

## LCQ17: Provision of ancillary facilities for staff of franchised bus companies

Following is a question by the Hon Wu Chi-wai and a written reply by the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Mr Frank Chan Fan, in the Legislative Council today (December 12):

Question:

Regarding the regulator kiosks, rest rooms and toilets provided for use by bus captains and regulators of franchised bus companies (bus companies), will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the current number of bus termini not provided with toilets (such as public toilets provided by the Government or toilets provided by bus companies) therein and within 50 metres therefrom, with a breakdown by District Council (DC) district;

(2) of the number of public transport interchanges (PTIs) currently not provided with toilets and their locations (set out the relevant information by DC district); as the Hong Kong Planning Standards and Guidelines stipulates that essential facilities such as toilets and regulator kiosks should be provided at PTIs, whether the Government will, in its future planning for PTIs, provide such facilities across the board;

(3) given that currently bus companies have to obtain the consent of government departments (such as the Transport Department, the Lands Department and the Highways Department) before installing latrines fitted with a chemical closet fitment for bus captains' use, of (i) the respective numbers of the relevant applications received, approved and rejected by the Government and (ii) the average and longest processing time taken in respect of the approved cases, in each of the past five financial years, as well as the current number of such applications being processed (with a breakdown by name of bus company);

(4) whether it will require that bus termini to be constructed in the future be provided with regulator kiosks, rest rooms and toilets; and

(5) whether the bus companies have to pay the Government nominal rents or market rents for the sites occupied by the aforesaid facilities of the bus termini; if the latter is the case, of the amount of rents paid by each bus company in each of the past five financial years; whether the expenditures concerned are included in the operating costs of the bus companies?

Reply:

President,

My consolidated reply to the Hon Wu Chi-wai's question is as follows:

The Transport Department (TD) and franchised bus companies have been striving to provide an appropriate working environment for the staff of the franchised bus companies, including providing ancillary facilities such as rest rooms and toilets at bus termini and public transport interchanges (PTIs). Depending on the size and locations of the proposed facilities, franchised bus companies will submit applications for the provision of regulator kiosks, staff rest rooms and chemical toilets to the TD, other government departments or private organisations. Since 2017, the TD has set up a task force, comprising representatives from relevant government departments (e.g. Government Property Agency, Lands Department and Housing Department) and franchised bus companies, to monitor the progress of these applications. The TD will continue to follow up and co-ordinate with relevant government departments for processing these applications to facilitate the early provision of these facilities for the convenience of the staff of the franchised bus companies.

As for the newly planned bus termini and PTIs, regulator kiosks, staff rest rooms and toilets are already classified as basic facilities. The Government will arrange for the provision of these basic facilities in the planning of new bus termini and PTIs with a view to creating a better working environment for the staff of the franchised bus companies.

At present, there are 298 bus termini and PTIs across the territory, of which 287 (about 96 per cent) of them are provided with toilets within a walking distance of three minutes (or within the site of the bus termini or PTIs), while the rest are served by toilets located within a walking distance of around four to seven minutes (Note 1). The figures concerned with a breakdown by District Council district are set out at Annex 1.

Notwithstanding the provision of toilets within or near the bus termini and PTIs, the franchised bus companies will still seek to provide chemical toilets where necessary for further convenience of their staff. The number of applications for the provision of chemical toilets processed by the TD in the past five years is set out at Annex 2.

Upon receipt of an application from a franchised bus company, the TD will consult relevant government departments and the local community. The TD has to pursue co-ordination work if there are objections from the local community. Where necessary, the TD will also work with the franchised bus companies to draw up revised proposal for further consultation. Records show that in general the average time taken for the TD to process these applications was about six to seven months. The approval process may take longer for more complicated cases. The longest time required to process a case in the past was about 23 months, and that case was approved in July 2016.

In general, any facilities provided by the franchised bus companies on government land are charged with market rents. The amount of rentals paid by each franchised bus company in the past five years to the Government for the facilities installed at bus termini and PTIs is at Annex 3. Such rentals

constitute part of the operating costs. Nonetheless, franchised bus companies have offered concessionary half fares to elderly passengers through the Elderly Concessionary Fare Scheme (ECFS) since 1993. Under the ECFS, franchised bus companies are exempted from the annual vehicle licence fees and receive reimbursement of rentals paid in respect of government land so as to facilitate their introduction or continuous provision of fare concessions to the elderly (Note 2). In other words, franchised bus companies are reimbursed for the rentals that they paid to the Government (Note 3).

Note 1: The only exception is the bus terminus located at the Aircraft Maintenance Area of the Airport, which is currently used by one bus route (i.e. Citybus route no. S52 plying between Yat Tung Estate, Tung Chung and the Aircraft Maintenance Area of the Airport). No toilet facility is provided in the vicinity of the bus terminus due to security and safety concerns. However, a round trip of the bus route only takes about 22 minutes, and the bus captains can use the toilet facilities at the other terminating point of the route (i.e. Yat Tung Estate, Tung Chung) where necessary. The TD will continue to keep in view the situation of this bus terminus.

Note 2: Under the Government Public Transport Fare Concession Scheme for the Elderly and Eligible Persons with Disabilities (\$2 Scheme) introduced in 2012, franchised bus companies will only receive reimbursement for the difference between the \$2 fare and the concessionary half fare. They still have to absorb any fare revenue forgone arising from the provision of fare concessions for the elderly under the \$2 Scheme (i.e. the difference between full fare and the concessionary half fare)

Note 3: The amount of reimbursement will not exceed the amount shouldered by the franchised bus company in the provision of fare concessions for the elderly.