

Planning for the Central Waterfront including the Tamar Site

LegCo Subcommittee meeting on 3 April 2006

Introduction

We refer to the captioned subject and are pleased to provide our views on the traffic and environmental issues related to the planning for the Central Waterfront including the Tamar Site below.

We recall that the prime purpose of the Central Reclamation Phase III (CRIII) project is to provide land for essential transport infrastructure developments. With the controversial opinions previously about the CRIII project settled, we could concentrate our attention and effort on the sustainable transport planning to meet our social, economic and environmental goals for the present and the future.

Present Situation

It is plain fact that the present trunk road of Connaught Road Central / Harcourt Road / Gloucester Road serving both as the east-west link for Hong Kong Island and in/out of the Central Business District is operating beyond its design capacity. Traffic congestion is not only limited to rush hours but continued regularly in the daytime during weekdays in both directions. Even a minor accident will result in a complete blockage and a serious incident could paralyse the transport network including the cross-harbour tunnels. There is a huge loss to the society in precious time and resources wasted, working efficiency reduced, fuel burnt and emission from vehicles caught in traffic jam polluting our environment.

Central-Wanchai Bypass

We fully support the construction of the Central-Wanchai Bypass which would provide a traffic bypass to relief the traffic congestion problem we are facing everyday. The east-west through traffic will be diverted from the existing trunk road resulting in less weaving and merging movements with local traffic accessing Central and Wanchai areas. While the proposed Central-Wanchai Bypass is underground, we agree that the visual and environmental impacts arising from the construction should be properly addressed to achieve the call for the enhancement of the Victoria harbour-front.

We urge also that the portion of Central-Wanchai Bypass within the CRIII reclamation area to be constructed as soon as practical. By doing so, the site could be handed back earlier for the construction of waterfront promenade and for the enjoyment by the public. The Government will not be blamed for leaving the site vacant and wasteful for an unnecessary prolonged period. More importantly, it

will provide relief to the traffic condition in and out of Central, which in turn improves the overall efficiency and our environment.

Pedestrian Traffic

A waterfront promenade running from Central to Wanchai will be developed for leisure and enjoyment of the public. It is therefore important to provide decent pedestrian access to facilitate the public going to the harbour-front. Pedestrian accessibility planning should be considered as an integral part of the overall sustainable transport planning with the prime objective of convenient and ease of use by the general public.

Mass Transportation Systems

Mass transportation has proven to be an effective and sustainable means of transportation of great efficiency. Priority should be given to the early construction of the Shatin-Central Link, Airport Railway extension and West Island Line. Improved connectivity among various rails will further enhance the efficiency. We believe these will relieve not only traffic congestion in the east-west bound traffic of Hong Kong Island but also help to reduce the traffic demand of the cross-harbour tunnels. A further advantage is the electricity driven powertrain is more environmental friendly with less pollutants emitted as compared with the fuel burnt driven vehicles.

In summary, we consider sustainable transportation planning should be adopted and the social, economic and environmental factors are of equal importance in the development of policies. Best practices could be adopted in the construction and maintenance of the transportation facilities to enhance environmental protection. Appropriate decision and action to resolve the present intolerable traffic condition need to be taken before the traffic network becomes paralysed.