

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(1)1494/04-05
(These minutes have been seen
by the Administration)

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Panel on Economic Services

**Minutes of meeting held on
Monday, 25 April 2005, at 10:45 am
in the Chamber of the Legislative Council Building**

Members present : Hon James TIEN Pei-chun, GBS, JP (Chairman)
Hon Abraham SHEK Lai-him, JP (Deputy Chairman)
Ir Dr Hon Raymond HO Chung-tai, S.B.St.J., JP
Hon Fred LI Wah-ming, JP
Dr Hon LUI Ming-wah, JP
Hon CHAN Kam-lam, JP
Hon SIN Chung-kai, JP
Hon Howard YOUNG, SBS, JP
Hon LAU Chin-shek, JP
Hon Miriam LAU Kin-yee, GBS, JP
Hon Jeffrey LAM Kin-fung, SBS, JP
Hon Andrew LEUNG Kwan-yuen, SBS, JP
Hon WONG Ting-kwong, BBS
Hon Ronny TONG Ka-wah, SC
Hon CHIM Pui-chung
Hon KWONG Chi-kin
Hon TAM Heung-man

Members attending : Hon Mrs Selina CHOW LIANG Shuk-yee, GBS, JP
Hon Patrick LAU Sau-shing, SBS, JP

Member absent : Dr Hon David LI Kwok-po, GBS, JP

**Public Officers
attending**

: Agenda item IV

Ms Sandra LEE
Permanent Secretary for Economic Development and
Labour (Economic Development)

Ms Eva CHENG
Commissioner for Tourism

Mrs Winifred CHUNG
Assistant Commissioner for Tourism

Mr Thomas THUMB
Assistant Commissioner for Transport

Mr CHEUNG Jin-pang
Principal Transport Officer
Transport Department

Mr LEE Yuk-shing
Chief Project Manager
Architectural Services Department

Mr YUNG Chun-wai, Jonathan
Senior Project Manager
Architectural Services Department

Agenda item V

Ms Sandra LEE
Permanent Secretary for Economic Development and
Labour (Economic Development)

Ms Eva CHENG
Commissioner for Tourism

Mrs Winifred CHUNG
Assistant Commissioner for Tourism

Mr LEE Yuk-shing
Chief Project Manager
Architectural Services Department

Mr FUNG Wing-kee, Raymond
Senior Architect
Architectural Services Department

Mr KWAN Chi-wai
Chief Engineer
Transport Department

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

Staff in attendance : Ms Anita SIT
Senior Council Secretary (1)9

Miss Winnie CHENG
Legislative Assistant (1)5

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I Confirmation of minutes and matters arising

- (LC Paper No. CB(1)1226/04-05 - Minutes of meeting held on
28 February 2005
LC Paper No. CB(1)1273/04-05 - Minutes of meeting held on
16 March 2005)

The minutes of the meetings held on 28 February and 16 March 2005 were confirmed.

II Information papers issued since last meeting

- (LC Paper No. CB(1)1222/04-05(01) - Tables and graphs showing the
import and retail prices of major
oil products from March 2003 to
February 2005 furnished by the
Census and Statistics
Department)

2. Members noted the information paper issued since last meeting.

III Items for discussion at the next meeting scheduled for 23 May 2005

- (LC Paper No. CB(1)1303/04-05(01) - List of outstanding items for
discussion
LC Paper No. CB(1)1303/04-05(02) - List of follow-up actions
LC Paper No. CB(1)1299/04-05(01) - A letter from Mr LI Wah-ming
suggesting that the Panel to
discuss the subject on sale of
travel insurance by travel
agencies)

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3. Members agreed that an item on “Tung Chung Cable Car and subsidiary legislation” proposed by the Administration be discussed at the next meeting scheduled for 23 May 2005.

