

立法會

Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(1)404/03-04
(These minutes have been seen
by the Administration)

Ref : CB1/PL/TP/1

Panel on Transport

Minutes of meeting held on Friday, 24 October 2003, at 10:45 am in the Chamber of the Legislative Council Building

- Members present** : Hon LAU Kong-wah, JP (Chairman)
Hon Andrew CHENG Kar-foo (Deputy Chairman)
Ir Dr Hon Raymond HO Chung-tai, JP
Hon CHAN Kwok-keung, JP
Hon Andrew WONG Wang-fat, JP
Hon Miriam LAU Kin-yee, JP
Hon TAM Yiu-chung, GBS, JP
Hon Abraham SHEK Lai-him, JP
Hon Tommy CHEUNG Yu-yan, JP
Hon Albert CHAN Wai-yip
Hon LEUNG Fu-wah, MH, JP
Hon WONG Sing-chi
- Non-Panel Members attending** : Dr Hon YEUNG Sum
Hon IP Kwok-him, JP
- Members absent** : Dr Hon David CHU Yu-lin, JP
Hon Albert HO Chun-yan
Hon Mrs Selina CHOW LIANG Shuk-ye, GBS, JP
Hon LAU Chin-shek, JP
Dr Hon TANG Siu-tong, JP
Hon LAU Ping-cheung

**Public Officers
attending : Agenda Item IV**

Environment, Transport and Works Bureau

Mr Arthur HO

Deputy Secretary for the Environment, Transport and Works
(Environment and Transport) T2

Mr Patrick HO

Principal Assistant Secretary for the Environment, Transport
and Works (Environment and Transport) T1

Electrical & Mechanical Services Department

Mr LAW Yu-wing

Acting Assistant Director/Gas & General Legislation

Agenda Item V

Environment, Transport and Works Bureau

Mr Paul TANG

Deputy Secretary for the Environment, Transport and Works
(Environment and Transport) T1

Mr Raymond HO

Principal Assistant Secretary for the Environment, Transport
and Works (Environment and Transport) T7

Highways Department

Mr WAN Man-lung

Principal Government Engineer/Railway Development

Agenda Item VI

Environment, Transport and Works Bureau

Mr Paul TANG

Deputy Secretary for the Environment, Transport and Works
(Environment and Transport) T1

Ms Ava CHIU

Principal Assistant Secretary for the Environment, Transport
and Works (Environment and Transport) T3

Highways Department

Mr Adrian NG
Project Manager/Major Works

Transport Department

Mr K B TO
Chief Engineer/Transport Planning

Attendance by invitation : **Agenda Item V**
MTR Corporation Limited

Mr Russell BLACK
Project Director

Mr Malcolm GIBSON
Chief Design Manager

Miss Maggie SO
External Affairs Manager

Clerk in attendance : Mr Andy LAU
Chief Assistant Secretary (1)2

Staff in attendance : Ms Alice AU
Senior Assistant Secretary (1)5

Miss Winnie CHENG
Legislative Assistant 5

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- I Confirmation of minutes and matters arising**
(LC Paper No. CB(1)86/03-04(01) - Minutes of meeting held on 9 October 2003)

The minutes of meeting held on 9 October 2003 were confirmed.

- II Information papers issued since the meeting held on 1 August 2003**
(LC Paper No. CB(1)2359/02-03(01) - Information paper on "Measures to

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- improve opportunities for Red Minibus operators to convert to Green Minibus operation" provided by the Administration;
- LC Paper No. CB(1)2406/02-03(01) - Submission from the Environmental Light Bus Alliance on selection criteria for green minibus operators selection exercises;
- LC Paper No. CB(1)2462/02-03(01) - Submission from a member of the public on the progress of the West Rail project;
- LC Paper No. CB(1)2473/02-03(01) - Submission from the Joint Concern Group on Barrier-free City (無障礙城市關注聯席) on meeting the transport needs of people with disabilities;
- LC Paper No. CB(1)68/03-04(01) - Administration's response to the submission from the Joint Concern Group on Barrier-free City circulated under LC Paper No. CB(1)2473/02-03(01);
- LC Paper No. CB(1)2546/02-03(01) - Administration's response to views from Central & Western District Council Members on the provision of public transport services circulated under LC Paper No. CB(1)1833/02-03(01);
- LC Paper No. CB(1)2547/02-03(01) - Administration's response to views from Yuen Long District Council Members on the problems of transport infrastructure and services circulated under LC Paper No. CB(1)2061/02-03(01);
- LC Paper No. CB(1)2550/02-03(01) - Submission from the GMB Maxicab Operators General Association Ltd. on allowing diesel public light bus owners to use the Government's one-off grant to replace their vehicles with Euro III models; and
- LC Paper No. CB(1)121/03-04(01) - Information paper on "Reconstruction of Causeway Bay Flyover and associated widening of Victoria Park Road" provided by the Administration)

