

LCQ3: Bus stops

Following is a question by the Hon Tony Tse and a reply by the Acting Secretary for Transport and Housing, Dr Raymond So Wai-man, in the Legislative Council today (July 11):

Question:

According to the Transport Planning and Design Manual, the bus stop spacing in urban areas should be around 400 metres and it may need to be increased to 600 metres in the light of traffic congestions. However, the current bus stop spacing of certain bus routes in urban areas is only 130 to 200 metres, and the frequent pick-up/drop-off of passengers by buses has prolonged the journeys as well as aggravated traffic congestions and air pollution. Besides, some members of the public have criticised that the bus stops are lacking facilities which are friendly to passengers and passers-by. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the bus stops in urban areas with a spacing of less than 300 metres at present, and set out the details, such as the District Council districts in which the bus stops are situated, the bus stop spacing, as well as the names of the franchised bus companies, the bus route numbers and the start and end points of the bus routes concerned; whether the Government will discuss with the franchised bus companies and members of the local communities the consolidation of bus stops that are too close;

(2) of the regulatory measures it has put in place to ensure that a balance is struck among the following considerations in the design of bus stops: the generation of advertising income for franchised bus companies, the provision of a comfortable waiting environment for passengers, and the avoidance of causing obstruction on the pavements; and

(3) given that the Government announced in the 2016 Policy Address that it would allocate \$80 million to subsidize franchised bus companies in installing seats and panels for display of real-time bus arrival information at bus stops, of the latest progress of such work?

Reply:

President,

Currently, around four million passenger trips are carried by franchised buses daily in Hong Kong, accounting for about 31 per cent of the overall public transport patronage. Therefore, the Government has been encouraging franchised bus companies to enhance the bus stop facilities for the convenience of passengers and better waiting environment. My reply to the various parts of the Hon Tony Tse's question is as follows:

(1) Regarding the location of bus stops, the Transport Department (TD) will make reference to its Transport Planning and Design Manual when considering

adding, changing or cancelling any en-route bus stops. According to the Manual, the ideal walking distance between two bus stops in urban area should be within 400 metres, while the distance between en-route bus stops would preferably be 400 to 600 metres.

In adopting the suggestions in the Manual, the TD will also need to take into account a host of factors in the light of the actual circumstances. Such factors include geographical constraints (e.g. whether the proposed bus stop is close to road junctions), road safety (e.g. whether drivers' view will be obstructed and whether vehicular access to nearby buildings will be obstructed during passenger boarding and alighting), the traffic flow in the vicinity, passenger demand, adequacy of space for waiting passengers and traversing pedestrians, etc. To facilitate orderly boarding of passengers, bus routes heading to the same destinations or destinations with close proximity will be arranged to use the same or a nearby en-route bus stop as far as possible. In determining the suitable location of en-route bus stops for individual route or a combination of routes, the TD will also take into account the service frequency and the number of passengers using that particular bus stops.

Given the vast number of en-route bus stops, we have not maintained information on bus stops with a spacing of less than 300 metres across the territory. Nevertheless, as mentioned above, the TD will take into account various factors on a case-by-case basis to determine the location of a bus stop, and the spacing between en-route bus stops will be reduced as actual needs arise. Take the section of King's Road between Island Place and Kam Hong Street as an example. Since the pavement along the eastbound section of the road is relatively narrow to cater for the heavy flow of waiting and interchanging passengers there, two en-route bus stops with a spacing of approximately 140 metres are provided for diverting passengers to ensure the safety of waiting passengers and pedestrians. As for the westbound of the same section of King's Road, two en-route bus stops with a spacing of approximately 150 metres for two daytime routes are provided to meet the needs of students commuting to school in the morning and interchanging passengers.

All in all, when considering adding, changing or cancelling en-route bus stops, the TD will continue to make reference to the suggestions in the Transport Planning and Design Manual, and make corresponding adjustments having regard to the actual traffic conditions, passenger demand and views of the local community so as to provide passengers with safe and convenient franchised bus services.

(2) As regards the design of bus stops, under the current practice, the franchised bus companies will submit new proposed appearances for bus stops and their shelters to the Advisory Committee on the Appearance of Bridges and Associated Structures under the Highways Department for scrutiny. The Committee scrutinises the appearances in the proposals mainly from the aesthetic, visual and greening points of view. When vetting franchised bus companies' applications for erecting bus stops at individual locations, the TD will take into account the Committee's opinion on the appearances of the bus stops, while carefully considering such information as the locations and

sizes of the proposed bus stops, and the numbers of light boxes at the proposed stops. In addition, the TD will examine the potential impact of the proposed bus shelters on pedestrian flow, the sightline of other road users and the operation of nearby shops, and will seek the views of relevant departments.

The primary objective of adding shelters to bus stops is to provide passengers with a more comfortable waiting environment. The light box panel, on the other hand, is an extension of a bus shelter. The panel can be used for displaying bus service details or other information for waiting passengers' reference. In case a proposed bus stop is located in a relatively narrow area which is not suitable for a larger shelter or one with light box panels, or that a proposed bus stop design may cause obstruction to pedestrians, the TD will request the franchised bus company concerned to change the design into more appropriate ones, such as a shorter and narrower shelter or one without light box panels, so as to adapt the bus stop to the specific environment of the pavement concerned.

Franchised bus companies intending to place advertisements on light box panels are required to file an application with the TD and bear the costs of the installation and maintenance services concerned. According to the current regulatory arrangements for franchised bus companies, revenue generated from advertising at bus shelters should be credited to the overall operating revenue of the companies. This will help relieve the pressure of fare increase.

As shown from the above, when the TD processes applications for erecting bus stops from franchised bus companies, it will consider various factors so as to enable that the bus stop designs can cater to the needs of the public and the local community, pedestrian and vehicular flows, road safety, etc., as far as possible.

(3) The Government has provided subsidies to franchised bus companies for installing seats at about 2 600 covered bus stops, and funded the installation of real-time bus arrival information display panels at about 1 300 covered bus stops with electricity supply on a matching basis. It is expected that the installation works will be completed in phases in 2020.

The first phase of seat installation commenced in November last year. As at June 25, 2018, installation was completed at around 600 bus stops. As for the display panels, the first phase installation works commenced in end-March 2018. As at June 25, 2018, around 20 bus stops were installed with display panels. The overall first phase installation works for seats and display panels at bus stops are expected to be completed in 2018, while the remaining installation works will be implemented in two phases for scheduled completion in 2019 and 2020 respectively.