

**For discussion  
on 15 April 2016**

## **Legislative Council Panel on Transport**

### **Public Transport Strategy Study - Topical Study Barrier-free Facilities of Public Transport Services**

#### **Purpose**

This paper briefs Members on the outcome of the eighth and the last Topical Study under the Public Transport Strategy Study (“PTSS”). The current provision of barrier-free facilities in public transport as well as further enhancement measures have been examined under this Topical Study.

#### **Background**

2. The Government has been encouraging the elderly and people with disabilities (“PwDs”) to integrate into the community. For example, starting from June 2012, eligible PwDs and elderly people aged 65 or above can, through subsidies provided by the Government under the Labour and Welfare Bureau’s (“LWB”) Public Transport Fare Concession Scheme, travel on general Mass Transit Railway (“MTR”) lines, franchised buses, ferries<sup>1</sup> and most of the green minibuses (“GMBs”) at a concessionary fare of \$2 per trip. In addition, eligible PwDs can make use of Rehabus service subsidised by LWB and Accessible Hire Car service provided by the Hong Kong Society for Rehabilitation for their commute.

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<sup>1</sup> For MTR service, including all heavy rail service (but excluding Airport Express, East Rail Line to and from Lo Wu, Lok Ma Chau and Racecourse stations, and first-class service of East Rail Line), Light Rail service and MTR bus service. For bus service, excluding “A” routes to and from the airport, racecourse routes and routes of New Lantao Bus on a pre-booking and group hire services. For ferry service, including designated ferry services but excluding deluxe class.

3. As our transport policy is underpinned by public transport, we would make every effort to take forward arrangements which can facilitate the use public transport services by PwDs. The Government has since 2002 been promoting the concept of “Transport for All”. The Government has been improving public transport facilities and promoting a barrier-free transport system in collaboration with public transport operators to cater for the needs of various passenger groups, including those of PwDs.

### **“Transport for All”**

4. Under the concept of “Transport for All”, the Government has been promulgating the following key elements<sup>2</sup> in relation to public transport services -

- (a) **Better accessible transport services for all:** further promoting barrier-free railway, franchised bus, ferry, public light bus (“PLB”) and taxi services;
- (b) **Better public transport infrastructure and facilities for all:** providing barrier-free public transport interchanges, bus stops, taxi stands, ferry piers, railway stations and other ancillary facilities; and
- (c) **Better partnership:** building partnership with public transport operators and groups of PwDs through exchanging views and collecting feedback from different stakeholders on a regular basis through meetings of the Transport Department (“TD”)’s Working Group on Access to Public Transport by People with Disabilities (“the Working Group”) and site visits; and enhancing the promotion of the concept of “Transport for All”.

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<sup>2</sup> Other elements of “Transport for All”, not concerning public transport, are “better streets and pedestrian areas for all” and “better planning standards, guidelines and procedures”.

5. On the provision of accessible public transport services (paragraph 4(a) above), public transport operators have been positive towards the enhancement of their services and facilities. Examples are at **Annex 1**. Some major initiatives in recent years include -

- (a) franchised bus companies have completed the installation of bus stop announcement system inside the compartment of their fleet in 2013. As at end-2015, over 90% of the buses (5 336 in total) in Hong Kong are wheelchair-accessible low-floor buses;
- (b) all MTR stations have installed at least one barrier-free facility, such as a lift connecting the concourse level and street level, ramp, stair lift or wheelchair aid;
- (c) since 1997, operators of new GBM routes have been required to install call bells inside the compartment so that passengers can inform the drivers their intention to alight. So far about 30% of the minibuses have been fitted with call bells. Moreover, TD encourages the trade to designate priority seats for persons in need as well as provide braille registration number plates, non-slip floor and additional handrails, etc. inside the compartment; and
- (d) the Government has been encouraging the taxi trade to use wheelchair-accessible models. The number of wheelchair-accessible taxis has increased from about 20 in early 2015 to about 80 now.

