

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(1)357/01-02

(These minutes have been
seen by the Administration)

Ref : CB1/PL/TP/1

Legislative Council
Panel on Transport

Minutes of meeting held on
Friday, 26 October 2001, at 9:00 am
in Conference Room A of the Legislative Council Building

Members present : Hon Mrs Miriam LAU Kin-ye, JP (Chairman)
Hon Abraham SHEK Lai-him, JP (Deputy Chairman)
Hon David CHU Yu-lin, JP
Hon Albert HO Chun-yan
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 LEUNG Fu-wah, MH, JP
Hon LAU Ping-cheung

Non-Panel members : Hon Cyd HO Sau-lan
attending Dr Hon YEUNG Sum
Hon Audrey EU Yuet-mee, SC, JP

Members absent : Ir Dr Hon Raymond HO Chung-tai, JP
Hon WONG Sing-chi

**Public officers
attending**

: Agenda item IV

Transport Bureau

Mr Paul TANG
Deputy Secretary for Transport

Mr William SHIU
Principal Assistant Secretary for Transport (4)

Highways Department

Mr L T MA
Government Engineer / Railway Development

Agenda item V

Transport Bureau

Mr Paul TANG
Deputy Secretary for Transport

Ms Shirley LAM
Principal Assistant Secretary for Transport (5)

Transport Department

Mr Tony SO
Chief Engineer, Strategic Roads Division, Planning Branch

Highways Department

Mr Adrian NG
Deputy Project Manager,
Major Works Project Management Office

Agenda item VI

Transport Bureau

Mr Paul TANG
Deputy Secretary for Transport

Ms Shirley LAM
Principal Assistant Secretary for Transport (5)

Transport Department

Mr Tony SO
Chief Engineer, Strategic Roads Division, Planning Branch

Highways Department

Mr Arun SHAH
Chief Engineer, Major Works Project Management Office

Planning Department

Mr K K LING
District Planning Officer, Hong Kong

Attendance by invitation : Agenda item IV

Kowloon-Canton Railway Corporation

Mr James BLAKE
Senior Director, Capital Projects

Mr K K LEE
Director, East Rail Extensions

Mr Vic MCNALLY
Environmental Manager

Mrs Irene YAU
General Manager, Corporate Affairs

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)87/01-02 - Minutes of meeting held on 11 October 2001)

The minutes of meeting held on 11 October 2001 were confirmed.

II Information papers issued since the meeting held on 13 July 2001

(LC Paper No. CB(1)1968/00-01(01) - Letter from the Chairman of Islands District Council on early completion of the widening of Tung Chung Road by 2004 and implementation of interim improvement measures;

LC Paper No. CB(1)1968/00-01(02) - Extract of minutes of meeting between LegCo Members and Tuen Mun District Council on 3 May 2001 on construction of Route 10;

LC Paper No. CB(1)1968/00-01(02) - Extract of minutes of meeting between LegCo Members and Tuen Mun District Council on 3 May 2001 on opening up the bus service network in Tuen Mun for introduction of competition;

LC Paper No. CB(1)1968/00-01(03) - Extract of minutes of meeting between LegCo Members and Eastern District Council on 14 June 2001 on installation of digital time clocks on traffic light in public roads;

LC Paper No. CB(1)2011/00-01(01) - Submission from a member of the public on RoadShow; and

LC Paper No. CB(1)102/01-02(01) - Retention of Chief Engineer/West Rail Post in Highways Department)

2. Members noted the above information papers issued since the Panel meeting held on 13 July 2001.

3. Referring to LC Paper No. CB(1)1968/00-01(02), members agreed that in view of grave public concerns on the matter, the Panel would hold a meeting to receive views from all interested parties/organizations on the Route 10 project and the Tuen Mun District Council would be invited to attend the meeting.

(Post-meeting note: The Panel had subsequently scheduled a special meeting on 8 November 2001 at 8:30 am to receive public views on Route 10, Shenzhen Western Corridor and Deep Bay Link.)

4. Referring to LC Paper No. CB(1)102/01-02(01), Mr Albert CHAN said that while he had no policy issues to bring up on the paper, he would raise his concerns about

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the staffing proposal, particularly the need to retain the Chief Engineer/West Rail post in Highways Department up to the end of 2004, at the Establishment Subcommittee (ESC) for discussion. The Chairman invited members to attend the relevant ESC meeting scheduled to be held on 21 November 2001 to give their views on the staffing proposal.

III Items for discussion at the next meeting scheduled for 23 November 2001

(LC Paper No. CB(1)86/01-02(01) - List of outstanding items for discussion;
and

LC Paper No. CB(1)86/01-02(02) - List of follow-up actions)

5. Members agreed to discuss the following items as proposed by the Administration at the next meeting scheduled for 23 November 2001:

- (a) Future development of domestic passenger ferry services in Hong Kong;
and
- (b) Route 10 - North Lantau to Yuen Long Highway.

