

**For discussion
on 11 January 2002**

Legislative Council Panel on Transport

Route 10

PURPOSE

This paper further explains the planning of Route 10 and sets out our response to points raised at the public hearing on 17 December 2001.

OVERALL TRANSPORT PLANNING

2. Upon the completion of the Shenzhen Western Corridor (SWC) and Deep Bay Link in 2005/2006, there would be four boundary crossings. They are Man Kam To, Sha Tau Kok, Lok Ma Chau and SWC. The destinations of the cross boundary vehicles are expected to be mainly the Kwai Chung Container Port, the urban area, the Airport and the Hong Kong Disneyland. The four crossings will be connected to these destinations by four north-south road links in the New Territories, namely the Tolo Highway in the east, Tuen Mun Road in the west, Route 3 Country Park Section (Route 3) providing direct access to the Kwai Chung Container Port and connection with Lantau Link via Tsing Yi for access to Lantau, and Route 10 providing a link between North West New Territories to North Lantau. The above roads together would form a comprehensive road network for the cross boundary vehicles to gain access to various parts of the territory as shown at **Annex A**.

ROUTE 10

3. Route 10 is a strategic highway project first identified in the Second Comprehensive Transport Study Update published in 1993 as Route “Y” which serves as a new north-south road link in addition to Route 3. Its need and alignment was confirmed in the Third Comprehensive Transport Study (CTS-3) completed in 1999. It performs the following functions –

- (a) to provide a convenient alternative access for Lantau and the airport. It is of strategic importance to provide an alternative road link to Lantau and the airport as soon as possible. Furthermore, the Lantau Link will reach saturation in 2010/11;
- (b) to meet forecast traffic demand generated by cross boundary activities; and
- (c) to meet anticipated population and employment growth in North West New Territories and to relieve traffic on Tuen Mun Road.

4. It is a fallacy to assume that because we have presently spare capacity at Route 3 Country Park Section, we do not need to plan for Route 10. With the rapid development of cross-boundary traffic, the need for this link is becoming more pressing. Our estimate is that by 2005/2006 (when SWC and DBL are expected to be completed), there will be about 65,000 vehicles a day at the four boundary crossings and this will increase to 83,000 by 2010/2011. We also need to take into account that with more infrastructure provided, we will be in a better position to meet the suppressed demand in terms of cross boundary traffic. Route 10 is required to provide relief to the Lantau Link which will be saturated by 2010/2011 and will also required to provide a more direct access to the Disneyland. Without Route 10, the peak volume to capacity ratios for TMR and Route 3 will be 1.3 and 1.1 by then. It is appropriate to point out that in terms of transport management planning, the main concern is to avoid congestion at peak hours and hence daily total traffic, while relevant, is of lesser importance.

5. Planning of transport infrastructure has a long lead time and it would be irresponsible for Government to make a start on Route 10 only when Route 3 is saturated. To do this, Government will likely be criticized for placing the interest of the Route 3 operator above that of the community at large. Route 10 represents an investment by Government in Hong Kong's infrastructure and our prime concern is to ensure that it will bring benefits to the community as a whole. Route 10 will bring some 20% return on investment per year in terms of economic benefits to the community in the form of savings in travelling time and expenses.

6. The toll level for Route 10 northern section will be decided nearer the time taking into account various factors like affordability of the public, the need for traffic diversion and the toll level of any alternative

route. Any comparison with Route 3 which is a BOT franchise and hence required the toll adjustment mechanism to be determined at the outset before award of the franchise, is not very relevant.

TUEN MUN-CHEK LAP KOK LINK

7. As regards Sir Gordon Wu's proposal of linking up Tuen Mun and Chek Lap Kok, we indeed have a similar long-term plan for a direct link from Tuen Mun to Chek Lap Kok (i.e. the Tuen Mun-Chek Lap Kok Link) (TM-CLK Link) as shown at **Annex B**. Such a link was identified in the CTS-3 as a third link to Lantau and the airport. Planning for this link takes into account further development of the logistics industry in Lantau, a possible fifth land crossing to the western shore of the Pearl River Delta and the future location of the new Container Port. However, it does not obviate the need for Route 10 which serves different functions –

- (a) TM – CLK Link only connects the airport with Tuen Mun. The catchment of Route 10 is much wider than the TM – CLK Link. Other than providing a direct connection for traffic from Yuen Long and Tuen Mun, it will also be attractive to motorists from Tsuen Wan, Kowloon and Northeast New Territories;
- (b) our forecast is that only less than 5% of the freight traffic from SWC would head for the airport. Therefore most traffic would still use Route 3 or Route 10 to gain access to the container port; and
- (c) TM – CLK Link will not help relieve traffic from Tuen Mun Road and Route 3.