2. Members noted the above information papers issued since the last regular Panel meeting held on 1 August 2003.

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3. Regarding the Administration's information paper on "Reconstruction of Causeway Bay Flyover and associated widening of Victoria Park Road" (LC Paper No. CB(1)121/03-04(01)), members noted that the relevant funding proposal would be submitted to the Public Works Subcommittee (PWSC) for consideration at its meeting to be held on 29 October 2003. In view of Ms Miriam LAU's concern about possible congestion at the relevant road sections during construction works, members agreed to request the Administration to provide supplementary information on the temporary traffic arrangements to be put in place during construction of the project for members' consideration before the said PWSC meeting.

(Post-meeting note: The supplementary information provided by the Administration was circulated to members vide LC Paper No. CB(1)179/03-04(01).)

4. Ms Miriam LAU referred to the Administration's information paper on "Measures to improve opportunities for Red Minibus operators to convert to Green Minibus operation" (LC Paper No. CB(1)2359/02-03(01)), and suggested that the Panel should receive views from the public light bus (PLB) trades before the Administration proceeded further with the recommendations made by the Working Group of the Transport Advisory Committee to review the selection criteria and marking scheme for Green Minibus operators selection exercises. In this connection, members noted that the Administration proposed to brief members on measures to promote the conversion of red minibus to green minibus operation at the forthcoming meeting to be held on 28 November 2003. Members agreed to invite the PLB trades to attend the meeting to give views on the matter.

III Items for discussion at the next meeting scheduled for 28 November 2003

(LC Paper No. CB(1)100/03-04(01) - List of outstanding items for discussion; and

LC Paper No. CB(1)100/03-04(02) - List of follow-up actions)

5. The Chairman advised that at the request of Mr CHENG Kar-foo, an urgent item on "Hong Kong - Zhuhai - Macao Bridge" had been included in the agenda as the relevant funding proposal would be submitted to PWSC for consideration on 29 October 2003. Consequently, the item on "Measures to enhance safety of passengers on public light buses" originally scheduled for discussion at the present meeting would be deferred to a later meeting.

6. Mr CHENG Kar-foo said that the Administration should respect the Panel consultation mechanism and ensure that relevant information papers were timely provided to members for consideration so as to allow time for a proposed Finance Committee/PWSC/Establishment Subcommittee item to be included on the agenda of the Panel's following regular meeting if necessary. He suggested that the Administration

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should be reminded to take this into account when submitting papers to the Panel for consideration.

7. Members noted the following three items proposed by the Administration for discussion at the next Panel meeting to be held on 28 November 2003:

- (a) Improvement to Castle Peak Road between Ka Loon Tsuen and Siu Lam;
- (b) Promoting the conversion of red minibus to green minibus operation; and
- (c) Policy on non-franchised bus services.

8. Mr CHENG Kar-foo proposed to discuss an item on "Progress update on the installation of speed enforcement camera and red light camera systems" at the next Panel meeting.

9. Ms Miriam LAU proposed to discuss two outstanding items viz. "Development of a cross-boundary ferry terminal in Tuen Mun" and "Provision and operation of tunnels and tollways" in the near future.

10. As a number of major traffic accidents involving franchised buses had happened in recent months, Mr TAM Yiu-chung suggested that the Panel should review with the Administration on measures to enhance the safety of bus operations with a view to enhancing road and passenger safety.

11. After deliberation, members agreed to discuss the following items at the next Panel meeting on 28 November 2003:

- (a) Improvement to Castle Peak Road between Ka Loon Tsuen and Siu Lam;
- (b) Measures to enhance the safety of bus operations; and
- (c) Promoting the conversion of red minibus to green minibus operation.

On item (c), deputations of PLB trades would be invited to attend the meeting to give views on the matter.

