

LCQ4: Government public transport fare concession scheme

Following is a question by the Hon Chan Han-pan and a reply by the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Dr Law Chi-kwong, in the Legislative Council today (July 7):

Question:

The Government announced in January this year that it would further extend the Government Public Transport Fare Concession Scheme for the Elderly and Eligible Persons with Disabilities (commonly known as the \$2 Scheme) to cover red minibuses (RMBs). However, residents' buses are not yet included in the Scheme. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) as some RMB operators have relayed that there are a number of monitoring conditions for joining the \$2 Scheme, including registration of the origin and destination of the routes and the fares, regular submission of audit reports, and signing of agreement with the Transport Department (TD), whether the TD will relax the conditions so as to encourage more RMB operators to join the \$2 Scheme; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(2) given that residents' buses are the major mode of external public land transport for Ma Wan residents, whether the Government will include residents' buses travelling to and from Ma Wan in the \$2 Scheme, so as to alleviate the burden of transport expenses on the elderly and persons with disabilities living in Ma Wan; if so, of the details and timetable; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

The Government announced on June 30 this year that the enhancement and anti-abuse measures under the Government Public Transport Fare Concession Scheme for the Elderly and Eligible Persons with Disabilities (\$2 Scheme) will be launched on February 27 next year. Such measures include lowering the eligible age to 60 on the condition that the new eligible persons aged 60 to 64 must apply for and use the tailor-made Personalised Octopus Card (i.e. the JoyYou Card) to enjoy the \$2 concessionary fare, and extending the \$2 Scheme to red minibuses (RMBs), kaitos and tramways. Like other public transport operators participating in the \$2 Scheme, RMB operators must strictly comply with the Government's monitoring conditions to ensure that public money will not be abused.

My reply to various parts of the Member's question is as follows:

(1) As the fare levels of RMB are currently decided by the operators on their own, RMB operators interested in joining the \$2 Scheme must register with the Transport Department the origin and destination of the routes and fares,

install an Octopus payment system on admitted routes to ensure adherence to pre-set registered fares for calculating reimbursement of differential fares, and submit to the Government on a regular basis assurance and audit reports prepared by an independent auditor. Such monitoring conditions are in line with those imposed on the operators of other public transport modes included in the \$2 Scheme.

(2) The \$2 Scheme is a public transport fare concession scheme and hence its coverage should be confined to public transport. Nevertheless, the Government has not rigidly excluded all residents' services from the \$2 Scheme. If operators of individual routes of residents' services are interested in joining the \$2 Scheme, they are required to prove that their service scope and operation mode actually meet the requirements for "public transport", and they will comply with all the necessary conditions under the \$2 Scheme, including (but not limited to) the monitoring conditions as set out in part (1) of the reply above. Upon implementation of the above enhancement measures as already committed, the Government will consider other recommendations on the condition that the operators concerned can prove that their service scope and operation mode fully comply with all the necessary conditions under the \$2 Scheme.