

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(1)733/01-02
(These minutes have been seen
by the Administration)

Ref : CB1/PL/TP/1

Legislative Council
Panel on Transport

Minutes of meeting held on
Friday, 23 November 2001, at 10:45 am
in Conference Room A of the Legislative Council Building

Members present : Hon Miriam LAU Kin-ye, JP (Chairman)
Hon Abraham SHEK Lai-him, JP (Deputy Chairman)
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 LAU Chin-shek, JP
Hon LAU Kong-wah
Hon TAM Yiu-chung, GBS, JP
Hon Tommy CHEUNG Yu-yan, JP
Hon LAU Ping-cheung

Members absent : Hon David CHU Yu-lin, JP
Hon Andrew WONG Wang-fat, JP
Hon Andrew CHENG Kar-foo
Dr Hon TANG Siu-tong, JP
Hon Albert CHAN Wai-yip
Hon LEUNG Fu-wah, MH, JP
Hon WONG Sing-chi

Public officers : **Agenda item IV**
attending

Transport Bureau

Mr Arthur HO
Deputy Secretary for Transport (2)

Transport Department

Mr Robert FOOTMAN
Commissioner for Transport

Mrs Dorothy CHAN
Deputy Commissioner for Transport

Mr Joseph TSUI
Chief Transport Officer, Ferry Planning

Marine Department

Mr Roger TUPPER
Assistant Director of Marine, Planning & Services

Agenda item V

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, Strategic Roads Division, Planning Branch

Highways Department

Mr Robert LLOYD
Project Manager,
Major Works Project Management Office

Mr Eddie ROBLIN
Deputy Project Manager (1),
Major Works Project Management Office

Mr Adrian NG
Deputy Project Manager (3),
Major Works Project Management Office

Mr Norman MAK
Chief Engineer (1-3),
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)357/01-02 - Minutes of meeting held on 26 October 2001)

The minutes of meeting held on 26 October 2001 were confirmed.

II Information papers issued since last meeting
(LC Paper No. CB(1)289/01-02 - Submission on increasing the seating capacity of public light buses)

2. Members noted the above information paper issued since last meeting.

III Items for discussion at the meeting on 14 December 2001
(LC Paper No. CB(1)356/01-02(01) - List of outstanding items for discussion;
and
LC Paper No. CB(1)356/01-02(02) - List of follow-up actions)

3. Members noted that the following items had been proposed by the Administration for discussion at the next Panel meeting:

(a) Review of the operation of public light buses; and

(b) Progress report of the speed limit review.

4. Expressing concern about recent incidents involving service disruption at the MTR Airport Express and Tung Chung lines, Mr CHENG Kar-foo opined that this matter merited urgent discussion. The Administration and the MTR Corporation Limited should be invited to brief members on the investigation reports for these incidents, preferably at the next meeting in December. In view of Mr CHENG's suggestion, members agreed that the Chairman should liaise with the Administration on

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the timing for discussion by the Panel on this matter. For the next Panel meeting to be held on 14 December 2001 at 8:30 am, members agreed that item (a) above would be included in the agenda while the second discussion item would be kept open for the time being.

(Post-meeting note: In view of wide public concern about the incident at the Cross Harbour Tunnel on 26 November 2001 and with the concurrence of the Chairman, the item on "Contingency arrangements for handling major traffic and transport incidents" had subsequently been included in the agenda for the meeting on 14 December 2001 as the second discussion item. The item "Progress report of the speed limit review" as proposed by the Administration would be deferred to a later meeting.)

Admin 5. Referring to item 2 on the Panel's list of outstanding items for discussion (LC Paper No. CB(1)356/01-02(01)), Mr Tommy CHEUNG expressed concern about the long lead time for taking forward the construction of a multi-storey car park at Stanley Market. Members agreed that the Administration should be requested to provide a progress report on the project.

6. Mrs Selina CHOW also raised an issue about the inadequate supply of parking spaces at sightseeing hotspots. In this connection, she considered that measures should be taken by the Administration to cater for the sudden surge of parking demand at such locations during holidays. Members agreed that this matter would be included in the Panel's list of outstanding items for discussion.

