

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(1) 2271/05-06

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by the Administration)

Ref : CB1/PL/EA/1

Panel on Environmental Affairs

**Minutes of meeting
held on Monday, 3 July 2006, at 4:30 pm
in Conference Room A of the Legislative Council Building**

Members present : Hon CHOY So-yuk, JP (Chairman)
Hon Emily LAU Wai-hing, JP (Deputy Chairman)
Hon Martin LEE Chu-ming, SC, JP
Hon CHEUNG Man-kwong
Hon SIN Chung-kai, JP
Hon LAU Kong-wah, JP
Hon Miriam LAU Kin-yee, GBS, JP
Hon Albert CHAN Wai-yip
Hon Audrey EU Yuet-mee, SC, JP
Hon LEE Wing-tat
Hon Jeffrey LAM Kin-fung, SBS, JP

Member attending : Hon WONG Kwok-hing, MH

Member absent : Hon WONG Yung-kan, JP

**Public officers
attending** : **For item III**
Environmental Protection Department

Dr Malcolm BROOM
Assistant Director/Water Policy

Mr David CHAN
Ag Senior Environmental Protection Officer/Water Policy
Division

Drainage Services Department

Mr TSUI Wai
Assistant Director/Projects and Development

Mr Fedrick KAN
Ag Chief Engineer/Sewerage Projects

For item IV

Environmental Protection Department

Mr Elvis AU Wai-kwong
Assistant Director (Environmental Assessment)

Mr Maurice YEUNG Kwok-leung
Principal Environmental Protection Officer (Assessment & Noise) (Atg)

Highways Department

Mr CHOW Chun-wah
Chief Engineer/Major Works 3-2

Planning Department

Mr Raymond WONG Wai-man
Chief Town Planner/Sub-Regional

Transport Department

Mr LEE Yan-ming
Chief Engineer/Traffic Engineering (NTW)

Clerk in attendance : Miss Becky YU
Chief Council Secretary (1)1

Staff in attendance : Mr Watson CHAN
Head, Research and Library Services Division

Mr Jackie WU
Research Officer 1

Mrs Mary TANG
Senior Council Secretary (1)2

Miss Mandy POON
Legislative Assistant (1)4

I. Confirmation of minutes, endorsement of the draft report of the Panel for submission to the Legislative Council and matters arising

- (LC Paper No. CB(1) 1737/05-06 — Minutes of the meeting held on 22 May 2006
LC Paper No. CB(1) 1739/05-06(01) — Draft report of the Panel for submission to the Legislative Council
LC Paper No. CB(1) 1739/05-06(02) — List of follow-up actions
LC Paper No. CB(1) 1739/05-06(03) — List of outstanding items for discussion)

The minutes of the meeting held on 22 May 2006 were confirmed.

2. Members endorsed the draft report of the Panel on Environmental Affairs for the current session and authorized the Chairman to revise the report to cover discussion at this and future meetings before it was presented to the Council on 12 July 2006.

3. As the Administration had not proposed any item for discussion, it was agreed that no Panel meeting would be held in July 2006 unless otherwise requested by members.

II. Information paper issued since last meeting

4. Members noted that no information papers had been issued since last meeting.

III. 338DS – Improvement and upgrading of the sewerage systems in Sha Tin/Ma On Shan New Town

- (LC Paper No. CB(1) 1739/05-06(04) — Paper provided by the Administration)

5. The Assistant Director (Projects and Development) (AD(PD)) gave a power-point presentation on the Administration's proposal to upgrade "338DS – Improvement and upgrading of the sewerage systems in Sha Tin/Ma On Shan New Town" to Category A at an estimated cost of about \$76 million in money-of-the-day prices.