12. Members also agreed to discuss the following items at a special meeting to be convened in late November/early December 2003:

- (a) Measures to enhance safety of passengers on public light buses;
- (b) Progress update on the installation of speed enforcement camera and red light camera systems; and

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- (c) Development of a cross-boundary ferry terminal in Tuen Mun.

(Post-meeting note: The special meeting was subsequently scheduled to be held on 5 December 2003. Separately, the Administration proposed to discuss an item on "Staffing matters related to Highways Department" at the said meeting. Regarding item (c), the Administration advised that it would provide a paper to members shortly for information. Members could then decide whether it was necessary to follow up on the matter at a later meeting.)

13. Members further agreed that the following items would be discussed at the regular Panel meeting to be held on 19 December 2003:

- (a) Policy on non-franchised bus services;
- (b) Provision and operation of tunnels and tollways; and

14. Expressing concern about the employment-related issues arising from the proposed implementation of the South Hong Kong Island Line and West Hong Kong Island Line, Mr LEUNG Fu-wah suggested that the Panel or its Subcommittee should follow up on the related issues together with the Manpower Panel. Representatives of local bodies and the transport trades might also be invited to give views on the matter. After deliberation, members agreed that the relevant meeting arrangements would be firmed up after consultation with the Manpower Panel.

15. The Chairman reminded members that the Panel would conduct a site visit to West Rail on 30 October 2003. Separately, the Subcommittee on matters relating to railways would discuss an item on "West Rail - latest update" at its meeting scheduled to be held on 25 November 2003.

IV Application from the Peak Tramways Company Ltd for extension of its right to run and operate the peak tramways

(LC Paper No. CB(1)100/03-04(03) - Information paper provided by the Administration)

16. At the invitation of the Chairman, the Deputy Secretary for the Environment, Transport and Works (T2) (DS for ETW(T2)) introduced the Administration's paper on "Application from the Peak Tramways Company Limited for Extension of the Period to run and operate the Peak Tramways" (LC Paper No. CB(1)100/03-04(03)). He said that after careful assessment, the Administration intended to recommend the Chief Executive (CE) in Council to approve the Peak Tramways Company Limited (the Company)'s request for a 10-year extension of its right to run and operate the peak tramway.

17. Mr CHENG Kar-foo enquired about the amount of premium to be paid by the Company for extending its operating right. DS for ETW(T2) replied that the exact

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amount would be subject to approval by CE in Council. The Administration would inform members in due course.

(Post-meeting note: According to the Legislative Council Brief issued by the Administration on 4 November 2003, the lump sum premium to be paid by the Company was \$36.8 million.)

Regulation by the Administration on service performance

18. As the franchise would be extended for another 10 years, Mr Albert CHAN called on the Administration to take the opportunity to review whether additional safeguards should be put in place to ensure the future service performance of the Company. He was particularly concerned that without proper monitoring, the Company could still stand to make handsome profits even when its service was deteriorating.

19. Mr Abraham SHEK also considered that the Administration should have the authority to regulate the fare or profit levels of the Company if and when necessary as the operating right of the Company would be extended for 10 years.

20. In reply, the Acting Assistant Director/Gas & General Legislation took members through the Administration's work in monitoring the Company's compliance of various statutory inspection and maintenance duties, and confirmed the technical safety of the peak tramway system. To supplement, DS for ETW (T2) said that the Company was under a statutory duty to maintain safe operation of the peak tramway. During the past 10 years, there was no major incident involving the operation of the peak tramway. Nonetheless, he assured members that if the peak tramway was considered not in safe working order, the Administration could order closure of the tramway for public use.

21. DS for ETW(T2) added that while the Administration would continue to monitor the Company's safe performance under the existing regulatory regime provided under the law, peak tramway was essentially a tourist and recreational facility. Taking that into account, the fares of the peak tramway were de-regulated when the operating right of the Company was last examined in the 1980's. Given the tough competition in the market from franchised buses and green minibuses, the Administration firmly believed that market forces would steer the Company towards a better quality of service. In fact, only three complaints of minor nature were received by the Transport Complaints Unit on peak tramways in the past 10 years. In case of any future complaints about peak tramway service, the Administration would take necessary follow-up action with the Company. In order to ensure its competitiveness and market share, the Company must continue to strive for and make investments to achieve service improvements. As an indication of its commitment to future development, the Company had already made plans for improving its operation and passenger facilities.

