

**Progress Report**  
**Motion Debate on “Assisting people with disabilities**  
**in integrating into society”**  
**Legislative Council Meeting on 15 November 2006**

**Background**

At the Legislative Council meeting on 15 November 2006, the following motion on “Assisting people with disabilities in integrating into society” moved by the Hon LEUNG Yiu-chung, as amended by Dr Hon Fernando CHEUNG Chiu-hung, was carried –

“That, as motions were passed by this Council in the 2002-2003, 2003-2004 and 2005-2006 sessions calling for improvement to transport facilities for people with disabilities and the offer of concessionary fares to them, and this Council requests the Administration to expeditiously adopt effective measures to fulfil the following demands:

- (a) examining the existing legislation and, if necessary, introducing legislative amendments or enacting laws to press various public transport operators to offer public transport half-fare concessions to people with disabilities, or making reference to overseas experience to provide transport subsidy for them and considering extending the concessions to their escorts;
- (b) allocating additional resources to expeditiously improve the Rehabus service, including increasing the number of such vehicles and strengthening the service;
- (c) requesting various public transport operators to draw up specific plans and timetables for improving their facilities to reduce the barriers to people with disabilities so that they can have easy access to all major public transport facilities;
- (d) introducing rehabilitation taxis, which are easy to board and alight by wheelchair-bound persons; and
- (e) implementing in all government departments and public bodies a voluntary quota system for the employment of people with

disabilities, requesting them to set indicators for and report annually on the employment of the disabled, as well as encouraging the private sector to follow suit,

so as to enable more people with disabilities to integrate into society, with a view to achieving the objective of “A Society for All” promoted by the Government.”

2. This report informs Members of the follow-up actions that have been taken by the Administration.

### **Fare Concession for Persons with Disabilities (“PWDs”)**

3. Public transport services in Hong Kong are provided by the private sector without Government subsidy. Given that operators need to be responsible for their own profits and losses, it is inappropriate for the Administration to direct public transport operators to provide fare concessions through legislative means. Public transport services operating under prudent commercial principles can ensure that reliable and efficient services are provided. On the other hand, the Administration will not be required to dip into public funds to subsidise their operation. This approach is in the public interest. Should the Administration make it mandatory for the operators to offer certain fare concession through legislation, there will be financial implication for the operators and may heighten the fare increase pressure.

4. Having said the above, the Administration understands PWDs’ views on provision of fare concession by public transport operators so as to lessen their burden and help them integrate into society. On this, the Administration has all along been reflecting PWDs’ demand for fare concession to public transport operators and will continue to encourage public transport operators to offer concessions to PWDs having regard to their financial conditions and social needs, with a view to attaining a balance between commercial principles and public interests.

5. In order to gain a better understanding of the provision of fare concession for PWDs in overseas countries, information on fare concessions provided in other countries was gathered. In the context of our study on overseas examples of provision of fare concession to PWDs conducted in 2005 (detailed findings of the research already forwarded to the LegCo Panel on Transport on 25 November 2005), it was found that the majority of the public transport systems which offered concessions to PWDs were operated with public funds, and only very few of them offered PWDs with severe physical disabilities and their carers fare concessions. As the LegCo

Subcommittee to Study the Transport Needs and Provision of Concessionary Public Transport Fares for PWDs has, upon consulting PWD groups, suggested to offer fare concession to PWDs who are recipients of Disability Allowance (“DA”) or assistance under the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance Scheme (“CSSA”) with 100% loss of earning power in the first instance, we shall not for the time being consider the proposal of offering fare concession to carers.

6. As regards legislative amendments, the Administration will, in response to request by the Subcommittee, consider introducing legislative amendments to the Disability Discrimination Ordinance (Cap. 487) (“DDO”) to put it beyond doubt that selective provision of concessionary fares to PWDs in phases would not constitute a contravention of the DDO.

### **Rehabus Service**

7. With a fleet of 95 buses, Rehabus operates 61 fixed routes and 3 feeder routes as well as dial a ride service. For 2006/07, government subsidizes \$35M, or 80% of its operating costs.

8. For 2006/07, the Government allocated additional funding for the purchase of 3 new buses and 8 replacement buses. For 2007/08, the Government plans to purchase 4 new buses and replace 9 old buses fitted with obsolete tail lifts. Also, all buses with obsolete tail lifts (around 10) will be replaced in the next two to three years, in view of their limitation in handling heavier powered wheelchairs, the use of which is increasingly common. By then, the Rehabus service will be further enhanced.

9. Apart from purchasing new buses and replacing existing ones, Rehabus will continue to rationalize its existing routes to meet client’s needs. It will also deploy suitable information technology for service improvement. In the coming two years, Rehabus will upgrade its “Rehabus Information Management System” for enhancing its services to clients through more effective utilization of available fleet resources.

### **Enhancement of Public Transport Facilities**

10. To help PWDs integrate into society, the Administration puts the vision of “Transport for All” into thorough practice. At present, all newly built public transport interchanges (“PTIs”) and bus termini are equipped with dropped kerbs. Apart from the new facilities, the Administration actively enhances existing traffic facilities. Over the years, the Administration has been investing nearly \$2.6 billion in various facilities

enhancement projects. Relevant actions that the Administration has taken to enhance traffic facilities and the progress are set out at Annex A.