IV Future development of passenger ferry services in Hong Kong

(LC Paper No. CB(1)356/01-02(03) - Information paper on future development of domestic passenger ferry services in Hong Kong provided by the Administration;

LC Paper No. CB(1)356/01-02(04) - Information paper on operation of cross boundary passenger ferry services at Tuen Mun Pier provided by the Administration; and

LC Paper No. CB(1)397/01-02(01) - Submission from New World First Ferry Services (Macau) Limited)

Future development of domestic passenger ferry services in Hong Kong

7. The Commissioner for Transport (C for T) reported that the Transport Department (TD) had completed its review on the future development of domestic passenger ferry services in Hong Kong (the Review). He then briefed members on the

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major findings and observations of the Review as set out in the Administration's paper on the subject (LC Paper No. CB(1)356/01-02(03)).

8. On the prospect of domestic passenger ferry operation, C for T stated that due to the rapid expansion of the rail and road-based transport network, the market share of ferry services had dropped and most of the existing ferry operators had a negative profit margin. In view of the convenience of land-based cross-harbour transport services and the rail/road connectivity of Lantau Island with the urban areas, patronage of the outlying island routes and inner harbour routes was expected to drop by 9% and 21% respectively in the next five years. Given the declining patronage trend, the Review had examined various possibilities to improve the financial viability of the ferry industry under the following three aspects:

- (a) to enhance the attractiveness of ferry services;
- (b) to reduce operating expenses of ferry operation; and
- (c) to expand opportunities of ferry operators to increase non-fare box revenue.

9. Regarding future network development, C for T reported that the Review had examined ten possible new routes and concluded that one harbour tour service might be viable. The findings had been passed to the Tourism Board and TD would assist in developing this new service where necessary.

10. In this connection, Mrs Selina CHOW observed that there was in fact scope for developing new recreational routes and harbour tours in Hong Kong for the enjoyment of tourists and local residents alike. Taking into account the on-going initiatives to promote tourism in Hong Kong, the Administration should recognize the development potential for such routes and provide the necessary supporting facilities accordingly. In particular, she expressed grave concern that the lack of pier facilities or coordinated ferry services for some major tourist attractions such as Stanley, Hung Shing Temple and Sai Kung had effectively frustrated massive promotional efforts made by the Hong Kong Tourism Board and the tourism industry. Emphasizing on the urgency of the matter and the long lead time required for constructing new piers, Mrs CHOW called on the Administration to take on a more proactive role and formulate measures to speed up the provision of additional pier facilities for developing such routes. In this respect, the Chairman pointed out that coordination among relevant bureaux and departments such as the Planning Department and Marine Department was required to take this initiative forward. Concurring with the need for early planning, Mr Tommy CHEUNG asked the Administration to consider the request made by the catering industry for the provision of pier facilities in Lei Yue Mun.

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11. In reply, the Deputy Secretary for Transport (2) (DS for T(2)) acknowledged the importance to optimize the use of Hong Kong's harbour resources to meet the transport needs of the people and to promote tourism development. As far as he knew, interest had been expressed by some operators to initiate such recreational routes and harbour tours.

12. C for T also stressed that TD was conscious of the need to support tourism and every effort had been made to identify the potential projects in the context of the Review. TD would continue to work together with the Tourism Commission (TC) to facilitate the development of such projects. However, it should be recognized that these were primarily tourism-related items and they would have to be taken forward from that perspective.

13. To supplement, the Deputy Commissioner for Transport (DC for T) reported that TD and other relevant departments had been liaising with TC on the provision of adequate pier facilities for major tourist attractions. Regarding ferry services for Hung Shing Temple, she informed members that pier facilities were available in both Sai Kung and Kau Sai Chau, and kaito services with fares ranging from \$6 to \$27 were provided by 27 licensed operators. DC for T agreed that TD would provide supplementary information on the existing ferry services available to the Panel after the meeting.

