

Appointment of Operators of Student Service Vehicles

- (1) At present, schools can appoint operators of the following types of student service vehicles to provide student services:
 - (i) School private light bus (SPLB), with service endorsement of School Private Light Bus Service; and
 - (ii) Non-franchised public bus (NFB), with service endorsement of Student Service.

If a student service vehicle is found to have provided unauthorised services, the Transport Department (TD) may conduct an inquiry against the licensee concerned under the Road Traffic Ordinance (Cap. 374). Once the inquiry has established that the licensee has violated the Passenger Service Licence (PSL) conditions, the Commissioner for Transport (the Commissioner) may suspend, cancel or vary the PSL concerned.

- (2) In selecting operators of student service vehicles, it is imperative to ensure that the operators have valid PSLs and their vehicles have valid PSL Certificates (PSLCs) with student service endorsement. Schools can request the operators to provide the PSLs and PSLCs for verification.
- (3) At present, there are around 5 300 vehicles (as at 30 June 2026) in the market approved to provide student services. Operators of these vehicles do not need to submit any further applications to TD and can deploy their vehicles for provision of student services. There are NFBs in the market which do not have endorsement for providing student service. These operators need to apply to TD for the relevant endorsement if they intend to provide student services.
- (4) To implement the Transport Advisory Committee's recommendations on improving the regulation of non-franchised bus operators, TD will strictly review all applications for additional vehicles. This applies to both existing operators expanding their fleets and new operators applying for new PSLs and vehicles, ensuring that there is a genuine need for the service. Besides, these applicants are required to source vehicles from the existing NFB fleet in the market for a period of 6 months in the first instance. As a result, the processing time for applications involving additional vehicles to the existing NFB fleet

would be longer, and those failing to provide justifications would be rejected.

- (5) To tie in with the above measures, all schools are advised to take the following actions as appropriate:
- (i) to arrange for early selection of school bus service operators so as to identify suitable prospective operators with adequate number of student service vehicles (NFBs and/or SPLBs) to provide student services.
 - (ii) to appoint existing operators with sufficient student service vehicles to provide student services as far as possible.
 - (iii) to provide the prospective operators with all the necessary and required supporting documents to facilitate the processing of their applications.

To allow greater flexibility for NFB operators in deploying vehicles for provision of student service, TD put forward in July 2012 a new measure that upon request by the operators, student service endorsement would be granted to all eligible vehicles for serving as spare vehicles so as to meet the operational need and public demand. All PSL holders were notified in writing of the application procedures.

- (6) To facilitate transport arrangement for students, to alleviate traffic congestion caused by student service vehicles and to achieve better utilization of vehicle resources, TD encourages school principals/management to consider adjusting the school hours and/or adopting flexible school hours arrangements as far as practicable under the principle that the education of students should always come first.
- (7) In the event that appointed operators of student services would need to pick up or set down students at some no-stopping restricted zones and/or to enter into some prohibited zones or bus lanes for providing the services, schools or the operators concerned may apply to TD for permits seeking exemption from such restrictions. TD will consider each and every application on its own merits. Having regard to all relevant factors, the Commissioner may issue such a permit subject to such condition and period as the Commissioner may think fit or reject the application. The application form (TD606) and guidance notes can be downloaded from TD website or obtained from the regional offices of TD. The duly completed application form with provision of

relevant supporting documents (including supporting letters issued by the schools) and in compliance with items in the guidance notes should be submitted to TD at least 15 working days prior to commencement of the student services to be provided in accordance with the requirements as stated in the guidance notes either via online application platform, in person, by post or by fax. In case of late applications or failure to provide the required supporting documents, the applicants may not be able to obtain the permits before commencement of the new school term. For further enquiries, the applicants may contact the respective regional offices of TD. Their enquiry phone numbers are 2829 5814 (Hong Kong Regional Office), 2399 2471 (Kowloon Regional Office) and 2399 2226 (New Territories Regional Office).

