立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(1)2193/00-01
(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, 18 May 2001, at 8:30 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 Ir Dr Hon Raymond HO Chung-tai, JP Hon Mrs Selina CHOW LIANG Shuk-yee, JP Hon CHAN Kwok-keung Hon Andrew WONG Wang-fat, JP Hon LAU Kong-wah Hon Andrew CHENG Kar-foo Hon TAM Yiu-chung, GBS, JP Dr Hon TANG Siu-tong, JP Hon Albert CHAN Wai-yip
Members absent	**:**	Hon Albert HO Chun-yan Hon LAU Chin-shek, JP Hon Tommy CHEUNG Yu-yan, JP Hon WONG Sing-chi Hon LAU Ping-cheung
Public officers attending	**:**	**Agenda Items I to III** Transport Bureau Miss Margaret FONG Deputy Secretary for Transport

Mr Brian LO
Principal Assistant Secretary for Transport

Transport Department

Mr Robert FOOTMAN
Commissioner for Transport

Mr George F K LAI
Deputy Commissioner for Transport/
Planning & Technical Services

Mr Thomas THUMB
Assistant Commissioner for Transport/
Technical Services

Mr T K CHOI
Chief Engineer/Intelligent Transport

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 Transport information system & journey time indication system
(LC Paper No. CB(1) 1067/00-01- Information paper provided by the Administration)

At the invitation of the Chairman, the Chief Engineer/Intelligent Transport briefed members on the salient points of the proposals as set out in LC Paper No. CB(1) 1067/00-01 and LC Paper No. CB(1) 1068/00-01. A set of presentation materials was tabled at the meeting and circulated to members after the meeting vide LC Paper No. CB(1) 1274/00-01.

2. Members noted that the Administration proposed to establish a Transport Information System (TIS) at an estimated cost of $63 million. The TIS would collect, process, analyze and disseminate comprehensive transport information including traffic conditions, progress of road works, traffic diversion measures, public transport services and traffic incidents. In addition, the Administration also proposed to provide a Journey Time Indication System (JTIS). The cost for implementing Phase I of JTIS was estimated to be $20 million. The JTIS would indicate, by digital

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displays installed ahead of critical traffic diversion points, to motorists the average journey time of travelling from these points to selected destinations. Phase I of JTIS involved the installation of digital indicators ahead of the three cross-harbour tunnels and the associated approach roads on the Hong Kong side. The tentative locations were Canal Road Flyover northbound, Gloucester Road eastbound and Island Eastern Corridor westbound.

Channels of dissemination of information

3. Mr Albert CHAN Wai-yip said that the paper did not contain sufficient information on how the general public could benefit from the TIS. He cited the example in Japan whereby citizens could simply make a telephone call to obtain the relevant traffic and transport information at low price and called on the Administration to introduce similar service for the benefits of the general public.

4. Assistant Commissioner for Transport/Technical Services (AC for T/TS) replied that with the establishment of TIS, the Administration would make comprehensive transport information available on the internet. It would include interactive route guidance function and public enquiry service so that different types of road users could plan their trips before they left their homes on the basis of up-to-date traffic information. Third-party service providers would also be able to provide road users with value-added traffic information via mobile phone or hand-held PC.

5. Commissioner for Transport (C for T) added that Government would be responsible for providing the basic infrastructure in support of the development of Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS) in Hong Kong. The traffic and transport data so generated would, in turn, facilitate commercial utilization. However, development of value-added commercial applications would be a matter for the private sector to pursue. In this regard, successful cases were observed elsewhere in the world. As for the case in Hong Kong, the private sector had indicated interest in developing navigation systems once the TIS was in place. The telecommunication companies also expressed interest in the provision of transport information. The Administration had also discussed with public transport operators and encouraged them to make use of the TIS to provide information relating to their services to passengers at bus stops and interchanges, etc.

6. Mr Albert CHAN Wai-yip remarked that it would be difficult to support the funding proposal without an undertaking from the Government as to how the general public could obtain up-to-date transport information through telephone, bearing in mind the general public might not have easy access to the internet. He was worried that the private sector might not be willing to invest on the value-added applications as highlighted by the Administration. Under such circumstances, Government should be in the best position to launch the related telephone enquiry service for the benefits of the general public.