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14. Highlighting the need to maintain ferry operation in Hong Kong, Ir Dr Raymond HO considered that the attractiveness of ferry services could be enhanced by better interchange with other connecting public transport modes. In order to promote public acceptance, greater publicity and financial incentives or discounts to commuters would be required. Expressing agreement with the need to facilitate interchange, DC for T said that she would relay the member's views to the ferry operators for consideration.

15. Mr TAM Yiu-chung expressed support for the Government to continue providing indirect assistance to ferry operators to help maintain their financial viability, so that the quality of essential services would be maintained to serve the transport needs of the residents in outlying islands.

16. In this connection, Ir Dr Raymond HO sought elaboration on the scope of structural maintenance of piers undertaken by the Government. In reply, DC for T said that ferry operators were only responsible for routine maintenance whereas the Government was responsible for structural maintenance. To supplement, the Chief Transport Officer, Ferry Planning advised that according to the agreement with the ferry operators, the Government would carry out necessary structural maintenance works after typhoons.

17. Mr LAU Chin-shek was worried that continued losses sustained by ferry operators might necessitate service curtailment or fare increase to the detriment of the passengers. In this connection, he sought assurance from the Administration that the

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improvement measures identified in the Review would effectively improve the financial viability of the ferry industry and thus, obviating the need for ferry operators to reduce service or increase fare.

18. In response, DC for T elaborated on the improvement measures that could be taken in the three specified areas, such as route rationalization and reconfiguration, promoting advertising at pier top and external walls of the piers in Central, etc. She said that with these measures, it was hoped that more non-fare box revenue would be generated for the relevant operators while reducing operating expenses. At the same time, TD would continue discussions with the ferry operators to identify further measures for improvement.

19. Advising further on the initiatives to expand commercial opportunities for ferry operators, DC for T stated that so far, one application for ferry pier advertising had been received and processing was expected to complete in about three months. She also confirmed that the Administration had been facilitating the letting out of shop spaces at ferry piers by ferry operators, and that no extra ferry pier rental had been charged by the Government for such leasing. Mr LAU Chin-shek considered that if the existing three-year term of ferry licences could be lengthened, it might facilitate the ferry operators in this area of business. DC for T noted the member's suggestion.

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20. Responding to Ir Dr Raymond HO, DC for T explained that after careful study, the Review had concluded that the introduction of parallel services was not recommended as it would adversely affect the viability of the existing services. Illustrating with the Cheung Chau - Aberdeen route, she advised that while this service might achieve viability, its introduction was not recommended because it would divert passengers away from the existing Cheung Chau - Central service and undermine the latter's financial viability with an impact on fares.

Operation of cross-boundary passenger ferry services at Tuen Mun Pier

21. At the invitation of the Chairman, DS for T(2) introduced the Administration's paper on the subject (LC Paper No. CB(1)356/01-02(04)) and highlighted the Administration's considerations of the proposals (the proposals) to convert the Tuen Mun Pier to a cross-boundary passenger ferry terminal. In this connection, the Chairman invited members to note the submission provided by the New World First Ferry Services (Macau) Limited (First Ferry (Macau)) (LC Paper No. CB(1)397/01-02(01)).

22. Mr Albert HO referred to the need for optimizing the use of existing ferry pier resources and the repeated calls made by the Tuen Mun District Council and local residents, and expressed grave dissatisfaction about the lack of progress in taking forward the proposals from interested parties to use Tuen Mun Pier to operate cross-boundary passenger ferry services to Macau and other cities in the Pearl River Delta Region (the PRD Region). Given the geographical proximity between Tuen Mun and

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Macau and other cities in the PRD Region such as Zhuhai, he pointed out that a cross-boundary ferry pier in Tuen Mun would generate new passenger demand from residents in the New Territories (NT), particularly Northwest NT, who might otherwise opt for other land-based cross-boundary transport modes due to the long journey to the existing cross-boundary ferry terminals (CBFTs) in Tsim Sha Tsui or Sheung Wan. Apart from bringing tremendous time and travel trip savings to the commuting public in NT, it would also benefit the society as a whole in terms of providing relief to the existing congestion at major cross-boundary land crossings. Criticizing the Administration's stance as procrastinating and the Administration's review on existing passenger demand as meaningless, Mr HO strongly urged the Administration to make an early decision in this matter.

