

LCQ20: Public light bus services

Following is a question by the Hon Wilson Or and a written reply by the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Mr Frank Chan Fan, in the Legislative Council today (September 15):

Question:

Public light bus (PLB) services, being a type of public transport services in Hong Kong, are subject to the regulation by the laws of Hong Kong and the Transport Department (TD). In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of (i) the respective numbers of complaints about scheduled PLBs (green minibuses) and non-scheduled PLBs received by the TD, and (ii) the respective numbers of such complaints which were found substantiated after investigation, together with a breakdown by PLB route and the subject matter of the complaints, in each of the past three years; if the relevant statistics are unavailable, of the reasons for that;

(2) of the number of cases in each of the past three years in which the Commissioner for Transport ordered operators of green minibuses to make written representations on violation of conditions of their passenger service licences, together with a breakdown by the licence condition involved;

(3) of the number of prosecutions instituted by invoking those legal provisions applicable exclusively to PLBs, as well as the relevant number of convicted cases, in each of the past three years, together with a breakdown by the provision involved; and

(4) given that some members of the public have criticised some green minibuses for overcharging and operating with a high lost-trip rate, of the practicable regulatory measures that the TD has put in place to ensure the provision of highly effective and quality PLB services by the relevant operators?

Reply:

President,

In consultation with the Transport Department (TD) and the Hong Kong Police Force (HKPF), our reply to the various parts of the Hon Wilson Or's question is as follows:

(1) The number and nature of complaints concerning green minibuses (GMB) and red minibuses (RMB) (Note 1) received by the TD in the past three years are tabulated below:

Year	Number of Complaints Received by TD (Note 2)					
	Adequacy of Service (Note 3)		Standard of Service (Note 4)		General (Note 5)	
	GMB	RMB	GMB	RMB	GMB	RMB
2018	1 334	85	8 471	520	529	82
2019	881	41	7 700	440	500	231
2020	489	31	5 502	365	314	147

(2) and (4) According to Section 27 of the Road Traffic Ordinance (Cap. 374), the Commissioner for Transport may issue passenger service licences (PSL) to authorise the holders to operate green minibus services and, through the terms and Schedule of Service under the PSL, effectively regulate the services provided by GMB operators. On the other hand, operators are obliged to comply with the various operational details as stipulated in the Schedule of Service (including details regarding the route, timetable, fare table, and number of vehicles, etc.), with a view to providing adequate and efficient minibus services to passengers.

In order to effectively monitor the standard of service of GMB and follow up on the relevant complaints, the TD would arrange site visits and on-board inspections from time to time to ensure that the operators provide services in accordance with the Schedule of Service. If any violation of relevant regulations is found during the inspections, such as lost trips and overcharging, the TD will request the concerned GMB operator to conduct follow-up investigation and provide written explanation with relevant information.

The number of cases where the GMB operators were required to provide written explanations regarding their contraventions of PSL conditions from 2018 to 2020 were around 4 900, 4 000 and 2 800 respectively. The TD has not maintained statistics on the relevant breakdown. During the same period, the TD had not revoked any GMB operator's PSL on the ground of non-compliance with PSL conditions.

Depending on the nature of complaints and investigation results, the TD will take follow-up actions including interviewing the operators concerned; reminding them of their obligation to operate in accordance with the Schedule of Service, so as to provide proper and efficient services; and requesting the operators concerned to implement improvement measures within a specified timeframe. If the operators are unable to provide the TD with satisfactory explanation, or fail to show improvement within a specified timeframe, the TD may issue warning to the operators, and may also consider whether approval should be given for renewal of their PSL, and the validity periods of such PSL during the mid-term review taking into account the standard of their services. If the contravention is serious and persistent in nature, the TD may conduct inquiry against such operators pursuant to Section 30 of Cap. 374 and, after considering the inquiry results, consider suspend, cancel, or vary the operators' PSL pursuant to Section 31 of Cap. 374.

(3) The number of prosecutions of various offences concerning public light buses in the past three years are tabulated below:

Offences	2018	2019	2020
Careless driving	581	524	458
Seatbelt-related offences	857	434	237
Speeding	416	390	432
Traffic light-related offences	1 071	1 144	806
Traffic sign-/Road marking-related offences	568	313	264
Illegal parking	3 142	2 074	2 510
Other offences (e.g. pick up/drop off or loading/unloading in restricted zones, hands-free device not used, seatbelt not buckled up, etc.)	1 727	1 185	892
Total	8 362	6 064	5 599

The HKPF has not maintained relevant statistics on convicted cases.

Note 1: GMB operate scheduled services with their routes, fares, vehicle allocation and timetable subject to approval by the TD. RMB are not required to operate on fixed routes or timetable and can set their own fares.

Note 2: Sources of complaints include direct written or e-mail complaints received by TD, as well as complaints referred by the Transport Complaints Unit and the Government's 1823 Call Centre.

Note 3: "Adequacy of service" refers to the carrying capacity, routes, hours of operation and provision of stops, etc.

Note 4: "Standard of service" refers to the regularity of services, driver's performance, condition of the vehicles and passenger services, etc.

Note 5: General complaints include those related to concessionary fare, methods of fare payment, advertisements on the exterior of the vehicles, etc.