6. On the enhancement of public transport infrastructure and facilities (paragraph 4(b) above), TD and the Highways Department (“HyD”) have retrofitted about 150 public transport interchanges, bus termini and PLB termini, as well as about 200 public piers and landings with barrier-free facilities such as tactile guide paths, tactile warning strips, dropped kerbs and road signs. All new public transport facilities will come with

facilities for ease of use by PwDs in accordance with TD's "Transport Planning and Design Manual".

7. On building better partnership (paragraph 4(c) above), the major public transport operators have been rendering active support and keeping close contact with TD and PwD groups to better understand the needs of PwDs in using public transport services through platforms such as TD's Working Group. The Working Group, with participation of 20 PwD groups, holds meeting around every 3 to 4 months so as to understand the needs and opinions of PwDs regarding their use of public transport services. Representatives from relevant government departments (including LWB, Transport and Housing Bureau, HyD, etc.) also attend the meetings. Meanwhile, the Secretary for Transport and Housing had met with the representatives of PwD groups three times during the past two years to listen to their views and understand more their needs. The Government will continue to make use of platforms such as the Working Group to exchange views with and follow up on suggestions from PwD groups.

### **Further promoting the concept of "Transport for All"**

8. In collaboration with public transport operators, the Government will continue to strive to implement various measures as far as practicable to further promote the concept of "Transport for All". In doing so, we would endeavor to make use of information technology. Taking into account the views of stakeholders and the actual situation, the Government, together with public transport operators, plan to introduce a series of measures to further facilitate the use of public transport services by PwDs. Details are at [Annex 2](#). Key measures are set out in paragraphs 9 to 14 below.

### ***Railways***

9. To assist the visually impaired, the MTR Corporation Limited ("MTRCL") is actively exploring the provision of audio information

through the guide paths at Shek Kip Mei Station. Moreover, for those stations without lifts connecting the station concourse with street level, MTRCL will continue to install external lifts in phases before end-2019<sup>3</sup> as long as the physical environment permits. In addition to providing more barrier-free facilities, MTRCL will step up the publicity of the message to give priority to wheelchair users in using the multi-purpose spaces in the compartments. MTRCL will also actively explore how the provision of textual information to the hearing impaired through the LED display panels inside the stations and compartments could be enhanced in an emergency. On the other hand, unless the physical environment does not allow, a lift for connecting platform level, concourse level and street level of a new station will be a standard provision when constructing new railway lines.

### ***Franchised Buses***

10. All franchises commencing from 2013 onwards already require new buses procured by franchised bus companies to have barrier-free features in their design. Apart from wheelchair-accessible low-floor design, such features mainly include wheelchair parking spaces and the associated safety restraint devices, designated priority seats for persons in need, enhanced handrail design, easily reached bells, bus stop announcement system, and large electronic destination and route number display panels. Franchised bus companies will also enhance the training of bus captains as well as maintenance of the barrier-free facilities. Based on the latest bus replacement programme, all buses (except for some serving South Lantau which are constrained by the terrain<sup>4</sup>) are expected to be of wheelchair-accessible low-floor design by next year (2017). As the use of wheelchair-accessible low-floor buses is

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<sup>3</sup> Due to geographical, land ownership and technical constraints in Tin Hau Station, there is no suitable location for installation of a lift. MTRCL is trying to work out a feasible option to put in place a lift.

<sup>4</sup> Traditional low-floor buses are not suitable for operation on some roads with steep gradient and sharp bends in South Lantau. The bus operator is currently trying out low-floor buses with modified design on the relevant routes. Such buses have a higher ground clearance whilst in motion.

increasingly common, TD is studying with franchised bus companies the feasibility of using such buses, equipped with other facilities/arrangements that can facilitate passengers (such as additional handrails), to provide new service or enhance existing service to and from hospitals. Subject to the findings of the study, the arrangement can be implemented in around two years. As to the suggestion of providing two wheelchair parking spaces in the compartment, please refer to paragraph 15(a) below.