11. As to requesting various public transport operators to draw up specific plans and timetables for improving their facilities to address the needs of PWDs, given that retrofitting or replacement of existing facilities involves large investment, if we compel the public transport operators to complete all projects in a short period of time, this will not only affect smooth operation of existing services, but may even create sudden financial burden for public transport operators and hence pose a fare increase pressure. In fact, public transport operators fully support the vision of “Transport for All”. Over the years, large amount of resources have been allocated to provide more facilities suitable for PWDs. For example, the Mass Transit Railway Corporation Limited (“MTRCL”) has invested \$400 million in improving the facilities in the past 10 years, while the Kowloon-Canton Railway Corporation (“KCRC”) has spent \$235 million in enhancing the facilities for PWDs. Progress of facilities improvements made by various public transport operators is at Annex B. The Administration will continue to work together with public transport operators to enhance facilities to benefit more passengers with disabilities.

Annex B

### **Wheelchair Accessible Taxis**

12. To supplement Rehabus services, the Government recognizes there is a need to actively consider introducing other wheelchair-accessible public transport means. We have been working with Transport Department (“TD”) to study the introduction of accessible taxi. According to law, apart from liquefied petroleum gas (“LPG”), taxis can also use petrol as fuel. There are petrol-fuelled wheelchair-accessible vehicles available in the market. However, as their operating cost as taxis is higher than that of LPG taxis, the taxi trade has not introduced them for use as taxis.

13. The Government and the taxi trade are actively sourcing for wheelchair-accessible LPG vehicles for use as barrier-free taxis. Fuel supply system (including the fuel tank and associated pipework) of LPG vehicles requires approval by the Gas Authority (i.e. the Director of Electrical and Mechanical Services). To facilitate the introduction of wheelchair-accessible taxis, TD and the Electrical and Mechanical Services Department (“EMSD”) had held briefing session for the automobile trade on the specifications of LPG taxis, including requirements on gas safety for the fuel supply system, access and fastening devices for wheelchair, and safety harnesses for passengers, to facilitate identification of suitable vehicles by the trade.

14. Automobile trade and taxi trade are welcomed to introduce

vehicle model which meets the legal requirements in Hong Kong as taxis so as to provide more convenient services for wheelchair users. Should there be suitable vehicle model, the departments concerned will follow up proactively on relevant procedures, including fuel supply system tests, vehicle inspection and road tests, in order to facilitate the early launching of barrier-free taxis.

### **Employment Indicator for People with Disabilities**

15. On the recommendation of the Sub-committee on Employment of the Rehabilitation Advisory Committee (the “Sub-committee”), the Health, Welfare and Food Bureau (“HWFB”) wrote to 369 Statutory Bodies and Government Subvented Organizations (“GSOs”) in May 2003 to encourage them to formulate recruitment policy and employment indicator for people with disabilities (PWDs). HWFB conducted a tracking survey in early 2004, which revealed that there was a general increase in the number of GSOs adopting the measures as compared with the findings of a similar survey conducted in 2002. The Sub-committee considered that the tracking survey was capable of helping to promote the employment of PWDs by GSOs, and recommended the Administration to continue to conduct similar surveys in the future.

16. HWFB is conducting another tracking survey, with a view to further encouraging GSOs that have not formulated recruitment policy and employment indicator for PWDs to do so. In parallel, we will also recommend those already reached their indicators to consider raising the indicators and publishing in their annual publications the recruitment policy and number of PWDs they have employed to encouraging private sector employers to follow suit.

17. As regards employment of PWDs in government, the Administration remains of the view that a fixed percentage or quota for the employment of disabled is not an appropriate or effective means to promote the employment of PWDs. We will continue the prevailing policy of placing PWDs in appropriate jobs whenever possible to help them integrate into the community. With a view to ascertaining whether the prevailing policy and arrangements remain effective in achieving the above policy, we will continue to keep track of the changes in the number of PWDs employed in the government.

Environment, Transport and Works Bureau  
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**Enhancement of Traffic Facilities for PwDs by the Administration**

1. The Transport Department (“TD”) updated “A Guide to Public Transport for People with Disabilities” in 2005, which provides information on the facilities of various public transport modes to help PwDs plan their journeys.
2. TD introduced braille registration plates on public light buses in 2003. As at end November 2006, 2,480 public light buses are provided with braille registration plates. As compared to June 2006, the number has increased by nearly 300.
3. Since 2003, TD has provided about 50 additional on-street parking spaces to meet the needs of disabled drivers, bringing the total number to 274. TD will continue to provide such parking spaces wherever feasible taking into account the demand for parking in the area and the local traffic condition.
4. Since 2003, TD had begun a scheme to reduce traffic sign poles through grouping of signs and accommodating multiple sign faces on a single post so as to reduce obstruction to pedestrians, especially wheelchair users. To date, over 1,900 traffic sign poles have been reduced in the urban area.
5. TD will continue to construct tactile guide paths to connect public transport interchanges/railway stations with regional hospitals, eye clinics, and centres or offices frequently visited by the visually impaired. Since 2003, TD had constructed twelve tactile guide paths. TD plans to construct an additional 3 tactile guide paths in 2007.
6. TD will continue to retrofit tactile warning strips in the middle part of the central refuge islands which are flush with carriageway according to the latest design standards.
7. TD and Highways Department (“HyD”) will continue to retrofit existing footbridges with accessible facilities. Between 2004 and 2006, HyD has completed the retrofitting of eight footbridges in Connaught Road Central (near Gilman Street), Kwun Tong Road (near Lower Ngau Tak Kok Estate), Salisbury Road (opposite to Shangri-La Hotel), Salisbury Road (opposite to Empire Centre), Kwun Tong Road (near Choi Shek Lane), Island East Corridor (near Chai Wan MTR Station), Shau Kei Wan (near Nam On Lane), and Hong Chong Road (Cross-harbour Tunnel toll plaza). Currently, there