23. Mr TAM Yiu-chung expressed support for the proposals to meet the demand of local residents and to provide relief to existing congestion at major cross-boundary land crossings. Noting from First Ferry (Macau)'s submission that the company would be willing to consider providing funds to convert Tuen Mun Pier, he called on the Administration to make a decision as early as possible. Similar views were expressed by Mr Tommy CHEUNG and Mr Abraham SHEK.

24. In reply, DS for T(2) did not agree that the Administration was procrastinating. While acknowledging Mr Albert HO's concerns for maximizing the use of existing resources, he urged members to take note of the declining trend of passenger demand for cross-boundary ferry services in recent years which was due to the prevailing economic conditions and the availability of more convenient land-based cross-boundary transport modes. In addition, the 65% utilization rate of existing CBFTs did not seem to suggest an immediate need for another CBFT. On the other hand, the potential impacts of the proposals on the demand for services at existing CBFTs would have to be examined.

25. DS for T(2) added that the Administration would also need to consider the staffing and resources requirements for supporting the operation of the proposed new control point at Tuen Mun Pier. In this connection, he clarified that to date, the Administration had not received any formal offer to share out the related costs for converting Tuen Mun Pier. Subject to the Administration's decision, it was intended that public funding would be provided for the project. DS for T(2) assured members that the Administration would critically review all relevant factors, including possible benefits for enhancing the convenience for residents in NT, before making a decision in this matter.

26. Supplementing on the requirements for a CBFT, the Assistant Director of Marine, Planning & Services (AD of M) advised that substantial modifications would be required at Tuen Mun Pier to accommodate the necessary customs, immigration and quarantine facilities to support a boundary control point. Site constraints would also add to the difficulty of modification works.

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27. In reply to Mr LAU Chin-shek's enquiry about the delays at existing CBFTs as raised by First Ferry (Macau), AD of M explained that necessary support would be provided to ferries in the allocation of berthing slots. While no direct complaint had been received to date, he would follow up on the perceived problem.

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28. Responding to Mr LAU Chin shek, DS for T(2) advised that the Administration would come to a conclusion in the near future. In response to members' call for an early decision, he agreed that the Administration would revert to the Panel on the matter by the first quarter of 2002. In view of the urgent need to improve Hong Kong's business environment, Mr Abraham SHEK however considered that the Administration should make genuine efforts to speed up the decision process.

29. Summing up the discussion, the Chairman invited the Administration to take note of the repeated call from members for an early decision on the proposals for Tuen Mun Pier. In the meantime, the Transport Bureau should coordinate with other relevant bureaux and departments and discuss the matter further with interested parties.

V Route 10, Shenzhen Western Corridor and Deep Bay Link

(LC Paper No. CB(1)356/01-02(05) - Information paper provided by the Administration)

30. The Deputy Secretary for Transport (1) (DS for T(1)) briefly introduced LC Paper No. CB(1)356/01-02(05) which set out the Administration's latest position on the three projects - Shenzhen Western Corridor (SWC), Deep Bay Link (DBL) and Route 10. He particularly drew members' attention to the Administration's response to the views and concerns raised by members at the previous meeting on 26 October 2001 and the public hearing on 8 November 2001.

31. With the aid of PowerPoint, the Chief Engineer (1-3), Major Works Project Management Office of the Highways Department (CE/MW, HyD) took members through the recommended revisions for Route 10 as follows:

- (a) add road connections between Tsing Lung Bridge and the North Lantau Highway (NLH) and widen the section of the latter between the existing toll plaza and Yam O Interchange;
- (b) delete the section along the coast of North Lantau;
- (c) add an interchange between Tsing Lung Bridge and Tuen Mun Road at Tsing Lung Tau;

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- (d) delete Siu Lam Link Road and replace it with a tunnel/viaduct scheme between Siu Lam and the approaches to Ting Kau Bridge (the Siu Lam - Sham Tseng Tunnel); and
- (e) delete the east arm of the So Kwun Wat Link Road.

