

For Information

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL PANEL ON PLANNING, LANDS AND WORKS

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

Purpose

This paper informs Members of the progress of the review of Wan Chai Development Phase II (“WDII Review”) and that of Kai Tak.

Background

2. The Government has announced in the 2004 and 2005 Policy Commitments that apart from Central Reclamation Phase III and the proposed reclamation schemes at Wan Chai North and Kai Tak, there will be no further reclamation inside the Harbour limits. In the light of the Court of Final Appeal’s (“CFA”) judgment of 9 January 2004 on reclamation, the Government has undertaken to comprehensively review the WDII and Kai Tak projects to ensure full compliance with the requirements of the Protection of the Harbour Ordinance (“PHO”) and the CFA judgment.

3. The Harbour-front Enhancement Committee (“HEC”) was established in May 2004 to advise the Secretary for Housing, Planning and Lands on the planning, land uses and developments along the existing and new harbour-front of Victoria Harbour. The HEC has set up two Sub-committees, namely the Sub-committee on WDII Review and the Sub-committee on South East Kowloon Development (“SEKD”) Review, to advise on the WDII Review and Kai Tak Review respectively.

4. The Government has been working closely with the two Sub-committees of the HEC on the reviews of WDII and Kai Tak. This paper reports on the

latest progress of the reviews.

Progress of the WDII Review

5. There is a compelling and present need to alleviate the traffic congestion problem along the northern shore of the Hong Kong Island. The Government has examined various traffic management measures and concluded that, even with all those measures in place to relieve traffic congestion and maximize the capacity of existing roads and junctions along the Connaught Road Central/Harcourt Road/Gloucester Road Corridor, the Trunk Road comprising the Central – Wan Chai Bypass (“CWB”) and Island Eastern Corridor Link would still be required. A note setting out why the Trunk Road is needed and the alternatives considered is at Annex.

6. The purpose of the WDII project is to implement the Trunk Road that is essential to meeting the transport need. In order to build the Trunk Road to the required traffic performance, some reclamation is likely to be required. The extent of reclamation will depend on the alignment, layout and level of the Trunk Road. In all events, any reclamation that has to be carried out must fully comply with the PHO and the “overriding public need test” stipulated by the CFA, and the extent of reclamation will be kept to the minimum. For any such reclaimed land, it will be put to public use and no land will be reclaimed for the purpose of land sale.

7. The comprehensive review on WDII started in March 2004. In July 2004, the Government accepted the advice of the HEC that an enhanced public participation should be adopted in the course of the WDII Review. To achieve this, a public engagement exercise, namely the “Harbour-front Enhancement Review (“HER”) – Wan Chai and Adjoining Areas”, is being carried out under the steer of the HEC Sub-committee on WDII Review as part of the WDII review process. Results of the HER project will provide input to the WDII Review.

8. The objectives of the HER project are to achieve a socially, environmentally and economically sustainable harbour-front at Wan Chai and adjoining areas and to satisfy planning, transport and infrastructural needs while ensuring that the WDII project complies with the PHO. Made up of the Envisioning, Realization and Detailed Design Stages, the HER project’s

Envisioning Stage was launched in January 2005 with an aim to engaging the community at an early stage to solicit their “visions” on the types of harbour-front developments they aspire for at Wan Chai and the adjoining areas, while acknowledging the opportunities available and the constraints for development.

9. At the Envisioning Stage, opinion surveys will be conducted and a series of public forums and charrettes will be organized. Promotional activities through the printed and electronic media will be arranged to reach out to the community. To facilitate the public engagement process, the Sub-committee on WDII Review is now preparing an information kit for the various public engagement activities planned for the Envisioning Stage.

Progress of the Kai Tak Review

10. The Kai Tak Planning Review commenced in July 2004. As explained to Members vide the information paper on “Kai Tak Planning Review” in October 2004, the Kai Tak Planning Review comprises three stages –

- (a) Stage 1 - engage the public in determining visions and key issues;
- (b) Stage 2 - engage the public in developing options of Outline Concept Plan, including an option on a “*No Reclamation*” scenario; and
- (c) Stage 3 - engage the public in developing the draft Preliminary Outline Development Plan. Preliminary technical assessments would be undertaken to confirm broad feasibility of the land use proposals as input to the Engineering Feasibility Study in the next stage of the Comprehensive Review.