6. Mr LAU Kong-wah questioned the justifications for spending \$76 million to upgrade the sewerage facilities in Shatin and Ma On Shan where allowances for expansion of infrastructure should have been included in the planning of these new towns. It would appear that the proposed project was meant to cater for the needs of the private residential developments above Wu Kai Sha Station and Che Kung Temple Station given that there were no other new developments in the area. If so, the

developers concerned should be responsible for providing their own sewerage connections. The Acting Chief Engineer/Sewerage Projects (AgCE/SP) explained that in addition to serving the new developments above the Wu Kai Sha Station and Che Kung Temple Station, the project would also serve housing estates at Whitehead, Lee On, Sai Sha and Kam Ying, as well as other unsewered areas with a total population of 28 000.

7. Mr LAU Kong-wah further enquired about the policy on the provision of sewerage connections for private developments and whether the cost incurred had been included in the land premium for the developments above the Ma On Shan Rail (MOSR). The Assistant Director of Environmental Protection (Water Policy) (ADEP(WP)) said that the Government was required to provide sewerage facilities for developments which were covered in the catchment areas.

8. Referring to paragraph 2 of the paper, Ms Audrey EU noted that the projected population intake was 32 000 which was different from the figure of 28 000 as provided by the Administration. AD(PD) explained that the project would provide sewerage facilities for the new housing developments at Lee On and Sai Sha and would meet with the increasing development demands following the commissioning of the MOSR. AgCE/SP added that the developments above the Wu Kai Sha Station would be proceeded in three phases. The first phase was expected to be completed in 2008 with a population intake of 2 500. This would be followed by the second and third phases with a population intake of about 1 900 for each phase. The projected population intake of 32 000 included those of the developments above the railway stations and their vicinity. The total population was made up of 28 000 around the Wu Kai Sha Station and 4 000 around the Che Kung Temple Station. At members' request, the Administration undertook to explain its policy on the provision of sewerage facilities for private developments together with the catchment of the proposed project in its submission to the Public Works Subcommittee (PWSC).

9. Ms Audrey EU was concerned that the project, which was expected to be completed in late 2010, might not be able to tie in with the population intake of the planned developments in mid 2008. AgCE/SP clarified that the population intake in 2008 would be for the first phase of the development above Wu Kai Sha Station only, and the construction works associated with the expansion of the relevant pumping station at Area 108 would be expedited to tie in with this population intake. In response to Ms EU's further question on the impact of the proposed project on the sewage charges in relation to paragraph 5 of the paper, AgCE/SP said that the annual recurrent cost of the works was about \$0.9 million, representing an increase in the recurrent cost of providing sewage services by about 0.05%. While such an increase would be taken into account in determining sewage charges, public consultation would be conducted before any fee adjustments.

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10. Ms Emily LAU sought elaboration on the proposed rising mains along Sai Sha Road. AD(PD) said that the rising mains would be about 450 metres long and 750 millimeters in diameter and would run underneath MOSR viaduct. The rising mains would descend at the Sai Sha Road and connect with the existing sewers. Ms LAU was concerned that the neighbouring community, which had just been freed from the nuisance associated with the construction of MOSR, would have to face the same problem again when project commenced. AgCE/SP said that there was a need for timely implementation of the project to meet with the development demands along MOSR given the surge of population intake since 2003-04.

11. Mr LAU Kong-wah enquired about the trenchless method for constructing the rising mains across the Sai Sha Road. AD(PD) said that having regard to the heavy traffic between the Sha On Street and the Sai Sha Road, trenchless method would be used for constructing the rising mains at the junction. However, the same approach could not be used at the road sections at Kam Ying Road, Ma On Shan Road and Che Kung Miu Road due to technical constraints.

12. Noting that Che Kung Miu Road had been identified as one of the 72 roads which required road re-surfacing with low noise materials, Mr LAU Kong-wah opined that opportunity should be taken to include the resurfacing works in the relevant road opening works in order to save time and resources. AD(PD) said that the Drainage Services Department (DSD) had informed other departments about the road opening works at Che Kung Miu Road to see if they had other public works to be carried out at the same location, but no response had been received. Mr LAU stressed the need for better coordination of road opening works to minimize disruption to the public. His concern was shared by Ms Emily LAU. The Chairman also requested DSD to liaise with the Highways Department such that low noise materials would be used for re-surfacing the roads after the road opening works were completed. At members' request, the Administration agreed to explain its construction plans in its submission to PWSC.

