

**Legislative Council Panel on Transport
and Legislative Council Panel on Security**

**Transport Arrangements Associated with
the Introduction of 24-hour Passenger Crossing at
Lok Ma Chau Control Point
- Trial Scheme for Taxi and Public Light Bus Operation
during the Extended Hours**

PURPOSE

Further to the joint Panels meeting held on 6 January 2003 and the site visit with Members on 10 January 2003, this paper informs Members of the Administration's consideration in respect of the introduction of a trial scheme for operation of taxis and public light buses (PLBs) in the Lok Ma Chau Control Point (LMCCP) during the extended hours.

BACKGROUND

2. At the last meeting on 6 January 2003, we explained to Members the constraints which need to be addressed properly before a trial scheme for operation of taxis and PLBs in the LMCCP can be implemented, but we have taken a proactive approach in considering the trades' proposal for a trial scheme. We also informed Members that having considered their views, the Administration agreed in principle to work out a trial scheme to allow regulated access by taxis to LMCCP during the extended hours (i.e. between midnight and 6.30 am), and that we would also consider the introduction of a similar trial scheme for PLBs.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

3. In his Policy Address delivered on 8 January 2003, the Chief Executive highlighted the need to forge closer economic co-operation with the Mainland and set out a clear direction for expediting economic integration with the Pearl River Delta Region. In pursuance of this policy objective, our transport policy on the provision of public transport services at our control

points is that, where circumstances allow, we would permit different modes of public transport to operate to our cross boundary control points as far as possible. In implementing this policy, we would have to consider the conditions and constraints at each of the control points. The arrangements for the provision of transport services to control points must be implemented in a progressive manner to ensure an orderly and safe environment and maintain smooth passenger and cargo flow.

4. The following are the guiding principles for considering whether, when, how and what public transport modes should be allowed to have access to control points –

- (a) priority should be given to **mass carriers** and transport modes which have large carrying capacity to ensure efficient use of the limited road space and facilities of the control points;
- (b) smooth operation of **freight transportation** through the limited access facilities must be maintained;
- (c) **law and order** inside the control point should not be compromised. As a responsible Government, we must devise pragmatic and comprehensive traffic control schemes for both vehicles and passengers;
- (d) **passengers safety** should not be compromised under any circumstances. We must ensure adequate and safe pedestrian access for passengers;
- (e) **smooth traffic flow** inside the control points must be ensured to maintain proper operation of the control points. We should minimise traffic conflict between the different types of vehicles types using the control points, such as container trucks, goods vehicles, coaches, shuttle buses, hire cars, private cars and other transport modes; and

- (f) there should not be any disruption to the operation or programme of any ongoing construction works taking place inside the control points. The provision of additional public transport services should not be at the expense of other **improvement works at hand or planned projects.**

PUBLIC TRANSPORT ARRANGEMENTS AT LMCCP DURING THE EXTENDED HOURS

Planned provision

5. As explained in our paper to the joint Panels on 6 January, the cross boundary passenger services via the LMCCP including the overnight service of the Lok Ma Chau – Huanggang cross boundary shuttle bus (at 10-15 minute frequencies) and the connecting public transport services at San Tin. There would also be cross boundary coach services and hire car services. They are expected to be able to meet passenger demand during the extended hours.

Trial Scheme for Taxis and PLBs during the Extended Hours

6. In examining the feasibility of a trial scheme to allow regulated access of taxi and PLBs to the LMCCP during the extended hours, we are guided by the principles set out in para. 4 above. Having considered all relevant factors and views expressed on the matter, we plan to also work out a trial scheme to allow regulated access by green minibuses (GMBs), in addition to taxis, to the LMCCP during the extended hours.

7. GMBs are selected instead of red minibuses (RMBs) because GMBs are better regulated and monitored in term of service level, frequency and fares, and it is consistent with our established policy of encouraging RMBs to convert to GMB operation. Transport Department is considering the GMB routes to be covered in the trial scheme and drawing up the arrangements for inviting operators in the PLB trade to submit their applications.

8. In working out the details of the trial schemes for taxis and GMBs, we need to address a number of practical issues. To recapitulate, the issues are -

- (a) provision of a suitable location within the LMCCP which is close to the immigration hall for picking up and setting down passengers by taxis and GMBs and to provide a safe pedestrian passage for passengers to and from the immigration hall;
- (b) provision of adequate and efficient shuttle bus services to carry the taxi and GMB passengers between LMCCP and Huanggang, the details of which need to be discussed with the shuttle bus operator and the relevant Mainland authorities;
- (c) proper arrangements to ensure that any new public transport service arrangements to be introduced would not cause delay to the improvement works currently underway at the LMCCP;
- (d) assessment of passenger demand for public transport services, including taxis and GMBs upon implementation of 24-hour opening of LMCCP to facilitate proper planning and arrangements for the trial operation of taxis and GMBs in the LMCCP; and
- (e) proper and efficient taxi and GMB operational arrangements at the LMCCP to ensure no obstruction to the smooth operation and security of the control point.

