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11 June 2010

Mr TANG Sin-hing, Chairman
Citybus Limited Employees Union
7/F, Wing Wong Commercial Building
557-559 Nathan Road
Yau Ma Tei, Kowloon

Dear Mr TANG,

Proposals in regard to the Operational Safety of Franchised Buses

With reference to your union's submission, dated 27 November 2009 to the Legislative Council (LegCo) Panel on Transport, which sets out your union's views on the operation of franchised bus services by Citybus Limited (CTB), we would like to give our response as follows.

Overtime allowance in lieu of breaks for bus drivers

CTB has drawn up schedules of working hours and breaks for its bus drivers in compliance with the *Guidelines on the Work Schedule for Bus Drivers* issued by the Transport Department (TD). Under the current arrangements, CTB will arrange for a meal break of one hour at the minimum for its bus drivers. In case a bus driver has less than an hour for actual meal break owing to a longer journey time arising from unforeseeable circumstances such as traffic congestion, CTB will compensate the bus driver concerned in the form of overtime allowance only if immediate deployment of another bus driver is impossible and the bus driver's prior consent has been obtained. In any case, the duration of breaks for the bus driver concerned will still not be shorter than that stipulated in the said Guidelines (i.e., bus drivers should have a break of at least 30 minutes after 6 hours of duty and within that 6-hour duty, the bus drivers should have total service breaks of at least 20 minutes of which no less than 12 minutes should be within the first 4 hours of duty). Such arrangement applies only to the aforementioned special circumstances so that services would not be affected.

Number of routes assigned to bus drivers

For the purposes of efficiency enhancement and the optimum use of resources, some CTB bus drivers will be assigned to drive more than one route within a single shift. Other local bus companies and overseas bus operators have also adopted this practice. For bus drivers who are required to drive more than one route within a single shift, CTB has formulated the following measures accordingly:

- (a) The journey time of a bus route will be reviewed from time to time subject to actual traffic condition to ensure that bus drivers have sufficient time to complete the journey and at the same time have adequate time for breaks and meals;
- (b) Sufficient notification will be given to bus drivers prior to any changes to their shift schedule; and
- (c) Bus drivers will be allowed to familiarize themselves with the bus routes they are to serve before actual operation. Under no circumstances will a bus driver be assigned to drive a route he/she is not familiar with.

Laser guns for bus speed detection and random breath tests

CTB has been using the laser gun for detection of the speeds of its buses for many years. Subsequent to the serious bus accident in Tseung Kwan O in November last year, we have demanded all bus companies to step up their use of the laser gun to monitor buses on night services and those operating on high-speed roads in response to concerns about the safety of bus services expressed by the LegCo and the public.

The laser guns currently used by CTB are hand-held models, similar to those used by the Police. CTB regularly sends the laser guns to their supplier for checks in accordance with the supplier's guidelines so as to ensure accuracy. The inspectors responsible for speed detection are required to have undergone training given by qualified instructors. During speed detection, CTB will send two inspectors to work together. One of the inspectors will operate the laser gun, while the other will record the registration number and the speed of the vehicle under detection so that errors can be minimized.

We understand that the aim of CTB's implementation of random breath tests for its bus drivers since June 2009 is to better ensure the safety of bus drivers, passengers and other road users. Under current practices, CTB will allow a bus driver who fails his/her first random breath test to re-take the test immediately to ensure that the readings are correct. Test results of other bus drivers who have taken the test at more or less the same time will also be checked against those of the bus driver in question to ascertain that the instrument is accurate and the bus driver has not been treated unfairly. We believe that CTB will continue to communicate with your union, other labour unions and labour consultative committees to come up with even better arrangements in this regard.

Provision of "transverse yellow bar marking" alerting motorists to reduce speed

The TD has clear guidelines providing that additional signs will under normal circumstances be erected ahead of any road sections where the speed limit will be lowered to serve as a warning to motorists. The relevant arrangements are as follows:

- (a) first, warning signs will be erected at about 100 to 200 metres ahead of the road sections where the speed limit will be lowered;
- (b) speed limit signs will be erected at the starting point of the road section where the speed limit will be lowered; and
- (c) speed limit road marking will be painted on the road surface in the vicinity of the starting point of the road section where the speed limit will be lowered to 50 km per hour.

Therefore, the existing speed limit signs and road markings are adequate, and similar in design to those adopted in advanced countries overseas.

The purpose of providing "transverse yellow bar marking" is to give motorists the visual impression that they are driving through those yellow bars swiftly, thereby alerting them to be aware of any excess in vehicle speed and reminding them of the need to slow down. "Transverse yellow bar marking" is mainly applicable to

- (a) slip roads leaving expressways; or
- (b) approaches to toll plazas with speed limit of 70 km per hour; or
- (c) special road sections with circumstances that may make motorists unaware of the need to slow down. Under such circumstances, consideration may be given to using "transverse yellow bar marking" to enhance motorists' awareness of the need to reduce speed in good time.

Should your union consider it appropriate to provide "transverse yellow bar marking" at individual locations, you are welcome to submit specific proposals to the TD.

(CHEUNG Jin-pang)
for the Commissioner for Transport

c.c.: LegCo Panel on Transport

b.c.c. (incoming letter enclosed):

The Commissioner for Transport
Deputy Commissioner / Transport Services and Management
Assistant Commissioner / Bus and Railway
Senior Engineer / Vehicle Safety
Chief Transport Officer / Bus and Railway 2
Assistant Secretary for Transport and Housing (Transport)1A