(Post-meeting note: The items had subsequently been revised as "Future development of passenger ferry services in Hong Kong" and "Route 10, Shenzhen Western Corridor and Deep Bay Link".)

6. On item (a) above, members agreed that the Administration should brief the Panel on the proposal of providing a passenger ferry terminal at Tuen Mun to facilitate the introduction of ferry services between Hong Kong and the Mainland/Macau.

7. Members also agreed that as the last Council meeting before the Christmas and New Year holiday break would be held on 19 December 2001, the Panel's regular meeting in December would be held on 14 December 2001 at 8:30 am in the Chamber of the Legislative Council Building, instead of 21 December 2001 as originally scheduled.

IV Lok Ma Chau Spur Line project

(Ref: TBCR 25/1016/97 - Legislative Council Brief issued by the Transport Bureau on 18 September 2001)

8. The Deputy Secretary for Transport (DS for T) advised that on 30 July 2001, the Appeal Board had dismissed the appeal lodged by the Kowloon-Canton Railway Corporation (KCRC) against the decision of the Director of Environmental Protection (DEP) not to approve the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) report and not to issue an Environmental Permit for the Lok Ma Chau Spur Line project (the Project). Since then, the Administration had been working with KCRC to explore other alternatives for implementing the Project so as to overcome the environmental problem at Long Valley which was the reason for not issuing an Environmental Permit. After

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careful considerations of factors such as engineering feasibility, potential environmental impact, planning implications and additional time required, the bored tunnel option was now proposed for the Project.

9. Mr James BLAKE, Senior Director, Capital Projects of KCRC (SD/CP, KCRC), stressed that the Corporation would aim at certainty in carrying forward the Project. KCRC was confident that it could deal with the environmental issues involved while meeting the programme, and a safe and attractive railway system would be delivered for the passengers.

10. With the aid of PowerPoint, Mr K K LEE, Director, East Rail Extensions of KCRC (D/ERE, KCRC), gave a presentation on the bored tunnel scheme proposed by KCRC for the Project. He advised that under the present proposal, the additional cost of constructing the Spur Line with the Long Valley section as a bored tunnel was about \$2 billion at 2001 prices. It was expected that the Spur Line would open for commissioning between the end of 2006 and mid-2007.

(Post-meeting note: A set of presentation materials tabled by KCRC was subsequently circulated to members vide LC Paper No. CB(1)164/01-02(01).)

Additional costs for the purpose of preserving the wetlands in Long Valley

11. Members noted that in order to mitigate the environmental impact associated with the original viaduct option on the wetlands in Long Valley, an additional \$2 billion was required for constructing the Long Valley section as a bored tunnel. However, members cast serious doubt on the cost-effectiveness of this hefty sum of monies for the purpose of preserving the wetlands in Long Valley in the end.

12. Pointing out that the wetlands in Long Valley were substantially privately-owned, Mr TAM Yiu-chung considered that it would be most important to ensure that these wetlands were well and truly preserved. Otherwise, the original purpose of minimizing the environmental impact on the wetlands would be defeated and the additional \$2 billion for constructing the bored tunnel wasted. Cautioning about the rampant situation of unauthorized use of land in the New Territories, Mr Albert CHAN considered that the Administration's overall planning should be compatible with the use of land in the area. He thus called on the Administration to proceed with the Project only after a clear decision was made to designate the wetlands in Long Valley as a Wetland Conservation Area to restrict any new developments within the area in future. He said that if the wetlands in Long Valley were not protected in such a way, he was not convinced that the \$2 billion would be worthily spent. Sharing similar concerns, Mr David CHU remarked that the use of such a hefty sum of monies for preserving the wetlands should have the support of the community.

13. In response, DS for T advised that the protection and conservation of wetlands was the responsibility of the Environment and Food Bureau (EFB) and fell outside the

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purview of the Transport Bureau (TB). However, he was aware that EFB was conducting a comprehensive review on the Government's nature conservation policy. He added that as far as the Spur Line project was concerned, TB's major considerations were to complete the project as early as possible to relief congestion at Lo Wu while ensuring that it would not undermine the wetlands at Long Valley.

14. Regarding land resumption, DS for T stated that the Administration would resume all the land required for the Project in accordance with law. It would also ensure that statutory easements over any private land for the proposed bored tunnel section were created properly so that the future operation of the Spur Line would not be affected. He supplemented that the Administration had already consulted the local residents, rural committees and District Councils, and they were generally in support of the present proposal.

Admin.

15. Mr Albert CHAN did not accept the above explanation and considered that the Administration should have the responsibility to ensure that the valuable wetlands in Long Valley would be preserved as the Project would incur an extra cost of \$2 billion for such purpose. Mr TAM Yiu-chung also opined that TB, though not the responsible policy bureau, should not adopt such a narrow-minded attitude in dealing with the matter. At the request of the Chairman, DS for T agreed to relay the concerns raised by members on the preservation of the wetlands in Long Valley to the relevant bureaux/government departments for consideration.

