

LCQ19: Air quality in Public Transport Interchanges

Following is a question by the Hon Kenneth Leung and a written reply by the Acting Secretary for Transport and Housing, Dr Raymond So Wai-man, at the Legislative Council meeting today (May 16):

Question:

The Practice Note on Control of Air Pollution in Semi-confined Public Transport Interchanges, which was issued by the Environmental Protection Department (EPD) in 1998, provides guidelines on aspects such as the air quality, the design required as well as the operation and maintenance of the ventilation systems of semi-confined public transport interchanges (PTIs). Recently, a newspaper reported that the concentrations of two types of air pollutants, namely nitrogen dioxide and fine suspended particulates (i.e. PM2.5) as recorded in several covered PTIs had substantially exceeded the relevant target limits under the Air Quality Guidelines of the World Health Organization. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) of the current total number of covered PTIs in Hong Kong and, in respect of each PTI, (i) the location, (ii) the area, (iii) the number of bus routes which can be accommodated, and (iv) the type of ventilation system installed;
- (2) of the number of complaints about the air quality of covered PTIs received by the authorities in the past five years; the contents of the complaints and the names of the PTIs involved;
- (3) whether it conducted any detailed study in the past five years on ways to improve the related facilities and environment (including air quality or ventilation systems) of covered PTIs; if so, of the details, if not, the reasons for that; and
- (4) given that in the light of the latest development in air quality standards, EPD is liaising with the relevant government departments so as to review the aforesaid guidelines, of the details of such review, and how EPD will improve the air quality of PTIs?

Reply:

President,

My reply to various parts of the Hon Kenneth Leung's question is as follows:

- (1) At present, there are a total of 65 covered public transport interchanges (PTIs) managed by the Transport Department (TD) in Hong Kong to facilitate passengers' interchange between different public transport services. The locations of the covered PTIs managed by the TD, their respective size, the number of bus routes observing the PTIs and the type of ventilation systems

installed are at Annex 1.

(2) From 2014 to April 2018, the TD received a total of 111 complaint cases concerning PTIs' air quality or ventilation systems, involving 37 PTIs (details at Annex 2). The complaint cases were mainly about the insufficient ventilation, air quality, damages and noise nuisance of ventilation systems, etc.

(3)&(4) In respect of the daily operation and management of PTIs, the TD, together with the Electrical and Mechanical Services Department (EMSD), have been monitoring the air quality of the PTIs as well as the operation of the ventilation systems regularly, and have carried out repair and maintenance works as appropriate. Besides, the TD commissions the EMSD to conduct air quality measurements in the covered PTIs managed by the TD approximately every two years. The frequency of measurements would be increased as the actual situation requires. Every air quality measurement covers 24 hours a day, including both the morning and evening peak hours, and collects data about the concentration of carbon monoxide (CO), sulphur dioxide (SO₂) and nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) in the PTIs. Based on the measurement results, the TD will work with the relevant government departments to consider and implement appropriate improvement measures, including extending the operating hours of ventilation systems, increasing the air volume, strengthening the management of switching off idling engines at PTIs and requesting the bus companies to deploy more environmentally friendly models of buses (including Euro IV and V) to operate the routes involved.

As regards the formulation and review of the Practice Note for Professional Persons – Control of Air Pollution in Semi-Confined Public Transport Interchanges (Practice Note), the existing Practice Note sets out the air quality (including CO, NO₂ and SO₂) guidelines for semi-confined PTIs, as well as the design of the PTIs and operation and maintenance of the systems required to meet the air quality guidelines for reference by the relevant professionals. The Environmental Protection Department (EPD) will work with relevant government departments to review the Practice Note. According to the EPD, factors including the actual operation and need of the PTIs as well as the local and overseas short-term air quality standards of similar air pollutants will be taken into consideration when reviewing the Practice Note.

The Government will continue to closely monitor the air quality and the operation of ventilation systems in the PTIs, and examine the causes of the unsatisfactory air quality. Additional measures will be taken based on the actual situation in order to enhance the air quality in the PTIs.