11. Franchised bus companies will upgrade their mobile apps for disseminating information about the routes and timetables to the visually impaired through an audio function. This service is expected to be rolled out in phases within this year. On the other hand, franchised bus companies are launching their real-time bus arrival information system progressively so as to facilitate passengers in knowing their waiting time and planning their journeys. Arrangements will also be made to provide such information to the visually impaired through an audio function of the mobile apps. The work is expected to be completed by around end-2018. Meanwhile, to assist the visually impaired to get hold of information on relocation or cancellation of bus stops, franchised bus companies will launch a one-year pilot by mid-2016. Under the pilot, braille question marks and braille telephone numbers will be displayed at the bus stops to be relocated or cancelled due to incidents such as road constructions or major public events to keep the visually impaired informed.

12. All franchises commencing from 2013 onwards already require the franchised bus companies concerned to install seats at new covered bus stops as far as practicable. To expedite the installation of seats at bus stops so that waiting passengers (including PwDs) can benefit, the Government will provide subsidies to franchised bus companies for installing seats at covered bus stops without seats. Seats will be installed at some 1,500 bus stops in about three years (from 2016/17 to 2018/19), and at the remaining bus stops (also around 1,500) thereafter. TD, in conjunction with franchised bus companies, is also studying the feasibility of setting aside waiting spaces at the front end of suitable

en-route bus stops to give priority to wheelchair-bound passengers to board buses.

### ***Public Light Buses***

13. TD has been encouraging the trade to install an additional half-step at middle door (see **Annex 3**) and handrails to facilitate easy boarding by passengers with minor mobility difficulties and elderly passengers. Meanwhile, TD encourages the trade to install call bells with indication lights inside PLB compartment to help people with hearing or speech impairment to inform the drivers of their intention to alight. TD is considering requiring newly registered GMBs to have the half-step at middle door, handrails and call bells with indication lights. This exercise will be conducted in tandem with the study of the role and positioning of PLB service.

### ***Taxis***

14. Apart from the on-going efforts to encourage the taxi trade to introduce wheelchair-accessible taxis, the Government will, in the context of studying the introduction of premium taxis as now being looked into, consider requiring operators of premium taxis to provide a certain number of wheelchair-accessible taxis. Separately, it is understood that some vehicle manufacturer is developing a liquefied petroleum gas-driven vehicle model<sup>5</sup> which is wheelchair-accessible and should be suitable for use as taxis. It is expected that this model will be launched in the market in the coming two to three years. The trade would then have more choices insofar as vehicle model is concerned. Furthermore, the Government will through publicity and education remind taxi drivers that they should provide assistance to those in need, including PwDs, as far as possible.

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<sup>5</sup> Under the law, newly registered taxis shall be powered by liquefied petroleum gas or petrol. Currently, most taxis are running on liquefied petroleum gas.

15. In addition to measures in paragraph 9 to 14 above, the Government will explore the feasibility of the following measures with public transport operators and stakeholders including PwDs -

- (a) for franchised bus service, the Government will explore with franchised bus companies the feasibility of providing two wheelchair parking spaces in the bus compartment of certain routes (such as hospital routes). In doing so, due consideration would need to be given to whether the existing models can fit more than one wheelchair parking space, the impact on the number and location of priority seats, etc.; and
- (b) the Government will be in search of whether there are low-floor wheelchair-accessible PLB models suitable for use in Hong Kong. If so, a trial with such models will be carried out to determine the feasibility of putting them to serve suitable routes. This exercise will be conducted in tandem with the study of the role and positioning of PLB service.

## **Conclusion**

16. “Transport for All” measures must keep pace with the times. When examining and implementing the above measures, the Government will maintain communication with PwD groups and public transport operators through platforms such as TD’s Working Group. The Government will also provide timely assistance and coordination as necessary. Public awareness and support are important to the further promotion of “Transport for All”. In this regard, TD will enhance public understanding of the transport needs of PwDs through publicity and education so as to promote the culture of integration of able-bodied and PwDs in the community. MTRCL and franchised bus companies will strengthen staff training while TD will continue to provide the relevant information to the PLB and taxi trades. In doing so, public



transport services, together with Rehabus and Accessible Hire Car services, can help PwDs better integrate into the community.

