

立法會
Legislative Council

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by the Administration)

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Panel on Planning, Lands and Works

Minutes of meeting
held on Tuesday, 22 February 2005, at 10:45 am
in the Chamber of the Legislative Council Building

- Members present** : Hon LAU Wong-fat, GBS, JP (Chairman)
Hon Patrick LAU Sau-shing, SBS, JP (Deputy Chairman)
Ir Dr Hon Raymond HO Chung-tai, S.B.St.J., JP
Hon James TO Kun-sun
Hon CHOY So-yuk
Hon Timothy FOK Tsun-ting, GBS, JP
Hon Abraham SHEK Lai-him, JP
Hon Albert CHAN Wai-yip
Hon LI Kwok-ying, MH
Hon Daniel LAM Wai-keung, BBS, JP
Hon Alan LEONG Kah-kit, SC
Hon CHEUNG Hok-ming, SBS, JP
- Members attending** : Hon James TIEN Pei-chun, GBS, JP
Hon CHAN Yuen-han, JP
Hon Miriam LAU Kin-ye, GBS, JP
Hon Emily LAU Wai-hing, JP
Hon Andrew CHENG Kar-foo
Hon Audrey EU Yuet-mee, SC, JP
Dr Hon KWOK Ka-ki
- Members absent** : Hon WONG Yung-kan, JP
Hon LEE Wing-tat

Public officers attending : Agenda item IV

Mr Jack CHAN
Principal Assistant Secretary for Environment, Transport and Works (Works)

Mr LEUNG Wing-lim
Chief Assistant Secretary for Environment, Transport and Works (Works)

Agenda item V

Mr SUEN Ming-yeung, Michael
Secretary for Housing, Planning and Lands

Mr TSO Man-tai, Thomas
Deputy Secretary for Housing, Planning and Lands (Planning and Lands) 1

Mr CHOW Tat-ming, Thomas
Deputy Secretary for Environment, Transport and Works (Transport) 1

Mr MA Lee-tak
Project Manager (Hong Kong Island and Islands)
Civil Engineering and Development Department

Mr LAU Ka-keung
Deputy Commissioner for Transport/
Planning and Technical Services

Mr KWAN Tsoi-kwai, Anthony
Assistant Director of Planning/
Metro and Urban Renewal

Clerk in attendance : Miss Odelia LEUNG
Chief Council Secretary (1)4

Staff in attendance : Ms Sarah YUEN
Senior Council Secretary (1)6

Ms Christina SHIU
Legislative Assistant

I Confirmation of minutes

- (LC Paper No. CB(1)803/04-05 -- Minutes of special meeting on 30 November 2004
LC Paper No. CB(1)919/04-05 -- Minutes of special meeting on 16 December 2004)
LC Paper No. CB(1)886/04-05 -- Minutes of meeting on 25 January 2005

The minutes of the meetings held on 30 November 2004, 16 December 2004 and 25 January 2005 respectively were confirmed.

II Information papers issued since last meeting

- (LC Paper No. CB(1)831/04-05(01) -- Draft research report on “Public Private Partnerships”
LC Paper No. CB(1)885/04-05(01) -- Information paper on 36WS – Ring Mains for Cha Kwo Ling Salt Water Supply System)

2. Members noted the above information papers issued since the last monthly regular meeting of the Panel on 25 January 2005.

III Items for discussion at the next meeting

- (LC Paper No. CB(1)907/04-05(01) -- List of outstanding items for discussion
LC Paper No. CB(1)907/04-05(02) -- List of follow-up actions)

3. Members agreed to discuss the following items at the next meeting scheduled for 22 March 2005:

- (a) Implementation of the Town Planning (Amendment) Ordinance 2004; and
(b) Comprehensive review of planning and land policy and mechanism of Town Planning Board.

IV Public Works Programme Information System

- (LC Paper No. CB(1)907/04-05(03) -- Information paper provided by the Administration
LC Paper No. CB(1)907/04-05(04) -- Background brief on “Public Works Programme Information System” prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat)

4. The Principal Assistant Secretary for the Environment, Transport and Works (Works) (PAS/ETW(W)) briefed members on the current state of development and implementation of the Public Works Programme Information System (PWPIS) for the Environment, Transport and Works Bureau (ETWB).

