

立法會

Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(1)2214/00-01
(These minutes have been seen
by the Administration and
cleared with the Chairman)

Ref : CB1/PL/TP/1

Legislative Council Panel on Transport

**Minutes of meeting held on
Friday, 13 July 2001, at 9:00 am
in Conference Room A of the Legislative Council Building**

Members present : Hon Mrs Miriam LAU Kin-yee, JP (Chairman)
Hon Abraham SHEK Lai-him, JP (Deputy Chairman)
Hon David CHU Yu-lin, JP
Ir Dr Hon Raymond HO Chung-tai, JP
Hon CHAN Kwok-keung
Hon LAU Chin-shek, JP
Hon LAU Kong-wah
Hon Andrew CHENG Kar-foo
Hon TAM Yiu-chung, GBS, JP
Dr Hon TANG Siu-tong, JP
Hon Tommy CHEUNG Yu-yan, JP
Hon LAU Ping-cheung

Non-Panel members : Hon Cyd HO Sau-lan
attending Dr Hon YEUNG Sum
Hon Emily LAU Wai-hing, JP
Hon IP Kwok-him, JP

Members absent : Hon Albert HO Chun-yan
Hon Mrs Selina CHOW LIANG Shuk-yee, JP
Hon Andrew WONG Wang-fat, JP
Hon Albert CHAN Wai-yip
Hon WONG Sing-chi

**Public officers
attending**

: Agenda Item III

Transport Bureau

Mr Arthur HO
Deputy Secretary for Transport (2)

Mr Patrick HO
Principal Assistant Secretary for Transport (1)

Transport Department

Mrs Dorothy CHAN
Acting Commissioner for Transport

Ms Zina WONG
Assistant Commissioner for Transport/Buses & Railways

Mr Don HO
Principal Transport Officer/Urban

Agenda Item IV

Transport Bureau

Mr Paul TANG
Deputy Secretary for Transport (1)

Ms Shirley LAM
Principal Assistant Secretary for Transport (5)

Transport Department

Mr Tony SO
Chief Engineer

Highways Department

Mr Norman MAK
Acting Deputy Project Manager,
Major Works Project Management Office

Mr Arun SHAH
Chief Engineer,
Major Works Project Management Office

Clerk in attendance : Mr Andy LAU
Chief Assistant Secretary (1)2

Staff in attendance : Ms Alice AU
Senior Assistant Secretary (1)5

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I Confirmation of minutes and matters arising

- (LC Paper No. CB(1)1687/00-01 - Minutes of meeting held on 30 March 2001;
LC Paper No. CB(1)1688/00-01(01) - List of outstanding items for discussion; and
LC Paper No. CB(1)1688/00-01(02) - List of follow-up actions)

The minutes of meeting held on 30 March 2001 were confirmed.

II Information papers issued since last meeting

- (LC Paper No. CB(1)1688/00-01(03) - Central Kowloon Route; and
LC Paper No. CB(1)1718/00-01 - Listing of RoadShow Holdings Ltd
- Implications on KMB (1933) Ltd)

2. Members noted the above information papers issued since last meeting. At the request of Mr CHENG Kar-foo, members agreed to include the matter on "Listing of RoadShow Holdings Ltd" in the Panel's list of outstanding items for discussion.

3. Members also noted that an information paper on "Application for Fare Increase by the "Star" Ferry Company Limited" was tabled at the meeting and subsequently issued to members vide LC Paper No. CB(1) 1779/00-01(01). Members agreed that the matter would be followed up by the Panel in due course.

III Measures to enhance the efficiency of bus service

- (LC Paper No. CB(1)1688/00-01(04) - Information paper provided by the Administration)

4. At the invitation of the Chairman, the Assistant Commissioner for Transport/Buses & Railways (AC for T/B&R) briefly introduced the various measures which the Administration had been taking to enhance the efficiency of franchised bus service as set out in LC Paper No. CB(1)1688/00-01(04).