32. Members noted that the Administration intended to seek funding approval from the Public Works Subcommittee in December 2001 to undertake the detailed design of SWC, DBL and the revised scheme of Route 10.

Need for Route 10

33. DS for T(1) stressed that Route 10 was a strategic highway project to provide an alternative external road link for Lantau and the Hong Kong International Airport, to meet anticipated population and employment growth in Northwest NT, and to meet forecast traffic demand generated by cross-boundary activities. It would be required as the fourth north-south link besides Tuen Mun Road, Route 3 (Country Park Section) (Route 3) and Tolo Highway. In its review, the Administration had further examined the programme for both sections of Route 10 in the light of initiatives to accelerate the development of logistics industry in Hong Kong and to attract tourists from the Mainland, both of which would increase traffic demand between the Mainland and Hong Kong.

34. Mr Tommy CHEUNG said that while he had no comments to make on the southern section of Route 10, he did not see an urgent need for the Lam Tei Tunnel of the northern section. In the absence of any information about the project cost of the revised scheme and its financing arrangement, he found it difficult to decide whether additional resources should be spent at this stage to build this tunnel also.

35. In reply, DS for T(1) advised that subject to possible revisions after detailed design, the construction cost of the revised Route 10 would be more or less the same as the original scheme, i.e. \$22 billion. In view of the need to ensure timely provision of Route 10 for better interface with SWC/DBL, the whole project would be funded by the Government. Hence, the tunnels under the project would not be financed through the "Build-operate-transfer" arrangement.

36. While expressing agreement with the long-term need for Route 10, Mr TAM Yiu-chung was worried that many planning problems, such as in alignment and interchange, might have been ignored by the Administration in its attempt to rush through the project, thus resulting in wastage of public resources.

37. DS for T(1) however did not agree that the Administration was rushing through the project. The need for a north-south link besides Route 3 CPS was identified back in 1993 and was confirmed by the Third Comprehensive Transport Study in 1999 in the

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form of Route 10. In view of the long lead time required to provide major transport infrastructure, the Administration had taken a forward-planning approach. Reiterating that SWC and DBL together with Route 10 would provide a strategic direct link from North Lantau to the boundary, he called on members to support the functional need of these three important projects.

Gap between completion of SWC/DBL and Route 10

38. Emphasizing on the long-term need for the northern section of Route 10 to cope with the traffic generated from SWC/DBL, DS for T(1) said that the Administration now planned to proceed with the construction of Route 10 in one-go. A start was planned for 2003. Due to its engineering complexity, Tsing Lung Bridge would take five years to complete. Hence, completion of Route 10 was expected in 2008. To mitigate concerns about the gap between the completion of SWC/DBL and Route 10 causing congestion at Tuen Mun Road, the Administration would look into the possibility of bringing forward the section of Route 10 linking DBL to the urban area (i.e. Lam Tei Tunnel and Siu Lam - Sham Tseng Tunnel) by about 12 months with a view to ensuring better interface between SWC/DBL and Route 10.

39. While seeking a formal undertaking from the Administration to complete the two tunnels by 2007, Mr Albert HO considered that any gap between the completion of SWC/DBL and Route 10 lasting more than one year was unacceptable. Referring to the uncertainty on future location of new container terminal facilities and the shortcomings created by the gap in respect of interface between the projects, he said that there might be a case to defer SWC/DBL so that their completion could tie in with Route 10.

40. Notwithstanding the possibility of early completion, Ir Dr Raymond HO still perceived the gap as a potential problem, particularly in view of the fact that the projected population of Northwest NT was 1 530 000. He cautioned the Administration to carefully plan for the programme of Route 10 to cater for the corresponding transport needs.

