

Legislative Council Panel on Transport

2004 Policy Agenda

Policy Initiatives of the Environment, Transport and Works Bureau

Introduction

The 2004 Policy Agenda just issued sets out the Government's new and on-going initiatives over the next three and a half years. This note elaborates on the initiatives affecting the transport portfolio of the Environment, Transport and Works Bureau in the 2004 Policy Agenda. It also gives an account of the position reached on initiatives in the transport portfolio in the 2003 Policy Agenda.

2004 Policy Agenda--New Initiatives

Vibrant Economy

Review the existing cross-boundary vehicle quota system with a view to further facilitating vehicular movement across the boundary, in anticipation of the commissioning of the Hong Kong – Shenzhen Western Corridor in end 2005

A descriptive account of the initiative

2. To maintain smooth traffic flow and avoid overloading our control points, all cross-boundary vehicles, except goods vehicles, are subject to a quota control regime jointly administered by the HKSARG

and Guangdong authorities. The commissioning of the Hong Kong-Shenzhen Western Corridor by end 2005 will significantly increase the overall handling capacity of our land control points, offering opportunities to further facilitate cross-boundary traffic. We are actively studying how the current control system could be relaxed so as to make the best use of the control point resources to meet the demand for cross-boundary traffic generated by the economic integration and growing exchanges between Hong Kong and Guangdong.

Build a new bridge at the Sha Tau Kok crossing to increase capacity and improve traffic flow

A descriptive account of the initiative

3. At present, northbound cross-boundary vehicles using the Sha Tau Kok crossing have to make two sharp turns when they exit from the existing boundary bridge at the Shatoujiao Control Point on the Shenzhen side. This affects the traffic flow. To address the issue, the HKSAR and Shenzhen Governments have agreed to build a new boundary bridge adjacent to the existing one. We plan to start construction works in early 2004 for completion in early 2005. The commissioning of the new bridge will greatly improve northbound traffic flow and will also enhance the bridge capacity.

Review, through the Transport Advisory Committee, the regulation of non-franchised buses

A descriptive account of the initiative

4. The Government has invited the Transport Advisory Committee (“TAC”) to review the regulatory framework and licensing system for

non-franchised bus (“NFB”) operation. A TAC Working Group has been set up to conduct the review covering the role of NFB in public transport trades, the regulatory framework and licensing system for NFB operation and the enforcement procedures and measures for tackling unauthorised NFB operation. It will meet the public transport trades concerned and will make recommendations on measures to strengthen the regulation of NFB operation. The review is expected to be completed by mid 2004. The Government will take into account the review findings and recommendations of the TAC and consult the Panel before deciding on the way forward.

Consider measures to regulate traffic including fiscal and traffic management means with a view to reducing congestion along major transport corridors and to consult the community on the proposals

A descriptive account of the initiative

5. To improve the traffic flow along major transport corridors and in anticipation of substantial traffic growth in the central business district, the Administration will explore all feasible measures, including fiscal and traffic management measures, to alleviate traffic congestion and provide an efficient and reliable transport system to meet the needs of the community.

6. In considering the practicality of possible measures, the Administration will take into account all relevant factors, including overseas experience, vehicle growth rate, cost effectiveness, traffic pattern and recent technological development. We will consult the community before making any decision.

2004 Policy Agenda--On-going initiatives

Vibrant Economy

Pursuing the Hong Kong – Zhuhai – Macao Bridge as a priority project. A Co-ordination Group consisting of representatives from the Guangdong, Macao and Hong Kong governments has been set up to undertake preparatory work for the construction of the Bridge

Progress Made/Present Position

7. In accordance with the approval of the State Council given in August 2003, the governments of Hong Kong, Macao and Guangdong have set up a Hong Kong – Zhuhai - Macao Bridge Advance Work Co-ordination Group (Co-ordination Group) to take forward the preparatory work for the project. The first and second meetings of the Co-ordination Group were held in August and October 2003. The meetings agreed to set up a project office in Guangzhou for undertaking the advance planning for the Bridge, and to commission a research institute to undertake the feasibility study of the Bridge.

8. We envisage that the Co-ordination Group will set up the Project Office and commence the feasibility study in early 2004.

