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\$375m plan for better buses

By Franz Leung

CHINA Motor Bus is proposing an ambitious \$375 million, five-year plan to revamp the quality of its bus services on Hongkong Island.

The company plans to spend \$75 million a year buying 50 air-conditioned buses.

The proposal was given to the Transport Department several weeks ago and is still awaiting approval.

CMB plans to overhaul its services in the Southern District with possible routes from Central to Stanley, Chung Hom Kok, Wa Fu, Ap Lei Chau and Lei Tung.

The company has been criticised for providing an inadequate service in the area.

It is also facing stiff competition from rival company Citybus.

Apart from the five-year plan, CMB also plans this year to replace 28 old double-decker buses with new, standard double-decker buses.

CMB has been warned by the Government to shape up within a year or risk losing its franchise.

The company has already started to improve its Southern District services.

Air conditioned buses

will run from tomorrow on the 504 service between the Southern District and Wan Chai pier.

The new route will run with six vehicles at intervals of 12 minutes. The fare will be \$3.50.

The route is in the same area where the company has lost almost one-third of its passengers to Citybus.

That company introduced air-conditioned services to three housing estates in February for a \$4 fare.

CMB's traffic manager, James Sykes, said the company yesterday received Transport Department approval for the 504 route.

He said the new route was not to compete with Citybus, but was an improvement on CMB's service to the district.

The new route is the second air-conditioned bus route introduced by the company.

In July, air-conditioned buses were introduced on the 575 route between Chi Fu to Admiralty.

A Citybus source said the company would buy up to 100 air-conditioned buses a year if it was granted a franchise.

Citybus assistant general manager, Belinda Ma, said the company did not treat CMB's competition as a threat.