16. Mr LEUNG Fu-wah was concerned that the additional costs for building the bored tunnel would be transferred to the passengers through increased fare. In reply, SD/CP, KCRC advised that in presenting the present proposal, KCRC considered that the Project at the increased cost was still a commercially viable railway to operate. As the Spur Line would have to compete with other modes of public transport providing cross-boundary services, the fare regime would be set accordingly.

Impact of the bored tunnel on the level of underground water

17. Citing the Strategic Sewage Disposal Scheme (SSDS) tunnels in Tseung Kwan O, Mr LAU Kong-wah expressed serious concern about the possible impact of constructing a bored tunnel on the level of water table, which would in turn affect the wetlands in Long Valley. In response, SD/CP, KCRC elaborated on the features and advantages of using the earth pressure balance technology for the tunnelling operations. The key feature was that this would be a completely sealed system with concrete lining following immediately behind and right up to the machine as the latter advanced. He assured members that the technology which was well proven for the West Rail (WR) project would avoid disrupting the ground water regime and it was completely different from the technology used for the SSDS tunnels. In addition, detailed monitoring of any variations in ground water level would be kept by KCRC at all times.

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18. The Chairman however pointed out that notwithstanding the technical success of WR's Tsing Tsuen Tunnel and the use of same technology for the Project, different results might occur as the soil structure in Long Valley was completely different. Sharing the Chairman's concern, Mr LAU Kong-wah said that he was unconvinced by KCRC's explanation and sought the Corporation's assurance that the ground water level of Long Valley would not be adversely affected by the construction of the Spur Line. Mr Andrew WONG raised the issue of possible claims for compensation in case of economic losses suffered by the affected land owners as a result of drawdown of ground water caused by the tunnelling works.

KCRC

19. In response, SD/CP, KCRC reiterated his confidence that with the use of the earth pressure balance technology for tunnelling, the level of water table in Long Valley would not be affected and that the floor of the valley itself would be fit for the present farming practices at all times. He went on to explain that with the said technology, the main difficulty would lie in excavating soil and rock together. But as indicated by KCRC's preliminary investigations, the condition in Long Valley was not worse than Tsing Tsuen Tunnel. At the request of the Chairman, SD/CP, KCRC agreed to provide an undertaking as requested by the member in writing after the meeting, together with all the necessary supporting technical information.

20. Mr CHENG Kar-foo expressed skepticism about KCRC's assurance that the ground water level of Long Valley would not adversely be affected by the construction of the Spur Line. He opined that instead of following the Central Alignment as originally proposed for the viaduct, the bored tunnel should be better aligned to avoid the Long Valley completely. In reply, SD/CP, KCRC reported that when considering KCRC's appeal, the Appeal Board had already examined other alternative alignments and was firmly of the view that the gazetted alignment was appropriate for the rail crossing and that it could be delivered in the shortest possible time.

21. While acknowledging members' concerns, DS for T stressed that with the available technology, the Administration was confident that the environmental impacts created by the Project could be mitigated and the relevant issues would be studied in detail during the EIA process. In view of the urgency of the Project, the Administration considered it appropriate to adopt the proposed alignment. As for alternative alignments, there might be other environmental and livelihood problems which would take a longer time to identify and address.

Admin.

22. Unconvinced by the given explanation, Mr CHENG requested the Administration to provide the judgements of the Appeal Board on the three possible alternatives, and feasibility of other alternative options for the Spur Line including the shifting of the alignment for the bored tunnel option away from the wetlands in Long Valley.

23. Noting from paragraph 14 of the paper that the Environmental Protection Department (EPD) considered the tunnel option to be more certain in its environmental

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Admin.

acceptability, Mr LAU Kong-wah enquired about the basis of EPD's view and the co-ordination among EPD, TB and KCRC in the matter. In reply, DS for T said that early discussions had been held among KCRC, EPD and the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) on the bored tunnel scheme. He stressed that it was with the preliminary agreement of the relevant government departments including EPD and AFCD that the tunnel option was pursued, and all the environmental issues involved would be carefully examined under the detailed EIA study for the Project. At the request of Mr LAU, DS for T agreed to provide members with the comments from EPD and AFCD on the bored tunnel scheme and its potential impacts on the environment and ecology.

Other concerns

24. Expressing opposition to the project, Dr TANG Siu-tong considered that the Spur Line was only built to serve the new development area in Kwu Tung. Citing the capacity problem with East Rail (ER), he opined that in order to better address the cross-boundary traffic need of the passengers, the Northern Link (NOL) should instead be built.