are 7 retrofitting projects underway and 5 more will commence within the financial year of 2007.

8. TD and HyD will continue to improve the facilities at the existing PTIs and bus termini. Improvement works, including installation of tactile warning strips and dropped kerbs, for 30 PTIs are planned to be carried out in 2007.



**Enhancement of Public Transport Facilities  
by Public Transport Operators to Cater for the Needs of PwDs**

Railways

1. All East Rail stations (except Racecourse station) of KCRC are provided with tactile guide paths. The tactile guide paths have been extended to lead the visually impaired passengers to a total of four compartments of trains. Boarding points of the compartments for PwDs are located at the central part of the platform where the gaps between the platform edge and trains are narrower. This minimises the inconvenience faced by PwDs when boarding and alighting. Assistance can also be readily provided by the duty platform supervisor if necessary.
2. KCRC has installed flashing neon lights at East Rail stations with wider platform gaps to caution passengers. KCRC had already provided “Platform Gap Fillers” to narrow the platform gaps at 50 platforms among 33 Light Rail stops and will make improvements at other stops as appropriate.
3. Ticket vending machines with an interactive voice message function for the visually impaired are available at all East Rail and West Rail stations.
4. KCRC installed Octopus readers with audible devices at the bi-directional gates in all the East Rail Stations to advise passengers the fare charged and remaining value of the Octopus cards to benefit visually impaired passengers.
5. KCRC has installed low-height Octopus entry/exit processors at platforms of the Light Rail Stops to facilitate the use by wheelchair users. Some Octopus entry/exit processors are equipped with braille to facilitate the use by visually impaired passengers.
6. KCRC has installed lifts at each East Rail station to link the entrance level and/or the station concourse with the platforms. Lifts are also available at all Light Rail interchanges with West Rail.
7. KCRC has provided portable ramps at all East Rail stations to facilitate the boarding and alighting of wheelchair users. All East Rail and Light Rail stations are provided with ramps to facilitate wheelchair users’ access.

8. MTRCL has installed passenger lifts and introduced wheelchair aids / stair lift to MTR stations to provide barrier-free access for wheelchair passengers. Among the 53 MTR Stations, passenger lifts are available at 30 stations, 12 stations are equipped with wheelchair aids and 11 stations are constructed with ramp. MTRCL has installed internal passenger lifts connecting between concourse and platform at Cheung Sha Wan and Sham Shui Po stations in 2006.
9. Portable ramps are provided at all MTR stations for easy boarding and alighting by wheelchair users.
10. MTRCL has provided all MTR stations with full-length tactile guide paths at platform that lead to every compartment of the trains.

#### Franchised buses

1. Franchised bus operators will continue their programmes to replace older buses with low-floor buses –
  - All franchised bus companies except New Lantao Bus Company Limited (“NLB”) agreed in 2001 that all the new buses to be purchased would be wheelchair accessible. As regards NLB, its operation is largely on the Lantau Island and deployment of wheelchair accessible buses is not suitable for most of its routes due to constraints of the terrain. However, NLB has planned to purchase wheelchair accessible buses for deployment on routes where the terrain permits so as to cater for the transport needs of PwDs as far as possible.
  - The number of wheelchair accessible buses has increased from 2,329 in 2003 to nearly 2,600 in October 2006. There has been an increase of almost 30 wheelchair accessible buses within four months since June 2006.
  - New World First Bus Services Ltd. (“NWFB”) has particularly arranged wheelchair accessible buses to operate on specific routes. All buses operating along these routes are wheelchair accessible so as to avoid confusion or inconvenience to PwDs.
2. The franchised bus operators will continue to install bus stop announcement system where feasible -
  - The number of bus installed with bus stop announcement system has increased from 2,825 in 2003 to 4,220 in October 2006. The number

accounts for more than 70% of the total bus fleet. As compared to June 2006, there have been over 60 buses newly installed with bus stop announcement system within four months time.

- The bus stop announcement system is considered as a standard equipment for all new buses purchased by Kowloon Motor Bus Co. (1933) Ltd. NWFB and Citybus Limited have respectively commenced a trial scheme of bus stop announcement system in February and September 2006. The trial schemes are expected to complete by February and August 2007 respectively.