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Panel on Transport
Legislative Council
Legislative Council Complex
1 Legislative Council Road
Central, Hong Kong

Dear Sir/Madam

The fatal minibus accident that killed one driver and injured six passengers and motorists in June underscored the urgent need for the Transport Department to ensure the safety of the millions of Hong Kongers riding minibuses everyday. While the government requires all the minibuses registered after 2004 to install seat belts, older vehicles were exempted as they were not suitable for retrofitting the seatbelts. In our letter to the editor in the South China Morning Post dated 04 AUG 2021, we asked Transport Department how TD ensures the safety of the millions of Hong Kongers riding minibuses everyday. We also urged TD to accelerate the replacement of these dangerous minibuses by limiting the number of hours these vehicles could operate and imposing extra taxation on their owners, and use the seat belt fastening detection system in all the minibuses to enforce the seatbelt requirements for the passengers as soon as possible.

To ensure the safety of the millions of Hong Kongers riding minibuses everyday, we urge the Panel on Transport to follow up on this matter with the Transport Department.

Yours sincerely

Qinyi XUE, student in Law, The University of Hong Kong
Weizhen BIAN, student in Computer Science, Hong Kong Baptist University

Appendix

How to improve minibus safety with more effective seatbelt laws (04 AUG 2021)

The fatal minibus accident that killed one driver and injured six passengers and motorist in June underscored the urgent need for the Transport Department to ensure the safety of the millions of Hong Kongers riding minibuses everyday. While the government requires all the minibuses registered after 2004 to install seat belts, older vehicles were exempted as they were not suitable for retrofitting the seatbelts. According to the Transport Department, 598 minibuses (out of 13.8% of all the vehicles) are still operating on the roads without passenger seatbelts. While financial incentive were introduced to the minibus owners to phase out their older minibuses, the government does not track the number of vehicles replaced and could not assess the effectiveness of the incentive scheme. We urge the government to accelerate the replacement of these dangerous minibuses by limiting the number of hours these vehicles could operate and imposing extra taxation on their owners.

The law requires the minibus drivers and passengers to wear seatbelts or face a fine of \$5,000 and imprisonment for three months. Yet, from 2011 to 2020, the police only instituted a total of 12 362 prosecutions against minibus drivers and passengers for failing to wear seat belts, a negligible number relative to about 1.4 million minibus rides everyday (note: 207,400 for RMB and 1,248,500 for GMB). The Transport Department has recently installed sensors and corresponding wiring for seat occupancy and seat belt fastening detection in a small number of minibuses to enhance passengers' awareness of wearing seat belt. We believe such a seat belt fastening detection system should be used in all the minibuses to enforce the seatbelt requirements for the passengers as soon as possible.

Weizhen Bian, Kowloon Tong and Qinyi Xue, Pok Fu Lam

https://www.scmp.com/comment/opinion/article/3143639/fatal-hong-kong-minibus-accident-wake-call-seat-belt-requirements?module=perpetual_scroll&pgtype=article&campaign=3143639