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Promoting competition among bus operators

5. Mr CHENG Kar-foo observed that the problem of unsatisfactory service for existing routes had not been addressed in the paper. He considered that more should be done by the Government to enhance the efficiency of franchised bus services in this area. Mr LAU Chin-shek also referred to complaints from the Tai Po and Northern District Councils about inadequate external bus services and asked whether the Administration would seriously consider allowing franchised bus operators to compete for the operation of existing routes.

6. Mr Abraham SHEK remarked that as a result of competition between the two existing operators, the franchised bus operation on Hong Kong Island was successful. However, the situation was different for bus services in Kowloon and the New Territories (NT) which were essentially provided by one operator only. In order to promote competition among different operators and provide choices for the public, he suggested that efforts should be made by the Government to open up the market both in terms of operation of individual routes and service provision in peak hours. In this respect, he considered that the Administration should provide members with information about those routes in Kowloon and the NT which were not providing a satisfactory service.

7. Noting members' views and suggestions, the Acting Commissioner for Transport (C for T(Atg.)) explained that it was the Government's policy to award the operating right of new routes on a package basis through an operator selection process whenever adequate demand was generated in new development areas with substantial population size. Apart from maintaining the efficient use of resources, it would also ensure a reasonable level of fare. Although the Government currently had no plan for an operator selection exercise for Tai Po and the North Districts where there were no plans for new networks of bus routes, these places were served by a variety of transport modes including rail, buses and minibuses. In addition, improvement measures had also been proposed by the Kowloon Motor Bus Company (1933) Limited under its route development programme.

8. C for T(Atg.) further elaborated on the existing mechanism in place to monitor the performance of franchised bus operators. She said that Transport Department (TD) would also encourage the bus companies to consider new ways to improve their service and meet the needs of passengers. Recently, the bus companies were encouraged to discuss the possibility of implementing interchange programmes with the two railway corporations. C for T(Atg.) added that it might not be appropriate to determine the satisfaction level of service provided solely on the basis of complaints received against individual bus routes, but TD would closely monitor the performance of each operator.

9. Mr CHENG however pointed out that past experience had shown that monitoring was not an effective solution to the problem cited by members. He considered that a major change was urgently required to meet the rising expectation

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of passengers. He thus called on the Administration to take more concrete actions to introduce competition to the franchised bus market by allowing other operators to compete for the operation of existing routes if the incumbent operator failed to provide a satisfactory service. In this connection, Mr CHENG requested the Administration to critically evaluate the performance level of individual bus routes and provide relevant information to members for follow-up. At the Chairman's suggestion, members agreed that the Administration should be requested to provide information in writing to the Panel on its mechanism for reviewing the performance level of individual bus routes.

Future development of franchised bus services

10. Mr LAU Chin-shek noted the Administration's assessment in paragraph 15 (d) of the paper that there would be an increase in the demand for feeder services to railway stations while the need for bus service which duplicated the new railways would decrease. In this respect, he asked whether it was the Government's policy to disallow competition between railways and franchised bus service in parallel routes. He was concerned that given the railway corporations' autonomy over fares, public interests would be undermined if passengers did not have other choices of public transport.

11. In response, the Deputy Secretary for Transport (2) (DS for T(2)) stressed that while railways would form the backbone of Hong Kong's transport system under the Government's current strategy, it would be equally important to ensure that reasonable choices were provided to the passengers and there was healthy competition in the market. Within this framework, franchised buses would continue to be an important public transport mode particularly in areas not conveniently served by railways and to feed passengers to the railways.

12. Ir Dr Raymond HO was concerned about the changing role of franchised bus services before and after the completion of railway projects, such as the impending Tseung Kwan O Extension and West Rail. He asked whether the Administration had studied the issues involved so that early arrangements could be made to ensure proper co-ordination between these two modes of public transport.

