

LCQ7: MTR fare concessions offered to full-time students

Following is a question by the Hon Andrew Leung and a written reply by the Acting Secretary for Transport and Housing, Mr Yau Shing-mu, at the Legislative Council meeting today (December 1):

Question:

Recently, I have received complaints on the fare concessions offered by the MTR Corporation Limited (MTR) from members of the public pointing out that MTR has refused to provide any fare concession for full-time post-secondary students aged 26 or above. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (a) whether it knows, in each of the years since 2000, the respective numbers of students aged under 26 and aged 26 or above who had enrolled in full-time post-secondary programmes, with a breakdown by the type of programmes (i.e. sub-degree, undergraduate and master/postgraduate programmes);
- (b) of the difference in age restrictions for eligibility for fare concessions offered to full-time students by MTR and by the Government for using government facilities and services (such as hiring the venues of the Leisure and Cultural Services Department or purchasing tickets for concerts held in its venues, etc.); and
- (c) given that the Government is the largest shareholder in MTR, whether it will consider urging MTR to provide fare concessions for full-time post-secondary students aged 26 or above; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

- (a) According to the information provided by the Education Bureau, the numbers of students aged under 26 and aged 26 or above enrolled in local full-time accredited post-secondary programmes in each academic year since 2001 are tabulated in the appendix.
- (b) According to the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD), it offers

concessions to all full-time students. For the hire of recreation and sports facilities, full-time students can enjoy a half-price concession when they use LCSD land-based recreation and sports facilities (including badminton courts, table tennis tables, tennis courts and holiday camps) during non-peak hours. Moreover, they can also enjoy a half-price concession when using LCSD swimming pool facilities, water sports centres, American pool tables and bowling greens at all times. Regarding the performing arts and cultural programmes, half-price tickets are also available for full-time students in respect of all performing arts and cultural programmes organised by the LCSD. In addition, full-time students are also entitled to a half-price concession for visits to fee-charging museums and participation in regular fee-charging programmes of the museums. There is no age limit for the above-mentioned concessions for full-time students.

(c) At present, students aged between 12 and 25 who are currently enrolled in a full-time course offered by a Government recognised primary, secondary school or post-secondary institution and hold a Personalised Octopus card with "Student Status" can enjoy fare concessions of up to 50% off normal fares on the MTR Island Line, Tung Chung Line, Kwun Tong Line, Tsuen Wan Line, Disneyland Resort Line, Tseung Kwan O Line, East Rail Line (except for journeys to or from Lo Wu and Lok Ma Chau stations and First Class Service), West Rail Line, Ma On Shan Line, Light Rail and MTR Bus. Since October 2008, the student fare concession was extended to the pre-merger Kowloon-Canton Railway network. About 540,000 students are now enjoying the fare concession scheme.

In addition, the Student Financial Assistance Agency (SFAA) has put in place the Student Travel Subsidy Scheme to provide travel subsidies to needy students who receive primary or secondary education or attend a full-time course up to the degree level in an acceptable institution, who reside beyond 10 minutes' walking distance from school and have to travel to school by public transport. The scheme has no age limit on the applicants, who are only required to provide relevant information, pass the means test and meet the above eligibility criteria in order to receive the subsidy. In the 2009/10 school year, the Scheme provided on average a subsidy of over \$2,300 per eligible post-secondary student, thereby easing the students' burden of travel expenses.

In view of the above, the Government has no plan to ask the MTR Corporation Limited to extend the student fare concession scheme to full-time post-secondary students aged 26 or above.

The Government has all along been encouraging public transport operators to provide fare concessions to passengers as far as possible to help reduce their travel expenses, taking into account the operators' operating and financial conditions, overall economic environment and the demand of passengers.

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