25. In response, DS for T stated that under the Railway Development Strategy 2000, NOL would connect West Rail to the boundary crossing at Lok Ma Chau and it was designed as a long-term complement to, but not a replacement of, the Spur Line project. Due to the increasing demand for cross-boundary rail service and the geographical constraints which limited the further expansion of the Lo Wu Control Point, the Administration was of the view that the Spur Line should be built as a matter of priority to provide relief to ER. Furthermore, building the NOL would take at least seven to eight years as the project was only at the conceptual stage. The Administration would closely monitor the situation and plan for the implementation of NOL accordingly. As for the development in Kwu Tung, he informed members that the planned population of this strategic growth area was 100 000 and its future development would be facilitated by the Spur Line.

26. To supplement, D/ERE, KCRC assured members that ER had the capacity to handle the additional passengers travelling on the Spur Line. When ER's signalling system was upgraded to automatic train operation by the end of 2002, the frequency of peak hour service could be increased from 24 to 27 trains per hour per direction if required.

27. Referring to the planned construction of the Spur Line, NOL and improved land-crossing facilities for vehicular traffic at Lok Ma Chau, Mr TAM Yiu-chung asked whether suitable planning had been made to avoid overcrowding the area. In reply, DS for T advised that the NOL project was still at the conceptual stage. The Administration would closely monitor the situation and further examine the issues involved after the Spur Line had commenced operation. Mr TAM however cautioned the Administration

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about the importance of early careful planning as it would be very difficult to make revisions once the design of the railway lines was finalized.

28. Noting that a section of the ER tracks would have to be moved away from their existing location, Mr LAU Kong-wah enquired about the impact of such relocation on the normal operation of train services. Sharing similar concerns, Mr CHENG Kar-foo sought elaboration from KCRC about the track connection between ER and the Spur Line at Sheung Shui. D/ERE, KCRC replied that the technical issues involved with track connection in Sheung Shui had been resolved. Referring to similar works undertaken by the Corporation previously, he assured members that such relocation would have no impact on the normal operation of ER. In response to members' request, D/ERE, KCRC agreed to provide supplementary information to members after the meeting.

KCRC

29. Mr LEUNG Fu-wah enquired about the employment opportunities to be created by the Project, as well as the percentage of local workers to be employed. He called on KCRC to give priority to employing local workforce for the Project. In reply, SD/CP, KCRC stated that the Corporation's policy was to ensure that all of its contracts provided maximum opportunity for the employment of local workforce. The same policy would apply for the Spur Line project. However, for some jobs requiring technical expertise not available locally, overseas workers might have to be employed. D/ERE, KCRC supplemented that about 1 000 jobs would be created for the project.

30. Responding to Dr TANG Siu-tong's enquiry, D/ERE, KCRC stated that KCRC would be entrusted with the management of the 28.5 hectare of fish ponds on Government land near Lok Ma Chau. The ecological value of these fish ponds would be enhanced to compensate for the 9.5 hectare of land taken up by the Lok Ma Chau Terminal.

31. Both Mr Albert CHAN and Mr David CHU suggested that a joint-Panel meeting be held with the Environmental Affairs Panel and Planning, Lands and Works Panel to discuss the Government's nature conservation policy and the protection of the wetlands in Long Valley in light of the latest development of the Spur Line project. The Chairman sought members' comment on the suggestion. Members did not raise any objection to the suggestion.

Admin.

32. Mr Abraham SHEK requested the Administration to provide relevant information on other alternative alignments for the Project, as well as their construction costs, programme and environmental impacts to members for consideration before the said joint-Panel meeting. Mr LAU Kong-wah considered that as private land was involved, the affected land owners should be invited to give views on the matter. His view was shared by Mr LAU Ping-cheung.

33. The Chairman requested TB to relay members' concerns raised at the present meeting to EFB and the Planning and Lands Bureau. The Chairman also requested the

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Admin. Administration and KCRC to provide all the information as requested by members in writing before the joint-Panel meeting.

(Post-meeting note: The joint-Panel meeting was subsequently scheduled to be held on 27 November 2001 at 10:45 am.)

V Shenzhen Western Corridor and Deep Bay Link

(LC Paper No. CB(1)1946/00-01(01) - Information paper provided by the Administration ;

LC Paper No. CB(1)139/01-02(01) - Submission from the Action Group Against Siu Lam Works (Route 10); and

LC Paper No. CB(1)144/01-02(01) - Submission from Route 3 (CPS) Company Limited)

34. At the invitation of the Chairman, DS for T introduced the Administration's paper (LC Paper No. CB(1)1946/00-01(01)) on the subject, which set out the current position on the Shenzhen Western Corridor (SWC) and Deep Bay Link (DBL). He said that as confirmed by the "Feasibility Study for Additional Cross-border Links" (Cross Links Study), there was a need for constructing SWC which was a dual 3-lane bridge spanning Deep Bay, together with its connecting road, DBL, to alleviate congestion at the existing land boundary crossings at Lok Ma Chau, Man Kam To and Sha Tau Kok which would reach saturation in the coming four to five years, and to enhance trade between Hong Kong and South China.