Latest Development

9. We have examined these issues carefully. We intend to make use of the operational carpark at LMCCP to provide taxi and GMB stands during the extended hours. The layout plans at Annexes A and B illustrate the flow of traffic and passengers in LMCCP under the trial scheme.

10. As we explained to Members during the site visit on 10 January, we are pursuing the following to address the other issues to ensure a smooth trial -

Smooth traffic flow

- (a) The egress of the proposed taxi and GMB stands is very near to the exit of the new Container Vehicle Examination Building where the Customs & Excise Department would use a Fixed Vehicle X-ray System to examine inbound container vehicles. This system will be commissioned on 31 January 2003 and its “operability and testing period” will commence immediately thereafter on a 24-hour basis for a minimum of 30 days, or until the system meets its specified performance levels. There could be potential conflict at the permanent Emergency Vehicular Access (EVA) (which will be completed before end of January 2003) between taxis and GMBs and the large container vehicles leaving the building. We are considering the need for and feasibility of introducing traffic management measures to regulate the traffic in this location.
- (b) To better regulate the taxi traffic into the LMCCP in order to avoid congestion in the control point or at San Sham Road, we plan to introduce a ticket system and will identify a holding area outside the LMCCP for empty taxis which want to enter the LMCCP to queue. The taxi drivers will be given a ticket to indicate their order of entrance to the LMCCP. We intend to locate the taxi holding area in San Tin PTI if security and traffic concerns could be addressed.
- (c) Suitable personnel will need to be deployed at the taxi and GMB stands in the LMCCP and the designated taxi holding area to maintain orderly operation of the taxis and GMBs. Details of these arrangements are being worked out by Transport Department and the Police.

Provision of safe pedestrian passage for passengers

- (d) We will provide footpaths in the operational carpark for waiting passengers at the taxi pick-up points and laybys for taxi drop-off and GMB loading/unloading activities. Outbound taxi and GMB passengers would walk along the same path as the one for outbound shuttle bus and coach passengers to enter the immigration hall. However, due to construction works in the vicinity, there is no proper access for inbound passengers to go to the proposed taxi and GMB stands. Removable posts will need to be erected at the EVA to separate the passengers from the traffic at the EVA. This is highly undesirable from road safety point of view. We are examining various options such as providing temporary access through routes A or B (see the plan in Annex B) to separate passengers from the traffic at the EVA.
- (e) Suitable road signs and road markings will need to be put in place. New signage will also need to be provided to direct passenger flow between the immigration hall and the proposed taxi and GMB stands.
- (f) There is operational need for carparking spaces for the operating departments near to the immigration hall even during the extended hours. We will designate part of the outbound coach holding area as temporary carparking spaces during the trial period. In addition, the provision of laybys and passenger waiting areas in the operational carpark for the trial schemes will reduce the number of carparking spaces available in the carpark during the day time. We also need to identify alternative space in the LMCCP for permanent reprovisioning of the carparking spaces to make up the shortfall.

Assessment of passenger demand

- (g) At present, it is not possible to have a realistic assessment of the passenger demand for taxis and GMBs to the LMCCP during the extended hours. We would have to make an assessment of the passenger travel pattern after the implementation of 24-hour operation of LMCCP

on 27 January 2003. Based on the actual traffic situation after implementation the 24-hour operation of the control point, we will review the planning and arrangements for taxis and GMBs to ensure an effective traffic control and management system.

Provision of adequate and efficient connecting shuttle bus services

- (h) Since taxi operation is not subject to any regulation on service frequency, if there is a sudden increase in taxi passengers to LMCCP and there is not adequate additional shuttle bus service to cater for this demand after they have completed the immigration procedures to transport them to Huanggang, it would create a lot of problems to the orderly operation at the LMCCP and the shuttle bus stop. We must avoid such situation. Therefore, we need to ensure that there will be adequate and timely provision of shuttle bus services and possibly additional standby service to cater for the additional demand for shuttle bus service at LMCCP from taxi and GMB passengers. Transport Department is exploring with the shuttle bus operator the best arrangements and will discuss with the relevant Mainland authorities when the details are ready.

