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By email

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

4 August 2020

Dear Ms LAU,

**Legislative Council Panel on Transport  
Meeting on 19 June 2020  
Motion on “Review on the standing capacity and service level of  
franchised buses”**

Regarding the motion passed by Members at the meeting on 19 June 2020 in relation to the above subject, our reply is as follows:

Pursuant to the current Guidelines on Service Improvement and Reduction in Bus Route Development Programmes (“Guidelines”), if the average occupancy rate of any bus route reaches 100% during any half-hour of the peak period and 85% during that one hour, franchised bus (“FB”) companies should increase vehicle deployment and service frequency to enhance service level and meet passenger demand. According to the revised Guidelines proposed by the Government at the above meeting, the Transport Department (“TD”) will require FB companies to use an occupancy rate equivalent to four standing passengers per square metre as the benchmark for service level adjustment. In other words, if the average occupancy rate of any bus route reaches 90% during any half-hour of the peak period and 75% during

that one hour, FB companies should increase vehicle deployment and service frequency.

Regarding Members' proposal of increasing service frequency once the occupancy rate of any long-haul bus route has reached 75% in the busiest half-hour, TD, after studies, considers that the proposal will stifle the full utilisation of the carrying capacity of buses. As an illustration, for a "Volvo B9TL 12 metres" (a bus model commonly deployed by FB companies) bus, the statutory total carrying capacity is 137 (including 47 standing passengers). According to Members' proposal, when the average number of passengers carried by the bus in the busiest half hour reaches 103 (including 13 standing passengers) (i.e. only less than two standing passengers per square metre), service frequency should be increased. TD understands that Members aim to provide passengers with a more comfortable travelling environment. However, the proposal will stifle the utilisation of the carrying capacity of buses, resulting in a waste of valuable bus network resources and imposing extra burdens on traffic flow and environment. In addition, there is a general decrease in occupancy rates of bus routes after peak hours. FB companies need to make arrangements for idle buses and captains in non-peak hours, which will create greater financial burdens on FB companies and eventually intensify the fare increase pressure.

When revising the Guidelines, TD has endeavoured to strike a balance between passenger expectations and usage of bus resources. While satisfying the need for enhancing comfort to passengers, it has optimised the use of bus resources and maintained the carrying capacity of buses during the busiest period as far as possible. When the Guidelines come into effect, TD, in collaboration with FB companies, will continue to review the service conditions of all bus routes and pay special attention to longer haul bus routes, with a view to reviewing the need for adjusting vehicle deployment and service frequency.

Yours sincerely,



( Nick CHOI )

for Secretary for Transport and Housing

c.c.:

Commissioner for Transport (Attn.: Miss Amy TSE)