

For information
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**Legislative Council Subcommittee to
Study Issues Relating to Mainland-HKSAR Families**

Arrangements for Cross-boundary Students

Purpose

This paper sets out the arrangements and measures made by the Administration to facilitate the cross-boundary students attending schools in Hong Kong.

Background

2. “Cross-boundary students”(CBS) refer to students who are Hong Kong residents living in Shenzhen and traveling daily to schools in Hong Kong. The majority of CBS attend kindergartens, primary and secondary schools in North District, the New Territories, while a small number of them are in Tai Po, Yuen Long and Tuen Mun Districts. The number of CBS has been increasing from year to year. According to the statistics, there is a total of 8 038 CBS attending schools in the 2009/10 school year in various districts in the New Territories, in comparing to the number of 6 768 CBS of the previous year, there is a 19% increase. A breakdown of the number by school type is as follows:

School Type	Kindergarten	Primary	Secondary	Total
Number of Students	2 681	4 090	1 267	8 038

3. The government has all along encouraged parents to choose schools which are near to their residence for their children (especially those of tender age). This helps to save the time of CBS in traveling between Shenzhen and the territory, thus minimizing the adverse effect on the students’ learning and personal development. The government has therefore constantly reminded parents that, for the sake of safety, children should be accompanied by parents or other adults if they have to cross the boundary to attend schools in Hong Kong. In case their children need to travel alone when crossing the boundary, their parents should make early transport arrangement for their children, such as cross-boundary school bus, train or other public transport services.

Access to Lo Wu boundary control point by cross-boundary students

4. For historical reasons, some CBS take nanny buses to school via Lo Wu Station Road, which is adjacent to the Lo Wu Boundary Control Point (BCP) and managed

by the MTR Corporation Limited. In general, members of the public, including students, could only get access to the Lo Wu BCP through trains. The Lo Wu Station Road is at present located inside the Frontier Closed Area (FCA)^{Note 1} and is restricted to holders of Closed Area Permits (CAPs) issued by the Police only. Under the FCA policy, CAPs are normally not issued to persons who pass through the FCA to places where possession of CAPs is not required and is accessible via public transportation. In addition, Lo Wu Station Road is a country road, for parts of the road, the optimum capacity is 100 vehicular trips per hour and it is the only emergency vehicular access to the Lo Wu BCP. Nevertheless, a number of schools outside the FCA have arranged nanny buses or school buses taking CBS to and from the Lo Wu BCP to their schools via Lo Wu Station Road. As we understand that there is a need to render support to students of tender age and those with special needs, the Security Bureau and the Police, after taking into account the views of the concerned parties, have flexibly put in force the policy on issuance of CAPs for CBS attending schools outside the FCA via Lo Wu Station Road.

5. In spite of the above limited capacity and physical constraints of Lo Wu Station Road, the Police after taking into consideration the safety of CBS and the views of related bureaux/departments, arranged for the issuance of CAPs to CBS attending kindergartens and Primary schools in the North District. Owing to the steady increase in the number of CBS, around 2 500 CAPs were issued in 2006/07 school year to CBS of kindergartens and Primary One to Primary Five levels attending schools of the North District, of which the number is 200 more than that for the 2005/06 school year. As the number of CBS was on the rise, the Education Bureau further sought the collaboration of the North District kindergartens and primary schools' principals for the implementation of flexible school hours in the 2007/08 school year. As such, the schools' starting time of some kindergartens with CBS was postponed to 9:00am while those of the primary schools were scheduled flexibly between 7:30 a.m. and 9:00 a.m. Similar arrangements were made for the schools' finishing time. The aim of such arrangements was to enhance the efficiency of the nanny bus and school bus services so as to ease the traffic load at Lo Wu Station Road. While the above measures could relieve the traffic load at Lo Wu Station Road temporarily, the number of CBS continued to rise. In the 2008/09 school year, the Government of Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) obtained the consensus from the headmasters of the primary schools in the North District in giving priority to students of tender age, arranged to issue CAPs to CBS in the North District attending kindergartens and Primary One to Primary Four classes only. Under this new arrangement, around 2 200 CAPs were issued to CBS using Lo Wu Station Road and the Primary Five CBS were diverted to access the Lok Ma Chau Spur Line Public Transport Interchange and other BCPs.

