

LCQ12: Concessionary interchange schemes for green minibus

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Following is a question by the Hon Kam Nai-wai and a written reply by the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Ms Eva Cheng, at the Legislative Council meeting today (February 24):

Question:

At the Traffic and Transport Committee meeting of the Southern District Council on November 23 last year, some operators of green minibus (GMB) indicated that due to the restrictions imposed by the Octopus system on the number of interchange routes, they found it difficult to introduce Octopus concessionary interchange schemes for GMB routes in the Southern District on schedule. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(a) whether it knows the reasons for the aforesaid problem of the Octopus system and whether there are other restrictions imposed on the interchange schemes (for example, a cap on the daily person-times using the schemes);

(b) of the total number of GMB routes offering Octopus concessionary interchange schemes in Hong Kong at present; whether it knows if any GMB operator has aborted the plan to introduce interchangeschemes due to the aforesaid reason in the past three years, and if the Octopus Cards Limited (OCL) has, in preparation for launching bus-bus, G MB-GMB, bus-rail and GMB-rail concessionary interchange schemes, carried out improvement work on its software and hardware so as to increase the number of interchange routes which can be supported by the Octopus system; if so, of the details; and

(c) given that the Government has all along encouraged public transport operators to introduce more concessionary

interchange schemes, whether the Government will discuss with OCL and ask the company to solve the aforesaid problem, so as to tie in with the introduction of various concessionary interchange schemes by GMB operators?

Reply:

President,

At present, there are 56 and 44 GMB routes offering concessionary fares for passengers interchanging with railways or other GMB routes respectively.

According to information obtained by the Transport Department from the GMB trade, in the past three years, only the GMB operator serving the Southern District as mentioned in the question has been unable to expand its concessionary interchange schemes first launched in July 2009 because it is using Octopus card reader/writers of relatively lower information storage capacity. To facilitate its operational development, the operator concerned has been discussing closely with the OCL in order to solve the related problem as soon as possible. In parallel, we have urged the OCL to accord priority to the above case with a view to expediting the implementation of the proposed additional GMB concessionary interchange schemes for the benefit of the public.

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