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Ms Sophie LAU
Clerk to Panel on Transport
Legislative Council Secretariat
Legislative Council Complex
Legislative Council Road
Central, Hong Kong

15 February 2019

Dear Ms LAU,

**Motions on “Report of the Independent Review Committee on Hong Kong’s Franchised Bus Service”
passed at the meeting of Legislative Council Panel on Transport on
18 January 2019**

Our consolidated reply to the five motions passed by Members at the captioned meeting is as follows.

Working Hours of Franchised Bus Captains

The Government attaches great importance to the operational safety of franchised buses. To ensure sufficient rest time of bus captains, the Transport Department (“TD”) has formulated the Guidelines on Bus Captain Working Hours, Rest Times and Meal Breaks (“the Guidelines”) for the franchised bus companies and requested them to comply with the Guidelines in arranging duty schedules. The TD will review the

Guidelines from time to time and make timely amendments where necessary.

In accordance with the revised Guidelines published in February last year, the maximum working hours of bus captains has been reduced from 14 to 12 hours, which is on par with the requirement in Australia (maximum 12 hours a day) and more stringent than that in Singapore (maximum 14 hours) and the UK (maximum 16 hours). The maximum driving hours has also been reduced from 11 to 10 hours, which is on par with the requirement in the UK (maximum 10 hours). In addition, the rest break for bus captains after six hours of driving will be lengthened from 30 to 40 minutes, which is longer than the requirement in the UK (where bus captains are entitled to a minimum 30-minute rest break after 5.5 hours of driving).

To cater for the service demand in the morning and evening peaks, franchised bus companies will arrange special shifts where necessary, and these special shifts only account for 10% to 20% of the total shifts of the franchised bus companies. To ensure that there is sufficient rest time for bus captains working on special shift, the TD has introduced a new arrangement in the revised Guidelines, under which a rest time of no less than three consecutive hours should be provided in a special shift. Meanwhile, franchised bus companies have been making continuous effort to improve the rest facilities in bus depots and termini for the convenience of the bus captains.

The TD will closely monitor the implementation of the Guidelines by franchised bus companies and continue to review the actual situation from time to time. In parallel, the TD will encourage the franchised bus companies to make effective arrangements in assigning shift duties of bus captains with a view to shortening the working and driving hours of bus captains to less than the relevant stipulated upper limit where possible. Upon the full implementation of the revised Guidelines in the second quarter this year, the TD will review the Guidelines again and collect views from bus companies and bus captain unions. The review is expected to be completed in 2020.

Furthermore, the TD will study the need of appointing expert(s) as ad hoc member(s) of the Working Group on the Enhancement of Safety of Franchised Buses to explore matters relating to fatigue monitoring and

management.

Remuneration of Franchised Bus Captains

The remuneration packages of bus captains are subject to a host of factors including the market situation and overall economic conditions. The Government has been urging the franchised bus companies, as responsible enterprises, to maintain effective communication with their staff regarding remuneration arrangements. KMB, Citybus, New World First Bus and Long Win have improved the wage structure of their frontline staff by increasing the bus captains' basic salary starting from March 2018. New Lantau Bus has also granted all of their full-time bus captains a special bonus. All bus companies also gave their full-time bus captains a pay rise of 5% or 8%, or not less than \$1,100 or \$1,250, in 2018 to further improve the remuneration packages of bus captains.

Staff Recruitment

To assist the franchised bus companies in recruiting bus captains, the TD, in conjunction with the Labour Department (LD) and franchised bus companies, organised job fairs in various districts, including four thematic job fairs held in Tung Chung, Tuen Mun and Tin Shui Wai between March and August 2018. The TD will continue to work with the LD to organise similar events to help franchised bus companies recruit bus captains.

The Government noted the suggestion by Members on providing subsidy to bus companies to recruit more bus captains. At the moment, all existing public transport services are basically operated in accordance with prudent commercial principles, the Government considered it not advisable to provide direct subsidy to private entities for staff recruitment. Nonetheless, the Government will continue to make use of subsidy schemes targeting franchised bus companies to enhance the operational safety of franchised buses and improve their ancillary facilities (such as passenger waiting environment).

In addition, the TD has relayed to franchised bus companies the suggestion of introducing bus service ambassadors for their consideration.

Passenger Publicity

The Government has been working with the Road Safety Council to organise publicity and educational activities, as well as to produce announcements of public interest ("API") and publications, to promote road safety among different road users (including passengers of public transport vehicles). Among such efforts, a new series of API reminding passengers not to disturb drivers while driving were broadcast on radio in September 2018, and a new issue of Road Safety Bulletin publicising riding safety for passengers was distributed in December 2018. Moreover, the TD will shortly roll out a series of API on television and on the internet to raise passengers' awareness of safety and courtesy (including respect for the bus captain) when taking public transport.

The TD is also working with the Hong Kong Police Force in devising the long-term publicity plans on passenger education, so that more publicity and educational activities will be rolled out in the long run to raise passengers' safety awareness. Also, the TD is preparing notices to this effect and will request the franchised bus companies to arrange for posting them inside bus compartments to remind passengers not to disturb bus captains in execution of duty.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a stylized 'C' followed by a dot.

(Nick CHOI)

for Secretary for Transport and Housing

c.c.: Commissioner for Transport (Attn: Mr Patrick WONG)