

立法會

Legislative Council

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Report of the Panel on Transport for submission to the Legislative Council

Purpose

This report gives an account of the work of the Panel on Transport during the 2000-2001 legislative session. It will be tabled at the meeting of the Legislative Council on 4 July 2001 in accordance with Rule 77(14) of the Rules of Procedure of the Council.

The Panel

2. The Panel was formed by a resolution passed by the Council on 8 July 1998 and as amended on 20 December 2000 for the purpose of monitoring and examining Government policies and issues of public concern relating to transport matters. The terms of reference of the Panel are at **Appendix I**.

3. The Panel comprises 17 members, with Hon Mrs Miriam LAU Kin-yee and Hon Abraham SHEK Lai-him elected as Chairman and Deputy Chairman respectively. The membership list of the Panel is at **Appendix II**.

Major Work

Transport infrastructure

4. The Panel continued with its vigorous efforts in overseeing the planning and development of transport infrastructure. During the session, the Panel had reviewed the implementation programme of a number of strategic infrastructural projects, taking into account the transport needs of the community, changes to the economy, population growth, land use planning, and the overall sustainability of our transport infrastructure.

Road network

5. The Panel recognized the need for the early completion of Route 9, which was a trunk road linking Lantau and Sha Tin via Tsing Yi Island and West Kowloon, to relieve the growing traffic demand on a number of critical corridors. However, members were equally concerned about the environmental implications of the project, particularly the problems of traffic noise and vehicle emissions during the operational phase. They called on the Administration to incorporate sufficient mitigation measures at the planning stage so as to alleviate the subsequent nuisances caused to local residents.

6. The Panel had also reviewed with the Administration the need, timing, scope and priority of the Route 10 project between North Lantau and Yuen Long Highway. In view of the uncertainties as to the implementation programme for the improvements to infrastructural connections with the Pearl River Delta, the need for and implementation timing of container port facilities in Lantau and the section of Route 10 between Lantau and Hong Kong Island, and taking into account the proposed deferral of the northern section of Route 10 between So Kwun Wat and Yuen Long to 2010 or beyond, members urged the Administration to critically review the alignment and implementation programme of the whole route so as to ensure that the project was cost effective and justified on transport grounds.

7. Following the decision made by the Director of Environmental Protection to reject the Environmental Impact Assessment report of the proposed Lantau North-South Road Link between Tai Ho Wan and Mui Wo in November 2000, the Panel had reviewed with the Administration the mechanism to consult relevant bureaux and departments in the planning and implementation of infrastructural projects so as to ensure the timely delivery of public infrastructure. Mindful of the serious safety risks caused by the substandard conditions of Tung Chung Road, members reluctantly accepted the proposed solution to widen the existing Tung Chung Road as an alternative to address the dire transport needs of the Lantau residents. They also took the opportunity to remind the Administration to speed up the delivery of the project within the environmental constraints and to implement improvement measures to alleviate the traffic problems faced by local residents in the interim.

Railway network

8. The Panel continued to monitor the planning and implementation programme of the railway development projects in Hong Kong. A subcommittee was formed under the Panel to monitor the related issues in this respect. During the session, a site visit was also made to observe the construction of the West Rail.

9. The Panel noted that the MTR Tseung Kwan O Extension would come

into service by the end of 2002, while the West Rail would start operation by the end of 2003. The Ma On Shan to Tai Wai Rail Link (the MOS Rail) and KCR Extension to Tsim Sha Tsui (TST Extension) would be completed in 2004. For the Penny's Bay Rail Link, it would be completed around 2005 to coincide with the opening of the Disney Theme Park. As for the Sheung Shui to Lok Ma Chau Spur Line, the statutory procedures were in progress.

10. On the detailed planning and implementation of the MOS Rail and the TST Extension, members identified a number of problems including their interface with other rail links in the urban area, the capacity of the East Rail and the overcrowding situation in Tai Wai Station as well as the noise impact of the projects during the construction and operational phases. Apart from urging the Administration to put in place adequate mitigation measures to minimize the nuisance caused to local residents, members also called on the Administration to strengthen the capacity of the East Rail and fast-track the implementation programme of the Shatin to Central Link to meet the transport needs of the commuting public. Members also took the opportunity to review the design of the proposed pedestrian subways linking the MTR Tsim Sha Tsui Station and KCR East Tsim Sha Tsui Station and explore the feasibility of providing travelators in the subways in a more cost effective and convenient manner.

