

LCQ15: Residents' service

Following is a question by the Dr Hon David Li Kwok-po and a written reply by the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Ms Eva Cheng, at the Legislative Council meeting today (January 26):

Question:

It was widely reported in the media that an accident involving two residents' service coaches in which one person died occurred at a private housing estate in Tung Chung on December 10, 2010. A residents' service is operated under Passenger Service Licence A06 (PSL-A06) granted by the Transport Department (TD), and the licence is normally renewed annually. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(a) of the total number of separate PSL-A06 licences that had been issued in each of the past three years, and among them, the number of those that had been issued to companies or individuals with an operating history of less than two years;

(b) of the average number of coaches operating under a PSL-A06 licence for a single private building or estate at present, as well as the median number, the smallest number and the maximum number;

(c) of the total number of accidents involving coaches operating under a PSL-A06 licence in each of the past three years, and whether licensed operators are under any obligation to report accidents to TD;

(d) of the total number of complaints received by TD concerning coaches operating under PSL-A06 licences in each of the past three years, as well as the number of investigations carried out, whether any action was taken against PSL-A06 service operators as a result of such investigations and the nature of any action taken;

(e) whether TD has any power to refuse to issue a PSL-A06 licence upon receipt of a valid application; if so, of the grounds upon which it may refuse to issue a licence, and the number of times it had refused an application in each of the past three years;

(f) whether TD has any power to carry out any review or inspection of PSL-A06

services, including the drivers and vehicles involved; if so, of the number of reviews or inspections it had carried out in each of the past three years and the nature of those inspections;

(g) of the number of PSL-A06 licences issued with permission for standees in each of the past three years, and whether any special condition had been attached to the issue of such licences;

(h) of the factors TD considers when evaluating whether a particular service should be provided under a PSL-A06 licence or under franchised bus services; and

(i) whether TD will consider reviewing the rules governing the provision of PSL-A06 services with the aim of better regulating the provision of residents' services?

Reply:

President,

For the various parts of the question, our reply is set out below:

(a) The total number of non-franchised buses (NFBs) that were endorsed under Passenger Service Licences (PSLs) - Residents' (A06) service endorsement as at end of 2008, 2009 and 2010 were 1,135, 1,185 and 1,114 respectively. Of these, the number of PSLs that were issued to companies or individuals with an operating history of less than two years is as follows -

Year	Companies with an operating history of less than two years	Individuals with an operating history of less than two years
2008	25	3
2009	12	0
2010	9	9

(b) On average, a single private building or estate is served by 3 NFBs. The median number, the smallest number and the maximum number of NFBs serving a building/estate are 2, 1 and 34 respectively.

(c) At present, a NFB may be granted with more than one service endorsement in

order to provide the operator with greater flexibility to fully utilise his/her vehicles. Against this background, the Transport Department (TD) and the Police do not have any statistics on the number of accidents involving NFBs that were operating A06 service at the time of the accidents.

According to section 56 of the Road Traffic Ordinance (Cap. 374) (the Ordinance), the driver of a vehicle, including a NFB, shall report to the Police an accident involving injury to any person.

(d) During the period from 2008 to 2010, TD received about 200 complaints concerning residents' service per year. TD would conduct inspections to check the service level provided by the operators and issue warnings to the operators if service irregularities are found.

(e) In accordance with section 28 of the Ordinance, in considering any application for a PSL, the Commissioner for Transport shall take into account, in addition to any other matter which he considers relevant to the application -

(i) any policy direction from the Chief Executive with respect to the provision of public transport services;

(ii) any limit in force under section 23 on the number of vehicles that may be registered;

(iii) the need for the services to be provided by the applicant;

(iv) the level of service already provided or planned by other public transport operators;

(v) traffic conditions in the areas and on the roads where the services are to be provided; and

(vi) the standard of service to be provided by the applicant.

The number of A06 service applications rejected by TD in 2008, 2009 and 2010 are 14, 26 and 15 respectively.

(f) To ascertain the level of service provided by the residents' service operators, TD

carries out inspections from time to time. In the past three years, TD carried out, on average, about 900 inspections / surveys per year.

(g) The total number of NFBs with A06 service endorsement with permission for standees as at end 2008, 2009 and 2010 were 129, 167 and 151 respectively. All PSL holders operating A06 service are required to comply with all the conditions that are attached to the PSL and vehicle licence of a NFB.

(h) Franchised buses are major passenger carriers, which act as feeders to railway stations and provide trunk services along main corridors. Franchised buses serve the general public and play a major role in our public transport system. On the other hand, residents' services play a supplementary role in the public transport system. They are introduced to serve passengers of specific housing developments with an aim to relieve heavy demand on regular public transport services primarily during peak hours and to fill the service gaps which cannot be met by regular public transport services.

The general principles that are considered in processing applications for new residents' service are as follows-

(i) the residents' service should facilitate commuters to connect to the nearby railway station or public transport interchange to avoid adding congestion to busy urban districts;

(ii) the residents' service should not pose a significant adverse impact on regular public transport services in the area concerned;

(iii) existing or planned public transport services in the area to be served by the proposed residents' service are inadequate or limited;

(iv) residential developments served by the proposed residents' service are distant from railway stations, public transport interchanges, major franchised bus stops, or Green Minibus stops and use of alternative services will result in an excessive number of interchanges; and

(v) the residents' service will not operate in congested areas or via local busy roads and will not cause traffic congestion.

(i) The operation of residents' service should comply with the PSL conditions,

licensing conditions for a NFB and conditions for operating residents' service. The residents' service also has to operate in accordance with the routing, stopping places, timetable and vehicle allocations as specified in the Schedule of Service attached to the PSL.

If operators of residents' service are found contravening the above, the Commissioner for Transport is empowered under section 31 of the Ordinance to impose sanction through an inquiry process to the operators of residents' service to suspend, cancel or vary the PSL.

The existing regulatory regime in governing the provision of residents' service is considered sufficient. Nonetheless, TD will continue to monitor the operation of residents' service and review the regulatory arrangements as and when necessary.

Ends/Wednesday, January 26, 2011

Issued at HKT 12:47