13. Ms Emily LAU enquired about the capacity of the existing sewerage systems and the provision of de-odourizer to mitigate the odour problem. Mr Albert CHAN was also concerned about the odour problem associated with sewerage facilities, given that the foul smell of the new sewerage facilities at Siu Ho Wan was troubling the residents of Lantau. AgCE/SP explained that the capacity of 4 000 cubic metres per day of the existing pumping station at Area 108 would be expanded to 14 500 cubic metres per day to cater for the large population intake from the planned developments near the Wu Kai Sha Station. To address the concerns about environmental impact associated with the commissioning of the new pumping station, greening measures which included the use of green rooftops would apply. As regards the odour problem, AgCE/SP said that as the proposed project was meant to improve and upgrade the sewerage facilities in Shatin and Ma On Shan area, this would unlikely intensify the problem. In addition to the proposed forced ventilation system, activated carbon would also be used as the deodorizing facility. As a result, the odour from the pumping station would be reduced by 99.5%.

14. Ms Emily LAU further asked if the residents were consulted on the proposed project. AgCE/SP said that the Development & Housing Committee of Sha Tin District Council had been consulted. Ms LAU considered that there was a need to consult the owners' corporations of the affected residential developments. AgCE/SP said that residents of the affected housing developments were represented by Shatin District Councillors and their concerns had been adequately reflected. In light of Ms LAU's concern, the Administration would consider consulting the owners' corporation of the affected residential developments on the proposed project.

15. In concluding, the Chairman said that the Panel did not object to the funding proposal being submitted to PWSC for consideration, but members' concerns raised at the meeting would need to be addressed.

IV. A draft comprehensive plan to tackle road traffic noise in Hong Kong

(LC Paper No. CB(1) 2394/04-05(01) — Reference cases relating to traffic noise impact of existing roads handled under the Legislative Council Redress System

LC Paper No. CB(1) 1739/05-06(05) — Referral arising from the meeting with the Tsuen Wan District Council on 6 January 2005 (English version only)

LC Paper No. CB(1) 1739/05-06(06) — Referral arising from the meeting with the Kwai Tsing District Council on 24 February 2005 (English version only)

LC Paper No. CB(1) 1739/05-06(07) — Referral arising from the meeting with the Sha Tin District Council on 12 May 2005 (Chinese version only)

LC Paper No. CB(1) 1739/05-06(08) — Referral arising from the meeting with the Sham Shui Po District Council on 9 June 2005 (English version only)

LC Paper No. CB(1) 1739/05-06(09) — Referral arising from the meeting with the Wong Tai Sin District Council on 10 November 2005 (Chinese version only)

LC Paper No. CB(1) 1808/05-06(01) — Extracts from the minutes of the meeting with the Wong Tai Sin District Council on 10 November 2005

LC Paper No. CB(1) 1739/05-06(10) — Referral arising from the meeting with the Eastern District Council on 8 June 2006 (English version only)

Action

LC Paper No. CB(1) 1739/05-06(11)	— Paper provided by the Administration)
RP04/05-06	— Research Report entitled “Mitigation Measures against Road Traffic Noise in Selected Places” prepared by the Research and Library Services Division
IN33/05-06	— Supplementary information on mitigation measures against road traffic noise in selected places prepared by the Research and Library Services Division)

16. The Chairman said that as the nuisance arising from road traffic had all along been a major public concern, members considered that reference should be made to overseas experience in mitigating the problem. In this connection, the Research and Library Services Division (RLSD) of the Legislative Council Secretariat had completed a study on mitigation measures against road traffic noise in selected places. She added that at the informal meeting held on 2 June 2006 to discuss the draft research report prepared by RLSD, members raised the following points for consideration by the Administration –