8. Sir Gordon Wu indicated that the cost of the TM – CLK Link would be \$9.5 billion, which does not seem to include cost for environmental mitigation measures which could be quite substantial. Our CTS-3 estimates for the Tuen Mun and Chek Lap Kok link and its connecting road, i.e. the Tuen Mun Western Bypass amounted to over \$20 billion. We have reservations as to whether the \$9.5 billion estimate is realistic.

9. One of the main purposes of an alternative access to Lantau is to cater for unforeseeable circumstances when road access to Lantau and the airport is disrupted while the airport is in operation, e.g. serious traffic accidents. The alignment of Route 10 and its links to Tuen Mun Road at Tsing Lung Tau meets this objective in the best possible way.

10. As regards the height of the Tsing Lung Bridge, Highways Department has already consulted the Civil Aviation Department and the proposed bridge structure would not exceed the height restriction imposed in that area. In any case, we are talking about a bridge structure of about 178 m high, while the proposed building in Tsuen Wan is a 100 storey building of over 400 m.

11. As much planning has already been done on Route 10, it is possible to complete the project by 2008. TM – CLK Link is still at its conceptual stage and therefore it could not be completed earlier than Route 10.

12. Our policy is to plan transport infrastructure in accordance with changing social and economic circumstances. A link from Tuen Mun to the airport and Route 10 are not mutually exclusive. If developments demand a direct link from Tuen Mun to Chek Lap Kok, we would no doubt pursue that.

BASIS OF TRAFFIC PROJECTIONS

13. There are concerns about the basis of the traffic projections. It is untrue and over simplistic to say we base our decisions strictly in accordance with the CTS-3 report. CTS-3 provides a blueprint for the planning of transport infrastructure but the programme of individual projects is subject to further study having regard to latest traffic projections as well as other socio-economic changes. We have instituted an annual Strategic Highway Project Review, the main purpose of which is to ensure transport infrastructure can be provided in a timely manner to meet demands. The projections quoted in Sir Gordon Wu's report were made before 1999 and were used as a basis for arriving at the CTS-3 conclusions but these have since been updated. Also, it is normal for traffic studies to cover more than one scenario, i.e. high, medium and low growth scenarios. Quoting only the high scenario in the CTS-3 report does not give readers a full picture of the CTS-3 projections. In the case of Route 10, our latest traffic forecast indicates a need for the southern section by 2007/2008 and the northern section in 2010/2011 taking into account all

relevant updated factors including the opening of West Rail. We stand by these projections. The plan to advance northern section of Route 10 to 2007 is mainly in response to local demand as well as changing economic circumstances.

14. Traffic projections are not an exact science and are affected by various external factors such as human behaviour and the state of the economy. This is the case worldwide and our traffic forecasting model is in line with that used internationally. Our projections are as good as any projections put forward. For example, our average traffic volume forecast on Route 3 during the tender stage was 40,158 for 2001 under the low range scenario which is very close (in fact a little lower) compared to the existing flow of over 43,000. Under the same low range scenario, this was expected to go over 90,000 by 2011.

SUBSIDY FOR ROUTE 3 USERS

15. There are suggestions that Government should 'subsidize' certain road users of Route 3 in order to improve its utilization. We do not see any justification to use public funds to subsidize certain users of Route 3 or indeed any other tunnels. Road users should make their own choice as to whether they should use any of the four north-south links (i.e. Route 3, Tolo Highway, TMR and Route 10). The important thing is to offer road users a choice of a quicker albeit more expensive route. In fact, since the completion of Route 3, diversion of traffic from TMR has happened. While the daily traffic for Route 3 and TMR taken together increased by 39% over the past three years, the traffic on TMR itself fell by 5%. The traffic at Route 3 is growing at an average rate of about 20% per year over the past three years and with the completion of improvements at the three existing land crossings and SWC/DBL, this trend should continue. Whether there is a case for such 'subsidy' on the ground of promoting the development of logistics business is a separate issue which requires much more study.