Access to the Public Works Programme Information System

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5. The Chairman enquired whether District Councils (DCs) could have access to PWPIS to facilitate monitoring of the progress of the public works undertaken in individual districts and improve communication between DCs and the works departments (WDs). Mr Daniel LAM Wai-keung shared his views and added that improved communication could facilitate project implementation. In response, PAS/ETW(W) explained that PWPIS catered for the monitoring of public works projects on a territory-wide basis and furthermore, a public works project could cover a number of districts. The Administration would liaise with the Home Affairs Bureau to see how DCs could have more information about projects in their respective districts.

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6. In this connection, Mr Patrick LAU Sau-shing asked whether the general public and Legislative Council (LegCo) members could be given access to PWPIS. In response, PAS/ETW(W) emphasized that PWPIS was essentially designed to satisfy the programme management and project management needs of ETWB and WDs and other relevant bureaux and departments. Since its data content was technical and sometimes sensitive in nature, it might not be appropriate to allow public access to it. Nevertheless, the Administration regularly reported the progress of PWP projects to LegCo Members. Mr Patrick LAU, however, opined that the construction industry should be allowed some access to details on tendering and the relevant timetable of PWP projects. In response, PAS/ETW(W) noted the suggestion and undertook to examine the request with ETWB officers.

Uses of the Public Works Programme Information System

7. In reply to Ir Dr Raymond HO Chung-tai on PWPIS's uses, PAS/ETW(W) elaborated that PWPIS was a computer system designed to provide timely data on works contracts and consultancy agreements, versatile analysis tools as well as efficient means of communication among relevant parties involved in managing and monitoring the PWP. To facilitate programme management, PWPIS allowed users to monitor the PWP from different perspectives such as under individual heads of expenditure, policy areas, controlling officers, project categories or by different levels of the organization structure. Where data capture was concerned, PWPIS could keep detailed information such as the personnel involved in the major contracts and their contact details. As to data query and reporting, attributes for monitoring of projects included project cost, expenditure and significant events (such as project start date, completion date and tendering date). Most important of all, PWPIS was user friendly and accessible by any

desktop personal computers connected to the Government Intranet without any enabling hardware or software installations.

8. In response to Ir Dr Raymond HO, the Chief Assistant Secretary for the Environment, Transport and Works (Works) (CAS/ETW(W)) provided further details on PWPIS's uses as follows –

- (a) On whether PWPIS could provide details on the progress, extent and timetable of public consultation, or the timetable of the projects per se, pre-defined on-line enquiry facilities were available to retrieve general project and contract information to support users in project monitoring. However, where particular details such as the timetable of the road opening works involved were required, they could be put in the “remarks” column. Data captured in this way were of an “unstructured” format and could not be analysed as conveniently as compared to data of a “structured” format; and
- (b) Electronic tendering could not be conducted through PWPIS because the system was for internal communication among ETWB and WDs on the Government's Intranet and not for communication with external service providers through the Internet.

Cost-effectiveness of the Public Works Programme Information System

9. To ensure PWPIS was value for money, Mr James TO Kun-sun was keen to ascertain whether PWPIS had brought about any improvement in the frequency of project monitoring. In this regard, Mr Patrick LAU enquired about the hit rate, and asked whether PWPIS could bring about savings in manpower resources. He further opined that LegCo Members should have the opportunity to use PWPIS to ensure it was cost-effective.

10. In response, PAS/ETW(W) explained that PWPIS was not a brand new project management system. It was in fact an improvement over the Public Works Management System rolled out in 1994 to bring about better processing powers and better operational efficiency, such as by providing pre-defined on-line enquiry facilities in project monitoring. CAS/ETW(W) supplemented on the improvements in project monitoring brought about by PWPIS as follows –

- (a) To ensure the timeliness of project information, deadlines for data update were set via administrative instructions;
- (b) Although there was no figure on the hit rate, an alert system was available to remind officers-in-charge to check the progress of the projects under their charge at least monthly;
- (c) The last review date was shown to give an indication of the timeliness and frequency of data review;

- (d) Ad hoc reports could be made to allow users to specify the report criteria, contents, layout and even frequency; and
- (e) Validation rules and threshold alerts would serve to reduce wrongful entry, thus improving the level of data integrity and accuracy.

PAS/ETW(W) estimated that with the above improvements, officers-in-charge should be able to monitor projects more frequently and effectively.