Enhancing the role of peak tramway in promoting tourism development

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22. Highlighting the importance of the peak tramway as one of the major tourist attractions in Hong Kong in promoting tourism development, Mr TAM Yiu-chung considered that the Administration should take a more pro-active role in formulating measures to further enhance the appeal of peak tramway to the tourists. In this respect, he said that the Administration should ensure that all necessary service improvements were taken early. Sharing similar concern, Ms Miriam LAU considered that more should be done by the Administration to ensure the provision of adequate and clear signage to guide the tourists to the peak tramway station.

23. In response, DS for ETW(T2) confirmed that the peak tramway did have capacity to cope with additional demand arising from further tourism development in Hong Kong. Having discussed the matter with the Administration, the Company indicated that it would seek to further improve its operation and passenger facilities, such as improvement to the physical environment of immediate stations, replacement of tramcar windows and floorings, etc., if its operating right was extended. The Administration would impress upon the Company members' concern for early implementation of the proposed improvements. Separately, the Environment, Transport and Works Bureau (ETWB) would follow up on the provision of ancillary facilities such as signage with the Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTb) and relevant government departments.

24. Mr LEUNG Fu-wah considered that as the peak tramway was essentially a tourist and recreational facility, the Administration should consider putting it under the purview of the Economic Development and Labour Bureau (EDLB) so that matters relating to the operation of peak tramway could be planned from the overall perspective of promoting tourism development. Citing the similar nature of the Tung Chung Cable Car project which was under the purview of EDLB, Ms Miriam LAU also said that the Administration might need to address this anomaly in the division of responsibility between policy bureaux so that proper recognition would be given to the peak tramway as a hardware in promoting tourism development.

25. While noting the members' views, DS for ETW(T2) said that ETWB was responsible for monitoring the operational aspects of the peak tramway in accordance with law. The situation was more or less the same as cross boundary coach services. In considering the Company's request for extending the operating right, ETWB had also consulted EDLB. Nonetheless, he would convey members' call for closer co-operation between the Company and HKTb on relevant matters to the Company for consideration.

- V Route 7, South Hong Kong Island Line and West Hong Kong Island Line**
(LC Paper No. CB(1)100/03-04(04) - Information paper provided by the Administration;
LC Paper No. CB(1)134/03-04(01) - Submission from HK Public-Light Bus Owner & Driver Association;
LC Paper No. CB(1)134/03-04(02) - Submission from Hong Kong Scheduled (GMB) Licensee

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- LC Paper No. CB(1)134/03-04(03) - Association;
Submission from Environmental Light Bus Alliance;
- LC Paper No. CB(1)143/03-04(01) - Further Submission from Environmental Light Bus Alliance; and
- LC Paper No. CB(1)113/03-04 - Background brief on Route 7, South Hong Kong Island Line and West Hong Kong Island Line prepared by the Secretariat)

26. Members noted the submissions from HK Public-Light Bus Owner & Driver Association, Hong Kong Scheduled (GMB) Licensee Association and Environmental Light Bus Alliance expressing their concern about the proposed implementation of SIL and WIL projects (LC Paper Nos. CB(1)134/03-04(01) to (03) and CB(1)143/03-04(01)). Another submission from Urban Taxi Operators' Joint Concern Group on the Construction of South Hong Kong Island Line (市區的士業關注政府興建港島南區鐵路支線聯席) was tabled at the meeting and subsequently issued to members vide LC Paper No. CB(1)165/03-04(02).

27. The Deputy Secretary for the Environment, Transport and Works (T1) (DS for ETW(T1)) briefed members on the latest development of the Route 7, South Hong Kong Island Line (SIL) and West Hong Kong Island Line (WIL) projects as set out in LC Paper No. CB(1)100/03-04(04). Pursuant to the decision of the Chief Executive in Council on 21 January 2003, the Administration had invited the MTR Corporation Limited (MTRCL) to examine modifications to its preliminary proposal on SIL with a view to arriving at a more cost effective option. The Administration agreed with MTRCL that there should be substantial benefits in integrating the development of SIL and WIL Phase I. To this end, the Corporation had commissioned further study to develop an optimum railway scheme which would serve the western and southern districts. The on-going study was expected to be completed in early 2004. The Corporation would then submit the project proposal to the Government by the second quarter of 2004.