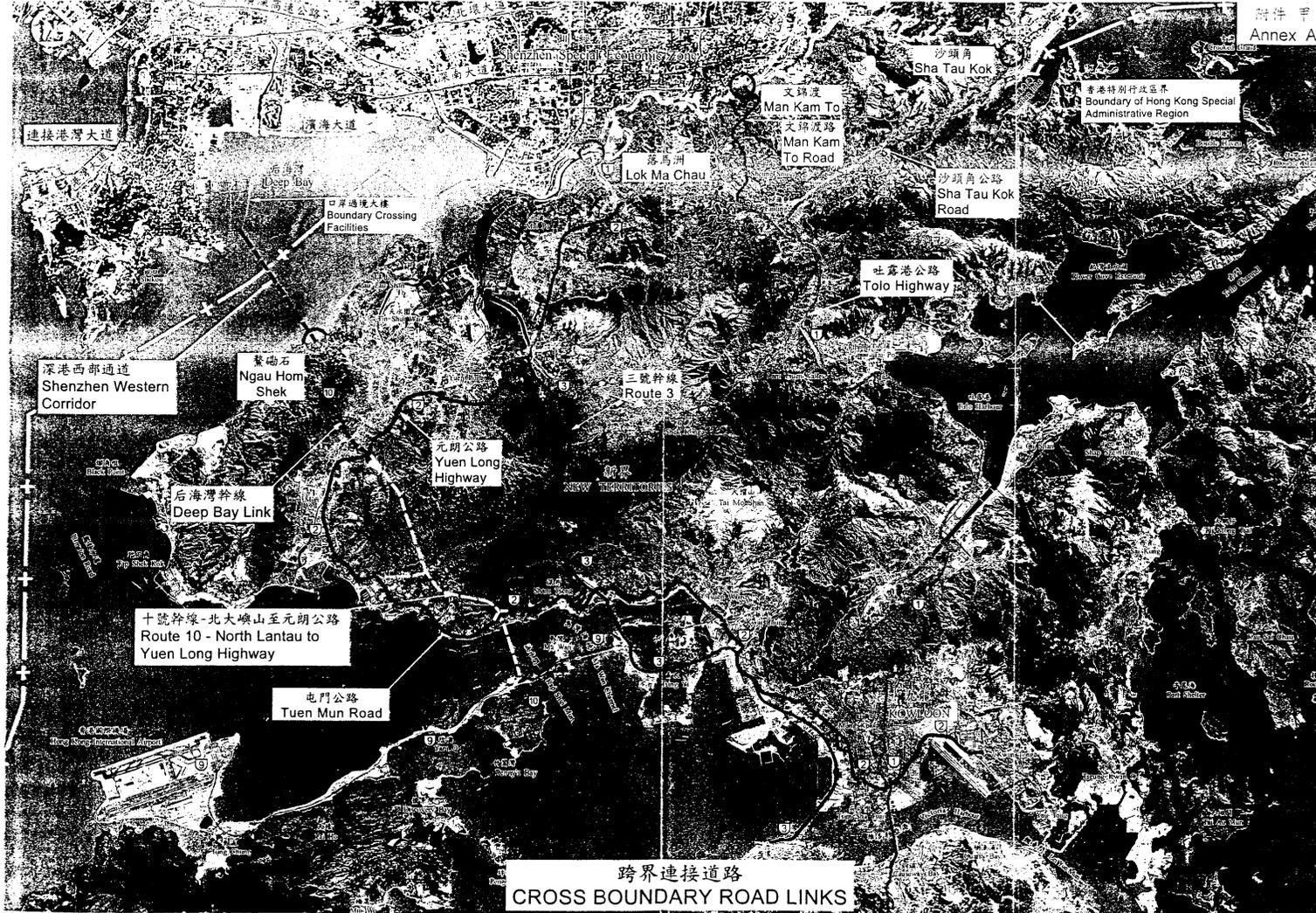
THE WAY FORWARD

16. We plan to submit our funding application for Route 10 to the Public Works Sub-Committee of the Finance Committee on 30 January 2002.

ADVICE SOUGHT

16. Members are invited to provide comments on the paper.

**Transport Bureau
January 2002**



工程項目示意圖

Indicative Plan on Projects

附件乙
Annex B