**Advice sought**

17. Members are invited to provide comments.

**Transport and Housing Bureau  
Transport Department  
April 2016**

**Major barrier-free facilities of  
existing public transport services**

<b>Public Transport Modes</b>	<b>Major barrier-free facilities</b>	
MTR	<p><u>Station/Platform</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Barrier-free access</li><li>• Wide gates</li><li>• Audible devices at exit/entry gates</li><li>• Braille plates installed on Ticket Issuing Machines, Add Value Machines and Platform Card Processors at Light Rail stops</li><li>• Escalator audible warning signals</li><li>• Tactile station layout maps</li><li>• Lifts connecting the street level and station concourses</li><li>• Stair lifts or wheelchair aids</li><li>• Tactile guide paths</li><li>• LED display Panels</li><li>• Indicator lights</li><li>• Disabled toilets</li><li>• Portable ramps</li><li>• Induction loops</li><li>• Passenger Information Display System</li></ul>	<p><u>Train</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Multi-purpose spaces/wheelchair parking spaces</li><li>• Door chimes</li><li>• Closing door buzzer</li><li>• Next stop announcement system and LED display panels</li><li>• Flashing system maps</li><li>• Handrails</li></ul>

<b>Public Transport Modes</b>	<b>Major barrier-free facilities</b>	
Franchised buses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Front kneeling capability</li> <li>• Wide gates</li> <li>• Wheelchair parking space</li> <li>• Closing door buzzer and indicator lights</li> <li>• Bus stop announcement system with LED display panels and/or voice announcement function</li> <li>• High coloured contrast and textured handrails</li> <li>• Bells within easy reach</li> <li>• Braille registration number plates and customer service hotline inside compartment</li> <li>• Non-slip floor</li> <li>• Fixed ramp</li> <li>• Priority seats</li> </ul>	
Public light buses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Call bells</li> <li>• Handrails</li> <li>• Non-slip floor</li> <li>• Braille registration number plates</li> </ul>	
Ferries	<u>On board</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Multi-purpose space/ wheelchair parking space</li> <li>• Non-slip gangplank</li> </ul>	<u>At pier</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tactile guide paths</li> <li>• Call bells at the entrance</li> </ul>
Taxis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Braille and tactile vehicle registration number plates on the rear left side door</li> <li>• About 11 000 taxis (about 60% of all taxis in Hong Kong) have been installed with taxi meters which can announce the taxi registration number and taxi fare</li> <li>• About 80 taxis are directly wheelchair accessible</li> </ul>	

**Annex 2**

**Proposed improvement measures to facilitate people with disabilities  
to use public transport services**

	<b>Items</b>	<b>Details</b>	<b>Expected implementation timetable</b>
<b><u>Public transport services in general</u></b>			
1.	On-going promotion of the concept of “Transport for All”	TD will step up publicity to enhance the public’s understanding of the travelling needs of the PwDs	Expected to be rolled out in 2017
<b><u>MTR</u></b>			
1.	Trial provision of audio information to the visually impaired through the tactile guide paths at station concourses and platforms	MTRCL is actively exploring the provision of audio information to the visually impaired through the tactile guide paths at concourses and platforms at Shek Kip Mei Station	In progress
2.	Stepping up of publicity to promote priority use of multi-purpose spaces inside compartments for wheelchair passengers	MTRCL will step up publicity	In progress
3.	Provision of textual information about emergencies to the hearing impaired through electronic displays in train compartments, station concourses and platforms	MTRCL has installed electronic displays in most of the train compartments, station concourses and platforms and is exploring how the provision of textual information to the hearing impaired could be enhanced in an emergency	In progress