4. Members noted the letter from Mr LI Wah-ming suggesting that the Panel discuss the issue of sale of travel insurance by travel agencies at a future Panel meeting. The Chairman said that regulation of the insurance industry fell within the purview of the Panel on Financial Affairs (FA Panel). The Financial Services and Treasury Bureau planned to submit a relevant proposal to the FA Panel for consideration in early June 2005. Members agreed that it would be appropriate for the FA Panel to follow up the issue.

IV Transport link in Tsim Sha Tsui East

- (LC Paper No. CB(1)1303/04-05(03) - Information paper provided by the Administration
- LC Paper No. CB(1)1303/04-05(04) - Powerpoint presentation material provided by the Administration
- LC Paper No. CB(1)1294/04-05 - Background brief on Transport Link in Tsim Sha Tsui East prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat
- LC Paper No. CB(1)1345/04-05(01) - A letter dated 18 April 2005 from Tsim Sha Tsui East Property Developers Association Ltd)

5. The Commissioner for Tourism (CT) introduced the “Transport Link in Tsim Sha Tsui East” project (the Transport Link project), recapitulating that when the Administration briefed the Panel on the project on 24 May 2004, members raised concern on the public traffic and transport arrangements and facilities, and urged the Administration to enhance the design and user-friendliness of the Transport Link project. The Administration had subsequently reviewed the traffic and transport arrangements in connection with the relocation of the Tsim Sha Tsui (TST) Star Ferry Pier Public Transport Interchange (PTI) and consulted all affected District Councils, the taxi trade and the tourist coach operators. The new arrangements were generally agreeable to them. The Administration had also improved on the design of the Transport Link project, including the provision of escalators for the new footbridges as suggested by members.

6. CT highlighted that the Transport Link project would achieve a “triple win” situation. The relocation of the TST Star Ferry Pier PTI to Wing On Plaza Garden (WOPG) in TST East would make way for the development of an open plaza in-situ, which would link the adjoining activity nodes and developments to become a focal point for both tourists and local residents. The reprovisioning of the PTI in TST East would increase the pedestrian flow in TST East. The provision of a podium garden and two footbridges under the Transport Link project would enhance the pedestrian links between TST East and other parts of TST. The Transport Link project would

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complement other tourism-related projects being planned or underway to enhance the attractiveness of the TST district, in particular the harbourside stretching from the International Mail Centre in Hung Hom to the TST Star Ferry Pier.

7. With the aid of Powerpoint, the Assistant Commissioner for Tourism (ACT) briefed members on the scope and design of the Transport Link project and its benefits to the local community and businesses. The Principal Transport Officer, Transport Department (PTO) briefed members on the proposed traffic and transport arrangements upon relocation of the existing PTI outside TST Star Ferry Pier to WOPG. With regard to the new turnaround area outside Hong Kong Cultural Centre (HKCC), he advised that it was estimated that the percentage of the boarding bus bays capacity used would be in the range of 30%-85% (53% on average) and the percentage of the alighting bus bays capacity used would be 51%. Bus-bus interchange at a fare discount would be available for affected passengers of the bus routes not passing the open plaza (i.e. KMB 2, 5, 7 and 9) to make use of designated bus routes at Nathan Road and Chatham Road. Transport Department conducted a 100% sample survey in April 2005 which revealed that the number of affected passengers who had to take bus-bus interchange was 7 300 daily. Of these passengers, only 3 900 took the Star Ferry .

Bus-bus interchange arrangements

8. In reply to Mr CHAN Kam-lam's enquiry about the bus-bus interchange arrangements for affected passengers of bus routes not passing the open plaza, PTO advised that for example, the affected passengers could interchange at Nathan Road to any of the bus routes stopping at the bus bays outside HKCC. They would not be required to pay extra fare for this second leg of the journey. For return journeys, the affected passengers could also travel on board buses stopping outside HKCC to Nathan Road and take an interchange at Nathan Road for onward journeys to their original destinations. The combined fares for the two legs of the journey would not be higher than the fare they now paid for.