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7. Deputy Secretary for Transport (DS for T) responded that the Administration's objective was to provide as much up-to-date transport information through as many channels as possible. She advised that some telecommunication companies had expressed interest in the provision of transport information as part of their service package for their users. The Administration would continue to maintain an active dialogue with the different value-added service providers so that the community could reap the maximum benefits from the TIS.

8. Mr David CHU suggested that the Administration should explore the possibility of setting up dedicated TV channels for disseminating transport information to the public. AC for T/TS undertook to consider Mr CHU's suggestion.

Cost effectiveness of the TIS

9. Mr LAU Kong-wah queried the cost-effectiveness of the TIS, particularly in busy areas such as Central district where no alternative route was available for motorists.

10. Deputy Commissioner for Transport/Planning and Technical Services (DC for T/P & TS) advised that with the establishment of TIS, Transport Department could respond to data queries and other demand for public services in a much more accurate, reliable and timely manner without additional staff. It was estimated that if similar functions and services were to be provided without TIS, it would require additional staff with an annual recurrent costs of about $59 million.

11. On the estimation of benefits, DC for T/P & TS advised that at present, there were 1.34 million private vehicle trips made every weekday, among which 0.93 million trips were non-regular trips. When the route guidance service was available to the public, it was expected that even at a very conservative estimate, the travelling time of 5% of these non-regular trips could be saved by 5 minutes per trip. Using the surveyed values of time from the Third Comprehensive Transport Study, this would represent an annual saving of about $100 million. Likewise, there were 9.89 million public transport trips (excluding taxi trips) made every weekday, among which 4.33 million trips were non-regular trips. With the availability of public transport enquiry service under the TIS, and again adopting a very conservative estimate, it was expected that an average of 3 minutes per trip for 5% of these non-regular travellers could be saved. This would represent an annual saving of $180 million. AC for T/TS also said that with the provision of value-added services offered by the private sector, the benefits accrued were expected to be much greater. However, it was difficult to quantify the actual benefits at this stage as the provision of such services would hinge on the demand and response of the market.

12. Mr LAU Kong-wah was not convinced of the Administration's reply. He was worried that despite the substantial investment by the Government to provide the

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basic infrastructure in support of the TIS, the private sector might not be interested in providing the related value-added applications. He therefore requested the Administration to provide further information on the overseas experience in implementing TIS and associated services, the costs and benefits of TIS and details of the private sector initiative in Hong Kong. Mr CHENG Kar-foo also requested the Administration to provide further information on how the estimated benefits are derived.

13. AC for T/TS replied that more than 10 companies had expressed interests in the provision of value-added services and requested the Administration to provide the relevant transport data and data infrastructure. These include a car manufacturing company, telecommunication companies, etc. He pointed out that as a start, Government should provide the basic infrastructure in order to facilitate the subsequent provision of value-added applications by the private sector. He would provide further information as requested by members.

(*Post-meeting note* : The requested information was circulated to members vide LC Paper No. CB(1) 1315/00-01).

14. Ir Dr Raymond HO indicated his support to the broad direction of ITS. He also opined that the Administration should aim at promoting competition among different service providers which, in turn, would benefit consumers.

Locations for the installation of journey time indicators

15. Mr CHENG Kar-foo opined that in order to enable motorists to make more informed choice on their cross harbour routing, journey time indicators showing real-time traffic conditions of different cross-harbour routes from Hong Kong Island to Kowloon should be installed well ahead of critical diversion points. He highlighted the shortfalls in the present proposal as set out in the paper and urged the Administration to review the locations for the installation of these indicators with a view to improving the performance of the system. In his opinion, journey time indicators should not be placed at congested areas where no alternative escape route was available for motorists.

16. AC for T/TS replied that the Administration would consult the relevant district councils before finalizing the exact locations for the installation of journey time indicators. He noted the member's suggestion on the need to place these indicators ahead of the tunnel portal in Aberdeen so that motorists would be able make an earlier decision on which cross harbour routing should be used before passing the Aberdeen Tunnel. The Administration would take this into account in the next phase of implementation. The Chairman remarked that journey time indicators should be placed at strategic locations. As such, the Administration should review the effectiveness of the proposed system and include all those strategic locations which could generate the greatest benefits to motorists in Phase I of the project. Mr

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Albert CHAN Wai-yip also asked the Administration to take into account the failure of the electronic display systems at Tuen Mun Road in planning for the present project.