Cross-boundary transport links

11. The Panel attached great importance to improvements to infrastructural connections with the Pearl River Delta and intermodal transport interchanges in the South China region so as to cater for the burgeoning economic activities between Hong Kong and the Mainland. During the session, the Panel was briefed on the current passenger and vehicular traffic conditions at Lok Ma Chau (LMC), which was one of the largest and most popular vehicular crossing, handling about 68% of all cross-boundary traffic (or around 21 000 vehicle trips a day). It had also reviewed the various measures being implemented or planned by the Administration to smoothen passenger and vehicular flows at the control point. Whilst welcoming the proposal to improve the cross-boundary shuttle bus service between LMC and Huanggang, members considered it necessary for the Administration to strengthen other supporting services so as to relieve the congestion problem there. They also considered that there was a need to accord priority to the planning and implementation of cross-boundary infrastructural projects so as to cater for the rising demand in cross-boundary passenger and freight movements.

Transport services

Bus

12. The Panel continued to monitor the regulatory regime governing bus fare revisions proposed by franchised bus operators. Members were worried that the trigger point of 13% for a 50/50 profit-sharing arrangement between the operator and passengers would become a de facto guaranteed or permitted rate of return to franchised bus operators. The Administration assured members that in considering bus fare adjustment, it would take into account all relevant factors including the financial position of the operator, the need to provide the operator with a reasonable rate of return, public acceptability and affordability, and the quality and quantity of service provided. The Administration also undertook to review the profit-sharing arrangement between the operator and passengers to ensure that public interest was safeguarded.

13. When consulted on the fare adjustment application from the New World First Bus Service Limited, some members had requested the company to consider deferring its fare increase proposal to help the people tide the difficult times. Members also urged the Administration to provide a more conducive environment for franchised bus operators to expand their network so as to relieve the pressure for fare increase and to enhance competition.

Public light bus

14. The Panel had reviewed the policy on public light bus (PLB) with the Administration. Recognizing the role and functions of PLB in the public transport hierarchy, members called on the Administration to review the Government policy in this respect, including the financial viability of PLB operation and the existing restrictions imposed on red minibuses to access new towns, new housing developments and new expressways.

Mass transit railway

15. Following the listing of the MTR Corporation Limited on 5 October 2000, the Panel continued to monitor its services and related business. To address the railway noise caused to nearby residents, members urged the new Corporation to revisit the feasibility of providing noise barriers in noise sensitive areas. Members pressed for the early installation of platform screen doors and also sought assurance from the new Corporation that no surcharge would be levied for all future refurbishment and improvement projects undertaken as part of its operational and safety requirements. The Panel was consulted on the MTR fare review for 2001. Members expressed grave concern about the justifications for the proposed fare increase, taking into account the profit and financial position of the Corporation. In light of the prevailing economic climate and the impact of the proposal on the livelihood of

the general public, members considered it not appropriate for the Corporation to adjust its fare at this time. Members were also worried that the Corporation's proposal might prompt other public transport operators to follow. Members therefore urged the Corporation to withhold any fare increase, and instead explore other cost-cutting initiatives to cut costs and introduce new sources of income to relieve the pressure for fare increase.

Kowloon-Canton railway

16. During the session, a site visit was made to observe the boarding situation at Tai Wai Station during the morning peak periods. Members took the opportunity to remind the railway corporation to strengthen its service to meet the transport needs of the commuting public. When consulted on the proposed adjustment of passenger fares for 2001, the Panel also expressed reservation on the proposed increase, bearing in mind the prevailing economic climate. The Panel passed a motion to request the corporation to defer adjusting its fares. The Panel also reviewed with the Corporation the performance, financial viability and operation of various railway lines.

Road safety

17. Ensuring road safety had always been high on the agenda of the Panel. The Panel welcomed the Administration's plan to review the speed limits of roads on a regular basis with reference to changes in the accident rates of the concerned road sections and the surrounding traffic conditions. It also welcomed the Administration's proposal to relax the speed limits of certain road sections, and to install appropriate road markings and warning signs to forewarn motorists of changes of speed limits ahead.

18. The Panel was also consulted on the proposal of a driver improvement scheme as an alternative to penalty for traffic offences imposed by the court. The objective was to provide an educational element to the efforts in improving driving behaviour and hence enhance road safety. Members supported the proposal in principle but urged the Administration to provide a safeguarding mechanism to avoid abuse by those drivers who merely sought to delay disqualification, to beef up the contents of the course to improve the effectiveness of the scheme, and to review the assessment criteria to be adopted by the service providers to ensure fairness.

19. When consulted on the proposal to improve the existing legislation concerning the use of vehicle lights, members called on the Administration to explore the desirability of requiring the main headlamps of vehicles to be automatically turned on to enhance road safety. Members also urged the Administration to step up publicity to promote the proper use of vehicle lights.

Managing road use

20. While the need for additional transport infrastructure to meet population growth and the corresponding increase in transport demand was getting more pressing, emphasis was also placed on the importance of meeting demand in a sustainable manner. In addition to provision of new infrastructure and improved public transport services, the Panel also examined ways to maximize the capacity and to enhance the performance of existing transport systems.