- (a) Prevention of noise problem at the outset of land use planning and project design planning was the most effective noise abatement measure. Consideration should be given to rejecting proposals of residential developments on sites where the surrounding traffic noise levels had already exceeded the noise limit. Buffer zones and green belts should be provided in the event that the noise levels of the proposed developments were below but close to the limit;
- (b) Consideration should be given to incorporating in the sales brochure for residential developments the noise levels which the developments would be exposed to so that prospective buyers could make an informed decision. This would encourage developers to adopt more effective noise mitigation measures, including the use of better construction materials to ensure sustainability of the buildings;
- (c) To reduce noise impacts arising from vehicles running on joints on flyovers, a joint-free design should be adopted for flyovers and highways while low noise road surfacing materials should be used for paving of roads;
- (d) Lighter materials, more aesthetic designs and advanced technique should be applied in the provision of noise barriers; and

(e) Noise abatement measures should be adopted to resolve the complaint cases as set out in Appendix I and II of the research report.

17. At the Chairman's invitation, the Head, RLSD gave a power-point presentation on the research report (LC Paper No. RP04/05-06) explaining the measures adopted by Japan, Taiwan, the State of New South Wales and the State of Victoria in Australia, the State of California in the United Sates and Hong Kong in mitigating the problem of road traffic noise.

18. The Assistant Director (Environmental Assessment) (AD(EA)) also briefed members on the draft Comprehensive Plan to tackle road traffic noise in Hong Kong (the draft plan) prepared by the Environmental Protection Department (EPD).

Noise limits

19. Given that the problem of road traffic road had all along been affecting the community at large, Mr WONG Kwok-hing said that he was disappointed at the measures proposed by EPD as these were not able to provide immediate relief to the problem. He also questioned the propriety of setting the road traffic noise limit at 70 A-weighted decibel levels (dB(A)) in Hong Kong, which in his view failed to take account of the canyon effect. ADEP(EA) explained that the prescribed noise limit 70 dB(A)L₁₀(1 hr) was set with reference to the standards which were adopted in the United Kingdom and USA. These standards were internationally recognized and acceptable in terms of reflecting noise annoyance. Mr WONG however pointed out that the international noise standard might not be applicable to Hong Kong given its dense population and rapid development. The public would be very disappointed if the international standard was adopted without making reference to the unique situation in Hong Kong.

Land use planning

20. Ms Emily LAU said that the problem of road traffic noise had been plaguing Hong Kong for a long time and over 1.1 million people were exposed to high levels of road traffic noise. Judging from the spatial distribution of traffic noise problem in Hong Kong as set out in Appendix 4 to the draft plan, most of the districts were affected by high road traffic noise levels. To tackle the problem at source, proper land use and development planning were necessary as otherwise high health cost would be incurred. AD(EA) concurred on the need for better land use planning at the outset to mitigate the road traffic noise problem. He said that a review of the Professional Practice Note on Road Traffic Noise would be carried out with a view to improving the environmental performance of new residential developments for the protection of future residents and providing more noise performance information to the public in a more transparent manner. EPD and the Planning Department (PlanD) were working closely on the prevention of road traffic noise problem at the outset of land use and project design planning.

21. The Chief Town Planner/Sub-Regional (CTP/SR) added that given the severe physical constraints in Hong Kong, there was a limitation to solely rely on land use planning, including means such as provision of buffer areas and locating trunk roads to the fringe of town centre, to prevent traffic noise. Other measures such as provision of noise barriers, use of submerged roads, traffic management, etc. would also need to be considered. Many other cities where development density was much lower and land was more extensive still required such measures to tackle traffic noise. The public would also be encouraged to use mass transport to reduce reliance on roads while developers should be required to conduct noise assessments before proceeding with their projects. On the question of providing buffer zones to keep building developments away from roads, CTP/SR said that this might be very difficult in developed areas given the presence of existing dense developments and the scarcity of land. However, buffer zones could be considered in the planning for the new development areas where situation permitted.

22. Ms Audrey EU enquired whether consideration could be given to rejecting proposals of residential developments on sites where the surrounding traffic noise levels had already exceeded noise limits. In the event that the residential development was allowed to proceed despite the high noise levels, the developers should be held responsible for the provision of noise abatement measures. The Chairman concurred that developers should bear the cost for mitigating measures, such as installation of noise barriers and surfacing of roads using low-noise materials, to protect their developments from exposure to excessive noise levels.