9. In reply to the enquiries of Mr KWONG Chi-kin and Mr Howard YOUNG, PTO advised that due to operational reasons, only those affected passengers using Octopus could enjoy the abovementioned interchange fare discount. The bus stop arrangements for the affected bus routes on Nathan Road would be reshuffled to facilitate interchange.

The turnaround area outside Hong Kong Cultural Centre and access to the Star Ferry Pier by different transport modes

10. Mr CHAN Kam-lam expressed concern that bus passengers would be confused with the arrangement of co-locating an alighting stop and a boarding stop of the same route at the bus bays outside HKCC. PTO advised that all the alighting bus stops would be located at the alighting bay, which would be located at the front part of the turnaround area, while the boarding bus stops would be located at the respective boarding bays, all of which would be located at the back of the turnaround area.

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Hence, passengers would not be confused with the bus stop arrangement.

11. On the design of the new facilities outside HKCC, Ms Miriam LAU expressed grave concern that there would not be sufficient spaces to cope with the demand for bus, taxi and coach operations. She was worried that traffic queue might tail back from the turnaround area, and consequently affected the traffic flow of Salisbury Road.

12. PTO advised that the turnaround area outside HKCC should have sufficient capacity to cope with the demand. In designing the facilities, the Administration had already taken into account the operational needs of buses and taxis with reference to the designs of other bus interchanges at the Cross-Harbour Tunnel, Shing Mun Tunnel and Tai Lam Tunnel portals. There would be spare capacity for the boarding and alighting bus bays outside HKCC. The section of Salisbury Road outside HKCC would be widened from two to three lanes to provide an additional traffic lane for bus only to enable through traffic at all times. It was therefore anticipated that congestion would not occur at the turnaround area.

13. Ms Miriam LAU also expressed concern about the ease of access to the TST Star Ferry Pier for coach and private car users under the new traffic and transport arrangements and the availability of loading/unloading spaces for goods vehicles. She asked whether similar concerns had been raised by the relevant District Councils and other concerned parties, and whether the new turnaround area could be enlarged to cope with the traffic demand of not only franchised buses and taxis, but also coaches, goods vehicles and private cars.

14. PTO advised that a new 48m long tourist coach layby for four coaches to pick up and set down passengers would be provided at Salisbury Road westbound outside HKCC. Coaches could leave the layby and right turn from Salisbury Road to Kowloon Park Drive without passing the turnaround area.

15. As regards loading/unloading spaces for goods vehicles, PTO advised that at present, the picking up and setting down activities of goods vehicles were mainly carried out outside Hong Kong Hotel. In future, arrangements would be made to widen Canton Road from 2 lanes to 3 lanes to provide more space for the picking up/setting down activities. Consideration would be given to allowing goods vehicles to enter the turnaround area outside HKCC after the normal bus service period so as to facilitate their loading and unloading activities for Star House.

16. For private cars, PTO advised that although private cars would not be allowed to enter into the turnaround area, they could make use of the road leading off Salisbury Road next to the HKCC or the layby at the widened section of Canton Road north of Salisbury Road for picking up and setting down passengers.

17. Regarding consultation with the transport trades, PTO advised that both the taxi trade and coach trade welcomed the proposed traffic and transport arrangements. In fact, under the proposed arrangements, new picking up/setting down areas would be provided for use by tourist coaches. Goods vehicles could also pick up and set down

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goods at the layby on Canton Road.

18. Ms Miriam LAU maintained her grave concern about the proposed traffic and transport arrangements, and expressed objection to the arrangements currently proposed. She opined that tourist coaches and private cars should be allowed to use the turnaround area for picking up and setting down passengers. She urged the Administration to seriously consider enlarging the turnaround area to satisfy the loading and unloading demands of motorists whilst ensuring a smooth flow of traffic in the area. She also maintained the concern that bus passengers would find the new arrangements very confusing, given the co-location of bus stops in the turnaround areas for both inbound and outbound trips. She therefore suggested the use of circular routes to address the problem.