Global positioning system

17. In response to Mr David CHU's question about the difficulties encountered in applying global positioning system (GPS) in Hong Kong, DC for T/P & TS advised that whilst there might be difficulties to locate a vehicle in densely built-up urban areas, ancillary in-vehicle devices such as map matching facility or solid-state compass plus mileage recorder could be installed to facilitate the process. These ancillary devices, coupled with the GPS and the in-vehicle navigation system, would allow motorists to use the route guidance function.

18. In response to Ir Dr Raymond HO, AC for T/TS undertook to provide the figures on the average daily passenger journeys in 2000 broken down by public transport mode.

(*Post-meeting note* : The requested information was circulated to members vide LC Paper No. CB(1) 1480/00-01).

II. Creation of one Chief Engineer and one Chief Systems Manager in Transport Department

(LC Paper No. CB(1)1068/00-01 - Information paper provided by the Administration)

19. Noting that Government was considering the proposal for corporatising the Survey and Mapping Office (SMO) of the Lands Department, Mr Albert CHAN Wai-yip queried why a different treatment was proposed in the case of the Transport Department.

20. On the proposed corporatisation of the SMO of the Lands Department, C for T advised that he was not in a position to comment on the proposal. But in order to deliver the various projects under the ITS, there was a need to strengthen the directorate support in the Transport Department. He explained that there was inadequate directorate support in the Transport Department to cope effectively with the increased complexity and volume of work on the development and implementation of ITS and increased demand on the use and application of information systems (IS). The proposed Chief Engineer (CE) post would be responsible for developing and overseeing the implementation of all on-going and proposed ITS projects. Given the ITS projects in mind, a supernumerary post of CE for a period of five years was recommended.

21. Regarding the creation of a supernumerary Chief Systems Manager (CSM)

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post for three years to develop the initial plans for IS in Transport Department, C for T explained that there was inadequate in-house expertise on IS to advise on the effective use and management of information technology and to oversee the implementation of the IS Strategy and the on-going support of IS related services.

22. Mr CHAN Kwok-keung pointed out that it was rather unusual for the Administration to create supernumerary posts for such long periods. He enquired whether the Administration had ever considered to create the posts on a permanent basis rather than on a supernumerary one. Alternatively, the posts could be created on a supernumerary basis for an initial period of one year. Thereafter, a review could be conducted to establish the long-term need of the posts.

23. C for T replied that the Administration had considered carefully alternative means to provide the required directorate support to meet the service needs, bearing in mind the need to ensure efficiency and effectiveness. The Administration considered a moderate approach appropriate and justified. Should there be a need to create the posts on a permanent basis, the Administration would revert to the Finance Committee.

24. Mr LAU Kong-wah remarked that the need for the continuation of the posts would depend on the scope and extent of the value-added applications to be introduced by the private sector upon the completion of the basic infrastructure by Government in about two years' time. As such, he queried why it was necessary to create the CE post for five years at this stage.

25. C for T reiterated that the Administration was certain about the need to create a CE post for at least five years to cope with the various projects under the ITS Strategy. AC for T/TS added that the planning and implementation of the Traffic Management and Information Centre would straddle 2006. As such, there was a need to create the post for at least five years.

26. Regarding the CSM post, C for T said that the incumbent officer would be required to provide the IS technical expertise and advice to all IS related projects in the pipeline. The Administration was aware that many IS services could be provided effectively outside the Government. However, since there was no in-house expertise for the time being, the Administration proposed that a CSM post be created for three years to develop the initial plans for IS in Transport Department. During that time, the Administration would consider further how the information technology function should be delivered in the future, including the balance between in-house resources and staff employed on contract terms.

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Policy on ITS

27. Mr CHENG Kar-foo enquired whether a related policy on ITS had been formulated by the Transport Bureau for implementation by the Transport Department. He also enquired whether the Bureau had gathered all the necessary information for the ITS and whether additional staff would be required for undertaking policy-related issues.

28. DS for T replied that Government's policy objective was to deploy effective traffic management measures to maximize the use of road space in Hong Kong in an efficient manner. Such measures might include the deployment of advanced information and telecommunication technologies to enhance, inter alia, the efficiency of the transport system. The Administration initiated an in-house ITS Strategy Review Study to develop a long-term ITS deployment plan for Hong Kong. It had also taken into account overseas experience in implementing ITS and associated services. While the need for additional transport infrastructure to meet the corresponding increase in transport demand was getting more pressing, emphasis was also placed on the importance of meeting demand in a sustainable manner. To discharge the policy, there was a need to strengthen the directorate support in Transport Department.