35. DS for T further stated that according to the agreement reached with the Shenzhen authority, each side would finance, manage and construct its portion of SWC in accordance with the boundary of Guangdong and Hong Kong, while the design of the bridge would be a joint effort. Both sides had also agreed to implement the project as soon as possible and would endeavour to complete the project in 2005. He added that during implementation, the Administration would maintain close liaison with the Mainland authorities.

36. With the aid of PowerPoint, the Deputy Project Manager, Major Works Project Management Office of the Highways Department (DPM(MW)/HyD) gave a presentation on the SWC and DBL projects. Members noted that the total cost of constructing SWC and DBL was approximately HK\$11 billion. The Administration intended to seek the approval of the Public Works Subcommittee (PWSC) on 14 November 2001 to upgrade the detailed design works of SWC and DBL to Category A.

Admin. 37. The Chairman referred to the simple maps contained in the paper, and requested the Administration to provide members with the materials presented at the meeting for information.

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(*Post-meeting note: A set of drawings and maps provided by the Administration on SWC and DBL was subsequently circulated to members vide LC Paper No. CB(1)235/01-02(04).*)

38. Members noted the submissions from the Action Group Against Siu Lam Works (Route 10) and Route 3 (CPS) Company Limited on the two projects (issued vide LC Paper Nos. CB(1)139/01-02(01) and CB(1)144/01-02(01) respectively).

DBL's connection with local road network

39. Concurring with the need for an additional land boundary crossing, Dr TANG Siu-tong expressed support for the construction of SWC. However, he referred to the opposition raised by the Tuen Mun District Council on the Administration's latest proposal to defer the northern section of Route 10 between Yuen Long Highway and So Kwun Wat and expressed grave concerns that in the absence of this section of Route 10, the additional traffic generated from DBL would aggravate the serious congestion already existing in Tuen Mun Road. In this connection, he queried the basis of the Administration's assumption that instead of using Tuen Mun Road which was toll-free, some of the vehicular traffic from the Mainland brought by DBL would take to Route 3 (Country Park Section) (Route 3) which was a longer, circuitous and tolled route.

40. Sharing similar concerns, Mr Albert CHAN also said that while he did not oppose to the long-term need of DBL and understood the planning for connecting DBL with Route 10, he had great reservation about the piecemeal approach adopted by the Transport Bureau (TB) in the implementation of major transport infrastructures as demonstrated in several projects recently. As he envisaged, once the SWC and DBL were completed, the majority of cross-boundary vehicular traffic now concentrated in Eastern New Territories (NT) would be diverted to SWC and it would have a disastrous effect on the already congested Tuen Mun Road. Dissatisfied with the poor planning of DBL's connection with the local road network, he considered that TB had erred seriously for failing to take the distribution of traffic into account.

Admin.

41. Referring to the five-year gap between the completion of DBL and Route 10 as a planning mistake on TB's part, Mr CHENG Kar-foo requested the Administration to provide relevant traffic forecasts for Tuen Mun Road, Yuen Long Highway and Route 3 before and after the opening of SWC and DBL to substantiate its claim that Yuen Long Highway and Route 3 could cope with the traffic demand during the initial operation of DBL. Notwithstanding the importance of establishing closer ties with the Mainland, he cautioned TB not to be over-ambitious in its planning. The Administration should ensure that Hong Kong people would not have to suffer from congestion unnecessarily caused by such projects. In this connection, Mr Albert HO raised serious doubts about the major planning assumptions used by the Administration in providing for DBL's connections with the local road network.

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42. Mr TAM Yiu-chung concurred with the need to fast-track SWC and DBL as their implementation had lagged behind previously. However, he also shared other members' general concerns about DBL's connection at Lam Tei which would naturally lead traffic to Tuen Mun Road. He pointed out that the Administration could not simply ignore the fact that drivers of lorries and container trucks coming off SWC and DBL would take to Tuen Mun Road, instead of choosing Yuen Long Highway and Route 3 which was a longer and circuitous route incurring extra time, fuel costs and tunnel toll. As the policy bureau responsible for co-ordinating the provision of transport infrastructure, TB should have taken all these considerations into account and made planning accordingly. It was indeed very difficult to convince members and the public to accept the present proposal. In order to resolve the said problem, Mr TAM suggested that the Administration should either consider advancing the implementation of Route 10, widening Tuen Mun Road or buying back the ownership of Route 3 to turn it into a toll-free route.