19. Mr KWONG Chi-kin shared the concern about the possible congestion at the turnaround area outside HKCC.

20. As to whether a bigger turnaround area would be provided, CT advised that the detailed design of the turnaround area would be decided at a later stage and the Administration would revert to members in due course with the detailed design.

Effect on the patronage of the Star Ferry

21. Mr Howard YOUNG asked if the Administration had made any assessment on the effect of the new traffic and transport arrangements on the patronage of the Star Ferry.

22. Mr CHAN Kam-lam also expressed concern that upon implementation of the new traffic and transport arrangements, the patronage of the Star Ferry would decrease. As a result, the operator had to increase the fares of the ferry service which would, in turn, affect both local passengers and tourists.

23. PTO advised that recently, TD had conducted a survey on all the passengers of all the four affected bus routes (i.e. KMB 2, 5, 7 and 9) terminating at the existing TST Star Ferry Pier PTI which included survey on the passengers of these four routes using the Star Ferry as well. In 2004, the daily patronage of the Star Ferry was about 74 000 passengers. The survey revealed that out of the 7 300 affected passengers using the four bus routes, only 3 900 interchanged to the Star Ferry. It was anticipated that some of the 3 900 passengers would continue to take the Star Ferry even when the new arrangements took effect and they had to interchange once before arriving at the Star Ferry Pier. As such, only a very small portion of Star Ferry's patronage would be affected under the new arrangements.

24. PTO further advised that at a survey conducted by Transport Department in 2002, about 67% of the passengers taking the bus routes terminated at the TST Star Ferry Pier PTI also took the Star Ferry. The percentage had reduced to 54% at the recent survey conducted in April 2005. As there had been no drop in the patronage of the Star Ferry during the period, it could be deduced that there had been an increasing

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number of passengers of the Star Ferry accessing the TST Star Ferry Pier on foot, and it was believed that most of them were tourists.

25. CT added that it was anticipated that the patronage of the Star Ferry would increase upon completion of the TST Promenade Beautification Project and the construction of an open plaza in-situ at the existing TST Star Ferry Pier PTI, as the harbourside of TST would then become more popular and more people would be attracted to the area near the open plaza.

26. Mr CHAN Kam-lam considered that for most existing passengers of the Star Ferry, the ease of access to the TST Star Ferry Pier would somehow be affected upon the relocation of the TST Star Ferry Pier PTI. The Administration should carefully assess the situation and formulate measures to maintain the operational viability of the Star Ferry.

27. Ms Miriam LAU said that at present, the Star Ferry was the cheapest public transport service for cross-harbour journeys. The Administration should ensure that the public could have convenient access to the TST Star Ferry Pier upon relocation of the TST Star Ferry Pier PTI. Ms LAU further said that the management of the Star Ferry had itself conducted an assessment of the effect of the new traffic and transport arrangements on the patronage of the Star Ferry and the conclusions were very different from those presented by the Administration.

28. Mrs Selina CHOW said that she supported in principle the relocation of the existing TST Star Ferry Pier PTI to TST East and the development of an open plaza in-situ. She however shared the concern of other members about the new traffic and transport arrangements. She was in particular concerned that under the new arrangements, tourists using tourist coaches and private car users would have to walk quite a long distance to reach the Star Ferry Pier. She urged the Administration to review the entire traffic and transport arrangements to ensure convenient access to the open plaza by various road users and ferry passengers who arrived at the open plaza via different transport modes, and smooth flow of traffic.

29. The Chairman was also concerned about the future loading and unloading arrangements for private car users heading for or leaving at Star Ferry Pier. Mr Howard YOUNG also sought details on the existing and future traffic arrangements for tourist coaches.