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13. AC for T/B&R replied that relevant studies would be conducted by TD to assess the changing demand of bus services brought about by the commissioning of new railways. Suitable service adjustments would be made where necessary under the relevant route development programmes in consultation with the franchisees, taking into account population build-up in the areas concerned and the healthy development of the bus companies. At the request of the Chairman, the Administration undertook to brief the Panel in due course on the relevant arrangements to be made on the provision of franchised bus services in the areas before the operation of West Rail.

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14. Mr TAM Yiu-chung referred to the grave concerns raised by the public light bus (PLB) trade that if franchised buses were to take on an enhanced role in providing feeder services, the viability of their operation would be directly affected. In this connection, he considered that the Administration should have a clear policy regarding the respective roles of PLBs and franchised buses in the public transport hierarchy. The Chairman advised that the Panel would follow-up on the matter pending the completion of the Administration's on-going review about the role and functions of PLBs.

Route rationalization measures

15. Citing the increasing population of Tin Shui Wai as an example, Mr TAM Yiu-chung was concerned that the provision of public transport services could not catch up with the pace of new town developments. The situation was particularly worse in the morning peak resulting in many complaints from the local residents. Hence, greater effort should be made by the Administration to improve the situation. In particular, he cautioned the Government to take into account the inconvenience caused by route amalgamation as the circuitous routing would mean longer travelling time for passengers.

16. In response, C for T(Atg.) advised that TD would take into account the transport needs of growing population in new development areas under the annual bus route development programme. In order to ascertain the adequacy of bus services, surveys would be conducted at peak times.

17. In reply to Mr TAM's follow-up question, C for T(Atg.) said that the Government had not deliberately limited the number of buses servicing the area in anticipation of curtailed services after the commissioning of West Rail. However, bus rationalization measures would be implemented where appropriate to enhance the efficiency of franchised bus service.

18. Referring to paragraph 13 of the paper, Dr TANG Siu-tong sought elaboration on the objections raised by relevant District Councils (DCs) against the route rationalization proposals and enquired about the measures to be taken to resolve such differences. In response, AC for T/B&R explained that during consultations with the relevant DCs on route rationalization proposals, objections might sometimes be raised by the DCs on account of increased fare or the inconvenience caused to the affected passengers, etc. In these cases, TD would continue to hold discussions with the DCs and the bus operators to work out a mutually-acceptable alternative arrangement. If necessary, the proposals would be revised to take into account the concerns raised by the DCs. At the request of Dr TANG, AC for T/B&R agreed to provide the revised schedule of Route 69X after frequency adjustment to members for information.

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19. Miss Emily LAU reiterated her belief that the transport needs of the people should be met in an environmentally-acceptable manner and thus, she expressed

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support for the principles outlined in paragraph 15 of the paper as well as the implementation of bus-bus interchange (BBI) schemes. She considered that in order to gain the support of the public and the DCs for bus rationalization and BBI schemes, greater emphasis should be placed on the environmental benefits to be achieved through such schemes. The papers to be provided for DC discussion should also be presented accordingly. In this connection, she also drew the Administration's attention to the motion passed by the Legislative Council supporting the development of an environmentally-friendly transport system in Hong Kong.

20. In reply, DS for T(2) stressed that it was the Government's policy objective to provide a transport system to meet the needs of the community in accordance with the principle of sustainable development. While acknowledging that different views might emerge at the district level, the Government would try its best to come up with a solution that was acceptable to all parties concerned. He also called on the continuous support from members in this area of work so that more positive results would be achieved. To supplement, AC for T/B&R explained that when consulting views of the public and the DCs, the Administration would present all relevant information about the traffic and environmental impacts of such schemes.

Admin. 21. Miss LAU suggested that the Secretary for the Environment and Food should be requested to send officials responsible for environmental protection to attend meetings with the DCs to explain the rationalization proposals from the perspective of improvement to the environment. The Administration noted the member's suggestion and would follow up internally and revert back to the Panel on the Government's representation at DC meetings when route rationalization proposals were discussed; and to provide samples of relevant discussion papers and the minutes of DC meetings.