23. AD(EA) explained that the provision of major new roads was governed by the Environmental Assessment Impact Ordinance (EIAO, Cap.499). However, most of the residential developments were not controlled by the EIAO but were governed by the guidelines under the Environment Chapter of the Hong Kong Planning Standards and Guidelines, which provided a guiding framework for the selection of sites, building disposition and design to reduce traffic noise exposure. Development projects submitted to the Town Planning Board (TPB) for approval would usually be accompanied by noise impact assessments. In order to minimize the noise impact, consideration would be given to incorporating in the sales brochures the noise levels which the developments would be exposed to so that prospective buyers could make an informed decision. This would also give developers an incentive to provide for designs which would minimize noise exposure. Meanwhile, project proponents and developers would be held responsible for implementing noise mitigation measures within their premises. The responsibility for the provision of noise mitigation measures in respect of Government land would be worked out on a case by case basis.

24. Ms Audrey EU held the view that the planning guidelines should be tightened to the effect that residential developments which would be exposed to road traffic noise exceeding the prescribed noise limits would not be allowed. This would force developers to take measures to ensure that their developments would not be exposed to excessive noise. AD(EA) said that TPB would be consulted on the Administration's proposals to reduce noise impacts on new residential developments.

CTP/SR added that not all redevelopment projects required approval from TPB, i.e. where the use conformed with the statutory land use zoning. In case where applications for permission to undertake redevelopment and/or change of land use, say from industrial to residential use, were required from TPB, PlanD would consult EPD on the noise impact and might recommend to TPB to require the project proponents to provide a noise impact assessment report and to undertake noise abatement measures, which might include re-alignment of building disposition, to minimize noise exposure as condition for planning permission. If the project proponents failed to demonstrate that they could meet the noise standards or noise abatement requirements, their applications might be rejected. At members' request, the Administration agreed to consider the suggestion of rejecting proposals for residential developments if these would be exposed to excessive noise levels.

Disclosure of noise information in sales brochure

25. The Chairman said that she was disappointed that the requirement for disclosure of noise information in sales brochures of residential properties was not mandatory. Since the exposure to road traffic noise could be minimized through improvements in design, choice of materials and orientation of residential developments, developers should be held responsible for implementing mitigating measures to protect the residents from excessive road traffic noise. To enable prospective buyers to make an informed decision on their purchase, developers should be required to disclose in the sales brochures the levels of noise which the properties were exposed to, in particular when the noise levels had exceeded the limits. AD(EA) said that said that Government adopted an open attitude in this respect. Public consultation on the draft plan would be conducted to solicit views on from stakeholders on how information should be disclosed.

26. Mr Martin LEE said that if the noise standards were too restrictive, some developers might re-align their building orientation in an attempt to minimize the noise levels after the sales, particularly for uncompleted flats. As a result, the prospective buyers might not be able to have the disposition and facing which they originally intended. He suggested that another possible way to deal with the noise problem was to decline consent for the development if the developer was not able to take measures to reduce noise levels to an acceptable limit. AD(EA) said that an inter-departmental working group had been set up with the Housing, Planning and Lands Bureau to explore the feasibility of disclosure of noise information in sales brochure so that prospective purchasers could be better informed when they made their choices.

27. Mr SIN Chung-kai recalled that when the subject on sales descriptions for uncompleted residential properties was brought up in a motion debate at a recent Council meeting, members noted that there was strong opposition from the Real Estate Developers Association. Therefore, it might be difficult to impose a mandatory requirement on the disclosure of noise information in sales brochures. Besides, there was no way to prevent residents to lodge complaints against road traffic

noise even if they were made aware of the noise problem before purchase. As such, the most effective means was to design the building in such a way as to minimize the noise levels to an acceptable level. Failure to do would result in the rejection of the development project.