30. In reply, CT advised that there was no designated loading areas for tourist coaches at the existing TST Star Ferry PTI. Apart from the new 48m long tourist coach layby for four coaches proposed at Salisbury road westbound outside HKCC, another new 100m long layby for about 10 coaches would be provided on Salisbury Road westbound opposite to WOPG PTI site in mid 2005. The proposed new tourist coach layby outside HKCC was a significant improvement to the existing arrangement. PTO advised that at present, tourist coaches were not allowed to pick up and set down passengers at the TST Star Ferry Pier PTI. The nearest loading/unloading spaces for tourist coaches were located at Peking Road.

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31. PTO further advised that the future bus stops at the turnaround area outside HKCC was about 140m away from the Star Ferry Pier, and this represented a walking distance of about two minutes. On the other hand, as vehicles would not be allowed to enter into the open plaza, the air quality in the open plaza and the walking environment between the layby on Canton Road and Star Ferry Pier would be significantly improved. Private car users only needed to take about two minutes' walk to reach the Star Ferry Pier after alighting at the loading bay on Canton Road.

32. On Mrs Selina CHOW's concern about the bus movements at the turnaround area, CT clarified that buses heading for WOPG PTI would only set down passengers at the turnaround area. They would not make a "U" turn in order to pick up passengers at the turnaround area but they would call at the bus stop outside HKCC to pick up passengers after leaving the terminus at WOPG PTI.

The open plaza to be developed in-site at TST Star Ferry Pier PTI

33. In reply to the enquiries of the Chairman and Mr KWONG Chi-kin about the construction and the management of open plaza, CT advised that the design for the open plaza had yet to be drawn up. The current thinking was to restore the harbour view of the area and to develop the plaza into a pedestrian-oriented landmark where cultural and leisure activities could be conducted. The construction of the open plaza would probably be funded by the Government while the private sector might be invited to participate in the management of the open plaza. These arrangements however were not yet finalized.

Improvements to pedestrian facilities

34. Mr SIN Chung-kai said that the Democratic Party was in support of the Transport Link project. He suggested that if feasible, improvements should be made to the pedestrian facilities along the northern side of Salisbury Road, such as the provision of widened and covered walkways.

35. CT advised that the existing slope to the southwest of the former Marine Police Headquarters and adjacent to Salisbury Road would be developed into an open plaza. While there would be a widened pedestrian pavement there, there was no plan to provide a covered walkway and in fact, such provision might not be compatible with the overall design of the open plaza.

36. Mr WONG Ting-kwong considered that the Transport Link project would greatly improve pedestrian circulation between TST West and TST East. He shared the concern of other members that most people would need to walk more to reach the Star Ferry Pier under the new arrangements. He thus suggested the provision of covered walkways with travellers to better facilitate pedestrian access to the Star Ferry Pier.

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37. Mr LAU Sau-sing concurred with Mr SIN Chung-kai and Mr WONG Ting-kwong on the need to improve the pedestrian facilities in the area. He suggested that the open plaza to be developed in-situ at the TST Star Ferry Pier PTI could be used as the focal point to develop a well-connected pedestrian scheme for the area with covered walkways, travellers and subways to facilitate through pedestrian flows in the area.

38. Noting that under the new arrangements, pedestrians would still have to use subways to travel between HKCC and the YMCA building/the Peninsula Hotel, the Chairman opined that there was much room for improvement to the existing subway system linking the southern and northern sides of Salisbury Road. Mr CHAN Kam-lam concurred.

Conclusion

39. The Chairman concluded that members in general supported the Transport Link project, but had expressed a number of concerns/views relating to the future traffic and transport arrangements, in particular the access to the TST Star Ferry Pier for people using different modes of transport. He suggested that these concerns and views should be duly reflected in the paper for the Public Works Subcommittee (PWSC).

40. In reply to Mr Ronny TONG's enquiry, the Chairman explained that it had been the established practice for the relevant Panel to be consulted on major and potentially controversial financial proposals. The Panel would consider the policy aspects and the merits of such proposals. In the present case, the funding proposal for the Transport Link project would be submitted to the PWSC and then the Finance Committee for approval. The Panel's views would be taken into account in the deliberations of the PWSC and the Finance Committee.