- (8) As stipulated in the PSL conditions, student service vehicles for kindergarten or primary students shall be subject to the provision of escort while the service is in operation. As many schools currently organize various extra-curricular activities, students service vehicles need to operate across multiple time slots to transport students home, which increases the difficulty for operators to deploy escort for each trip. In view of this, schools and parent-teacher associations should work in collaboration with operators to agree on several fixed time slots for picking up students. This would not only facilitate operators to comply with the PSL conditions on provision of escort, but also ensure student safety while riding on student service vehicles.
- (9) The Road Traffic (Construction and Maintenance of Vehicles) Regulations (Cap. 374A) stipulates that in every student service vehicle registered on or after 1 May 2009, the vehicle must be equipped with “safer seats”. For details, please refer to “Requirements for Passenger Seats in Student Service Vehicles” at **Annex**. In addition, all passenger seats on student service vehicles **first registered** on or after 25 January 2026 must be fitted with seat belts. From the same day, passengers must wear seat belts if fitted. Seat belts on passenger seats must observe the requirements in Schedule 2 of the Road Traffic (Safety Equipment) Regulations (Cap. 374F). Operators of student service vehicles may select and install suitable and approved seat belts (i.e. body restraining seat belt or lap belt) according to their operation need. TD encourages the schools to consider preferably selecting the operators which can provide student service vehicles fitted with “safer seats” and seat belts for enhancing the protection to students. In addition, all student service vehicles must equip seat belts and safer

seats on all passenger seats before 31 December 2028. From that day onwards, vehicles failing to meet such requirement will no longer be permitted to provide student services. When approving student service operators for the 2028/29 academic year and beyond, schools should pay attention to whether the operators are able to comply with the aforementioned legislative requirements.

- (10) If you have any enquiries, please contact the Public Vehicles Unit of TD at 2804 2574 (for NFB matters) or 2804 2263 (for SPLB matters).

Transport Department
July 2026

(English Translation)

Requirements for Passenger Seats in Student Service Vehicles **(Generally Known as “Safer Seats”)**

According to the Road Traffic (Construction and Maintenance of Vehicles) Regulations (Cap. 374A), every student service vehicle registered **on or after 1 May 2009** must be equipped with “safer seats”. In addition, all passenger seats on student service vehicles first registered **on or after 25 January 2026** must be fitted with seat belts. Seat belts on passenger seats should observe the requirements in Schedule 2 of the Road Traffic (Safety Equipment) Regulations (Cap. 374F). Operators of student service vehicles may select and install suitable and approved seat belts (i.e. body restraining seat belt or lap belt) according to their operation need. In addition, all student service vehicles must equip seat belts and safer seats on all passenger seats **before 31 December 2028**. From that day onwards, vehicles failing to meet such requirements will no longer be permitted to provide student services.

Safer seats are strong and closely spaced, with high and energy-absorbing backs, which can reduce the risk of students being thrown out of their seats and reduce the degree of injury in case of collisions. Overseas research proves that the use of safer seats is effective in protecting students on student service vehicles. Compared with seat belts, safer seats offer protection to passengers without requiring any action, thus they are suitable to be used on student service vehicles.

Definition of Student Service Vehicles

- (1) a public bus authorised for providing student service **(A03)** as specified in section 4(3)(d) of the Public Bus Ordinance (Cap. 230);
- (2) a private bus authorized for providing student service **(B01)** as specified in section 27(5)(a) of the Road Traffic Ordinance (Cap. 374); and
- (3) a school private light bus.

Standards of the Passenger Seats

- seats, barriers and their anchorage shall conform to the requirements of any specification or standard specified in the legislation;
- seat backs, barriers and controlled surface shall be made of impact energy absorption material that conforms to the requirements of any specification or standards specified in the legislation;
- no folding table or folding table or folding accessories shall be installed on any controlled surface;
- seats and restraining barriers shall be made of fire resistant material that conforms to the requirements of any specification or standard specified in the legislation;
- every seat shall be forward-facing; and
- space of the passenger seat and the height of seat back should meet the requirement specified in the legislation.

Notes to Applicants for Provision of Student Service

- Any student service vehicle which is registered on or after 1 May 2009 must be fitted with passenger seats of the standard as stipulated in the Road Traffic (Construction and Maintenance of Vehicles) Regulations (Cap. 374A).
- Any student service vehicle first registered on or after 25 January 2026 must be fitted with seat belts for all passenger seats as required under the legislation.
- All student service vehicles must equip seat belts and safer seats on all passenger seats before 31 December 2028.
- Approval will NOT be given for issuance of PSL or student service endorsement to those vehicles which are not in compliance with the legislative requirements on passenger seats and/or seat belts.

Enquiries

For requirements of passenger seats details, please contact Vehicle Safety and Standards Sub-Division of TD by phone:

Bus Technology Division

For examination of buses

- Tel. no.: **3961 0307**

Vehicle Safety and Standards Division (Vehicle Examination Centre)

For examination of school private light buses - Tel. no.: **2759 7573**

For application details, please contact Public Vehicles Unit of TD by phone or fax:

Public Vehicles Unit

Non-franchised Public Bus - Tel. no.: **2804 2574**

Private Bus - Tel. no.: **2804 2450**

School Private Light Bus - Tel. no.: **2804 2263**

Fax. no. - **2865 1227**