28. AD(EA) said that developers were obliged to observe the Hong Kong Planning Standards and Guidelines in designing residential developments. However, it would be for TPB to decide whether a development project should be approved or not, taking into account the views of EPD and the public. Meanwhile, the Administration would consider measures to mitigate road traffic noise through legislative/administrative means. Noting that the population to be exposed to excessive traffic noise would be increased from one million to 1.5 million, and that the number of vehicles would be increased from 0.3 million to 0.6 million in 10 years' time, Mr SIN Chung-kai remained of the view that designs of residential developments not able to reduce the noise exposure to under 70dB(A) should be rejected. This would encourage developers to adopt more effective noise mitigating measures in developing residential properties.

Provision of noise barriers

29. Mr WONG Kwok-hing noted with concern that of the 36 road sections identified for installation of noise barriers in 2000, only two had been completed and 18 would be retrofitted next year while the rest were still under consideration. AD(EA) said that \$1,100 million had already been earmarked for the provision of noise barriers at the 18 road sections. The Administration would apply for additional resources in the coming years for the installation of noise barriers at the remaining road sections.

30. Mr LAU Kong-wah enquired if the Administration had worked out the optimum design for noise barriers. Quoting the controversial noise barriers along the Tolo Highway, Mr Jeffrey LAM echoed that more efforts should be made to improve the design and choice of material of noise barriers. Consideration should also be given to using recycled materials for the noise barriers. AD(EA) reiterated that EPD was working with PlanD at the outset of land use to avoid road traffic noise, thereby obviating wherever possible the need for noise barriers which should be installed if necessary. Where noise barriers were considered necessary, an optimal design would be adopted to ensure visual compatibility with the vicinity and landscaped with trees. Consideration could also be given to holding a design competition for noise barriers.

Improving road joints at flyovers

31. Noting that the population to be exposed to excessive road traffic noise would be increased by 50% by 2016 as compared to 1997, Mr LAU Kong-wah considered it necessary for more commitment on the part of the Administration to resolve the problem. In particular, more efforts should be made to address the noise problem associated with vehicles passing road joints and manholes which caused a lot of noise

nuisance. AD(EA) said that the Highways Departments (HyD) was working on ways to minimize the road traffic noise associated with road joints. However, road joints which were causing noise nuisances were mostly found in those flyovers built many years ago where replacement and repair would pose immense difficulties. Meanwhile, the Administration would look into the design and maintenance of joints in the provision of new roads. The Chief Engineer/Major Works 3-2 supplemented that to reduce the noise impact arising from heavy vehicles running on road joints, HyD had improved the design of new road bridges by reducing the number of joints. The number of road joints in new bridges had also been reduced by spacing them around 100 metres instead of around 30 meters apart as in existing bridges. The road joints at the Eastern Corridor and the Lai Chi Kok Flyover had recently been replaced and noise measurements would be made to assess if the said replacement was effective in reducing traffic noise. Nonetheless, HyD had engaged the City University to conduct studies on the current practice/specification on road joints with a view to further improving the design.

Traffic management schemes

32. Mr WONG Kwok-hing said that the problem of intermittent noise arising from heavy vehicles running on joints at flyovers was a cause of concern to residents. The problem was particularly serious at Texaco Road and Tsing Yi Estate. There was hence a need to address the night-time traffic noise problem.

33. Expressing similar concern, Mr Albert CHAN said that the problem of road traffic noise had been affecting the public for years. In this connection, the Administration had conducted a two-stage feasibility study on measures to reduce road traffic noise. Measures, such as road widening works and installation of noise barriers, had been carried out in some roads in Tuen Mun and Tsuen Wan. However, there were still a large number of roads where the average noise levels were close to but below the noise limit of 70 dB(A) on average were not provided with any mitigation measures. Other than noise abatement measures, a more effective means was to implement traffic management schemes to restrict heavy vehicles from entering residential developments at night-time and divert them to other routes at night if such diversions would not result in transferring the noise nuisance to residents along the diverted routes. This was a common practice adopted by overseas countries and was very effective in reducing unnecessary trips to residential developments by heavy vehicles. He hoped that EPD would take the lead in taking forward the traffic management schemes.