11. With advice from the HEC Sub-committee on SEKD Review, an enhanced public participation programme was devised to encourage public involvement in all stages of the Planning Review with a view to building public consensus on the study proposals.

12. The Stage 1 Public Participation programme, i.e. envisioning for the future of Kai Tak, took place between September and November 2004, during which a series of public forums, community workshops and a range of briefing sessions were conducted involving the relevant statutory and advisory bodies, District Councils and other stakeholder groups. About 240 written submissions were received.

13. The Planning Department is processing the public views received in the Stage 1 Public Participation programme in consultation with the HEC Sub-committee on SEKD Review. The public engagement process for the Stage 2 Public Participation programme is being worked out with advice from the Sub-committee.

Way Forward

14. The Government believes that the Harbour should be protected and preserved as a special public asset and a natural heritage of Hong Kong people. We will abide by the PHO and the Court of Final Appeal's judgment on reclamation. We will reach out to the community, in partnership with the HEC, with a view to working out the best solution to meet the overriding public needs of the community.

Housing, Planning and Lands Bureau
Environment, Transport and Works Bureau
Civil Engineering and Development Department
Planning Department
Transport Department

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Central - Wanchai Bypass

Central - Wanchai Bypass (CWB)

- The CWB is a strategic highway that will run parallel to the Connaught Road Central/Harcourt Road/Gloucester Road Corridor. It will connect the Rumsey Street flyover in the west to the Island Eastern Corridor in the east via a new Island Eastern Corridor Link (IECL).
- The CWB and IECL are the final and most vital road transport links missing on the northern shore of Hong Kong Island. On completion, they will allow the formation of a continuous, strategic road link that starts at Chai Wan in the east and continues all the way to Hong Kong International Airport and Tuen Mun in the northwest New Territories.
- Government planning models since the late 1980s have confirmed the need for CWB. The Comprehensive Transport Study (CTS) model is a planning tool that helps formulate solutions to cope with anticipated traffic demand. The CTS-2, completed in 1989, confirmed the need for CWB by the mid-to late-1990s. CTS-3, completed in 1999, reconfirmed the need for the CWB.
- A re-run of CTS-3 in the 4th quarter of 2003 using the latest land use planning assumptions and population projections also reaffirmed the need for the CWB.

Why do we need the CWB?

- Central and Wan Chai suffer serious traffic congestion - and the problem is going to get worse unless CWB is built.
- The Connaught Road Central/Harcourt Road/Gloucester Road Corridor is already saturated and cannot cope with anticipated traffic growth.
- Other east-west secondary Corridors, such as Hennessy Road and Queensway are also heavily congested. The capacity of these roads is constrained by traffic signals and kerbside loading / unloading activities of goods vehicles, buses and taxis.
- The CWB is needed to divert through traffic away from the Central Business District (CBD), to cater for anticipated traffic growth and to

alleviate congestion on existing road networks (already operating at capacity) that feed into Central from the east and west.

- Currently, the Connaught Road Central/Harcourt Road/Gloucester Road Corridor is the only strategic route serving the Central and Wan Chai areas. This route is subject to heavy congestion, and sometimes gridlocks, when minor accidents or incidents occur along the route.
- If the CWB is not built, congestion along the Connaught Road Central/Harcourt Road/Gloucester Road Corridor will spill over into neighbouring roads in Central and Wan Chai, eventually creating gridlock.
- Traffic management alternatives will provide local and limited short-term relief. But in the long term, the CWB is the only viable solution. Traffic management measures can complement CWB, but cannot replace it.

Other Alternatives Considered

Full utilization of the Western Harbour Crossing (WHC)

- This approach is not expected to relieve significantly congestion in the Central and Wan Chai areas as most of the traffic would still need to go through Central, except for the small percentage of traffic from and to the western part of the Hong Kong Island. This is because the diversion of traffic from CHT to WHC is likely to result in a corresponding increase in traffic from the eastern and southern parts of the Hong Kong Island. Therefore, the overall traffic condition of the Corridor is not expected to improve under such a hypothetical toll regime.
- Equalizing the tolls would be subject to a commercial agreement with the tunnel operators. This would take time to negotiate, with no certainty over the outcome.