29. Referring to the job description for the CE post, Mr Albert CHAN Wai-yip remarked that it was a clear indication that Government had no intention to develop TIS applications on its own as the incumbent officer would only be tasked to promote the development of ITS applications through public/private collaboration. Without Government's commitment, the general public might not be able to obtain up-to-date transport information through telephone. AC for T/TS advised that the proposed job description was not exhaustive and Government would consider various options in the development process. C for T stressed that the Administration's objective was to provide as much up-to-date transport information through as many channels as possible. With the establishment of the TIS, the Administration would continue to use TV and radio to provide more accurate, timely and reliable transport information to the public. The Administration would also maintain an active dialogue with the different value-added service providers so that the community could reap the maximum benefits from the TIS.

III. Electronic Road Pricing

(Legislative Council Brief issued by Transport Bureau (file ref: TBCR 2/1/2061/89 pt 16) on 24 April 2001)

30. Mr CHENG Kar-foo expressed grave concern about the way the Administration conducted the Feasibility Study on Electronic Road Pricing (ERP). He opined that the Administration should have withheld further expenditures on ERP when it had decided to develop a comprehensive ITS. He was also worried that due

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to rapid development of information technology, the proposed 10-year timeframe for the development of ITS might be too long. He asked about the actions to be taken to ensure that the spending on ITS would be value for money and cost-effective.

31. DS for T gave an account of the rationale for initiating the ERP study in 1996. She said that in late 1980s and early 1990s, the number of private motor vehicles grew at an annual rate of over 10%. The average speed (km/h) of roads in 1995 was the lowest among the past 20 years. Facing such an environment, the Administration saw the need to explore alternative means to control the growth of vehicular traffic other than through the traditional means of road construction and improvement to public transport services. It was against this background that the ERP study was commissioned in 1997. However with the reduction in vehicle growth rate, the Administration did not see any transport justifications to proceed with ERP at this stage.

32. DS for T further explained the difference between the ERP study and the ITS, and stressed that the general public would benefit from the latter upon the gradual introduction of services from 2003. She said that the Feasibility Study on ERP was only a consultancy study commissioned to assess ERP's applicability in meeting transport objectives. But for ITS, a concrete programme had already been drawn up for implementation over the next ten years at a total of $3.2 billion. Phase I of TIS would be completed in early 2003. By then, the general public would have access to obtain one-stop information on public transport services comprehensively.

33. Notwithstanding the Administration's reply, Mr CHENG Kar-foo maintained his view and regretted that more than $100 million was spent on ERP-related studies, including $38 million for the one conducted in the 1980s.

34. Mr LAU Kong-wah remarked that despite the objections from the community and some members of the Legislative Council, the Administration maintained its view to commission the ERP study in 1997, resulting in the wastage of about $100 million in the end. He suggested that the Director of Audit should be invited to examine the case in detail with a view to preventing the recurrence of similar incidents in future.

35. C for T replied that whilst there were divided views among members, the funding proposal was endorsed by the Finance Committee after a thorough debate. At the time the ERP study was proposed, there was a need to commission a study to assess ERP's applicability in meeting transport objectives. However, due to the Asian financial turmoil, the increase in the actual number of vehicle was significantly lower than the forecast one, rendering it not necessary to proceed with ERP now.

36. Ir Dr Raymond HO said that he did not agree with the Administration's remarks that ERP was necessary because there was a significant growth of vehicles in 1995. He recalled that the growth rate of private car was only less than 2%. Although

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he had requested the subject matter be discussed at the Transport Advisory Committee, it was not accepted by the then Administration.

37. Mrs Selina CHOW remarked that the Liberal Party had all along objected the proposed ERP scheme, and hence, the ERP feasibility study. She had suggested that the Government should not over-commit itself to an in-depth study when there were still many uncertainties, but split the study into two phases. Ir Dr Raymond HO also said that he had requested the Administration to commission a desktop study before deciding the way forward thereby saving the need for spending a substantial amount of money on evaluation of technology options. However, his opinion was not accepted by the Administration.

38. After deliberation, members agreed that the Chairman should write to the Director of Audit requesting him to initiate an investigation on the way the Administration conducted the ERP study.

(*Post-meeting note* : The correspondences between the Chairman and the Director of Audit were circulated to members vide LC Paper No. CB(1) 1522/00-01).

IV. Any other business

39. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 10:40 am.

Legislative Council Secretariat
15 October 2001