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Press Releases

LCQ17: MTR half-fare concessions for eligible persons with disabilities

Following is a question by the Hon Cheung Hok-ming and a written reply by the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Ms Eva Cheng, at the Legislative Council meeting today (June 24):

Question:

Last month, the MTR Corporation Limited (MTRCL) announced that it would implement the Half Fare Promotion Scheme for persons with disabilities (the Scheme). Under the Scheme, recipients of the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance aged between 12 and 64 with 100% disability and recipients of Disability Allowance in the same age group will enjoy half-fare concessions. MTRCL wishes that the Government will take complementary measures, including amendments to the Disability Discrimination Ordinance (Cap. 487), to ensure that the Scheme does not contravene the law. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(a) of the latest progress of the relevant work;

(b) of the specific implementation timetable of the aforesaid Scheme; and

(c) whether it will consider discussing with MTRCL extending the coverage of the Scheme to all holders of Registration Card for People with Disabilities issued by the Labour and Welfare Bureau; if it will, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

(a) and (b) The Government has all along encouraged public transport operators to offer concessionary fares to the public, including persons with disabilities (PwDs). MTR Corporation Limited (MTRCL) announced on May 21 that MTRCL will offer up to half fare concessions to recipients under the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance scheme aged between 12 and 64 with 100% disability and recipients of Disability Allowance in the same age group by way of a promotion scheme. Through the scheme, MTRCL aims to encourage these PwDs to participate more in activities away from home, thereby enhancing their contact with and integration into society.

To facilitate the early implementation of the scheme, the Labour and Welfare Bureau (LWB) has, in response to the request of MTRCL and having regard to the scheme, commenced the preparatory work for amending the Disability Discrimination Ordinance (DDO) in close collaboration with the Transport and Housing Bureau, Department of Justice and Equal Opportunities Commission. The legislative amendments will help alleviate concern over possible contravention of the DDO by the scheme. The legislative amendments will tie in with the implementation timetable of the scheme. LWB expects to submit the proposed legislative amendments to the Legislation Council (LegCo) for approval at the earliest opportunity in the 2009-2010

legislative session.

In parallel, MTRCL has also started preparatory work to put in place administrative procedures and technical changes, such as updating the Automatic Fare Collection software, designing and printing application forms, establishing application procedures, arranging for new Octopus cards and staff to process the applications. It is expected that the related work will be completed by the end of this year. MTRCL is also in discussion with the Social Welfare Department on the verification of eligibility of applicants. Details of the scheme and application procedures will be announced after legislative amendments to the DDO are completed. If the legislative amendments and preparatory work are completed as scheduled, the scheme will be open for application at the end of this year.

(c) MTRCL has been providing ongoing fare concessions for the elderly, children and students together with different promotions offered from time to time. MTRCL has also been carefully listening to society's views on the provision of concessionary fare to PwDs. Hence MTRCL, apart from the aforementioned concessions, has decided to offer fare concessions to recipients under the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance scheme aged between 12 and 64 with 100% disability and recipients of Disability Allowance. MTRCL's proposal has already provided fare concessions to the PwDs most in need of assistance and there are objective identification criteria for these two groups of PwDs.

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