

# **The Provision of Concessionary Public Transport Fares for Persons with Disabilities**

## **Meeting of Legislative Council on Subcommittee to Study the Transport Needs and Provision of Concessionary Public Transport Fares for Persons with Disabilities on 11 March 2008**

### **Submission from the Equal Opportunities Commission**

#### **Purpose**

This paper is to reiterate the views of the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) in respect of the provision of concessionary public transport fares for persons with disabilities (PWDs).

#### **Current Development**

The issue of providing concessionary fare to PWDs using public transport services has been discussed in the public arena and the Legislative Council for a considerable period of time. The well-being of PWDs has always been EOC's concern and we consider that every possible effort should be made to enhance their social integration.

At the last meeting of this Subcommittee, Members urged for early introduction of the Concessionary Public Transport Fare (CPTF) Scheme without any restrictions, such as restricting the concessions to certain days and hours. Also such provision should not affect Government's funding on other welfare services. Members of PWD groups suggested that CPTF should not be paid out in the form of increasing the amount of Disability Allowance but through modification of the Octopus System.

#### **EOC's stance**

In view of the huge surplus for the current fiscal year, there is growing expectations for the Government to afford CPTF to PWDs. While EOC welcomes the Chief Executive's announcement in December 2007 that the Government had decided to provide concessionary public transport fares to PWDs to help them to integrate into society, we consider that it is equally important, if not more important, for the

Government to continue engaging the corporate sector in assuming corporate social responsibilities (CSR). We cannot think of a better chance nor a better example for the Government to project itself as a role model to other PTOs by exercising its ownership and management rights in the MTRCL to provide CPTF to PWDs. At the same time, the Government should actively consider stipulating the offer of CPTF in the franchise or licence conditions of PTOs. Moreover, there is a global trend that the value of CSR is heightened and universally recognized. Clearly, it is undesirable that implementation of the Scheme is dependent on the financial surplus of the Government each year.

On the operation of the Scheme, we share the views that in order to ensure PWDs can enjoy concessionary fare for every trip on public transport, the scheme should be implemented by modifying the Octopus System similar to which concessionary fares for school children and the elderly are collected. Technical requirements cannot and should not be advanced as a reason against implementation. Such Scheme would better address the genuine traveling needs of individual PWDs and the concerns about under-provision for frequent travelers and over-provision for infrequent users, as well as for the convenience of PWDs.

All in all, the Scheme should be considered from a long term perspective of the community and be pursued without further delay.

**Equal Opportunities Commission**  
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