11. Mr James TO enquired whether the workload of frontline staff would be increased because of additional data input work to support PWPIS to facilitate project monitoring by their supervisors. In response, CAS/ETW(W) assured members that when developing PWPIS, the types of data that had to be input had already been reviewed to ensure only genuinely necessary data would be input. Both frontline staff and users were involved in the process and the required data had been agreed on. A committee had also been set up to meet every three months to review the data required and improve PWPIS according to prevailing circumstances.

(The meeting was adjourned at 11:20 am pending the arrival of public officers attending the next item, which had been scheduled to start at 11:45 am. The meeting resumed at 11:30 am.)

V Progress of the Review of Wan Chai Development Phase II and Kai Tak

- (LC Paper No. CB(1)921/04-05(01) -- Information paper provided by the Administration
- LC Paper No. CB(1)763/04-05(01) -- Information paper on comprehensive planning and engineering review of Wan Chai Development Phase II
- LC Paper No. CB(1)921/04-05(02) -- Background brief on “Central and Wan Chai reclamation” prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat
- LC Paper No. CB(1)921/04-05(03) -- Background brief on “South East Kowloon Development” prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat)

12. The Secretary for Housing, Planning and Lands (SHPL) briefed members on the progress of the review of Wan Chai Development Phase II (WDII Review) and that of Kai Tak. A copy of SHPL’s speaking note is attached.

Wan Chai Development Phase II

13. Commenting on the WDII Review, Mr Andrew CHENG Kar-foo stressed the importance of protecting the harbour and allowing the public to decide whether it should be reclaimed to provide land for roads to alleviate the traffic congestion problem along the northern shore of Hong Kong Island. He was concerned that the Administration seemed to consider construction of roads to be the best option to alleviate the congestion problem. However, in his view, the option would only lead to more congestion. He urged the Administration to be open-minded in considering other alternatives, such as electronic road pricing (ERP), equalization of the tolls of the three cross-harbour tunnels, and restricting loading and unloading activities in Central. In his opinion, to support the implementation of ERP in the Central Business District, the flyover to Wanchai North at Connaught Road Central could be used as the alternative route to receive the diverted traffic generated from those wishing to avoid entering the charging zone. While a bottleneck would inevitably be created along the alternative route at the early stage of the ERP scheme, the problem would be solved with the increasing use of public transport and the rail network on Hong Kong Island to take up half of Hong Kong's traffic volume.

14. In response, SHPL and the Deputy Secretary for Environment, Transport and Works (Transport)1 (DS/ETW(T)1) explained that while a number of options were available for tackling traffic congestion problem in Hong Kong, their applicability would depend on the circumstances on the ground. The Government had examined various traffic management measures for tackling the traffic congestion problem along the Connaught Road Central/Harcourt Road/Gloucester Road Corridor (the Corridor) and concluded that, even with all those practicable measures in place to relieve traffic congestion and maximize the capacity of existing roads and junctions along the Corridor, the Trunk Road comprising the Central-Wanchai Bypass (CWB) and Island Eastern Corridor Link (IECL) would still be required for the following reasons –

- (a) The problem of traffic congestion along the northern shore of Hong Kong Island had been a long-standing problem and Government planning models since the late 1980s had confirmed the need for CWB to connect the Rumsey Street flyover in the west to the Island Eastern Corridor in the east to address the problem. In fact, CWB and IECL were the final and most vital road transport links missing on the northern shore of Hong Kong Island. On completion, they would allow formation of a continuous, strategic road link that would start at Chai Wan in the east and continue all the way to Hong Kong International Airport and Tuen Mun in the northwest New Territories. Whilst the Administration was open-minded in deciding how CWB should be taken forward, there was a compelling and present need for it;
- (b) Where ERP was concerned, according to overseas experience, it would be one possible form of traffic management provided that there

was an alternative route bypassing the charging zone and there was community consensus on its implementation. The enactment of legislation and LegCo support would be required to implement the scheme. In London and Singapore, where ERP was implemented in certain areas, the traffic within the charging zone was reduced by about 14% to 16%. The reduction was not very high, and this could only be achieved with the provision of an alternative route. If there were no alternative routes, it was unlikely that introducing ERP in Hong Kong could achieve similar results;

