

政府總部  
運輸及房屋局  
運輸科  
香港添馬添美道 2 號  
政府總部東翼



**Transport and  
Housing Bureau**  
**Government Secretariat**

**Transport Branch**  
East Wing, Central Government Offices,  
2 Tim Mei Avenue,  
Tamar, Hong Kong

本局檔號 Our Ref.: THB(T)L 3/2/4  
來函檔號 Your Ref.: CB1/PL/TP

電話 Tel. No.: 3509 8156  
傳真 Fax No.: 2104 7274

Secretary General  
Legislative Council Secretariat  
Legislative Council Complex  
1 Legislative Council Road  
Central, Hong Kong  
(Attn: Ms Sophie LAU)  
[Fax: 2978 7569]

3 March 2014

Dear Ms LAU,

Thank you for your letter of 16 January, enclosing with it the letter of the same date from the Hon Gary FAN Kwok-wai to the Chairman of the Panel on Transport of the Legislative Council on the operation of public light buses (“PLBs”). Further to our earlier acknowledgement, please find below a detailed reply.

Under the current public transport policy, railway is the backbone of our public transport system complemented by other public transport modes. Among them, PLBs play an active role by, amongst others, providing feeder service to public transport interchanges. There is a cap on the total number of PLBs to avoid excessive competition and duplication of services.

Our response to the issues raised in the letter is as follows –

**(1) PLB seating capacity**

In order to assess whether the service level of various PLB routes can meet passenger demand, the Transport Department (“TD”) conducts

comprehensive survey on PLB service regularly. Survey result shows that PLB service is able to meet passenger demand in general. We note that the PLB trade would like to relax the limit on PLB seating capacity to help meet passenger demand during peak hours and increase income. However, relaxing the limit on seating capacity would lead to an increase in the total capacity of PLBs. As the total patronage is unlikely to grow significantly, any increase in the total capacity of PLBs might trigger unhealthy competition among the various public transport modes and affect their operational sustainability and financial viability. From the viewpoint of the overall supply and demand of public transport service as well as the sustainable development of the trade, any proposed change in PLB seating capacity has to be considered carefully. In fact, to help meet passenger demand of individual green minibus (“GMB”) routes during peak hours, TD will try its best to assist operators in making flexible arrangements where feasible. This would increase the capacity of certain GMB routes during peak hours. The trade may approach TD for it.

## **(2) Converting PLB licences into taxi licences**

PLBs and taxis play different roles in the public transport system. PLBs mainly provide feeder service to/from public transport interchanges and serve areas that are difficult for mass carriers to provide services (such as areas with narrow and circuitous roads). Meanwhile, taxis provide personalised, point-to-point and more comfortable public transport service. As their roles and functions as well as licensing conditions and vehicle specifications are all different, it would not be appropriate to allow the two types of licences to be convertible.

## **(3) The Fourth Comprehensive Transport Study**

Upon the completion of the study for the Review and Update of the Railway Development Strategy 2000 later this year and having regard to the progress of the planning and implementation of major transport infrastructure projects, the Government will prepare for the study on the overall long-term development and arrangement of public transport to formulate future strategies for public transport.

PLB service plays an important role in our public transport system. TD has all along been assisting the GMB trade to improve their operating

environment through various measures such as rationalisation of GMB routes and adjustments to service timetables to meet passenger demand and enhance operational efficiency. TD also encourages the trade to explore sources of non-fare box revenue (such as advertisements on vehicle bodies or inside vehicle compartments) to increase their income. The Government will closely monitor the operating situation of the trade to facilitate its healthy development.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jason Chan', with a large loop at the start and a horizontal line extending to the right.

(Jason CHAN)

for Secretary for Transport and Housing

*c.c.*

Commissioner for Transport

(Attn: Mr. Albert SU)