9. In parallel, we have secured funding from this Council's Finance Committee for an Investigation and Preliminary Design study for the section of the Bridge within Hong Kong and the connecting infrastructure linking the Bridge with the local transport network. The study will commence in early 2004 and will be completed by end 2004.

Implementing the project to build a new bridge to connect Lok Ma Chau and Huanggang to increase capacity and enhance traffic management

Progress Made/Present Position

10. Lok Ma Chau/Huanggang is the major crossing for cross-boundary freight traffic. With the rapid growth in cross-boundary traffic in recent years, the capacity of the existing boundary bridge is reaching saturation. We have reached consensus with the Shenzhen authorities to build a new boundary bridge right next to the existing one, and have agreed on the division of labour and cost-sharing arrangements. The HKSAR Government started works in early November 2003 while the Shenzhen side commenced works in late December 2003. The entire project is expected to be completed by the end of 2004. The commissioning of the new boundary bridge will improve the traffic within and in the vicinity of the control point. As the new bridge will be used solely by goods vehicles and the existing bridge by passenger vehicles, goods and passenger traffic will be segregated. This will enhance traffic management.

Discussing with the Mainland authorities on the best way to proceed with the proposed express rail link connecting Hong Kong, Shenzhen and Guangzhou upon finalisation of the relevant feasibility study

Progress Made/Present Position

11. The Expert Group set up by the Mainland authorities and the HKSAR Government to conduct the preliminary feasibility study of the Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link has confirmed the strategic value of the rail link in Stage I of the study. The Technical Group under the Expert Group has embarked on Stage II of the study, which would look at issues such as rail technology, crossing points, alignments, and cost and benefit analysis. We expect the Expert Group to complete the study in a few months.

Deciding on the study findings of the merging of the MTR Corporation Limited and the Kowloon – Canton Railway Corporation

Progress Made/Present Position

12. The Financial Services and Treasury Bureau and our bureau have been proceeding with the MTRCL/KCRC merger study. The Government will consider in detail the impact of the merger on the public, the future development of the railway, the management and staff of the two corporations, and minor shareholders of MTRCL and other stakeholders. We strive to complete the study and announce the way forward as soon as practicable.

Actively pursuing with the planning and implementation of various railways with careful consideration on changing needs and control of costs, including detailed design of the Kowloon Southern Link and Shatin to Central Link; constructing the Hong Kong – Shenzhen Western Corridor/Deep Bay Link for completion by end 2005; assessing the viability of the West Hong Kong Island Line and the South Hong Kong Island Line; monitoring the progress of the Tai Wai to Ma On Shan Rail Link and KCR Extension to Tsim Sha Tsui for timely commissioning

Progress Made/Present Position

Kowloon Southern Link (KSL)

13. We invited KCRC to proceed with the detailed planning and design of the KSL on 24 September 2002. We aim to gazette the railway scheme in early 2004 and expect the project to be completed in end 2008/early 2009.

Shatin to Central Link (SCL)

14. After a comprehensive assessment of the proposals submitted by the two railway corporations in mid 2001, we awarded the project to KCRC on 25 June 2002. KCRC is currently reviewing the alignment and location of stations of the SCL in light of public suggestions and recent developments. We plan to confirm the railway scheme in early 2004 to facilitate detailed planning and design. The tentative completion date for the SCL is between 2008 and 2011 as recommended in the Railway Development Strategy 2000.

West Hong Kong Island Line (WIL) and South Island Line (SIL)

15. MTRCL has commissioned a consultancy study to develop these two railway line extensions. MTRCL will continue to evaluate the shortlisted options based on technical, financial and social merits and identify the preferred option for recommendation in the project proposal. As part of the study, the impact of the SIL/WIL on other modes of transport will also be evaluated. MTRCL will also look into possible corresponding measures to minimise such impact. It is anticipated that MTRCL will complete the study and submit the project proposal to the Government in the second quarter of 2004.

Hong Kong – Shenzhen Western Corridor (HK – SWC) / Deep Bay Link (DBL)

16. Construction works for the HK – SWC and DBL commenced in August and June 2003 respectively and are progressing smoothly. Both projects are scheduled for completion by end 2005.