41. Given the complex technical and environmental issues involved, Mr LAU Kong-wah expressed serious reservation about the Administration's claim that the project could be fast-tracked for completion by 2007. During the few years after the opening of SWC/DBL but before Route 10 was completed, he envisaged that local residents in Tuen Mun and Yuen Long would have to suffer from serious congestion at Tuen Mun Road as well as the local road network in Yuen Long. In this connection, he enquired about the measures to be taken by the Administration to tackle the problem. In reply, the Chief Engineer, Strategic Roads Division, Planning Branch of TD (CE/TD) explained that instead of travelling through local road network in Yuen Long, traffic coming from SWC/DBL could be directed to Yuen Long Highway at the Lam Tei Interchange.

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42. Responding to the concerns raised by members, DS for T(1) explained that according to traffic forecasts, the daily traffic flow of SWC and DBL in 2006 would be 28 000 vehicles, much less than the capacity of the crossing of 44 000. It was expected that traffic would build up incrementally in the first few years after the completion of SWC/DBL. Hence, notwithstanding the two-year gap between the completion of SWC/DBL and Route 10, no major problem was perceived as the improved dual 3-lane Yuen Long Highway and Route 3 would be able to cater for the demand in the initial stage. In addition, the commissioning of West Rail in end 2003 would help reduce land transport on Tuen Mun Road. DS for T(1) also assured members that the matter would be further examined in the context of the detailed design for the projects.

43. Dr TANG Siu-tong suggested that a direct road link should be built from Ngau Hom Shek to Route 3 via Tsin Shui Wai North. Apart from providing better local connections for SWC/DBL to relieve the congestion at Tuen Mun Road, this proposal could also address the existing congestion at the local road network in Yuen Long. In response, DS for T(1) advised that the Administration had already considered the member's suggestion and some technical problems were identified. More importantly, as this proposal would have to be taken forward from scratch and many environmental issues would be involved, its implementation might not necessarily be faster than Route 10. To supplement, CE/TD advised that local traffic problems would be pursued at the district level.

44. Referring to the planned widening of Tuen Mun Road, Ir Dr Raymond HO expressed concern about the traffic disruptions caused to the travelling commuters during the construction stage. DS for T(1) replied that the widening works would be carried out in phases. He assured members that during construction, three traffic lanes would be maintained in each direction at any one time.

Projected utilization of Tuen Mun Road, Route 3 and Route 10

45. Recalling the erroneous traffic forecasts provided by the Administration previously, Mr TAM Yiu-chung said that the new forecasts and assessments put forward by the Administration for the Route 10 project were not convincing at all and utterly fail to address the concerns raised by members as regards worsening congestion at Tuen Mun Road. He remarked that a gap of any length between the completion of SWC/DBL and Route 10 was unacceptable from the local residents' point of view. Hence, he called on the Administration to adopt a pragmatic approach and address the very real problems identified by members.

46. The Chairman was concerned that as the northern section of Route 10 were tolled, the utilization of Route 10 might not be as high as projected. In response, DS for T(1) advised that according to the latest traffic forecasts, the throughput at Route 3 during peak period would be up to capacity in 2010 if Route 10 was not built.

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47. To supplement, CE/TD advised that the existing volume/capacity (v/c) ratio of Route 3 during peak period was 0.6. Without Route 10, the v/c ratio of Route 3 would increase to 1.1 in 2011. During the initial stage of SWC/DBL's operation, it was forecasted that traffic coming from SWC/DBL would be about 2 000 passenger car units during peak hours, about one third of which would be diverted to Route 3. Without Route 10, the v/c ratio of Tuen Mun Road would be 1.3 in 2011 which suggested serious congestion. Other north-south links would also be operating close to capacity by then if Route 10 was not available. It was thus necessary to complete Route 10 by 2010 to provide much needed relief.

Admin

48. Both Mrs Selina CHOW and Mr LAU Kong-wah said that they were not at all convinced by the forecasts given by the Administration. In this respect, Mr LAU requested the Administration to provide the details of the latest traffic forecasts to members for information after the meeting.