34. AD(EA) said that EPD would work out with HyD on ways to improve the design and maintenance of joints to reduce the noise impact of heavy vehicles passing through road joints. Meanwhile, the feasibility and practicability of introducing night-time traffic noise standard was being explored to protect residents from high levels of traffic noise at night. In fact, traffic management scheme had been applied to the Texaco Road Flyover. It was found that there were pros and cons of such a scheme as the diversion of heavy vehicles to alternative routes might result in

transferring the noise nuisance to other areas. The diversion might also have impact on the operation of the transport trades. Notwithstanding, the Administration would continue to identify road sections suitable for application of traffic management schemes without affecting the transport trades and transferring the noise problem to other areas. The Chief Engineer/Traffic Engineering (NTW) added that while the Transport Department (TD) would cooperate with EPD on the implementation of traffic management schemes, it would need to ensure that these schemes would not cause inconvenience to the trades nor transfer the noise nuisance to residents along the diverted routes.

35. Mr LEE Wing-tat said that the experience of the night-time traffic management scheme at the Texaco Road Flyover had demonstrated its effectiveness in reducing road traffic noise provided that a suitable diverted route was identified. As these schemes were more effective and could be more timely implemented as compared to the provision of noise barriers which would take a long and tedious construction process, he suggested that District Councils should hold meetings with EPD, HyD and TD to discuss the feasibility of applying night-time traffic management schemes in noise sensitive areas within their districts. Co-operation from the transport trades should also be sought in identifying suitable diverted routes for heavy vehicles during night-time for the benefit of residents. AD(EA) took note of Mr LEE's suggestion and said that the Administration would conduct public consultation on the draft plan. Criteria for night-time traffic management schemes would be worked out taking into account all views received.

36. Mr Jeffrey LAM opined that there were difficulties in imposing traffic management schemes given the high development density in Hong Kong. Besides, heavy vehicles were not the only culprits, other vehicles such as motorcycles also contributed to the noise problem. Expressing similar view, Ms Miriam LAU said that it was not fair to put the blame on heavy vehicles, particularly under the circumstances where residential developments were built next to the already existing roads frequented by vehicles. She emphasized the need that the transport trades should be adequately consulted on the implementation of traffic management schemes to minimize the impact on their operation, and that diverted routes should be identified provided that the diversion would not result in transferring the noise problem to other areas. Incentives should also be considered to encourage drivers to use the diverted routes. Ms Emily LAU shared the view that incentives should be offered to encourage drivers to avoid noise sensitive areas during night-time.

Illegal tempering of vehicles

37. Ms Miriam LAU pointed out that as the noise nuisance associated with tempered vehicles was particularly disturbing at night, there was a need to impose control against these vehicles. AD(EA) said that an inter-departmental group comprising representatives from the Police, EPD and TD had been set up to tackle the noise problem of illegally tempered vehicles. In fact, the Police had stepped up enforcement actions against these vehicles. Given that poor driving habits of some

bus drivers might also contribute to the noise nuisance, the bus companies had been requested to issue guidelines to improve the driving practices of bus drivers.

Traffic noise from railways and trams

38. The Chairman supported the implementation of more effective measures to protect the public from exposure to excessive traffic noise generated by public transport systems, such as railways and trams. AD(EA) said that the Administration was committed to reducing road traffic noise and would be seeking cooperation from the transport trades, including public transport systems. He added that the noise levels of railways were subject to the control under the Noise Control Ordinance (Cap.400). He also agreed to follow up on complaints about noise levels of public transport systems.

39. Referring to the 400 complaints about traffic noise received last year, Mr Jeffrey LAM enquired about the number of repeated complaints and the number of complaints which were yet to be resolved. AD(EA) said that while there were technical difficulties in addressing some of the noise complaints, others could be satisfactorily resolved. By way of illustration, the number of noise complaints about the Fanling Highway had been reduced following the provision of noise barriers. It was more difficult to deal with traffic noise in built-up urban areas where planning at the outset was the only solution to the problem.

V. Any other business

40. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 6:30 pm.

Council Business Division 1
Legislative Council Secretariat
27 September 2006