43. Noting the views and concerns raised by members, DS for T explained that according to the Administration's forecasts, the traffic of SWC and DBL would build up gradually after operation. In the initial stage, the improved dual 3-lane Yuen Long Highway and Route 3 would be able to cater for the traffic generated by DBL. In the longer term, the northern section of Route 10 would be required. He appealed for members' understanding on the need to implement highway projects by phases to avoid excessive impacts on the existing road network and said that under current planning, this section of Route 10 would be completed after 2010. The Administration would closely monitor the traffic situation and continue to review regularly its need and timing. As far as the southern section of Route 10 - North Lantau to Yuen Long Highway was concerned, it would serve the strategic function of providing an alternative access to the Hong Kong International Airport and other developments on Lantau. The Administration would brief members on the outcome of the latest review on the Route 10 project at the next regular Panel meeting in November.

44. To supplement, the Chief Engineer of the Transport Department advised that relevant transport models had been used to forecast the traffic demand of the major roads concerned. From the overall planning point of view, the improved Yuen Long Highway and the spare capacity of Route 3 would be able to cater for the traffic of DBL during its initial stage of operation from 2006 to before 2011.

45. The Principal Assistant Secretary for Transport (5) (PAS for T(5)) further explained that when SWC was completed in 2005, the distribution of cross-boundary vehicular traffic would even out. It was anticipated that the daily throughput of DBL would be about 28 000 vehicles, while the crossing in Lok Ma Chau would handle about 26 000 vehicles per day. At the request of Mr Albert CHAN, she agreed to provide more detailed information on the traffic distribution of southbound cross-boundary vehicles via the existing Lok Ma Chau crossing and the future SWC.

Admin.

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46. The Chairman considered that the Administration had not responded to the legitimate concerns raised by members about the imminent worsening congestion of Tuen Mun Road. Dismissing the Administration's traffic forecasts as totally unrealistic, she said that without the provision of better connections for DBL, both members and the public, especially the local residents in Tuen Mun, would find it hard to accept the present proposal. Notwithstanding the provision of Route 10 in the long run, the Administration should concentrate on the very real congestion problems to be created by DBL and put forward concrete measures to channel cross-boundary vehicular traffic to Route 3 via Yuen Long Highway. Mr TAM Yiu-chung also stressed the importance of having co-ordinated planning for the related Route 10 project. Mr Albert HO considered that planning for Route 10 should take into account the location of new container port facilities.

Planning for SWC

Admin.

47. Mr LAU Kong-wah opined that the merits of the SWC project should be considered in its totality against the economic benefits including the possible traffic diversions likely to be generated by building SWC and DBL. In this connection, he sought information about the connecting road infrastructure on the Mainland side after She Kou. In response, DPM(MW)/HyD advised that the section of SWC in the Mainland would connect to the western part of Shenzhen. He agreed to provide supplementary information to members after the meeting.

(Post-meeting note: A relevant map provided by the Administration was circulated to members vide LC Paper No. CB(1)235/01-02(04).)

48. On Mr LAU's further enquiry about the co-location of boundary crossing facilities, DS for T replied that in view of the large requirement of land for providing the necessary facilities, both sides had agreed to the principle of co-locating immigration and customs clearance on the Shenzhen side. In actual practice, it meant that cross-boundary checks would be undertaken separately by officers from the Hong Kong and Shenzhen authorities within the same premises. The Security Bureau was considering the related legal issues, etc. for deploying officers of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government to work in the Mainland.

Admin.

49. While recognizing the importance of maintaining closer ties with the Mainland, Miss Cyd HO emphasized the need for transparency and wide consultation during the planning stage of major cross-boundary infrastructural projects. She considered that TB should duly inform Members and the public about other forthcoming projects, together with the relevant planning parameters and assumptions, including the forecast of inbound and outbound passengers.

50. Mr Abraham SHEK referred to the current restriction on the use of cross-boundary crossings by vehicles and raised the issue about the cost-effectiveness of hefty investments for the provision of such infrastructures. DS for T responded that the

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Admin. provision of essential infrastructures could provide scope for a review of the policy of cross-boundary control. At the request of Mr SHEK, he agreed to provide supplementary information on the existing number of cross-boundary traffic permit holders and the forecast in five years' time.

Environmental concerns

Admin. 51. Dr TANG Siu-tong was concerned about the environmental and ecological impacts of DBL on Pak Nai which was a site of special scientific interest, and asked whether the Government had already consulted the green groups on the proposed alignment to avoid a recurrence of the Spur Line incident. Sharing similar concerns, Dr YEUNG Sum cautioned the Administration not to take the matter lightly. Referring to the lack of information in the Administration's paper, he requested for further details about the ecological and environmental impacts of SWC and DBL.

52. Acknowledging the members' concerns on the environment, DS for T said that consultation had already been held with major green groups. The general assessment was that the environmental impacts caused by the projects could be mitigated. The concerns raised by the green groups would be studied in detail during the EIA process. In addition, he reported that early discussions had also been initiated by HyD with AFCD and EPD on the projects. Highlighting the concerns about the environmental impact arising from the works on the Shenzhen side, DS for T assured members that the Administration would maintain close liaison with the Chinese side during implementation of the projects.