BBI schemes

22. Mr LAU Kong-wah pointed out that while route rationalization proposals might meet with some resistance in the district level, BBI schemes were generally welcomed by the passengers as they could enjoy certain fare concessions. He asked whether the Government would allow bus companies to give more discounts to passengers under BBI schemes. Mr LAU also considered that BBI schemes should extend beyond major transport interchanges such as tunnel toll plaza. With the use of Octopus card, different fares could be charged for individual sections of a bus route. Passengers could then freely interchange between routes operated by the same franchisee and eventually, between services provided by different operators. Concurring with this view, Mr Abraham SHEK pointed out that such an arrangement was technically feasible if two Octopus card readers were provided on each bus.

23. C for T(Atg.) responded that the success of BBI schemes would also largely depend on the location for interchange. As BBI schemes had proven to be more popular at major transport interchanges, priority was given to their implementation at such locations. While noting members' views in the matter, she emphasized that in

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considering the introduction of BBI schemes, it would be most important to ensure that real gains were achieved in terms of increased operational efficiency, efficient use of resources and reduced congestion. Moreover, a balance should be maintained so that existing services provided by other transport operators such as taxis and PLBs would not be adversely affected by BBI schemes.

24. AC for T/B&R also said that where possible, BBI schemes would be introduced to complement with route rationalization proposals so as to minimize the inconvenience caused to the passengers. The Government would support the offer of concessions by bus operators to promote BBI schemes. She further explained that unlike the Mass Transit Railway which was a closed system for entry/exit of passengers, there would be technical feasibility issues to be addressed to charge sectional bus fares in the way suggested by some members. One should also bear in mind that if an additional Octopus card reader was installed, passenger flow might be impeded.

25. Unconvinced by the explanation given, Mr LAU opined that the Administration should adopt an open attitude in this matter and consider his suggestion from a public service perspective rather than from the franchisees' point of view. He thus strongly requested the Government to extend the scope of BBI schemes as a matter of priority.

26. Referring to some views expressed by bus companies that a long time was taken for TD to approve their applications for BBI schemes, Mr LAU Chin-shek sought information on how many applications were being processed by TD, and how many applications had been rejected so far and why. In response, AC for T/B&R undertook to provide more detailed information after the meeting.

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Service improvements

27. Mr LAU Chin-shek pointed out that as the bus companies converted their fleet to air-conditioned buses, fares would be increased indirectly while depriving the passengers' choice. Given the impact on the people's livelihood, he considered that the original fares for non-air-conditioned services should be maintained after the bus companies had fully converted their bus fleet. In reply, AC for T/B&R explained that the replacement of older buses was planned under the bus route development programmes and the views of the DCs would be consulted and taken into account before finalizing these programmes. In view of Hong Kong's climatic conditions and in order to meet passengers' expectations for air-conditioned services, all new buses acquired by bus companies would be equipped with ventilation facilities. However, she stressed that the replacement process would take place progressively.

28. Ir Dr Raymond HO considered that the Government should encourage bus operators to make use of new technology, such as by touch screen monitors, to disseminate more information about bus route/service at major bus stops. AC for T/B&R replied that such programmes were being developed and tested by the bus

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companies. Moreover, it was the Government's intention to establish a central database on all public transport services under the Transport Information System which would form part of the Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS). The Chairman however pointed out that before the implementation of ITS, the Administration should ensure that different bus companies would co-operate and develop a single system in the near future to facilitate the passengers. Noting the members' suggestions, C for T(Atg.) agreed to discuss the matter further with the bus operators.

29. Mr LAU Ping-cheung reiterated his concerns about the air quality at existing covered public transport interchanges (PTIs), especially the two PTIs at the Tsuen Wan MTR station and the Exchange Square in Central. AC for T/B&R advised that with the expert advice of the Environmental Protection Department, a series of improvement programmes had been planned to upgrade the ventilation plants in covered PTIs where conditions were unsatisfactory. She agreed to provide supplementary information about the two PTIs after the meeting.