Intelligent transport system

21. The Panel supported the initiative to develop an intelligent transport system to achieve better use of existing transport infrastructure, greater efficiency in traffic management, and to enable road users to have access to real-time traffic information. However, members were concerned about the cost effectiveness of the proposed system, the private sector initiative in developing value-added application systems, and how the general public could benefit from the various systems and at what cost. Views had also been expressed about the need to put in place adequate measures to avoid abuse and to preserve the privacy of road users.

Toll pricing strategy

22. Investigations into a preferred toll pricing strategy for competing tolled facilities remained a concern of the Panel. Members were concerned about the automatic toll increase mechanism under the Build-Operate-Transfer franchises, and the resulting traffic implications and financial burden on road users. In order to promote a more equitable use of precious social resources and to spread out the traffic among various tunnels to ease congestion, members urged the Administration to examine and formulate a long-term policy on tunnel utilization, and to propose new measures for resolving the congestion problem of tunnels as well as promoting the optimum use of tunnel resources. Members also took the opportunity to seek the Administration's assurance on the future toll pricing strategy for the Route 9 section between Sha Tin and Kowloon.

Environmental improvement measures

23. The Panel held a series of joint meetings with the Environmental Affairs Panel to discuss issues of mutual concern. In addition to other measures proposed under the comprehensive programme to reduce motor vehicle emissions, members pressed for the early introduction of cleaner alternatives to diesel vehicles, increasing the one-off grant to assist owners of pre-Euro diesel light vehicles to retrofit their vehicles with particulate trap or diesel oxidation catalyst, replacement of diesel vehicles by liquefied petroleum gas vehicles, introduction of trolley bus system, promotion of proper vehicle maintenance and strengthened enforcement on illicit fuel. Members had also reviewed with the Administration the rationalization programme for franchised bus service in

Central district and the implementation of bus-bus interchange schemes. The Panel was also briefed on the findings of the feasibility study on introducing trolleybus system in Hong Kong.

24. The Panel was also briefed on the proposal to control idling engines. Notwithstanding the need to introduce suitable measures to control vehicle emissions, members accepted that a balance should be maintained in formulating the control scheme to ensure that the transport trade would not be unduly affected. The Panel therefore sought the Administration's assurance that it would continue its dialogue with the trade and would introduce guidelines on the control scheme as a first step, followed by a review to ascertain its effectiveness before introducing the relevant legislation.

25. The Panel also gave views on the new policy to address the noise impact of existing roads on nearby residents. Members welcomed the launching of an improvement programme to address the problems which had existed for many years. They urged the Administration to expedite the implementation timetable of the retrofitting and resurfacing programme, to revisit the feasibility of providing air-conditioning and double-glazed windows for residents affected by excessive traffic noise from existing roads, and to conduct experiments to ascertain the effectiveness of new materials and designs to address the traffic noise problem.

26. During the session, the Panel was briefed on a number of financial and legislative proposals prior to their introduction into the Council. On the proposed Mass Transit Railway (Amendment) Bylaw 2001, members urged the Administration to review the legislative proposal, taking into account members' concern about the need and justifications for empowering the Corporation to perform certain regulatory functions within the railway premises. Members also reviewed the traffic conditions in the vicinity of Tseung Kwan O Tunnel and urged the Administration to put in place improvement measures to address the traffic and transport problems faced by residents.

27. During the period from October 2000 to June 2001, the Panel held a total of 20 meetings, 4 of which were joint meetings with the Panel on Environmental Affairs. The Panel and its Subcommittee also paid three visits to observe various public transport services and operations in the territory.

Legislative Council Secretariat

22 June 2001

Legislative Council

Panel on Transport

Terms of Reference

1. To monitor and examine Government policies and issues of public concern relating to transport matters.
2. To provide a forum for the exchange and dissemination of views on the above policy matters.
3. To receive briefings and to formulate views on any major legislative or financial proposals in respect of the above policy area prior to their formal introduction to the Council or Finance Committee.
4. To monitor and examine, to the extent it considers necessary, the above policy matters referred to it by a member of the Panel or by the House Committee.
5. To make reports to the Council or to the House Committee as required by the Rules of Procedure.

**Legislative Council
Panel on Transport**

Membership list

Chairman	Hon Mrs Miriam LAU Kin-ye, JP
Deputy Chairman	Hon Abraham SHEK Lai-him, JP
Members	Hon David CHU Yu-lin Hon Albert HO Chun-yan Ir Dr Hon Raymond HO Chung-tai, JP Hon Mrs Selina CHOW LIANG Shuk-ye, JP Hon CHAN Kwok-keung Hon Andrew WONG Wang-fat, JP 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 Albert CHAN Wai-yip Hon WONG Sing-chi Hon LAU Ping-cheung
	(Total: 17 Members)
Clerk	Mr Andy LAU
Date	10 October 2000