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14 March 2017

Secretary General
Legislative Council Secretariat
Legislative Council Complex
1 Legislative Council Road
Central
Hong Kong
(Attn.: Ms Doris Lo)

[Fax no.: 2840 0269]

Dear Ms Lo,

**Motions Passed at the Meeting of
the Legislative Council Panel on Transport on 24 February 2017
in respect of the New Franchise for the Bus Network of
the Kowloon Motor Bus Company (1933) Limited**

At the meeting of the Legislative Council Panel on Transport (“Panel”) on 24 February 2017, Members passed four motions in respect of the new franchise for the bus network of the Kowloon Motor Bus Company (1933) Limited (“KMB”) raised at the meeting on 20 January 2017. I write to provide our response to the key points of the four motions.

Fare Concessions

KMB currently provides a variety of fare concessions to passengers (such as bus-bus interchange (“BBI”) concession schemes and section fares) which basically cover all of its regular routes. Under the new franchise, KMB will introduce various fare concession schemes, namely the long-haul route fare concession scheme for full-time students, inter-modal interchange fare concessions with trams, new intra-network BBI concession schemes and alignment of fares for short-haul trips on cross-district routes and shuttle bus routes. Please refer to paragraph 10 of the Government’s paper submitted to

the Panel on the progress of discussion on the new franchise with KMB (LC Paper No. CB(4)413/16-17(04)) for details. During our discussion with KMB on proposals for new fare concession initiatives, our focus was to address the long-standing requests of passengers and to practically meet passengers' needs. While it is our established policy to encourage public transport operators to offer more fare concessions, it should be noted that public transport services are provided by private operators in accordance with commercial principles basically without government subsidies. The provision of fare concessions should thus avoid exerting fare pressure which might eventually affect the basic fare level.

After granting the new franchise, we will continue to explore with KMB the feasibility of introducing more practicable fare concessions initiatives on the aforesaid basis. Regarding the monthly passes, the Government considers that their coverage should not be too restrictive such that passenger demand can be met in an appropriate manner. The pricing of the monthly passes should not be too high so that the fare concession can be practical. Meanwhile, bus companies should be capable of introducing such monthly passes without passing the costs to non-monthly pass users in order to avoid generating pressure for fare increase in future. While the Government and KMB had explored proposals on monthly passes in the course of discussion on the new franchise, the preliminary concepts and information provided by KMB were unable to ensure that the monthly passes could achieve the above outcome. Further studies and discussion are thus required. As regards the fare concession for students, KMB has taken note of the views of the Panel and other stakeholders. We will closely monitor the usage of the scheme upon its implementation. KMB has also committed to conducting a review of the concession scheme six months after its implementation. The Government will actively follow up with KMB by then and brief the public on the progress.

Service Enhancement

KMB has committed to rolling out several new initiatives under the new franchise to enhance its service level. For example, KMB will upgrade the passenger facilities at highly-utilised bus termini and bus interchanges progressively to improve the waiting environment. KMB will also partner with the Transport Department ("TD") to facilitate passengers' planning of their trips and managing of their waiting time through making real-time arrival information available at the website and smartphone application of TD's "Hong Kong eTransport". Having regard to an ageing population, KMB plans to launch a trial to reconfigure the bus compartments of its existing super-low-floor buses so that the lower deck can accommodate two wheelchair passengers at the same time. KMB expects to launch the trial progressively from mid-2017 onwards on a few selected routes serving hospitals. Subject to passengers' feedback, KMB will consider further expanding the number of buses with dual wheelchair spaces. Details of each initiative are set out in paragraph 9 of the

aforesaid Panel paper. TD will continue to follow up with KMB on matters concerning service frequencies and further enhancement to the provision of data through regular contacts.

As regards Transport for All, all buses of KMB are currently equipped with bus stop announcement systems inside the bus compartments for the convenience of the visually impaired. Having listened to the views of bodies representing the visually impaired earlier, KMB is planning to add a text-to-speech function in its smartphone application such that the visually impaired may obtain bus services information (including information on temporary changes in bus stop locations) in audio form. KMB expects that the new function can be launched within this year. TD will also continue to meet with representatives of persons with disabilities regularly through the Working Group on Access to Public Transport by People with Disabilities to understand their needs and to take appropriate follow-up actions with the bureaux, departments and operators concerned. Meanwhile, the Government has already completed a topical study on barrier-free facilities of public transport services under the Public Transport Strategy Study and briefed the Legislative Council in April 2016. The topical study has examined the barrier-free facilities of public transport services as well as how such arrangements can be further enhanced. In addition, under the Government Public Transport Fare Concession Scheme for the Elderly and Eligible Persons with Disabilities, eligible persons with disabilities may use public transport services, including all regular routes of KMB, at a concessionary fare of \$2 per trip. The Government will continue to listen to the views on matters concerning the provision of fare concessions for different cohorts in need.

Bus Captains' Working Environment and Treatment

TD has all along encouraged the bus companies, being good employers, to provide suitable facilities at bus termini for their staff. At present, toilets and rest facilities are generally part of the basic ancillary facilities when new bus termini are built. Insofar as KMB is concerned, 176 (about 89%) of the bus termini are provided with rest rooms for bus captains. As for toilets, they are either located at or within a walking distance of three minutes at 194 bus termini (about 98%), while toilets are basically located within a walking distance of around four to seven minutes for the remaining bus termini. These toilets are available for use during the normal operating hours of bus services. Some bus termini do not have rest facilities or toilets for bus captains mainly because of the physical constraints at individual sites (e.g. the bus terminus is located on a narrow sidewalk or without electrical installations) or because of the views of the neighbourhood. KMB has also provided staff canteens at five bus termini for the convenience of its staff. According to KMB, it is arranging comprehensive renovation (including enhancement of air-conditioning systems and catering facilities) at these staff canteens, which is expected to be re-opened to serve frontline staff upon completion of the renovation works by

mid-2017. Meanwhile, the bus companies have installed self-service facilities such as drinking water dispensers, microwave ovens, refrigerators and vending machines for use by staff at most of the bus termini and rest rooms.

Same as other franchised bus companies, apart from employing regular bus captains, KMB also employs part-time bus captains to meet the need of daily manpower deployment and additional passenger demand on some specific dates and hours. In fact, the employment of part-time bus captains can help reduce the need for regular bus captains to work overtime and can give them sufficient rest time, thereby enhancing driving safety. In addition, to ensure that bus captains have sufficient rest time, TD has issued the Guidelines on Bus Captain Working Hours, Rest Times and Meal Breaks (“Guidelines”). Each franchised bus company are required to submit quarterly reports to TD on the implementation of the Guidelines. TD will continue to closely monitor the implementation of the Guidelines. It will also keep the Guidelines under review from time to time and refine them should there be practical needs to do so.

We should be grateful if you can relay the above to Members of the Panel for their reference.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be the name 'Louis Leung' written in a cursive style.

(Louis Leung)

for Secretary for Transport and Housing

c.c.: Commissioner for Transport (Attn.: Miss Rachel Kwan)