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IV Route 7

- (LC Paper No. CB(1)1688/00-01(05) - Information paper provided by the Administration;
- LC Paper No. CB(1)1717/00-01(01) - Submission from Save Our Shorelines Society dated 15 June 2001;
- LC Paper No. CB(1)1717/00-01(02) - Submission from Save Our Shorelines Society dated 5 July 2001; and
- LC Paper No. CB(1)1717/00-01(03) - Submission from Southern District Council)

The Chairman drew members' attention to the written submissions from Save Our Shorelines Society (LC Paper Nos. CB(1)1717/00-01(01) and (02)) and Southern District Council (SDC) (LC Paper No. CB(1)1717/00-01(03)).

31. The Deputy Secretary for Transport (1) (DS for T(1)) briefed members on the latest position of the Route 7 project as set out in LC Paper No. CB(1)1688/00-01(05). He advised that according to the results of the Strategic Highway Project Review on the Route 7 project, the need for a new road link between Kennedy Town and Pok Fu Lam by 2010 was confirmed. This would serve as an alternative link between the two places so as to relieve a number of critical junctions along the existing Pok Fu Lam Road between Pok Fu Lam and Kennedy Town. These critical junctions were expected to become over-saturated in 2011 causing congestion to Pok Fu Lam Road.

32. DS for T(1) further said that there would not be a clear need to extend the road link further to Aberdeen at this stage. The traffic situation at Pok Fu Lam Road in 2010 would be similar under the two scenarios, namely, the provision of a new alternative road link between Kennedy Town and Pok Fu Lam or the provision of a

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road link all the way from Kennedy Town to Aberdeen. The Administration had therefore concluded that it was more urgent and cost-effective to construct the road link between Kennedy Town and Pok Fu Lam to serve as an alternative, while the extension from Pok Fu Lam to Aberdeen would be considered only when there were further developments in the Southern District.

33. DS for T(1) added that the review results had also indicated that a dual two-lane configuration would be able to meet the traffic needs. Given the above changes, the Route 7 project would be renamed to "Road Link between Kennedy Town and Pok Fu Lam". The target completion date was 2010.

34. The views and concerns expressed by members on the revised Route 7 proposal were summarized below.

Sustainable development

35. Miss Emily LAU considered that transport infrastructure should be provided in a manner conducive to the sustainable development of Hong Kong, and she was disappointed that no officials responsible for environmental protection was present at the meeting to explain the Administration's latest proposal from that perspective. Expressing general support for the construction of railways to meet the transport need of local residents and new developments, Miss LAU queried whether the proposed road link was compatible with the principle of sustainable development and the rail-based strategy advocated by the Government.

36. Miss Cyd HO did not support the construction of Route 7. Instead, she opined that a railway system should be built to serve the area. In this connection, she was dissatisfied that the Administration had failed to provide all relevant information to members for consideration. In the absence of such critical information as population forecasts, projected traffic growth and anticipated rail patronage, it would be very difficult for members to evaluate the desirability and viability of the rail option.

37. Mr TAM Yiu-chung remarked that the principle of sustainable development should be put in proper context and railway development was not the only solution available. While considering that a railway system might not be suitable for the Southern District, he considered that the Administration should have more definite planning for the development of transport infrastructure in the area. Hence, he urged the Administration to carefully re-consider its proposal from that perspective so as to determine whether a dual two-lane or three-lane road link should be built and whether a railway system was indeed desirable.

38. While stating that the Southern District could benefit from a railway system, Mr IP Kwok-him pointed out that its implementation would take much longer. Thus, it would not help address the dire need of the local residents for an alternative external traffic link.

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39. Ir Dr Raymond HO said that he could not agree with the view that railway construction should replace all road projects. Citing overseas experience, he pointed out that the visual impact of highways could be enhanced through suitable landscape design. In this connection, he requested the Administration to provide members with a comparison between Hong Kong and other international cities such as New York and London in terms of the total length of carriageway and the total number of vehicles.