V Tourist district enhancement programme – the Peak

- (LC Paper No. CB(1)1303/04-05(05) - Information paper provided by the Administration
- LC Paper No. CB(1)1303/04-05(06) - Powerpoint presentation material provided by the Administration)

41. CT introduced the item, highlighted that the Peak, being a “must-see” attraction to visitors to Hong Kong, was an important tourist asset for Hong Kong. In 2002, the Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTb) conducted a consultancy study on “Improvement and Further Development of the Peak as a Visitor Attraction” which recommended, inter alia, the “Victorian” theme be adopted for the enhancement works at the Peak. The enhancement project would include streetscape improvement to the open plaza outside Peak Galleria and various walking trails, landscape enhancement to Mount Austin Playground and Victoria Peak Garden, and the use of a de-commissioned Peak Tram cabin as a Visitor Information Centre. The Administration had consulted relevant stakeholders including the Central and Western

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District Council (C&WDC); Culture, Leisure and Social Affairs Committee and Working Group on Development of Tourism and Local Community Economy of the C&WDC; Chung Wan and Mid-Levels Area Committee; Peak Tramways Company Limited; Hang Lung Properties Limited; Peak Association; and the Peak residents affected by the project. The proposed improvement works were agreeable to the parties concerned. The Architectural Services Department (ArchSD) had completed the detailed design for the project and was preparing the tender documents.

42. With the aid of Powerpoint, the Senior Architect, ArchSD (SA), gave a presentation on the scope and design of the proposed improvement works. (*The scope of the project is set out in detail in paragraph 3 of the draft PWSC paper attached to the Administration's paper and the designs of the various improvement works are illustrated in the Powerpoint presentation notes.*)

43. Mr Fred LI pointed out that the main purpose of visitors to the Peak was to have a panoramic view of the Victoria Harbour and the urban area on both sides of the Harbour. The attractiveness in this respect had significantly reduced in recent years as the view was often hazy and thus was not as spectacular as in the past. The continual increase in the number of high-rise buildings on the Hong Kong Island had also affected the view at the Peak.

44. Mr SIN Chung-kai said that he generally supported the proposal but shared the concern of Mr Fred LI.

45. CT undertook to convey the members' concern to the relevant bureaux for appropriate follow-up actions.

46. Mr Fred LI noted that while it was stated in the Administration's paper that the Peak was a "must-see" tourist attraction in Hong Kong, the estimated number of visitors to the Peak in 2004 was only 4.5 million and would increase to about 5 million by the time the project was completed in 2007. In reply to his enquiry about the basis of the figures, CT advised that the total number of visitor arrivals was about 21 million in 2004. Most visitors coming to HK the first time and those travelling in tour groups would visit the Peak. The visitor figures for the Peak were estimated based on the visitor surveys conducted by HKTB. In those surveys, most visitors described the Peak as Hong Kong's premier visitor attraction and a "must-see" tourist attraction in Hong Kong.

Traffic issues

47. Members in general considered it very important to ensure smooth traffic flow in the Peak area if the attractiveness of the Peak were to be maintained and enhanced. The Chairman said that at present, traffic congestion often occurred during weekends and public holidays. He was concerned that with the continual increase in visitors, the traffic condition in the Peak area would be aggravated.

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48. Mr Ronny TONG asked whether the Administration had considered capping the number of tourist coaches to the Peak each day to avoid aggravating the busy traffic at the Peak. He said that similar measures were adopted by some overseas places to alleviate the traffic congestion at popular tourist attractions.

49. CT advised that during weekdays, the travelling patterns and the peak hours of travel between residents in the Peak and visitors/tourists were different. The normal visiting hours of tourist coaches were 10 am to 12 noon, 2 pm to 4 pm and the night hours after dinner. During weekends, public holidays, Golden Weeks and special occasions, the Police would ensure that special arrangements were in place to cope with the increased traffic. These included restriction of access to Mount Austin Road by all vehicles, temporary conversion of on-street parking spaces for private cars into coach parking spaces and control measures implemented at road junctions as and when necessary.