6. In the 2009/10 school year, having regard to condition of Lo Wu Station Road, the Government of HKSAR continued to issue CAPs to CBS in the North District of kindergartens and Primary One to Primary Four classes, as well as those with special needs (Students with disabilities, and siblings of CBS possessing CAPs.). As at September 2009, a total of about 2 200 CAPs were issued to CBS using Lo Wu Station Road, and this number is comparable to that of 2008/09 school year.

^{Note 1} The FCA is designated under the Public Order Ordinance (Cap. 245) as part of the package of measures for maintaining the integrity of our boundary with the Mainland and for combating illegal immigration and other cross-boundary criminal activities. Access to the FCA is controlled by the Police through the issuance of Closed Area Permits based on actual needs to enter the FCA.

Access to Lok Ma Chau Spur Line Public Transport Interchange by cross-boundary students

7. The operation of the Lok Ma Chau Spur Line (LMCSL) commenced on 15 August 2007. To ease the traffic load of Lo Wu Station Road, the Government of HKSAR started a pilot scheme in April 2008 to allow limited number of school buses to enter LMCSL Public Transport Interchange (PTI) to take CBS to and from their schools. In view of the limited area of LMCSL PTI, which is located inside the FCA and within the conservation area, the number of school buses that can gain access to the PTI should be limited. After taking into consideration of the student safety, the Education Bureau (EDB) in collaboration with other bureaux/departments implemented a trial run between April and July 2008 allowing school buses to enter the LMCSL PTI at specific time-slot to take the CBS before and after school. The maximum capacity of car trip allowed is 8 car trips per hour. The school buses can gain access to enter the LMCSL PTI at designed time-slot. During that period, about 600 CBS were issued CAPs to and from school at LMCSL PTI.

8. During the trial period, the schools concerned reflected that CBS might have different schools' finishing hours owing to the arrangement of examinations or extra-curricular activities. After the liaison between EDB and the related bureaux/departments, a "multiple time slots" arrangement was launched in 2008/09 school year, which allowed 8 school buses to enter LMCSL PTI at either the "first half hour" or the "second half hour" sessions taking students repeatedly throughout the day. This measure allows flexibility for the school buses to cater for the needs of the CBS. In 2008/09 school year, about 1 700 CBS were issued CAPs, such that they could take school buses at LMCSL PTI to and from school.

9. To cater for the increasing number of CBS, the government has made available two additional parking spaces at the east side of LMCSL PTI in July 2009. There was an increase in the number of school buses allowed access LMCSL PTI from 8 trips per hour in the 2008/09 school year to 12 trips per hour in the 2009/10 school year accordingly. At present, about 2 000 CBS were issued CAPs for LMCSL PTI.

Provision of cross-boundary school bus services under special quotas

10. Recognizing the issuance of CAPs to cater the transportation needs of the CBS would not be an appropriate and long term measure, the Government of HKSAR seeks to introduce cross-boundary school bus services which could provide safe and long term door-to-door transportation service for the CBS. With effect from March 2008, the Government of HKSAR launched a trial scheme in which cross-boundary coach operators are allowed to provide cross-boundary school bus services at Man Kam To and Shenzhen Bay BCPs. In view of the success of the trial scheme, the Government of HKSAR with the consent of the Office of Port Administration of the People's Government of Guangdong Province, issued 20 special quotas^{Note 2} to the coach operators for operating school bus services at Lok Ma Chau (Huanggang), Man Kam To and Shenzhen Bay BCPs in the 2008/09 school year. In the 2009/10 school year, after obtaining the agreement of the Mainland authorities, the HKSAR Government has increased the number of special quotas from 20 to 42; to cater for the needs

^{Note 2} Special quotas refer to the trips granted by the HKSAR Government and the Mainland Authority to the cross-boundary school bus operators.

of CBS who may need to leave school at different hours due to examinations and extra-curricular activities, 20 “additional northbound trips” are approved. After the approval of the 42 special quotas, the operators have rescheduled their services according to the flow pattern of CBS. As at October this year, there are 40 trips^{Note 3} using special quotas and 16 trips of “additional northbound trips” operating between Shenzhen and Hong Kong serving around 1 500 CBS. Among them, about 280 are using the “additional northbound trips”.