28. As far as Route 7 was concerned, DS for ETW(T1) advised that Route 7 was kept under review pending the review study of SIL and WIL conducted by MTRCL. As the Western Reclamation would not go ahead, the Administration was looking into the possibility to adopt a landward alignment of Route 7. In the meantime, the Interim Traffic Improvement Measures (Interim Measures) for improving the local traffic conditions along Pokfulam Road to a manageable level without Route 7 were now being carried forward as planned.

29. In this connection, Dr YEUNG Sum called for the early implementation of the Interim Measures. DS for ETW(T1) responded that once the technical feasibility of the improvement measures was established by later this year, the Administration would formulate a realistic delivery programme and take necessary steps to complete the works

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as soon as possible. The Administration would revert to the Panel on the matter in due course.

30. With the aid of PowerPoint, Mr Malcolm GIBSON, the Chief Design Manager of MTRCL (CDM/MTRCL), took members through the progress of MTRCL's study in respect of the railway system, alignment options, interchange arrangement and preliminary financial assessment. A set of presentation materials was tabled at the meeting and subsequently issued to members vide LC Paper No. CB(1)165/03-04(01).

31. Regarding the preferred railway alignments being studied by the Corporation, Dr YEUNG Sum conveyed the strong request from local communities that the railway extension should also serve Kennedy Town and Aberdeen. Mr Abraham SHEK also called on the Corporation to give favourable consideration to providing a station at Happy Valley to serve the local residents.

Impact of SIL/WIL's implementation on other modes of transport

32. Referring to paragraph 5 of the Administration's paper, Ms Miriam LAU queried why the impact of SIL/WIL on other modes of transport was being evaluated by MTRCL instead of by the Administration. Stressing the need to balance the interests of all parties concerned, she opined that the Administration, as the regulator of public transport services in Hong Kong, was duty bound to critically review the impact of SIL/WIL on the operation of other public transport services before taking on such important transport infrastructural projects.

33. In reply, DS for ETW(T1) said that while the Administration would make reference to MTRCL's evaluation, the Administration would conduct its own study to ascertain the potential impact of SIL/WIL's implementation on other public transport modes before a final decision was made. In this respect, members noted from CDM/MTRCL that MTRCL's study would investigate rail/bus integrations.

34. In view of the different interests at stake, Dr YEUNG Sum suggested that the Panel should invite views from all parties concerned including local communities, green groups and public transport operators on the Route 7 and SIL projects after MTRCL completed its study in early 2004.

35. Nonetheless, Ms Miriam LAU reiterated her call that the Administration should give early consideration on the impact of introducing a railway system on the patronage and viability of other public transport modes including franchised buses, minibuses and taxis. While acknowledging the member's concern, DS for ETW(T1) said that it might be premature to deal with these issues at this stage as a final decision on the way forward for SIL/WIL had yet to be made. The Administration would consider the impacts carefully when there were more definite proposals on the timetable and alignment of the project. Referring to previous cases in the development of new railway projects, he assured members that the Administration would adopt the same approach and facilitate

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the collaboration of different transport modes on the provision of shuttle services connecting more distant areas with the new stations while maintaining healthy competition in the market.

Financial arrangements

36. Dr YEUNG Sum said that the Western District had been demanding for the railway for almost 20 years and was worried that MTRCL might not agree to implement the SIL/WIL project as it was not financially viable from the Corporation's investment point of view. However, considering the substantial economic and indirect benefits to the community at large, the Administration should ensure that the project would be taken forward if considered appropriate.

37. In response, DS for ETW(T1) explained that after receiving MTRCL's project proposal, the Administration would conduct a thorough check on the financial assumptions used by the Corporation. The Administration would also widely listen to public views before a final decision was taken. If the project was considered necessary from a public interest point of view, the Government would then negotiate with the Corporation on the necessary funding arrangement.

38. Casting doubt on the long-term financial viability and cost-effectiveness of the proposed SIL/WIL project, Mr LEUNG Fu-wah was worried that in case the patronage fell short of expectation, the Corporation might resort to fare cuts to increase patronage. This would in turn create unhealthy competition in the market and affect the viability of other public transport modes operating in the area. The Administration should carefully consider the matter from this perspective before a final decision was taken. In this connection, he sought information on the Government's funding commitment to the SIL/WIL project.