- (c) On equalization of tunnel tolls, although the concessionary toll paid by private cars for using the Western Harbour Crossing (WHC) was \$40 as against \$20 for using the Cross Harbour Tunnel (CHT), there was great difficulty in persuading the WHC operator to keep the concessionary toll, not to mention adjusting it downwards. Moreover, even if the WHC operator was willing to reduce the tolls, the diversion of traffic from CHT to WHC was likely to result in a corresponding increase in traffic on the Corridor westbound. Therefore, the overall traffic condition of the Corridor would in fact deteriorate; and
- (d) Assuming that the mass transit railway (MTR) Island Line would be extended to the Western District, it was forecast that if CWB was not ready by 2011, traffic conditions would worsen to a speed of 5 km/hr and it would take 45 minutes for drivers to travel from Rumsey Street to Causeway Bay via the Corridor. Most bus routes ran along "inner" roads, including Des Voeux Road and Queen's Road. Any reduction in bus services as a result of passenger diversion to the MTR would be limited and at most provide slight relief to the already congested inner roads. It would not help relieve congestion in the Corridor.

The Central-Wanchai Bypass

15. The Chairman reiterated the Wan Chai District Council (WCDC)'s stance towards CWB, namely, that it would support the construction of CWB on condition that the extent of reclamation would be minimized. In response, SHPL reaffirmed the Administration's undertaking that in all events, the extent of reclamation for the purpose of implementing CWB would be kept to the minimum. The reclaimed land would be put to public use for enjoyment of the harbour front and no land would be reclaimed for the purpose of land sale. He also stated that the Administration was well aware of WCDC's views and would give due regard to them.

16. Ms Miriam LAU Kin-ye, Ir Dr Raymond HO and Mr Albert CHAN Wai-yip echoed SHPL's view in paragraph 14(a) above, and indicated support for the construction of CWB. In particular, Ms LAU pointed out that the need for CWB had been endorsed in the 1990 White Paper on Transport Policy. Ir Dr HO

showed appreciation for the perseverance demonstrated by SHPL in pursuing CWB and, highlighting the remote possibility of reaching unanimous consensus on transport matters, urged the Administration to make an early decision on how to construct CWB. Mr Albert CHAN also pointed out that to ensure Hong Kong would not lag behind other cities in infrastructural developments, a mechanism should be devised to facilitate early resolution of disagreement on CWB as LegCo support would be required for it to proceed. Miss CHOY So-yuk, however, said that she believed that no reclamation would be required for the construction of CWB.

17. In reply to Ir Dr Raymond HO and Mr Albert CHAN on the timetable and procedure for making a decision on CWB, SHPL stressed the need to follow the proper procedures and hence conduct public consultation. The consultation would not take too long because public debate on CWB had been going on for years. It was hoped that an internal decision could be made within 2005.

18. Notwithstanding the Administration's explanations in paragraph 14 above, Ms Emily LAU Wai-hing and Mr CHEUNG Hok-ming maintained that alternatives other than road construction that necessitated reclamation should be explored to relieve traffic congestion because of grave public concern about reclamation. In Ms LAU's view, the various political parties in LegCo should support the pursuit of other alternatives by the Administration. Along the same line, Dr KWOK Ka-ki pointed out that although the need for CWB had been confirmed in the 1980s, circumstances had changed and so were public sentiments about reclamation. He urged the Administration to genuinely explore other alternatives to relieve traffic congestion.

19. In response, SHPL assured members that he was well aware of public sentiments against reclamation through various channels. He agreed that the harbour should be protected, and stressed that he did not intend to act against public views. However, in performing public duties, the Administration should strike a balance among various demands. As there was a compelling and present need to provide a vital conduit to solve traffic problems, he believed that the Trunk Road should be pursued. He then reiterated the points he made in paragraph 14(a) above, and pointed out that the public needed to decide whether to continue tolerating the deteriorating congestion problem on the northern shore of Hong Kong Island, or to construct the Trunk Road with some land reclaimed from the harbour.

20. Mr James TIEN Pei-chun said that after careful examination, Members of the Liberal Party could not support any of the three concepts for building the Trunk Road put forward in the Harbour-front Enhancement Review (HER) Public Engagement Kit (the Kit) because the extent of reclamation involved was, in their view, excessive.

