

LCQ13: Lost and delayed trips of franchised buses

\*\*\*\*\*

Following is a question by the Hon James To Kun-sun and a written reply by the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Ms Eva Cheng, at the Legislative Council meeting today (May 4):

Question:

In recent years, I have received from time to time complaints from members of the public about the worsening situation of scheduled trips of franchised buses being cancelled without notice ("lost trips") or delayed. In this regard, I have repeatedly requested the Transport Department (TD) to follow up the issue, but there is no improvement to the situation. It has been reported that, apart from bus captains taking sick leave, one of the reasons why certain trips were cancelled without notice or delayed is the increase in staff turnover due to the unsatisfactory pay package offered to the bus captains who were recruited in recent years. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(a) whether it knows the respective numbers of complaints received by franchised bus companies, TD and the 1823 Call Centre about lost or delayed bus trips in each of the past three years; among such complaints, the number of substantiated cases; the 10 bus routes with the largest number of complaints and substantiated complaints each year;

(b) whether TD, after receiving complaints about lost or delayed bus trips, sent its staff to the bus stops to check the bus frequency on site; if it did, how long TD usually took to conduct such on-site checks after receiving the complaints; whether TD will take the initiative to send its staff to check the bus frequency of those routes regarding which complaints about lost or delayed trips are particularly numerous; if it will, of the number of such on-site checks conducted in each of the past three years; whether the franchised bus companies will be penalised for lost or delayed trips, and of the current penalties;

(c) whether it knows, in each of the past three years and for each franchised bus company, the respective numbers of full-time and part-time bus captains who joined the company, the turnover rate of its bus captains, the percentage of those with less than two years of service in the total number of bus captains who left the service in

the year, the number of bus captains, the average daily number of trips made for the bus routes it operates, and how the ratio of the number of bus captains to the number of trips made each day varied over the years;

(d) whether it has discussed with the franchised bus companies in the past three years ways to improve bus services and the pay packages of bus captains; and

(e) whether it will introduce intelligent technologies to obtain real-time information about the franchised bus operations, so as to monitor the service and minimise the inconvenience caused to passengers by lost or delayed bus trips?

Reply:

President,

(a) Over the past three years, the patronage of franchised buses was about 1.4 billion passenger journeys each year. The numbers of complaints received by the Transport Department (TD) through the Transport Complaints Unit (TCU) under the Transport Advisory Committee (TAC) involving frequencies of franchised buses in the past three years are as follows:

Year	2008	2009	2010
Number of Complaints (Note)	722	751	1,103

Note: As there is a lot of duplication of complaints lodged with different complaint channels, the figures of TCU under the TAC are provided for reference.

The franchised bus companies do not have the breakdown of complaints involving bus frequencies.

Bus frequencies may be affected by factors such as bus captains' taking leave, sudden mechanical failures of the vehicles, or some external factors (such as road traffic conditions or other traffic incidents) leading to service irregularities. Since road traffic conditions and traffic incidents are beyond the control of the bus companies or are unexpected, the bus companies can only follow up and implement improvement measures for complaints concerning bus frequencies under their control.

(b) Upon receipt of complaints about bus frequencies, TD will first analyse the case,

seek explanations and operational details of the bus routes concerned from the franchised bus companies to ascertain if the bus frequencies follow the timetables of the service schedule issued by TD.

Depending on the circumstances of the complaints, TD would conduct site investigations at the location concerned as and when necessary. These investigations will be prioritised according to the nature of complaints, traffic situation in the district concerned, and the resources available.

The numbers of on-site checks on bus frequencies conducted by TD in the past three years are as follows:

Year	2008	2009	2010
Number of on-site checks	995	884	1,144

TD also conducts large-scale annual surveys to monitor the overall service level of franchised buses.

In case a franchised bus company fails to make improvement or provide reasonable explanations, TD will issue letters to the relevant bus company regarding the complaint, requesting the bus company to maintain a satisfactory and efficient public bus service, and to implement improvement measures within a certain period of time. If the franchised bus companies are unable to make improvements within a certain period of time, TD will issue a warning letter to the relevant bus company.

(c) The table in the annex shows the total number of bus captains at year-end, the number of bus captains joining the companies each year, the turnover rate of bus captains, the average daily number of bus trips made, and the ratio of the number of bus captains to the number of trips made each day of the franchised bus companies in the past three years.

(d) TD often meets with the bus companies and bus captain unions to exchange views on ways to improve bus services. The management of the bus companies also holds discussions with its staff on bus services and remuneration packages of bus captains from time to time.

(e) TD monitors the performance of the bus companies through passenger satisfaction surveys, field surveys and inspections, vehicle examination, review of regular reports

submitted by the bus companies, regular meetings with the bus companies, and collation of public opinions.

The Government will also continue to liaise with the relevant organisations to keep abreast of the latest applications of technology and encourage the franchised bus companies to try out and adopt technological systems that can enhance their services.

Ends/Wednesday, May 4, 2011

Issued at HKT 15:55