

LETTERHEAD OF THE HONG KONG INSTITUTION OF ENGINEERS

Your ref: CB/PL/TP+EA

23 January 2001

By Fax: 2121 0420

Ms Alice Au
for Clerk to Panel on Transport
Legislative Council
Legislative Council Building
8 Jackson Road
Central
Hong Kong

Dear Ms Au

**LegCo Panel on Environmental Affairs and LegCo Panel on Transport
- Measures to Address Noise Impact of Existing Roads**

Thank you for your letter dated 3 January 2001 to me inviting the Institution to send representatives to attend the meeting on 7 February 2001 and to submit comments on the captioned subject. Comments from the Institution are submitted as follows for the LegCo Panels' consideration.

- (1) Hong Kong needs a quieter environment. The new policy to address traffic noise from existing roads is supported. However, it is understood that only 29 existing road sections out of several hundred "noisy roads" have the potential to be retrofitted with noise barriers or enclosures, and 72 road sections are possible candidates to be resurfaced with new low-noise materials. Priority should be given to roads with traffic noise affecting hospitals and schools. We propose that higher priority should be accorded to the 36 roads that meet the requirements for low noise surfacing, while leaving the remaining 36 roads that do not meet the requirement at a lower priority.
- (2) Residents facing other roads will continue to be exposed to high levels of traffic noise until the old buildings are redeveloped. The Brief mentioned about 10 years to install noise barriers at 29 roads. The HKIE is concerned about the time it will take to mitigate all 655 noisy roads and the cost the taxpayers will have to foot to mitigate the noise.
- (3) Given the close proximity of many high-rise buildings to busy roadways, and the need to comply with the adopted noise limit, traditional noise barriers, i.e. plain barriers, cantilevered barriers, partial enclosures, etc. may not be adequate. We urge the government to consider more innovative designs of noise barriers in order to minimize compartmentalization of pedestrians, and maintain adequate air quality at

the pedestrian level. Aesthetically, the barriers should be pleasing and be able to blend in with the urban fabric.

- (4) We support the use of traffic management for roads where no practical engineering solutions are available. On the other hand, we do not support the use of full enclosures as the ultimate solution for many "difficult" noise problems, since we may be creating an air quality problem for those living close to the exhaust ends or portals.
- (5) While it is impractical to retrofit or resurface most of the existing roads, the Government is urged to actively promote the use of mass transit or electric vehicles as a means of reducing traffic noise. At present, competition for passengers between bus companies, public light buses (PLB) and MTRC has greatly increased the number of "partly filled" and "chilly" double-decker buses and PLB on the roads, and therefore more road traffic noise, and vehicle fumes. It is important not to allow any environmental benefits from the use of ultra-low sulphur fuel or particle traps on buses to be eroded simply by the increasing number of vehicles.
- (6) The Government should consider various punitive or incentive measures to force drivers to reduce car usage. Possibilities are assigning more roads during busy hours for pedestrians' use, and providing alternative and equally convenient modes of transportation.
- (7) Reducing road traffic through encouraging walking and cycling as well as increased use of public transport, especially railway, would certainly have an impact on the quality of our urban life. It is now a trend and there seem to be clear directives though they may not be as consistent as we would expect. We urge the Government to take every opportunity to reduce road traffic and thus to alleviate noise problems through urban restructuring, innovative noise planning and to implement measures to reduce traffic in new development in both the metropolitan areas and the New Territories. For example, innovative noise planning concept can be incorporated in the urban planning, e.g. use of elevated decks for pedestrians, building podiums, fully air-conditioned commercial buildings, industrial building etc. to serve as functional noise barriers for noise sensitive buildings behind.

Thank you for your kind attention.

Yours sincerely

Ir Dr John Luk
President

cc : Ir Dr H F Chan
Ir C C Chan