- Extent of reclamation to make way for Central-Wanchai Bypass

21. Commenting on the extent of reclamation required to construct CWB, Mr Albert CHAN recognized that it had been significantly scaled down in response to concerns expressed by LegCo and the public. While supporting the construction of CWB, Ms Miriam LAU however opined that reclamation to provide land for CWB should be kept to the minimum or even obviated by building CWB on elevated structures or along the coastline. Mr James TIEN shared her view, and urged the Administration to contain reclamation to the extent absolutely necessary, say within ten hectares. Miss CHOY So-yuk questioned the need to reclaim 23 hectares of land for the Trunk Road. In her views, if CWB would be put in tunnel, there would be no need for reclamation.

22. In response, DS/ETW(T)1 explained that CWB would have to be connected with Rumsey Street flyover and the Island Eastern Corridor. To solve the congestion problem along the northern shore of the Hong Kong Island, traffic from Causeway Bay and Wan Chai would need to have access to the Trunk Road through connection roads. Notwithstanding the use of elevated structures and tunnels, there remained a need to reclaim land to accommodate the connection roads. The Administration would consider any viable proposal to build the Trunk Road to the required traffic performance without reclamation. SHPL added that members' views would be given due consideration.

23. Ms Emily LAU emphasized that there should not be further reclamation in the Victoria Harbour because the public were against it. Dr KWOK Ka-ki stressed that the harbour was the most valuable and important public asset and could generate income for Hong Kong through attracting tourists. It would be short-sighted to sacrifice the harbour lightly for other purposes. He urged the Administration to conduct a comprehensive public consultation on the need to protect the harbour and if the need was so established, traffic congestion could no longer be used as an excuse to reclaim land to build roads.

24. In response, SHPL reiterated that the Government would abide by the Protection of the Harbour Ordinance (PHO) (Cap.531) and the "overriding public need test" stipulated by the Court of Final Appeal (CFA) in considering the issue of reclamation. The Administration would take into consideration public views regarding the Trunk Road in deciding the way forward.

25. In reply to Ms Miriam LAU on the envisaged extent of reclamation required for CWB, DS/ETW(T)1 advised that this would depend on its alignment, layout and level. In any event, any reclamation had to fully comply with the PHO and the CFA judgment on reclamation, and the extent of reclamation would be kept to the minimum. Dr KWOK Ka-ki however pointed out that notwithstanding grave public concern about reclamation and the need to review the extent of reclamation according to the CFA judgment, the extent of reclamation in WDII as recently presented in the Kit had only been slightly reduced.

26. In response to Ms Emily LAU on whether the Harbour-front Enhancement Committee (HEC) had any consensus on whether further

reclamation along the harbour should be allowed, SHPL reported that he had the impression that most members of the HEC accepted the need for the Trunk Road but had yet to agree on the extent of reclamation pending public consultation in particular regarding the alignment, layout and level of the Trunk Road. He assured that the extent of reclamation would be fully justified according to the PHO and the CFA judgment. The relevant details would also be made public.

- Public consultation on Central-Wanchai Bypass

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27. Ir Dr Raymond HO opined that to ensure the decision making process on CWB would be conducted properly, the Administration should make periodic reports to the Panels concerned. In this regard, Ms Emily LAU said that a scientific method of gauging public views should be worked out. In response, SHPL agreed to keep the relevant Panel(s) informed of the developments.

28. In this regard, Mr Andrew CHENG opined that for meaningful public consultation exercise, the costs and other details of CWB and each of the other alternatives should be provided for comparison. In response, DS/ETW(T)1 explained that the Administration would consult the public on the alignment, layout and level of CWB, and the extent of reclamation would vary according to the decision. As such, the requested details were at present not available. He assured members that the costs and the justifications for CWB would be provided to Members when the relevant funding proposal was put up to LegCo for approval.

29. Noting the above, Mr Andrew CHENG opined that instead of asking the public to put forward proposals on CWB, the Government should work out preliminary proposals with details including the costs, reclamation involved, the proposed alignment, layout and level for public comment. In response, SHPL pointed out that three planning concepts in this regard had been made available in the Kit. The Kit would need to be revised in response to public views.