Admin. 53. Dr TANG also pointed out that the oyster beds along the intertidal mud flat of Deep Bay would be affected by the SWC project. Referring to the uncertainty about the ownership of these oyster beds and the claim staked by "Tang Yau Kun Tong" of Ha Tsuen in Yuen Long, he enquired about relevant resumption and compensation arrangements to be made. In response, DPM(MW)/HyD undertook to follow-up on the case with the Lands Department and revert back to the Panel in due course.

Implementation programme

54. Mr Albert CHAN expressed serious dismay that such mammoth projects would be completed by 2005, while the relatively small-scale project of the widening of Tung Chung Road could only be completed in 2006. Considering that such an implementation programme as highly unfair, he seriously condemned TB for discriminating against the local residents in Tung Chung.

55. Stressing the importance of SWC and DBL, PAS for T(5) explained that the Cross Links Study had provided the necessary information and data for taking forward the projects. In addition, the implementation had been fast-tracked as top priority and the proposed programme was only possible with preliminary and detailed design works undertaken concurrently. In view of the general need to speed up the progress of public

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works to create more job opportunities, the Administration would also review whether other projects could likewise be expedited.

56. As regards the Administration's timetable to seek funding approval from PWSC on the detailed design works of SWC and DBL at its meeting on 14 November 2001, both Dr YEUNG Sum and Mr Albert HO stated that Members of the Democratic Party had great reservation about the item. The Administration should address the concerns raised by members at the present meeting before putting the item to PWSC. In this respect, Mr CHENG Kar-foo asked whether the Administration would consider deferring the funding application pending further discussion by the Panel at the meeting on 23 November 2001.

57. While agreeing to consider Mr CHENG's suggestion, DS for T said that the Administration would provide written response to members' concerns before putting the funding request to PWSC. To supplement, PAS for T(5) said that due to site constraints, there was indeed not much room for shifting the alignment of SWC and DBL. In addition, the Shenzhen side had decided that the SWC should land at Dong Jia Tou in Shenzhen and the Cross Links Study had confirmed that Ngau Hom Shek was the most appropriate landing point on the Hong Kong side. This had been agreed by both Shenzhen and Hong Kong sides.

(Post-meeting note: The Administration subsequently advised the Panel that the funding proposal would be deferred.)

Admin. 58. The Chairman opined that more detailed explanation should be given by the Administration regarding the feasibility of other alternative alignments for the projects. Alarmed by the fact that prior agreement had already been reached by the Administration with the Mainland authorities on a number of critical issues before any Panel discussion or consultation, Dr YEUNG Sum expressed serious doubts about the presumptuous approach taken by the Administration in these projects. In response, DS for T explained that the location of the bridge landing at Ngau Hom Shek was confirmed by some detailed studies undertaken previously in the context of the Cross Links Study.

Admin. 59. Summing up the discussion, the Chairman invited the Administration to take note of the general concern raised by members about the supporting infrastructure on the Hong Kong side and their implementation programme. Without adequate supporting data, members had serious reservation about the projects at this stage. In this connection, she called on the Administration to address all the concerns raised by members at the meeting before seeking funding approval from PWSC.

60. In view of the wide implications of the projects, members agreed that the Panel should hold a special meeting on Thursday, 8 November 2001 at 8:30 am, to receive public views on Route 10, SWC and DBL.

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VI Route 7

- (LC Paper No. CB(1)86/01-02(03) - Information paper provided by the Administration; and
LC Paper No. CB(1)126/01-02(01) - Submission from the Aberdeen Kai Fong Welfare Association Ltd)

61. DS for T highlighted the salient points on the way forward proposed by the Administration for the Route 7 project as set out in LC Paper No. CB(1)86/01-02(03). He said that having regard to the motion passed by members at the meeting on 13 July 2001 and the views expressed by the general public at the Panel meeting on 21 September 2001, the Administration intended to conduct an engineering review for the entire section of Route 7 from Kennedy Town to Aberdeen. In this review, various possible alignments linking Kennedy Town to Pok Fu Lam and from Pok Fu Lam to Aberdeen would be examined. Secondly, the extent to which the project could be in tunnel and the costs and environmental impacts involved would be investigated. Thirdly, the traffic projection figures would also be reviewed in the light of the latest population projections and tourism initiatives for Aberdeen with a view to refining the timetable for the project in particular the section between Pok Fu Lam and Aberdeen. The engineering review would start shortly for completion in 2002.

62. Members noted the submissions from the Aberdeen Kai Fong Welfare Association Ltd (LC Paper No. CB(1)126/01-02(01)) and Friends of the Earth (tabled at the meeting and subsequently issued to members vide LC Paper No. CB(1)164/01-02(02)).