Tolling strategy of Route 10 and its impact on Tuen Mun Road and Route 3

49. Members in general considered that the tolling strategy of Route 10 was a pivotal factor affecting the usage of Route 3 and the congestion at Tuen Mun Road. Mr Tommy CHEUNG pointed out that if the Siu Lam - Sham Tseng Tunnel was tolled, traffic coming from SWC/DBL would still take to Tuen Mun Road. As such, he was worried that this tunnel would follow the steps of Route 3 and become another white elephant. While acknowledging that some improvements were made by the revised scheme, Mr Albert HO opined that the Administration could not simply ignore the effect of tunnel toll on the success or otherwise in achieving traffic diversion among these alternative routes.

50. In reply, DS for T(1) explained that the tolling strategy for Route 10 northern section would be considered nearer the time of completion taking into account the situation at that time covering public acceptance and affordability, the economic situation, the need for traffic diversion and the toll levels of alternative routes.

51. Regarding the potential impact of Route 10 on the operation of Route 3, DS for T(1) said that from a planning perspective, Route 3 and Route 10 were not mutually exclusive as different purposes and destinations were served by them respectively. In response to the suggestion that the Government should assist the Route 3 (CPS) operator or some users of Route 3 CPS, he said that any business investments would inevitably involve risks and there was no justification for the Government to use public funds to intervene in a commercial operation or subsidize commercial activities. However, the Administration would be willing to discuss with the Route 3 (CPS) operator on other means to encourage motorists to use Route 3. He emphasized that when planning for the provision of transport infrastructure, the Administration would have to focus on meeting peak demand and avoiding congestion rather than daily patronage.

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52. Mr LAU Kong-wah did not agree with the Administration's stance in the matter. Given the existing congestion at Tuen Mun Road and under-utilization at Route 3, he considered that the Administration should accept its responsibility for obvious planning mistakes. The Chairman also considered that instead of counting on the Route 3 operator to come up with possible solutions, the Administration should seriously examine the issues involved and hold sincere discussions with the company.

53. Mrs Selina CHOW found it unacceptable that the Government had completely detached itself from the problems faced by the Route 3 operator. She was of the firm view that the Administration should face up to its balancing duty and put forward measures to even out usage at these alternative routes. Hence, it was very important for the Government to have a clear tolling strategy for Route 10. She cautioned that the Administration's stance would only serve to destroy the credibility of the Government and it would not be conducive to attracting foreign investments on transport infrastructures in Hong Kong. Similar views were expressed by Mr Abraham SHEK.

Technical issues

54. Given the high and steep slopes along the alignment, Ir Dr Raymond HO was concerned about the substantial hill cutting involved in the widening of NLH and asked whether the project cost would escalate as a result of increased technical difficulty. In response, CE/MW, HyD explained that when widening NLH, the space available at the toll plaza would be fully utilized. Moreover, the carriageway in both directions would be widened and hence, not much hill cutting was required. In this connection, Ir Dr HO urged the Administration to provide landscaping works accordingly. The Administration took note of the member's views.

55. Recalling the need for Tsing Ma Bridge to have its bridge bearings replaced shortly after completion, Ir Dr HO enquired about the measures to be taken by the Administration to avoid similar incidents for the new Tsing Lung Bridge which would adopt a new design. In reply, CE/MW, HyD confirmed that engineering feasibility of the shallow streamline deck design had been thoroughly tested in wind tunnels in Canada and Denmark. Regarding the replacement of bridge bearings of Tsing Ma Bridge, CE/MW, HyD advised that the incident was still being investigated. Subject to the findings by the consultants, HyD would specify suitable bearings for Tsing Lung Bridge taking into account the lessons learned.

56. Summing up the discussion, the Chairman invited the Administration to take note of the views expressed by members on the Route 10 project, particularly in respect of the gap between the completion of SWC/DBL and Route 10, and the impact of the tolling strategy of Route 10 on Route 3 and Tuen Mun Road. In view of the serious concerns raised by members, the Panel could not give its support for the Administration's present proposal. Mr Albert HO said that the Administration would need to properly account for these issues when seeking funding approval for the projects.

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VI Any other business

57. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 1:05 pm.

Legislative Council Secretariat

8 January 2002