50. CT further advised that based on recent tourist surveys, the increase in visitors were mainly individual tourists rather than tourists travelling in groups. Individual tourists mainly used the Peak Tram or other public transport modes to go to the Peak. According to the Peak Tramways Company Limited, if the increase in demand warranted, the capacity of Peak Tram could be increased by 17%. ACT supplemented that the Peak Tramways Company Limited very much welcomed the proposed improvement works, and had confirmed that they would improve the tram service, including increasing the frequency of the service, to cope with the increase in visitors.

51. As regards Mr Ronny TONG's suggestion of capping the number of tourist coaches during weekends and public holidays, CT advised that the traffic condition at the Peak at present and in the foreseeable future might not warrant such a drastic measure. In fact, the travel and tourism trades had adopted measures to avoid aggravating the traffic condition, such as scheduling the tours to avoid weekend visits and taking the tours to the Peak by Peak Tram instead of by coaches.

52. The Chief Engineer, Transport Department (CE/TD), advised that the traffic congestion at the Peak area during weekends and public holidays was mainly caused by the increase in private car traffic of local visitors. At present, the Police would regulate the traffic at the Peak area and the major road junctions along the Peak Road during weekends and public holidays. He however acknowledged that given the dual single-lane configuration of the Peak Road, a certain degree of traffic congestion was inevitable during those days with heavy patronage of the Peak.

53. In reply to Mr Howard YOUNG's enquiry, CE/TD advised that at present, there were adequate drop-off and parking spaces for tourist coaches at the Peak Galleria. The capacity should be able to cope with additional demand when the number of visitors to the Peak increased to 5 million. As regards the drop-off spaces for tourist coaches at the Garden Road Peak Tram Station, he advised that if so required, additional drop-off spaces could be made available for coaches by converting the existing metered parking spaces to coach drop-off spaces.

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54. Mrs Selina CHOW said that due to their narrowness and the lack of roadside laybys, traffic congestion often occurred at Magazine Gap Road and other road sections on the way to the Peak. She asked if it was possible to widen the relevant road sections. CE/TD advised that in fact, works had been carried out to widen certain sections of Peak Road over the past few years. The topography of the areas along the roads posed severe difficulties for further widening works. However, the Administration would continue to examine the feasibility of widening more road sections and/or provision of more lay-bys.

55. Mr LAU Sau-sing considered that the ease of access was very important for enhancing the popularity of the Peak. He appreciated that the geographical conditions of the Peak and its access roads posed serious constraints to road widening works to cater for more vehicular traffic in the area. He thus suggested that more thoughts be given to providing pedestrian facilities, such as escalators, for access to the Peak. The Central-Mid-Levels Escalator and Walkway System was a successful example.

56. The Chairman on the other hand said that residents of the Peak in general did not support the idea of constructing escalators in the Peak area. They considered it preferable to preserve the natural environment of the Peak.

Cost-effectiveness of the proposed improvement works

57. Mr KWONG Chi-kin noted that the estimated project cost was \$142.6 million. However, there seemed to be no significant improvement associated with the various improvement works except for the works relating to Victoria Peak Garden. Also, the number of visitors would only increase by 0.5 million to about 5 million in 2007, and in fact, the increase might simply be a natural result of the growth of visitor arrivals in Hong Kong rather than a result of the proposed improvement works. He thus questioned the cost-effectiveness of the proposed improvements.

58. CT responded that according to the recent visitor survey of HKTB, the average expenditure of each tourist was about \$4,400 during their stay in Hong Kong. An additional 0.5 million visitors represented an additional tourist expenditure of some \$2 billion. Moreover, the economic benefits would be long term. From another angle, it was also necessary to make continuous improvements to enhance the competitiveness of Hong Kong as a tourist destination given the increasingly strong competition from neighbouring countries. The proposed improvement works were drawn up based on the recommendations of the consultancy study commissioned by HKTB in 2002.