39. Mr Russell BLACK, the Project Director of MTRCL (PD/MTRCL), also said that it would be too early to speculate on the construction costs and funding gap at this stage. However, he could confirm that the project cost of combining SIL and WIL would be significantly lower than building stand-alone SIL and WIL. Likewise, the funding gap would also be smaller. As a very rough estimate, the funding gap would be less than half of the capital cost of the project.

40. As far as the reliability of the Corporation's patronage and revenue assumptions was concerned, PD/MTRCL advised that as part of the review, the Corporation had conduct detailed transport planning studies to ascertain the potential market share of SIL/WIL, taking into account various factors including the current services provided by other transport modes and their fare levels, as well as the forecasts of catchment population for individual stations. The conclusion was that potential ridership during peak period would be in the order of 20 000 passengers per hour and hence, the proposal was made to develop a medium capacity railway system to cope with that demand. He assured members that the Corporation would consider the project from a commercial

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investment point of view and was confident that the expected level of patronage could be generated.

41. Citing the operational problems of the Light Rail (LR) system, Mr Albert CHAN expressed concern about MTRCL's proposal for adopting a medium capacity railway system for SIL/WIL. In reply, PD/MTRCL assured members that the proposed medium capacity railway system was not a LR which operated largely at-grade. More like a scaled-down MTR system, the SIL/WIL would be substantially in tunnel while the remaining would be built on viaduct. Responding to Mr CHAN's further enquiry about the need to cross-subsidize the operations of SIL/WIL, PD/MTRCL stated that the Corporation would not enter a project on the basis of affecting other lines of MTR.

Principles of providing funding support for railway development

42. Mr CHENG Kar-foo pointed out that as the railway network continued to develop, Hong Kong would see an increasing need for small to medium capacity railway systems which were not always financially viable. Given the change in the Government's housing policy, the option of granting property development right as funding support no longer seemed practicable. As such, he was strongly of the view that the Administration should urgently review its principles of providing funding support for future railway development projects so that this important policy matter could be dealt with together with the SIL/WIL project on hand. His concern was shared by Mr Abraham SHEK.

43. In reply, DS for ETW(T1) explained that apart from ETWB, other bureau was also involved in the funding of railway development projects. It had always been the Government's policy to provide funding support where necessary for the construction of new railway projects. Each request for funding support would be considered on its own merits. In the past, funding support had been provided by the Government to the two railway corporations to undertake various projects including equity injection to the Kowloon-Canton Railway Corporation for the construction of the West Rail. However, in view of the changing circumstances, the Administration might need to consider how best such funding support could be provided for future projects.

44. Mr CHENG Kar-foo however said that it would be a major departure from the current policy if the railway corporations requested the Government to subsidize the implementation of new railway projects. Any policy change of such an important nature must be thoroughly discussed by members and the community at large so as to ensure public acceptability.

45. Mr Albert CHAN also considered that funding support was the most critical issue to be considered for the SIL/WIL project. He thus called on the Administration and MTRCL to come up with an agreement as soon as possible. Otherwise, it would be very difficult for members to consider the merit of the SIL/WIL proposal without any details of the financing arrangement.

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Provision of Route 7 vis-à-vis SIL

46. Mr LEUNG Fu-wah pointed out that as the revised schemes of Route 7 and SIL/WIL obviously overlapped with one another, it would be unrealistic to contemplate the provision of both projects from a transport planning point of view. As such, it would not be fair to the local residents if the Administration continued to adopt a non-committal stand on both projects.

47. Mr Albert CHAN also said that some local residents might prefer Route 7 over SIL. Under the circumstances, the Administration should make a clear policy decision as to whether road or railway infrastructure should prevail.

48. DS for ETW(T1) replied that the Administration had always maintained the view that different functions were served by Route 7 and SIL, and that they were not mutually exclusive from a planning point of view. However, taking into account their substantial resource requirements, it was unlikely for the Administration to construct the projects at the same time. When planning for the provision of transport infrastructure, the Administration would consider all relevant factors including their transport benefits and financial commitment. He re-assured members that the Administration would carefully consider all views expressed by members and the public on the matter.

49. While conveying the support of local residents in western and southern districts for MTRCL's proposal to adopt a medium capacity railway system for SIL/WIL, Mr IP Kwok-him reiterated his call for the provision of necessary road infrastructure to serve the scattered population pockets as well as future tourism development in the Southern District. In this respect, he enquired about the Administration's progress in following up on the motion passed by the Panel in July 2001 requesting for the early construction of Route 7 mainly in tunnel form.