Other Support

11. Apart from transportation arrangements, the Government of HKSAR has put in place various support measures to cater for the needs of the cross-boundary students. The measures are as follows:-

Clearance Counters and “e-Channels for Students”

12. To facilitate the entry/exit of CBS, Lo Wu and Lok Ma Chau Spur Line Control Points open 4-8 designated counters for them during rush hours before and after school on the weekdays. Additional counters would be available in accordance with the actual demand. Meanwhile, a total of 6 student e-channels for CBS (3 for arrival and 3 for departure) were installed in December 2007 and February 2008 respectively. Pre-registered CBS may use the e-Channels to complete the immigration clearance by themselves. In order to maintain order and ensure the safety of the CBS, security guards are also deployed to control the passenger flow at Lo Wu and Lok Ma Chau Spur Line Control Points during the rush hours.

“On-board Clearance”

13. Immigration Department, Customs and Excise Department and Department of Health are providing “on-board clearance” services to CBS at Man Kam To and Sha Tau Kok Control Points in order to facilitate the entry/exit of CBS of tender age. The ‘on-board clearance’ services are provided on a trial basis. CBS may stay on board the coaches at the control points to undergo the arrival/departure clearance. This pilot arrangement is being reviewed by relevant bureaux/departments from time to time in order to meet the actual needs of the CBS.

Student Travel Subsidy Scheme

14. The Student Financial Assistance Agency (SFAA) has been providing travel subsidy for needy cross-boundary students through a means-tested Student Travel Subsidy

^{Note 3} For the 2009/10 school year, the 40 special quotas include scheduled trips to and from the BCPs at Lok Ma Chau (Huanggang) (9 trips), Man Kam To (11 trips), Shenzhen Bay (13 trips) and, for the first time, Sha Tau Kok (7 trips).

Scheme. The amount is calculated on the basis of the average fares on public transport to and from school within the boundaries of Hong Kong. Students (including cross-boundary students) receiving travel subsidy may choose the mode of transport for traveling to and from school according to individual circumstances. In the 2008/09 school year, the SFAA granted travel subsidy to 1 570 qualified CBS with an average of \$4,645. Compared with the average travel subsidy granted to all recipients, the amount of subsidy received by cross-boundary students is three times that received by other students.

Student Support

15. The Government of HKSAR offers a range of support and services to CBS. Parents of primary students can contact student guidance teachers / teachers / staff of school while secondary students can approach school social workers for assistance. For educational issues such as arrangement for school placement, parents are encouraged to make direct contact with the EDB. For other needs and services, parents can contact the Social Welfare Department or seek assistance for services from various non-government organizations under the Integrated Family Service Centers. Besides, as schools are aware that cross-boundary students tend not to stay behind to join after-school activities because of the long traveling hours, many schools would make special arrangements by organizing extra-curricular activities during lunch time or weekends.

Way Forward

16. To cater for the safety and needs of CBS, the government regards the provision of cross-boundary school bus services as a long term policy which could provide a better and more sustainable solution. This arrangement has obtained the consent of the Government of the Guangdong Province in issuing special quotas for the provision of the cross-boundary school bus services. The government will continue to review the various transport arrangement and measures such as enhancing immigration clearance and boundary facilities and expanding the cross-boundary school bus services to meet the needs in the next school year.

Education Bureau
Security Bureau
Transport and Housing Bureau
Hong Kong Police Force
Home Affairs Department
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