59. Mr KWONG Chi-kin maintained that the proposed improvement works did not seem to result in substantial improvement to the environment of the Peak. While the major improvement works were to be undertaken at the Victoria Peak Garden, the patronage of the garden was expected to remain low given the inconvenience of access to the garden. He therefore maintained his reservation on the cost-effectiveness of

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the project.

Design of improvement works

60. Mr Fred LI suggested that instead of using concrete and asphalt for repaving the various walking trails at the Peak, it would be more desirable to use stones or pebbles. He also opined that the paving for the piazza outside the Peak Galleria and Peak Power should be beautified with patterns. SA advised that pebbles and stones would be used for repaving the piazza.

61. The Chairman suggested that relational distance information should be included in the signage to be installed along the various walking trails. If feasible, more public toilets should be provided in the Peak area.

62. Mr Fred LI said that based on the pictures shown during the Powerpoint presentation, the design of the Victoria Peak Garden appeared rather bland. Mr Ronny TONG asked if the construction of a façade-like architecture of the Victorian style had been considered to create a landmark and bring out the Victorian atmosphere of the garden.

63. SA advised that as the former Governor's summer residence located at the present site of the Victoria Peak Garden was of the Victorian style, the intention of the proposed design for the Victoria Peak Garden was to create a Victorian atmosphere for the garden while providing a pleasant open space for use by visitors. A major feature of the garden was the four gazebos to be constructed at the four corners of the garden and the idea was originated from the four towers at the corners of the former Governor's summer residence. He said that the design of the garden would express the characteristic of Victorian style architecture.

64. Citing the successful experience of the Stanley Waterfront Improvement Project, Mrs Selina CHOW considered that there was a need to enhance the overall environment of the Peak so as to lengthen the visitors' stay on the Peak and strengthen the competitiveness of Hong Kong as a tourist destination. With regard to the design for the Victorian Peak Garden, which involved substantial improvement works, she shared some other members' feeling that the current design could not effectively induce people's association of the garden design with the former Victorian-style Governor's summer residence.

65. SA said that the present design mainly sought to provide a garden of the Victorian style. The former Gate Lodge would be retained to display photos of the Victorian city. The present design did not include any building or substantive structure because such building or structure was not required for the purposes of the garden.

66. Mrs Selina CHOW said that the construction of a façade or building replicating the former Governor's summer residence might not be necessary to bring out the theme of the project. However, it was still worth revisiting the design for the

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Victoria Peak Garden with a view to coming up with a design that could more effectively bring out the Victorian atmosphere.

67. Mr LAU Sau-sing said that apart from the form of the structures to be built, the use of materials was also important. He suggested that stones be used as the main construction materials so as to bring out the Victorian style of the garden.

Access to the Victoria Peak Garden

68. Noting that the existing patronage of the Victoria Peak Garden was generally low partly due to the inconvenience of access to the garden, members enquired whether there would be complementary measures or facilities to improve the accessibility of the garden. CT advised that the Administration had explored the possibility of constructing a new footpath linking Mount Austin Playground and the former Gate Lodge which would serve as a short-cut to the Victoria Peak Garden. Departments concerned had examined the site condition in detail. In view of the extremely difficult site conditions, the Administration decided not to pursue the construction of the footpath. CT also advised that the use of trolleys and electric carts had been considered but were found not practicable given the high gradient of the Mount Austin Road and the possible impact of such vehicles on the environment and nearby residents.

69. Mrs Selina CHOW said that given that the inconvenience of access to the garden, the utilization of the garden might continue to be low after the improvement works. She and the Chairman asked the Administration to further explore ways to improve the access to and transport accessibility of the garden.

70. The Chairman concluded that members generally supported the proposal whilst certain concerns and suggestions had been made by individual members on the design and traffic aspects.

VI Any other business

71. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 12:40 pm.