

16 October, 2002

The Honourable Mrs Miriam LAU Kin-ye, JP
The Chairman
Panel on Transport, Legislative Council
Legislative Council Building
Hong Kong

Dear Chairman

Request to reconsider the timing of Tsing Lung Bridge

We, the undersigned, understand that the Legislative Council Panel on Transport will hold a special meeting on Friday, 18 October 2002 to discuss the current status of Route 10 road scheme. We, therefore, wish to bring to your attention the various factors which could affect Legislative Council's decision of whether or not to proceed with the construction of the proposed Tsing Lung Bridge at this time.

On 17 December 1999, Finance Committee of the Legislative Council approved funding for the detailed design of the southern section of Route 10. During the 3 year period since that approval, the following events have taken place which could not have been foreseen at the time when funding was approved :

- Economic integration between Hong Kong and the Pearl River Delta (PRD) has increasingly become one of the top priorities for Hong Kong over the past few years. Interestingly, the physical infrastructure connectivity to the Eastern PRD has far exceeded that to the Western PRD. Similar to the Eastern PRD, the Western PRD including Zhongshan, Jiangmen, Foshan, Shunde and Zhaoqing with a combined GDP of RMB 288bn (about 20% of Hong Kong's GDP) is also export-oriented, but Hong Kong so far has not been able to play a more active role in helping their exports to the world market. Better, more efficient and convenient physical infrastructure connectivity between Hong Kong and the Western PRD should be able to open up more business opportunities in Western PRD to Hong Kong. In logistics, trade related and financial services, for example, Hong Kong has obvious advantages to serve this region and is well positioned to tap the potential of this growth area.
- To develop Hong Kong as a tourism hub is also one of the priority areas that the Hong Kong Government is now pushing. Faster expansion in tourism will certainly offer

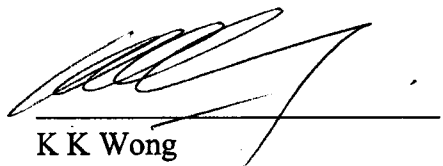
growth impetus and create employment opportunities for Hong Kong. Transportation infrastructures that can greatly improve the connectivity between Hong Kong and the Western PRD are essential for Hong Kong to pursue as a regional tourism hub. The improvement in transportation connectivity between Hong Kong and the Western PRD should enhance Hong Kong's strengths in tourism by leveraging tourist attractions in Macau, Zhuhai, or even other cities in the Western PRD especially with Macau emerging as the Las Vegas of the East attracting visitors from all over the world. International tourists may perceive Hong Kong, Macau and the PRD as one area where integrated and complementary attractions are provided and hence will lengthen the average stay period and increase their total spending in Hong Kong accordingly.

- On 8 March 2002, the Legislative Council Finance Committee voted against the funding application for the detailed design of the northern section of Route 10 and requested the Administration to comprehensively review the whole Route 10 road scheme. Such a decision could not have been foreseen at the time when detailed design for the southern section was approved.
- The proposed Tsing Lung Bridge is not a weather secure route, being exposed to strong wind impact as is the existing Tsing Ma Bridge. In fact, it could be worse than the Tsing Ma Bridge as the latter at least has an enclosed lower deck which is less affected by strong wind than the upper deck. The proposed Tsing Lung Bridge does not have such a provision in its current plans. To give Councillors an idea of the effects of strong winds, during the period August 1997 to early October 2002, the upper deck of the bridge was partially closed (open only to vehicles not exceeding 1.6 metres in height) 48 times and fully closed 6 times. An alternative link such as a Tuen Mun and Chek Lap Kok road tunnel, considered in the Third Comprehensive Transport Study for completion in 2016, does not have such a disadvantage as it could be constructed using the well proven submerged tube technique. If required, the Tuen Mun - Chek Lap Kok link could be expanded to accommodate a future rail link which gives an obvious advantage over the proposed Tsing Lung Bridge as the latter offers no opportunity for a combined road-rail link.
- A Tuen Mun - Chek Lap Kok link will provide an efficient and direct connection between the Hong Kong International Airport and Shenzhen Airport via the Shenzhen Western Corridor and Shekou, thus capturing more flow of air cargo and people from the Pearl River Delta. Besides, such a connection will also facilitate the one million population in Tuen Mun and Yuen Long with convenient access to the airport.
- A Tuen Mun - Chek Lap Kok link will provide an opportunity for a future railway linkage connecting the existing Airport Express / Tung Chung line with the West Rail and a possible Macau / Zhuhai / Hong Kong railway. The link will also enhance the utilization of the existing airport railway line and the future West Rail.

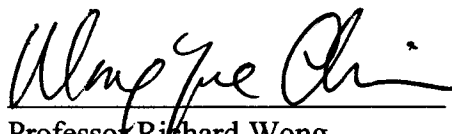
- Hong Kong is currently suffering from a sustained period of deflation and substantial budget deficit. The proposed Tsing Lung Bridge and Route 10 has been budgeted to cost \$23 billion which is substantially higher than that for a Tuen Mun - Chek Lap Kok link according to reliable estimates. The current need for an optimum use of precious resources has become even more crucial than at the time when funding was approved for the detailed design of the southern section of Route 10.

In light of the above factors, we strongly request our Honourable Councillors to reconsider the timing of the Tsing Lung Bridge and perhaps consider the implementation of the Tuen Mun - Chek Lap Kok link as a Phase I project to be followed by the Tsing Lung Bridge as a possible Phase II project but subject to a full review after the link is completed.

Yours faithfully



K K Wong
Member of Hong Kong Airport
Authority



Professor Richard Wong
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cc Members of the Panel on Transport