Electronic Road Pricing

30. Mr Andrew CHENG agreed with the Administration on the importance of community consensus on ERP as highlighted in paragraph 14(b) above. He however said that in the absence of information on the cost of CWB for comparison with the cost implications of ERP, the public could not determine whether ERP should be implemented. On the other hand, given the scarcity of land in Hong Kong, implementation of ERP would be required sooner or later. He called upon the Administration to demonstrate greater determination in pursuing ERP. In response, DS/ETW(T)1 reiterated that with the current roadway setup, ERP could not be implemented without CWB.

31. Ms Miriam LAU and Ir Dr Raymond HO shared the Administration's view on ERP, quoting the experience of Norway and the United Kingdom. In particular, Ir Dr HO opined that with little land in Hong Kong to provide alternative routes to make ERP viable, the option should not be further examined.

Ms Emily LAU, on the other hand, said that the Audit Commission should investigate why the relevant bureau and department had failed to implement ERP despite spending \$100 million and two decades studying it. In response, SHPL emphasized that as explained in paragraph 14(b) above, it was not feasible to pursue ERP without CWB.

Full utilization of the Western Harbour Crossing (WHC)

32. Mr Andrew CHENG and Ms Miriam LAU saw a need to equalize the usage and tolls of the three cross-harbour tunnels. In particular, Mr CHENG pointed out that the public had long been concerned about the imbalance in this regard and the traffic congestion so arising. Despite the difficulties highlighted in paragraph 14(c) above, the Administration should make efforts to rectify the imbalance once and for all. He opined that to achieve this purpose, the Administration should, as proposed by the Democratic Party, set up a bridge and tunnel authority to regulate all tunnels and bridges. Dr KWOK Ka-ki also urged the Administration to take over control of the tunnels instead of negotiating with the WHC operator to cut tolls. In response, DS/ETW(T)1 agreed to further examine the above views.

33. In this regard, Ms Emily LAU stated that instead of equalizing the tolls of all cross-harbour tunnels, their usage should be equalized by deliberately charging lower tolls for under-utilized tunnels. She however supported the proposed establishment of a bridge and tunnel authority to provide the Government with the flexibility to adjust the operation of tunnels and bridges as necessary to tackle traffic problems. Ir Dr Raymond HO commented that downward adjustment to the tolls of WHC would not increase its usage because traffic congestion at its exit on the Hong Kong side would turn away drivers. The Administration noted their views.

Other alternatives

34. Commenting on the Administration's explanation in paragraph 14(d) above, Ms Emily LAU pointed out that the number of bus routes that ran into the Central Business District should be restricted. Ir Dr Raymond HO, on the other hand, called for early extension of the MTR Island Line to the Western District. According to him, the need for the extension had been examined and agreed upon many years before. The Administration noted their views.

The Harbour-front Enhancement Review

35. The Chairman referred to the Kit and enquired why the Harbour-front Enhancement Committee (HEC) Sub-Committee on Wan Chai Development Phase II (the Subcommittee), which initiated the HER, had subsequently decided to revise the Kit. He also asked whether the Wan Chai District Council (WCDC) had been consulted beforehand. Mr CHEUNG Hok-ming likewise sought details on the decision.

36. In response, the Deputy Secretary for Housing, Planning and Lands (Planning and Lands)1 (DS/HPL(P&L)1) reported that there was close consultation with WCDC in the WDII Review. The decision to withdraw the Kit resulted from some problems in internal communication. As the three illustrations contained in the Kit had given rise to confusion with the result that the original objectives of issuing the Kit were not fully comprehended by the community, the Sub-committee decided that it would issue another Kit as soon as possible to facilitate public engagement and envisioning. As an improvement to past practices, the public would be engaged in working out the preliminary planning concepts for the Trunk Road and WD II. Compared to the past practice of consulting the public after the planning concepts were produced, the present approach was a new attempt in public involvement.

37. Mr CHEUNG Hok-ming asked when the revised Kit would be issued, and whether it would cover measures to relieve traffic congestion other than the Trunk Road. In response, DS/HPL(P&L)1 reported that the revised Kit was under active preparation and hopefully could be ready in the following month. To facilitate the public to evaluate and build consensus on the conceptual Plan and Master Plan to be developed under the WD II Review, which would form the basis for the draft OZP, the revised Kit would highlight the constraints for the harbour-front development of Wan Chai and adjoining areas. The constraints included, for example, the need to provide the missing transport links on the northern shore of Hong Kong, to take into account the various existing and planned strategic infrastructural facilities such as CHT and the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre (such as the need to maintain their connection roads to the Trunk Road at a desirable gradient), to retain or re-provision many existing harbour-front facilities, to abide by CFA's judgment on reclamation, etc.