40. Responding to members' views, DS for T(1) stated that it was the Administration's objective to maintain the sustainability of Hong Kong's long-term development. In terms of transport planning, it meant that railway development would always be accorded priority. However, in areas where a railway service was not feasible or effective in relieving congestion and coping with transport demand, road development would have to be undertaken. This was particularly true for the Southern District as its development and population were relatively dispersed, and the implementation of the South Island Line (SIL) might not help address the transport need of Pok Fu Lam area.

41. DS for T(1) added that the SIL had been critically evaluated under the Railway Development Strategy 2000 (RDS-2000) and a number of difficulties was identified with its implementation, including dispersed and inadequate catchment population and financial viability. Hence, more careful consideration was required and the Administration would keep this project in view as a longer-term railway possibility.

42. DS for T(1) also said that according to the Administration's assessment, SIL would only take away 3% of the traffic at Pok Fu Lam Road as the majority of local residents would continue to travel by private cars or taxis. Hence, he stressed that the present proposal was the best option available to address the problem of over-saturation at Pok Fu Lam Road in 2010. As the proposed road link and SIL would serve different purposes, they should not be regarded as a substitute for one another.

43. Both Miss LAU and Miss HO queried the basis of the Administration's assessment that only 3% of the traffic would be taken away from Pok Fu Lam Road. Miss LAU considered that such a low conversion rate clearly demonstrated the failure on the Government's part to promote the concept of sustainable development in Hong Kong.

44. In reply, the Chief Engineer of the Transport Department (CE of TD) advised that according to the latest planning data, the population of the Southern District would be 275 000, 306 000 and 315 000 in 2006, 2011 and 2016 respectively. Given that the Southern District was an area of low-density population with a higher income, private car ownership was expected to increase ahead of population growth. To supplement, DS for T(1) stated that while various measures would be taken to limit the growth of private cars in Hong Kong, it was not Government's intention to discourage private car ownership by deliberately not building new roads to provide relief to existing road networks that were highly-congested. At the request of the Chairman, DS for T(1) agreed to provide a supplementary note to members after the meeting setting out details

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about projected population growth in the Southern District, in particular the planned developments for Ap Lei Chau.

45. Given the revised scope of the project, Miss Emily LAU was concerned that the proposed road link would be seen by the public as having the sole function of serving the Cyberport. She did not agree with such overt favouritism on the Government's part. In response, DS for T(1) said that the project was not purpose-built for Cyberport as the road link would extend beyond Cyberport to connect Pok Fu Lam area. Mr TAM Yiu-chung however considered that the Government should do everything possible to facilitate Hong Kong's development, including the Cyberport project.

Section from Pok Fu Lam to Aberdeen

46. While expressing grave concern about the repeated changes to the Route 7 project, Mr IP Kwok-him said that he could never accept the scaled down project as proposed which was completely against the aspiration of local residents. He was particularly dissatisfied that despite the repeated calls from SDC and the Central and Western District Council (C&WDC) for the early provision of a much-needed alternative external land connection between Aberdeen and Kennedy Town, the Administration had tried to shift the focus towards addressing the local traffic needs of the Pok Fu Lam area.

47. Referring to the serious congestion at the Aberdeen Tunnel especially in the morning peak, Mr IP pointed out that the situation had become quite unacceptable for a long time and he queried the basis of the Administration's claim that the volume/capacity (v/c) ratio of Aberdeen Tunnel was 1 in 2010. He was unconvinced that the section from Pok Fu Lam to Aberdeen would be considered only when there were further developments in the Southern District as the need for that section already existed. In addition, there were already a number of planned and proposed developments for Ap Lei Chau. Thus, the Administration should plan ahead for the necessary transport infrastructure so as to ensure that the development of the Southern District would no longer be hampered by the lack of adequate external road connection.

