

For information

Legislative Council Panel on Transport

Special Traffic and Transport Arrangements during the Sixth Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization

Purpose

This paper sets out the special traffic and transport arrangements to be implemented during the period of the Sixth Ministerial Conference (MC6) of the World Trade Organization (WTO) in December 2005, the justifications of such measures and their impacts on the motorists and users of public transport services.

Background

2. Hong Kong will be hosting the WTO MC6 at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre (HKCEC) from 13 to 18 December 2005. It will be a major and high profile international event. We anticipate some 11,000 participants, including 6,000 delegates, 3,000 press members and 2,000 representatives of non-governmental organisations. The Conference will be supported by around 10,000 additional personnel.

Setting up of a Closed Area

3. Based on the experience of similar events (e.g. WTO Ministerial Conferences in Seattle and Cancun in 1999 and 2003 and G8 Summit at Gleneagles in July 2005), we expect that a large number of local and overseas protesters will stage demonstrations during the MC6 period. While most of these protesters are expected to be peaceful and law-abiding, some may use disruptive or violent methods. Given that Hong Kong is a small, crowded and busy city, it is necessary to safeguard public safety and public order by

setting up a Closed Area around the vicinity of the HKCEC during the Conference period by way of an order under the Public Order Ordinance (Cap. 245). The Closed Area (Hong Kong Ministerial Conference of World Trade Organization) Order (L.N. 160 of 2005) (the Closed Area Order) was gazetted on 7 October and tabled at the Legislative Council (LegCo) on 12 October 2005. On completion of the LegCo negative vetting process, the Closed Area Order will take effect on 2 December 2005.

4. In terms of geographical area, the Closed Area covers the conference venue and its environs, including the roads leading to the HKCEC, Wan Chai Ferry Piers and the Tamar Site, as well as the sea area around HKCEC. The map at the Schedule to the Closed Area Order (please see **Annex**) shows the location of the Closed Area.

5. The relevant area will be declared as Closed Area from 6:00 p.m. on 12 December 2005 (i.e. the day before MC6 opening) to 5:00 a.m. on 19 December 2005 (i.e. a few hours after the official closing time of MC6). During this period, only holders of accreditation badges* as well as individuals with a justifiable purpose and have been granted permission by the Commissioner of Police will be allowed to enter or leave the Closed Area. Separately, only authorised vehicles can enter or leave the Area during the period.

Special Traffic and Transport Arrangements

6. Subject to LegCo's scrutiny of the Closed Area Order, the following traffic and transport arrangements in Wan Chai North will be implemented in the period during which the relevant area is declared as a Closed Area, i.e. from 12 to 19 December 2005:

* In line with the security practice of previous WTO Ministerial Conferences and large-scale international events in Hong Kong, all persons entering the HKCEC during MC6 will be required to present a personalised accreditation badge issued by the MC6 Coordination Office for access to the Conference venue.

- (a) suspension of bus termini, bus stops, taxi stands, coach parking spaces, loading bays and on-street parking spaces, including the Wan Chai Ferry Pier Public Transport Interchange outside the Great Eagle Centre and the one off Golden Bauhinia Square;
- (b) diversion of all bus routes passing via Harbour Road and Convention Avenue to Gloucester Road; truncation of all bus routes terminating at Wan Chai Ferry Pier and the Golden Bauhinia Square to Hennessy Road;
- (c) suspension of regular ferry services on Wan Chai – Hung Hom route and Wan Chai – Tsim Sha Tsui route; and
- (d) suspension of sightseeing cruises from Wan Chai operated by the New World First Ferry Services Ltd. and deletion of the en-route stopping point at Wan Chai for the sightseeing cruises operated by the “Star” Ferry Co. Ltd.

7. Under these arrangements, 30 bus routes will have to be diverted and about 22,000 bus commuters each day who usually board or alight at the bus stops/termini in Wan Chai North will have to use the bus stops along Gloucester Road and Hennessy Road. Separately, about 24,000 ferry passengers from Tsim Sha Tsui and Hung Hom will need to use alternative ferry services to Central and change for other transport modes to Wan Chai.

8. Taxis should refrain from entering the roads in the vicinity of the HKCEC because of the congested traffic and the suspension of the taxi stands. For other motorists, they should avoid the congested area in Wan Chai North and use other routes farther away from the area. If they choose to pass through Wan Chai North, they will experience impeded traffic flow and have to spend longer time on their journeys.

9. To help divert road traffic from the Causeway Bay and Wan Chai area and the Cross-Harbour Tunnel during the MC6 period, we have secured the agreement of the franchisees of Western Harbour Crossing and Eastern Harbour Crossing to provide 14%-25% concessions on tolls for private cars, taxis and goods vehicles from 13 December to 18 December. We hope this would help enhance the traffic conditions.

Publicity and Public Relations

10. The MC6 Coordination Office (MCO) has arranged briefings for the premises and shops to be affected, various business sectors, as well as the District Councils of Wan Chai, Eastern District, Central & Western District, Yau Tsim Mong and Kowloon City. The Police and Transport Department (TD) briefed participants on the special traffic diversions and the adjustments to public transport services mentioned in paragraph 6 at these briefings, to garner community support to the special arrangements and to engender understanding and cooperation by the affected parties. Representatives of the premises and Government buildings in Wan Chai North have also been reminded to re-schedule their programmes of meetings, public services, goods delivery, as well as maintenance and repair to avoid the period of the MC6.

11. We have requested principals of the schools in Wan Chai district to remind their students, parents, staff and school bus drivers to pay attention to the special traffic and transport arrangements, avoid congested areas and use public transport as far as possible. We will conduct radio and TV interviews in late November to brief the public on the traffic and transport arrangements. In early December, we will display large banners at critical locations along major roads to remind the public to pay attention to updated traffic situations broadcast on radio stations. In addition, MCO will produce an information pamphlet on MC6 for distribution to the public before MC6. Press conferences will also be organised to apprise the public of the arrangements for MC6 nearer the time.

Responses to Emergency Situations

12. We have been working closely with the Police and the public transport operators on the arrangements to handle emergency situation. Depending on the prevailing circumstances and traffic situations nearer and during the MC6 period, other ad hoc traffic and transport arrangements may be necessary to minimise the impact on commuters.

13. TD will step up the monitoring of the traffic conditions and transport services nearer and during the MC6 period. Its Emergency Transport Coordination Centre (ETCC) will deal with traffic problems caused by protests and processions and implement special traffic and transport arrangements as appropriate in conjunction with the Police 24 hours daily throughout the MC6 period. It will also work closely with other Government Departments and operators of public transport and tunnels/bridges. Any special arrangements or changes in traffic management during MC6 will be communicated to the public through the mass media and other suitable means.

Way forward

14. We will publicise the traffic and transport arrangements and acquaint the travelling public with them well in advance of MC6. During the MC6 period, we will make every effort to ensure effective coordination of traffic management measures; respond to unanticipated incidents; and disseminate information through the mass media and other suitable means.

Environment, Transport and Works Bureau

Transport Department

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