Ma On Shan to Tai Wai Rail Link and KCR Extension to Tsim Sha Tsui

17. The construction works have been progressing well for both projects. All the civil works have been substantially completed. The testing of the railway system will commence after the track laying and railway system works are completed, with a view to commissioning the railways by end 2004.

Caring and Just Society

Reviewing the operating environment of public transport and developing a more rational process for fare adjustment

Progress Made/Present Position

18. We briefed the LegCo Transport Panel in August 2003 on the Administration's proposal to develop a more objective and transparent process for public transport fare adjustment. The proposed fare adjustment process is based on a price-cap model, which allows transport fares to go up or down in light of the relevant factors and in accordance with a specified formula. We are now discussing details of the proposed mechanism with the relevant public transport operators.

Environmentally Responsible Development

Promoting the use of environmentally friendly buses by adding a provision in new bus franchises on the adoption of the latest commercially available environmentally friendly technology for acquiring new buses, encouraging bus companies to deploy cleaner vehicles along busy corridors and including the provision of environmentally friendly measures as appropriate as a criterion in selecting operator for new bus route packages.

Progress Made/Present Position

19. We have added a new provision in the franchises of Citybus Limited (North Lantau and Airport bus network), Long Win Bus Company Limited and New World First Bus Services Limited, which took effect in mid-2003. This provision requires them to adopt the latest commercially available and proven environmental protection technology in setting specifications for acquiring new buses. It is our plan to insert similar provisions in new franchises to be granted in future.

20. We are working with franchised bus operators to promote the deployment of more environmentally friendly buses on busy corridors including Hennessy Road, Queensway, Des Voeux Road Central and Nathan Road. By end 2003, about 75% of buses operating in these corridors are of Euro II and above standards.

21. We will also adopt the provision of environmentally friendly measures as a criterion as appropriate in future exercises for selecting operators for new bus route packages.

2003 Policy Agenda--New Initiatives

Vibrant Economy

Foster interaction with the Pearl River Delta as a key to economic revival in Hong Kong. A bridge linking Hong Kong (Lantau Island), Macau and Zhuhai is being pursued as a priority project

Progress Made/Present Position

22. It becomes an on-going initiative in the 2004 Policy Agenda. Please refer to paragraphs 7-9 above.

Build a new bridge to connect Lok Ma Chau and Huanggang

Progress Made/Present Position

23. It becomes an on-going initiative in the 2004 Policy Agenda. Please refer to paragraph 10 above.

Study the feasibility of a new express railway linking Hong Kong, Shenzhen and Guangzhou

Progress Made/Present Position

24. It becomes an on-going initiative in the 2004 Policy Agenda. Please refer to paragraph 11 above.

Decide on the study findings of the merging of the MTRCL and the KCRC

Progress Made/Present Position

25. It becomes an on-going initiative in the 2004 Policy Agenda. Please refer to paragraph 12 above.

Caring and Just Society

Review the operating environment of public transport and develop a more rational process for fare adjustment

Progress Made/Present Position

26. It becomes an on-going initiative in the 2004 Policy Agenda. Please refer to paragraph 18 above.

2003 Policy Agenda—On-going Initiatives

Vibrant Economy

Pressing ahead with the implementation of the Kowloon Southern Link; commencing detailed design of Shatin to Central Link; beginning construction of the Shenzhen Western Corridor/Deep Bay Link and assessing the viability and timing of the Island Line Extensions and South Hong Kong Island Line

Progress Made/Present Position

27. It continues to be an on-going initiative in the 2004 Policy Agenda. Please refer to paragraphs 13-17 above.

Environmentally Responsible Development

Promoting the adoption of state-of-the-art, environmentally friendly technology by bus companies in their new fleet purchases and encouraging them to deploy cleaner vehicles along busy corridors. New franchise conditions will be introduced requiring bus companies to adopt the latest commercially available environmental technologies in their new buses. Operators who promote environmentally friendly measures will be given a better chance to secure the right to operate new bus route packages. Building on the existing arrangement whereby only Euro II and Euro III engine buses are deployed to bus routes operating in Causeway Bay corridors, we will work with bus companies to promote the use of more Euro II and Euro III engine buses in other busy corridors

Progress Made/Present Position

28. It continues to be an on-going initiative in the 2004 Policy Agenda. Please refer to paragraphs 19-21 above.

Environment, Transport and Works Bureau
January 2004