50. DS for ETW(T1) replied that while no serious technical difficulties were envisaged for the construction of Route 7 mainly in tunnel, such an alignment would still fail to provide convenient connections for the population concentrations in between. There would also be other environmental implications in respect of dumping of massive construction waste.

51. In response to Mr IP Kwok-him's enquiry on the project timetable of SIL/WIL, PD/MTRCL advised that MTRCL was very confident on the timetable for the project implementation. The greater uncertainty in programme was really the statutory processes.

VI Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge

(LC Paper No. CB(1)128/03-04(01) - Information paper provided by the Administration)

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52. The Chairman advised that as requested by members at the previous Panel meeting held on 29 September 2003 to discuss the Administration's funding proposal for investigation and preliminary design for the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge (HZMB) Hong Kong Section (HKS) and North Lantau Highway Connection, the Administration had provided a supplementary information paper on the justification of the Bridge and the location of its landing point in North West Lantau (LC Paper No. CB(1)128/03-04(01)).

Traffic impact

53. As the construction of HZMB was not envisaged in the original planning of Tung Chung New Town, Mr Albert CHAN was worried that the additional traffic generated by the Bridge would overload the local traffic network and create adverse impact on the local environment. In considering the project, the Administration must ensure that due regard was also given to the necessary changes in the land use planning for the affected areas. It would not be fair to construct the Bridge to bring about economic benefits to the community at large while sacrificing the interests of local residents. He therefore queried why Tung Chung New Town was not included in the proposed scope of study under the funding proposal.

54. In response, DS for ETW(T1) assured members that the potential changes to land use planning in Tung Chung and Lantau as a result of the implementation of HZMB would be examined by the Planning Department separately.

55. Stressing the need for the adequate provision of local connecting infrastructure for the land boundary crossings under construction and planning, i.e. the Hong Kong - Shenzhen Western Corridor and HZMB, Mr WONG Sing-chi considered that the Administration should make early planning for the provision of the Tuen Mun-Chek Lap Kok Link (TM-CLKL) as part and parcel of the Bridge. In this connection, he sought the Administration's undertaking that it would continue to plan for the provision of TM-CLKL.

56. DS for ETW(T1) responded that TM-CLKL was a component of the Strategic North-South Link (West) identified by the Administration under the long-term infrastructure development strategy in the North West New Territories Traffic and Infrastructure Review (the Review). The Review also included a link connecting HZMB and the North Lantau Highway, and Lantau Road P1 between Tung Chung and Yam O so as to provide additional capacity to the North Lantau Highway. When the Review was last discussed by the Panel on 29 September 2003, the Administration undertook to revert to the Panel on its progress in taking forward the Review.

57. Referring to paragraphs 9 to 10 of the Administration's paper, Mr CHENG Kar-foo requested for further supplementary information on the basic assumptions for the traffic forecasts of the Bridge, as well as the titles of major studies that the

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Administration had made reference to when coming up with the relevant traffic forecasts. The said information should be provided to members for consideration before the relevant funding proposal was considered by the Public Works Subcommittee at its meeting scheduled for 29 October 2003.

- Admin 58. While agreeing to the member's request, DS for ETW(T1) said that only preliminary analysis was made at this stage. As part of the funding proposal, a more detailed traffic impact assessment would be carried out to validate the relevant figures.

(Post-meeting note: The requested information was circulated to members vide LC Paper No. CB(1)192/03-04(01).)

Environmental impact

59. Mr Albert CHAN reiterated his concern about the potential impact of the construction of HZMB on the Chinese white dolphin population in the area. To ensure sustained efforts in the protection and conservation of the Chinese white dolphins, the Administration should seriously consider his suggestion of setting up a dedicated fund for the purpose.

60. In response, DS for ETW(T1) assured members that the potential impact of the project on the Chinese white dolphins would be carefully examined under the Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) study to be undertaken as part of the funding proposal. The Administration would consider the member's suggestion in the context of mitigation measures proposed by the EIA study.

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Local participation in the project

61. While expressing support for the project, Mr LEUNG Fu-wah called on the Administration to take necessary steps to safeguard the opportunities for local employment in all stages of the project. He said that his support for the funding request would depend on the Administration's undertaking in this respect. DS for ETW(T1) took note of the member's view.

Council Business Division 1
Legislative Council Secretariat
26 November 2003