48. Mr YEUNG Sum also referred to the congestion at the Aberdeen Tunnel and expressed grave reservation about the Administration's present proposal. On behalf of Members of the Democratic Party, he strongly requested that Route 7 should extend beyond Pok Fu Lam and connect to Aberdeen. Also, the project should be built primarily in a tunnel form to preserve the beautiful shoreline of Hong Kong. In addition, the Administration should actively pursue the option of railway development in the Southern District to serve the local residents. Similar views were expressed by Mr CHENG Kar-foo.

49. In response, CE of TD explained that at present, the v/c ratio of Aberdeen Tunnel was 0.7 to 0.8, if unrestrained. The congestion in the Wanchai direction at the

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morning peak was mainly attributed to the tailing of traffic caused by congestion of the local traffic network and the Cross Harbour Tunnel. DS for T(1) stressed that building the road link all the way from Kennedy Town to Aberdeen would have little impact on the traffic situation of Pok Fu Lam Road in 2010. Moreover, given the longer route, it was doubtful as to whether many people would choose to travel on the road link from Aberdeen to Causeway Bay. Hence, building that section might not help alleviate the congestion at Aberdeen Tunnel. Given the difficulties and environmental concerns involved, the Administration had taken a sensible approach to implement the project in phases to tie in with the actual demand. In the meantime, more careful study into the extension from Pok Fu Lam to Aberdeen would be carried out.

50. Mr IP Kwok-him however said that it was exactly for the impact on the local traffic network caused by congestion of Aberdeen Tunnel that the Wanchai District Council was also opposed to the Administration's present proposal. He called on the Administration to consider the construction of Route 7 from Kennedy Town to Aberdeen to provide relief to the dire transport needs of the residents in the area. The Chairman also said that the congestion of Aberdeen Tunnel had been a long-standing problem which should be addressed urgently. Ir Dr Raymond HO considered that the road link should be extended to Aberdeen. Mr LAU Ping-cheung opined that the Administration should commit to a timetable for the section between Pok Fu Lam and Aberdeen.

Dual two-lane configuration

51. Expressing disappointment with the review findings, Ir Dr Raymond HO considered that the whole project should be put on hold pending an overall study on Route 7. He was particularly concerned about the dual two-lane configuration proposed by the Administration. In this connection, he referred to the submission from the Association of Consulting Engineers of Hong Kong which was tabled at the meeting and expressed agreement with the Association's view that it was questionable as to whether a dual two-lane configuration would be able to meet the need of the area. Given the planned developments in the Southern District, Ir Dr HO suggested that the road link should be designed to allow for future improvement from a dual two-lane to a dual three-lane configuration.

(Post-meeting note: The submission from the Association of Consulting Engineers of Hong Kong was subsequently issued to members vide LC Paper No. CB(1)1782/00-01.)

52. Ir Dr HO also drew members' attention to paragraph 5 of the paper which stated that even with Route 7, the v/c ratio of Aberdeen Tunnel in 2016 would be 1 which indicated the onset of congestion, and the reserve capacity of the critical junctions at Pok Fu Lam Road would be -5% which indicated an overloading situation. He was not convinced that public funds should be spent on a road link which could only provide partial relief at these related road sections. Mr LAU

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Ping-cheung shared Ir Dr HO's views and he was worried that the proposed road link would become saturated in only a few years' time after completion. Hence, he called on the Administration to revisit its decision on building a dual two-lane road link.

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53. In response, DS for T(1) explained that the revised dual two-lane configuration had already taken into account the latest statistics in traffic volume and projected traffic growth of Hong Kong. CE of TD supplemented that according to the Administration's calculations, the v/c ratio of the road link between Kennedy Town and Pok Fu Lam would be 0.5 in 2011 and slightly increased to 0.6 in 2016. Hence, spare capacity would be available even with a dual two-lane configuration. However, as data on land use planning was available only up to 2016, it would not be possible to say for sure when the proposed road link would reach saturation. In this connection, the Chairman said that such critical data should have been provided in the Administration's paper. Mr CHENG Kar-foo and Mr Tommy CHEUNG also considered that in view of the brief information provided in the paper, it was very difficult for members to critically evaluate the present proposal.