	Items	Details	Expected implementation timetable
<b><u>Franchised buses</u></b>			
1.	Installation of seats for waiting passengers at covered bus stops	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Currently, there are around 140 covered bus stops installed with seats. The Government will subsidise franchised bus companies to install seats at existing covered bus stops without seats</li> <li>Franchised bus companies are required to provide seating facilities at new covered bus stops as far as practicable</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Between 2016/17 and 2018/19, around 1,500 seats will be installed. Thereafter, another 1,500 seats will be installed at the remaining covered bus stops</li> <li>In progress <sup>1</sup></li> </ul>
2.	Full adoption of wheelchair-accessible low-floor buses	Franchised bus companies will continue with bus replacement	Expected that all franchised buses will be of wheelchair-accessible low-floor design by 2017 <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> All franchises which commencing from 2013 onward have this requirement. These franchises include those for New World First Bus Services Limited, Citybus Limited (franchise for Hong Kong Island and Cross-Harbour bus network and franchise for the Airport and North Lantau bus network), Long Win Bus Company Limited and New Lantao Bus Company (1973) Limited. Similar requirement will be imposed on the new franchise which will become effective in 2017 for the bus network of the Kowloon Motor Bus Co. (1933) Ltd..

<sup>2</sup> Except for some serving South Lantau constrained by the terrain.

	<b>Items</b>	<b>Details</b>	<b>Expected implementation timetable</b>
3.	Study on a pilot scheme to provide bus service to and from hospitals	TD is studying with franchised bus companies the feasibility of deploying wheelchair-accessible low-floor buses, equipped with other facilities/arrangements that can facilitate passengers, to provide new service or enhance existing service to and from hospitals	Subject to the findings of the study, expected to be implemented in around two years
4.	Provision of waiting areas for wheelchair-bound passengers at en-route bus stops	TD is studying with franchised bus companies the provision of waiting spaces for wheelchair-bound passengers at the front end of suitable en-route bus stops	Will be implemented at individual and suitable en-route bus stops subject to physical environment
5.	Upgrading of mobile apps of franchised bus companies to provide the visually impaired with real-time bus arrival information through an audio function	Franchised bus companies will upgrade their mobile apps to provide the visually impaired with real-time bus arrival information through an audio function	Expected to be completed by around end-2018
6.	Provision of information about the relocation and cancellation of bus stops to the visually impaired	Franchised bus companies will launch a one-year pilot scheme to display braille question marks and braille telephone numbers at bus stops to be relocated or cancelled due to incidents such as road constructions or major public events	The pilot scheme will be launched in the middle of this year

	<b>Items</b>	<b>Details</b>	<b>Expected implementation timetable</b>
7.	Promotion of awareness among the public and the franchised bus captains of the transport needs of PwDs	TD has requested the franchised bus companies to enhance training of bus captains so that the bus captains will have a better understanding of the transport needs of PwDs and facilitate their use of bus service	In progress
8.	Enhancement of the maintenance of barrier-free facilities (e.g. ramps)	TD has requested the franchised bus companies to pay particular attention to whether the barrier-free facilities (e.g. ramps) are operating properly during their monthly inspection, and to carry out repair promptly if such facilities are found to be out of order	In progress
<b><u>Taxi</u></b>			
1.	Continuing to introduce wheelchair-accessible taxis	Apart from the on-going efforts to encourage the taxi trade to introduce wheelchair-accessible taxis, the Government will, in the context of studying the introduction of premium taxis as now being looked into, consider requiring operators of premium taxis to provide a certain number of wheelchair-accessible taxis	The Government plans to report to the Legislative Council Panel on Transport in the middle of this year the progress of the study on the introduction of premium taxis
2.	Designation of taxi stand for wheelchair-accessible taxis	TD will study the designation of taxi stands for wheelchair-accessible taxis at major public facilities frequently used by PwDs, e.g.	Subject to the outcome of the discussion with relevant organisations,

	<b>Items</b>	<b>Details</b>	<b>Expected implementation timetable</b>
		hospitals	expected to be implemented in 2017/18
<b><u>Public light bus (PLB)</u></b>			
1.	Encouraging the installation of an additional half-step and handrails on GMBs	TD will follow up with the trade on the installation of an additional half-step at the middle door and handrails so as to facilitate the boarding and alighting of elderly passengers and persons with minor mobility difficulties, and the installation of call bells with indication lights to facilitate the people with hearing or speech impairment to inform the drivers of their intention to alight	This exercise will be conducted in tandem with the study of the role and positioning of PLB service
2.	Encouraging the installation of call bells with indication lights on GMBs		



Annex 3

**Half-step at the middle door of a public light bus**