Provision of the section from Pok Fu Lam to Aberdeen

63. Notwithstanding the proposed review, Dr YEUNG Sum was worried that the Administration might defer or shelf the implementation of the section of Route 7 from Pok Fu Lam to Aberdeen on account of inadequate traffic demand. In view of the strong requests put forward by members and some attending deputations in previous Panel meetings, he sought the Administration's undertaking that this section of Route 7 would be constructed together with the link road from Kennedy Town to Pok Fu Lam.

64. In response, DS for T assured members that the technical feasibility of possible alignments for the section linking Pok Fu Lam to Aberdeen and its connection with the existing road network would be examined under the engineering review. However, even if Route 7 was to be built all the way from Kennedy Town to Aberdeen, consideration would have to be given for construction to be undertaken in phases with the section between Kennedy Town and Pok Fu Lam completed first as traffic forecasts indicated that there was a more urgent need for this section by 2010.

Admin. 65. Miss Cyd HO referred to the motion passed by the Panel urging for the construction of Route 7 in tunnel form, and requested the Administration to account for

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the additional costs so required, the toll strategy and the ownership of the tunnel when it reverted to the Panel on the review.

Provision of a mass transit system in the Southern District

66. Responding to Dr YEUNG Sum's enquiry about the Administration's stance on the provision of a mass transit system in the Southern District, DS for T stated that the South Island Line (SIL) which ran directly between Admiralty, Wah Fu and Ap Lei Chau was a longer term project considered by the Railway Development Strategy 2000 (RDS-2000). It was estimated that the revenue of SIL could cover the operating cost with the planned population of 310 000 on the south Hong Kong Island catchment in 2016. To make this railway line viable, an additional 170 000 population and 43 000 jobs within the said catchment area would be required. While SIL would be kept in view as a longer-term railway possibility, it commanded a lower priority than the six rail projects recommended by RDS-2000.

67. The District Planning Officer, Hong Kong advised that according to the projections made by the Working Group on Population Distribution, the population of the Southern District would be about 260 000 in 2010. In terms of planning for railway development, it would be worth noting that such population was dispersed over a relatively large area.

68. Dr YEUNG Sum however opined that the relevant planning standards for catchment population could be suitably relaxed, taking into account the benefits in terms of environmental protection and tourism promotion. Instead of considering the matter solely from an operational viability point of view, the Administration should adopt an open attitude and explore other alternatives for developing a mass transit system suitable for the Southern District, such as light rail or funicular tram. Considering that the projected population of 260 000 in 2010 together with potential residential developments along the alignment would justify the provision of a mass transit system in the Southern District, he called on the Administration to plan for its construction in parallel with Route 7 in tunnel form. Sharing this view, Mr Abraham SHEK considered that there might be a case for providing both road and rail infrastructures in parallel to attract further developments in the area. In this connection, he requested the Administration to provide information on the catchment population requirement and cost for constructing a railway line that followed the alignment of Route 7.

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69. Mr LAU Chin-shek also pointed out that main population centres in the Southern District such as Wah Fu and Ap Lei Chau had already exceeded the catchment population requirement of 50 000 for a railway station. Stressing on the importance of timely provision of transport infrastructure to meet the needs of the people, he urged the Administration to make early planning for developing a mass transit system in the area.

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70. Miss Cyd HO recalled that at the Panel meeting on 21 September 2001, various views had been put forward by attending deputations on the rail option. She was dissatisfied that no response was forthcoming from the Administration. Referring to paragraph 8 of the Administration's paper, she sought elaboration on the calculations for additional population requirement in the Southern District for the provision of a rail link.

71. In reply, DS for T said that the Administration was aware of the demand of local residents. Reiterating the Government's policy objective to use railways as the major transport mode, he stressed that the development of Route 7 and SIL was not mutually exclusive. Even if SIL was built, it would not displace much of the anticipated increase in road utilization in Pok Fu Lam. On the Chairman's enquiry, DS for T confirmed that the need and time of SIL would also be looked at. However, given the dispersed population and low-density development, the case for a railway line that followed the alignment of Route 7 was not strong on transport ground. A railway line linking Admiralty to Wah Fu, Ap Lei Chau would have to be constructed in tunnel because of the difficult terrain and the cost effectiveness between a heavy rail and light rail or funicular tram would not be greatly different. Responding to Miss Cyd HO's question, PAS for T(5) clarified that the calculations given in the paper was based on the catchment population for a railway line and not the total population of the Southern District.

72. The Chairman invited the Administration to take note of members' repeated call for the early construction of Route 7 in tunnel form, as well as the provision of a mass transit system in the Southern District. She also suggested that the Administration should discuss the matter with the two railway corporations.

VII Any other business

73. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 12:15 pm.

Legislative Council Secretariat
21 November 2001