54. As regards the situation at critical junctions of Pok Fu Lam Road, CE of TD explained that as the road was designed to meet the original traffic pattern of the existing Pok Fu Lam development in the area, it would be very difficult for existing users to switch to a new road. He drew members' attention to the fact that without Route 7, the v/c ratio of both Aberdeen Tunnel and the critical section of Pok Fu Lam Road would be as high as 1.4. Hence, the road link was necessary to cope with the traffic demand generated from various planned developments.

55. While agreeing to consider Ir Dr HO's suggestion at paragraph 22 in the context of the forthcoming Engineering Review and Preliminary Design (ER&PD) consultancy study for the road link, DS for T(1) stressed that the Administration would aim at providing the necessary transport infrastructure according to actual demand. As the Southern District was not a strategic growth area, its population growth might not be significant.

Motion

56. In view of grave concerns on the Administration's revised proposal for Route 7, Mr CHENG Kar-foo did not support the use of \$26 million for the ER&PD consultancy study. His view was shared by Mr Tommy CHEUNG.

57. Referring to the strong views put forward by SDC and C&WDC, Mr CHAN Kwok-keung said that he could not understand why the Administration had failed to respond to such legitimate request and construct the section between Pok Fu Lam and Aberdeen. He opined that under the existing economic conditions, the Administration should undertake more capital projects to stimulate economic growth. In this connection, he proposed a motion calling for the early implementation of the Route 7 project from Kennedy Town to Aberdeen which should be constructed primarily in tunnel form. The wording of the motion was as follows:

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"本會強烈要求政府儘速興建連接堅尼地城至香港仔段以隧道為主的七號幹線。"

58. The above motion was put to vote. Mr David CHU, Ir Dr Raymond HO, Mr CHAN Kwok-keung, Mr TAM Yiu-chung, and Mr LAU Ping-cheung voted for the motion and Mr Tommy CHEUNG abstained. As the majority of members present voted for the motion, the motion was endorsed.

59. Addressing members' concerns, DS for T(1) highlighted the following points for members' consideration:

- (a) The v/c ratio of a road might not be directly affected by an absolute population growth; instead, much would depend on the rate of such growth and the choice of transport modes;
- (b) By the time the proposed road link was completed in 2010, other measures would be available to alleviate the congestion at the Cross Harbour Tunnel such as the construction of the Sha Tin to Central Link which in turn should have an effect on the Aberdeen Tunnel;
- (c) Additional costs would be incurred by the construction of the road link in tunnel form. Moreover, due to the presence of submerged public utilities, certain technical problems would be involved in the tunnel option which required further study;
- (d) While the section between Kennedy Town and Pok Fu Lam would be constructed first, it did not mean that the section between Pok Fu Lam and Aberdeen had been dropped. The Administration would further examine the measures to be taken to overcome the difficulties involved in the section between Pok Fu Lam and Aberdeen; and
- (e) Given other committed railway development projects under RDS-2000, SIL would only be considered as a longer-term possibility.

60. The Chairman said that as the present proposal had failed to win the support of members, the Administration should withhold the ER&PD consultancy study pending further discussion by the Panel.

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Way forward

61. Members agreed that in view of strong public views on the Route 7 project, the Panel should hold a special meeting in late September to receive views from all interested parties. At the suggestion of the Chairman, members agreed that an open invitation for submission of views would be posted on the Legislative Council website and invitation letters would also be sent to interested organizations, including the academics, local residents' groups, District Councils, green groups and professional bodies.

(Post-meeting note: The meeting was scheduled to be held on 21 September 2001 from 9:00 am to 1:00 pm.)

V Any other business

62. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 11:30 am.

Legislative Council Secretariat

30 October 2001