38. Referring to the need to revise the Kit, Ms Emily LAU urged the Administration to exercise care in future to avoid recurrence. Dr KWOK Ka-ki also found the above development regrettable, especially as the Kit, prepared by the Civil Engineering and Development Department (CEDD), had not been discussed by the Subcommittee. He cast doubt on the credibility of the Government, in particular of CEDD, and stressed the importance of engaging independent consultants to conduct the relevant engineering feasibility studies under the monitoring of LegCo. In response, SHPL assured members that as was the existing practice, the reports of the engineering studies of Government projects would be made open. Independent consultants would also be invited to comment on them.

39. Mr Albert CHAN likewise considered the recent publication of the Kit premature because it was impossible and illogical that all concepts put forward therein with varying extents of reclamation could all comply with the "overriding public need test" stipulated by the CFA. He questioned why, with the PHO clarified by the CFA judgment, the Administration still failed to identify the best way to take forward the Trunk Road. In response, SHPL reiterated the points that

as the extent of reclamation would vary according to the number of connection roads, there was a need to consult the public on whether there was a need for the Trunk Road and if so, the number of connection roads and hence the extent of reclamation. Any option to be adopted must comply with the PHO and the CFA judgment.

Central Reclamation Phase III

40. Miss CHOY So-yuk expressed regrets about town planning in Hong Kong, which in her view was often frustrating. She urged the Administration to minimize the extent of reclamation in Central if the public expressed similar views on the WDII Review.

41. In response, SHPL pointed out that the contracts of Central Reclamation Phase III (CRIII) works had been awarded. The works were only temporarily suspended on 27 September 2003 pending the Court's decision on the interim injunction over CRIII works and the judicial review of the Chief Executive in Council's approval of the Central Outline Zoning Plan (OZP) filed by the Society of Protection of the Harbour Limited following the Court's judgment on WDII. The applications for the interim injunction of CRIII and judicial review were dismissed by the High Court on 6 October 2003 and 9 March 2004 respectively. CRIII works had since resumed according to the original plan, which had already minimized reclamation.

Kai Tak

42. The Chairman asked why the Kowloon City District Council's proposal of providing a town hall or a civic centre was not incorporated in the new OZPs of South East Kowloon Development (SEKD). He also enquired about the progress of the study on how to improve the accessibility to the harbour front of To Kwa Wan. In reply, DS/HPL(P&L)1 explained that in the light of the CFA judgment on harbour reclamation, the Government had to comprehensively review the Kai Tak project to ensure full compliance with the requirements of the PHO and the CFA judgment. It was therefore necessary to review the original OZPs concerned, which involved reclamation. A Sub-committee on SEKD Review was set up under the HEC to advise on the Kai Tak Review. Stage 1 Public Participation programme, i.e., envisioning for the future of Kai Tak, took place between September and November 2004. The Planning Department was presently processing the public views in consultation with the HEC Subcommittee on SEKD Review. The details to be included in the draft OZPs had yet to be finalized.

43. Miss CHAN Yuen-han reminded the Administration of strong public sentiments against reclamation and urged it to refrain from further reclamation. In her view, reclamation could not be justified in SEKD despite the need to reclaim the Kai Tak Approach Channel. She also shared Miss CHOY So-yuk's view that town planning in Hong Kong was far from desirable. Too much emphasis had been placed on the need for land while the needs of the communities concerned

were ignored. To redress such imbalance, she opined that the Administration should observe the following three criteria when planning for SEKD –

- (a) That there should not be any reclamation;
- (b) That the Administration should experiment new concepts of planning, such as sustainable planning, in SEKD where the land available for planning was large, so that the ridgelines would not be blocked and the wall effect could be obviated; and
- (c) That to advocate the people-oriented planning approach, sufficient community facilities should be made available in SEKD and in Kowloon City, the population to be accommodated there should be maintained at an optimal level, and a water-front promenade and large public open space should be provided. Moreover, the future SEKD must be integrated with the neighbouring old districts, and efforts should also be made to retain old and develop new economic activities in the integrated area.