Electronic Road Pricing (ERP)

- We are actively exploring whether and how ERP could be implemented in Hong Kong. In further studying the issue, we shall take into account all relevant considerations, such as privacy, charge rate, vehicle growth rate, cost implication to road users, impact on business and technological development etc. We shall also consult the public on any proposals to be drawn up.
- It would be unfair to ask those who want to by-pass the CBD to pay. Implementation of ERP needs to be supported by alternative routes or bypasses having sufficient capacity to receive the diverted traffic generated

from those wishing to avoid entering the charging zone. This points to the need for CWB. Without the Bypass, ERP alone could not effectively reduce traffic within the charging zone.

- ERP is one possible form of traffic management provided that: (a) there is an alternative route bypassing the charging zone; and (b) there is community consensus on its implementation. With the current roadway setup, we cannot implement ERP without the CWB.
- To unduly restrain traffic demand in the CBD could significantly impact on economic activities in the area. In the case of London's congestion charging scheme, the retail sector has expressed concern about the decline in the number of persons visiting the charging zone thereby adversely affecting retail business, particularly smaller retailers. It was also reported that a significant number of businesses were thinking of relocating.

Rationalisation of franchised bus services

- The number of bus trips through Central has been reduced by more than 15% since 1999. The scope of further reduction through Central is unlikely to be significant.

Restricting loading and unloading activities in Central

- There are already severe restrictions on loading/unloading along the Connaught Road/Harcourt Road/Gloucester Road Corridor.
- Imposing further restrictions on such activities along roads within the Central Business District cannot relieve congestion along the Connaught Road Central/Harcourt Road/Gloucester Road Corridor.
- Confining loading/unloading activities to night-time could adversely affect commercial activities in the district and may create noise problems.
- The Government should balance the interests of different parties, including the trucking industry, business operators in Central and other road users.

MTR Extension to Kennedy Town

- The forecast of the traffic problem in the Connaught Road Central/Harcourt Road/Gloucester Road Corridor is made on the assumption that the MTR Island Line would be extended to the Western District.
- Most bus routes run 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 will be limited and at most provide slight relief to the

already congested inner roads. It will not help relieve congestion in the Connaught Road Central/Harcourt Road/Gloucester Road Corridor.

New hillside escalators from Central to Mid-levels

- Additional escalator links will help relieve the traffic burden along roads in the Mid-levels, but will not help relieve congestion in the Central and Wan Chai areas.

Further Delay - the Consequences

- At present, the Connaught Road Central/Harcourt Road/Gloucester Road Corridor is already operating beyond capacity, with the volume/capacity (v/c) ratio above 1.0. Congestion is not limited to the normal am and pm peak hours.
- It is predicted that by 2011 traffic volume during peak hours at critical sections of the Corridor would exceed capacity by 30% if the CWB is not built.
- The traffic on the Connaught Road Central/Harcourt Road/Gloucester Road Corridor will in turn cause congestion to spill over into neighboring roads in Central and Wan Chai, creating gridlock.
- If the CWB is not ready by 2011, it is estimated that traffic conditions will worsen to a speed of 5 km/hr and it will take 45 minutes for drivers to travel from Rumsey Street to Causeway Bay via the 4-kilometre Connaught Road Central/Harcourt Road/Gloucester Road Corridor.
- If the CWB is built, the traveling time from Rumsey Street to Causeway Bay will be reduced to 5 minutes. With a protracted delay to the CWB, the travel and environmental prospects for the Central Business District will include:
 - Worsening traffic congestion
 - Increased risk of gridlock
 - Substandard air quality, noise and physical environment
 - Deteriorating operating conditions for public transport
 - Deteriorating environment for pedestrians
- The existing Connaught Road Central/Harcourt Road/Gloucester Road Corridor has been heavily used for many years. Major repair and reconstruction works would be required in the next 15 to 20 years. If the CWB is not completed within that timeframe, east-west traffic could be

paralysed when part of the Corridor has to be closed for repair and/or reconstruction works.