Coordination with existing works in LMCCP

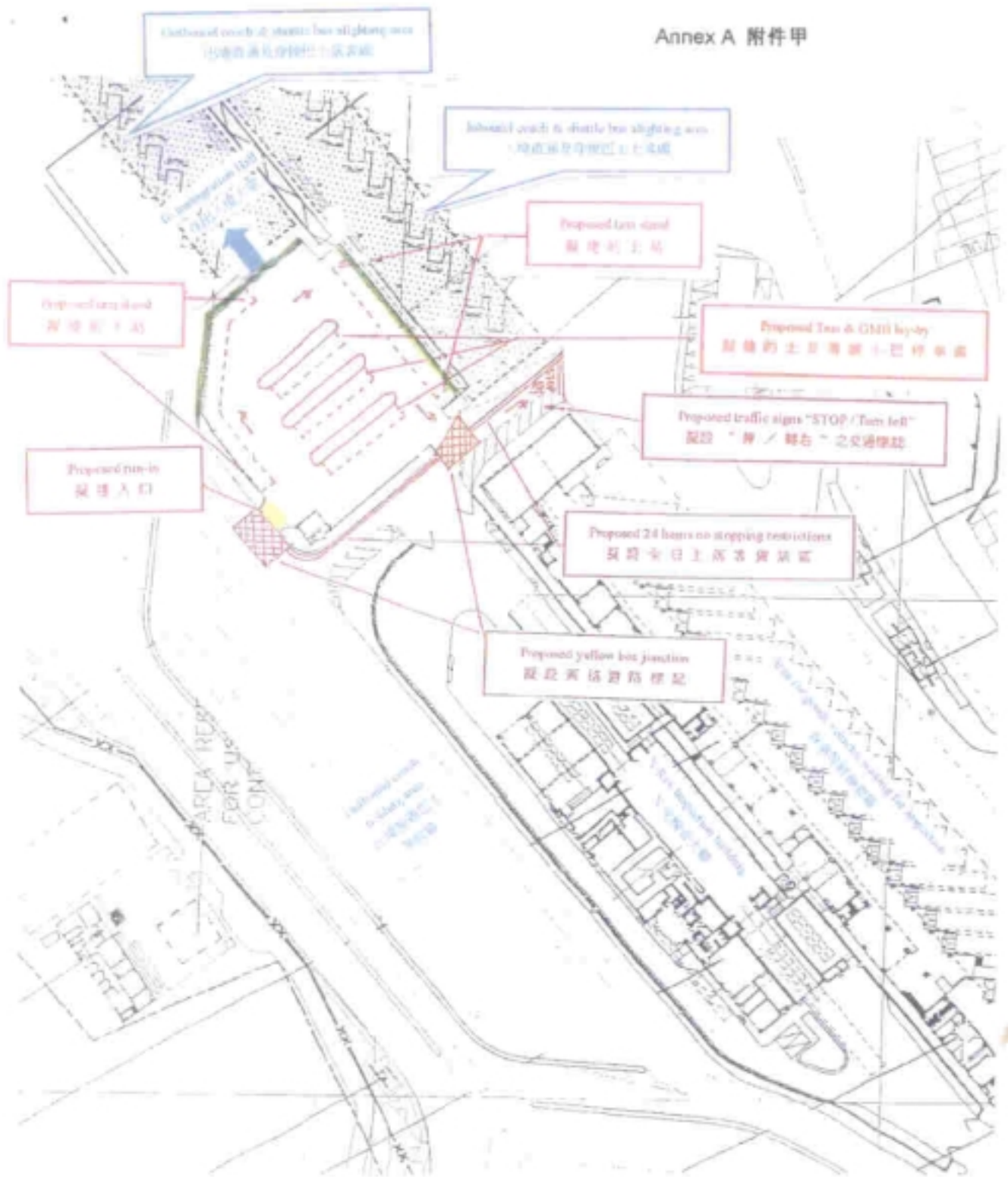
- (i) Construction works are currently underway in nearly 50% of the area of the LMCCP. We need to ensure that the necessary modification works for the trial schemes will not disrupt the progress of the ongoing improvement projects which are on full stream and are targeted for completion by September 2003. For example, when the permanent EVA to the south of the operational carpark is completed before end of this month, the existing temporary EVA at the northern end of the operational carpark must be closed off to make way for the next stage of construction to provide new outbound coach drop-off area and inbound coach pick-up area.

Commencement of the trial schemes

11. The modification works to prepare for the trial schemes are expected to be completed by mid March 2003. We are also working in full swing to sort out the details of the trial schemes and are in discussion with the taxi and PLB trades on the related issues. Transport Department will in parallel make preparation to conduct a GMB operator selection exercise for the trial. We shall decide on the target implementation dates for the two trial schemes as soon as possible when we have resolved the issues described above.

Environment, Transport and Works Bureau
13 January 2003

Annex A 附件甲



落馬洲管制站延長通關時段之的士及小巴運作試驗計劃草圖
Layout Plan for Trial Schemes of Taxi & Green Minibus Operation in Lok Ma Chau Boundary Control Point during the extended hours.