44. In response, SHPL assured members that the planning review for SEKD was conducted on the basis of “zero reclamation”. As to the other two criteria highlighted above, whether they should be adopted would hinge on the outcome of the relevant public consultation exercise. Noting such, Miss CHAN Yuen-han reiterated the need for the Administration to adopt all three criteria, and to refrain from selectively taking on board only those public views which were favourable to it. Mr Albert CHAN added that the PHO was also applicable to SEKD. He further urged the Administration to exercise great care in planning for SEKD, and to consider his proposal of relocating all Government offices presently situated in Central to SEKD so as to vacate the sites in Central for more gainful use.

45. Mr Timothy FOK Tsun-ting enquired when the decision would be made as to whether the long-awaited stadium in SEKD would be provided. In response, SHPL said that the provision of the stadium would be considered but since consultation on the conceptual development options was still under way, specific details of the facilities to be provided had yet to be worked out.

VI Any other business

46. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 1:10 pm.

Secretary for Housing, Planning and Lands's speaking note at the meeting

Chairman and Members,

I am glad to have this opportunity today to brief the Panel on the progress of the reviews on Wan Chai North and Kai Tak. As our special public asset and natural heritage, Victoria Harbour should be protected and preserved. It is our pledge that apart from Central and the development schemes at Wan Chai North and Kai Tak, there will be no further reclamation inside the Harbour.

In respect of the remaining reclamation projects on Hong Kong Island, we resumed the works of Central Reclamation Phase III last March to implement minimum reclamation to meet the urgent traffic needs. The nearby Wan Chai Development Phase II ("WDII") project is now undergoing an envisioning stage under the principle of "minimum reclamation". We have also adopted "zero reclamation" as the starting point to re-plan the last proposed reclamation scheme on the Kowloon side, i.e. the site of the former Kai Tak Airport.

In reviewing the two development projects mentioned above, we will strictly adhere to the requirements of the Protection of the Harbour Ordinance ("PHO") and the judgment of the Court of Final Appeal ("CFA"). It is only when we are satisfied that reclamation is necessary and that there are no other reasonable alternatives to the reclamation option that we will allow minimum reclamation to take place to meet the CFA's "overriding public need".

The sole purpose of the WDII project is to build a new Trunk Road to relieve the pressing problem of traffic congestion along the northern shore of Hong Kong Island. I believe that Members must have noticed that the traffic problem is worsening. According to the estimate made by Transport Department ("TD"), if the new Trunk Road is not built by 2011, it will take 45 minutes to travel from Rumsey Street in Central to Causeway Bay during rush hours (which at present takes 15 minutes). TD has examined various traffic management measures to relieve traffic congestion and maximize the capacity of existing roads and junctions along the Connaught Road Central/Harcourt Road/Gloucester Road Corridor, but concluded that apart from these measures, the Trunk Road will still be required. With the Trunk Road in place, the travelling time is expected to shorten from the 15 minutes at present to 5 minutes. As Asia's World City, we must not allow the traffic congestion problem to affect our economic activities and the public's daily life. Therefore, we must build the Trunk Road to meet the urgent need.

Any possible reclamation at Wan Chai North will depend on the alignment, design and location of the Trunk Road and the extent will be kept to the minimum. If reclamation is to be involved in the process of building the Trunk Road, any reclaimed land at Wan Chai North will be put to public use only. I must emphasise that no land will be reclaimed for the purpose of land sale.

To enhance public participation and facilitate consensus-building, we are working closely with the Harbour-front Enhancement Committee ("HEC") in carrying out the comprehensive reviews of Wan Chai North and Kai Tak with a view to ensuring full compliance with the PHO and the CFA judgment. Meanwhile, the relevant Sub-committees of the HEC are conducting public consultation activities in relation to these two development projects. The objective is to engage the public before the preliminary planning concepts are produced so that the public can express at an early stage their vision and aspirations for the sustainable development of the harbour-front with a view to building consensus. Compared to the past practice of consulting the public after the planning concepts were produced, this is a new attempt that involves another round of public consultation. I hope that this new practice facilitates the future planning of the Harbour, better responds to public aspirations, and meets public needs in our attempt to "return the Harbour to the people".

My colleagues and I and the colleagues from the Environment, Transport and Works Bureau are happy to answer Members' enquiries. Thank you.

Ends/Tuesday, February 22, 2005