

Paper – October 2006

A critical review of the Central Wanchai Bypass and the Wanchai Development 2 Concept Plan

This paper presents critical questions in relation to the Wanchai Development 2 Concept Plan (WD2 Concept) and proposed Central Wanchai Bypass design (CWB).

1. **Can traffic congestion lead to an overriding public need without policies in place to avoid more traffic, roads and reclamation?**
 - a. In 1997, the majority of the community has decided to fix the shoreline. For the first time in 150 years of development, the use of reclamation to form land for infrastructure around the harbour is restricted. And we can't move the mountains.
 - b. It may be argued that it is reasonable to call for 'one last reclamation' for transport infrastructure required for developments started before 1997.
 - c. To justify that this is the 'last' reclamation, however, there must be a clear effort to avoid the need for additional infrastructure and related reclamation. Specifically there must be proof that we are capable, willing and effective in controlling density and traffic to achieve this.
 - d. The Government has had ample and timely warnings on the need to implement policy changes to control density and to provide alternative transport solutions:
 - i. The Protection of the Harbour Ordinance came into effect in 1997, now almost 10 years ago;
 - ii. The Third Comprehensive Transport Study in 2000 called for rail as the backbone of our transport system;
 - iii. The Expert Panel urged for a long list of actions including the stemming of development in the corridor in 2005;
 - iv. The 2006 report of the Direct Investigation by the Ombudsman into the 1972 Mid-levels Moratorium demonstrates the lack of control over density in adjoining areas, and the subsequent responses show the Government unwilling to control private property development.
 - e. Since 1997, Government continues with policies which increase density and traffic irrespective of the knowledge that we lack the land resources to provide for additional infrastructure:
 - i. the ongoing and planned sales of land for development in the corridor and adjoining areas;
 - ii. the (planned) use of land in the corridor for new facilities for Government's use;
 - iii. the failure to implement control measures on the redevelopment of private property in the corridor and the adjoining areas;
 - iv. the failure to review URA's projects in the adjoining areas;
 - v. the failure to prioritize alternative transport solutions and measures.

2. Is the CWB and related infrastructure a comprehensive and sustainable solution for traffic congestion along the corridor and in adjoining areas?

- a. It is unclear how the plans for the CWB and related works resolve the traffic congestion along the corridor.
- b. Although the CWB will allow some of the traffic to bypass the congestion, it will make it easier for more traffic to come to the already congested areas.
- c. With exception of short term relief at the Pedder/Man Yiu Street junctions, the CWB appears to do little to reduce the congestion caused by the stacking of traffic attempting to enter the Cross-Harbour Tunnel, Causeway Bay, Times Square, Wanchai, Mid-levels and various areas of Central.
- d. The plans appear not to address traffic congestion from Aberdeen, among others.
- e. Transport data shows that the new roads reach capacity in 2016. Above v/c 0.9 the risk of grid lock increases exponentially, which would be irresponsible without options for new infrastructure.
- f. It appears that the proposed design for the Central Wanchai Bypass and related road works do not provide a comprehensive and sustainable solution to traffic congestion along the corridor and in the adjoining areas.

3. Have all reasonable means to resolve traffic congestion along the Connaught-Gloucester Road corridor (the corridor) been exhausted?

- a. Does promoting new road works and related reclamation meet the Protection of the Harbour Ordinance and related Court of Final Appeal Judgment if not all reasonable means have been implemented or prioritized?
- b. Is there a convincing cost/benefit analyses demonstrating that prioritizing the CWB over all other measures is reasonable?
- c. The following list includes a number of reasonable means to resolve traffic congestion which have yet to be implemented:
 - i. electronic road pricing and dynamic tunnel fares to manage traffic (e.g. charging delivery trucks more during peak hours);
 - ii. tunnel fare equalization;
 - iii. reduction of car parking facilities (in fact, spaces have again increased including with new temporary car parking on Tamar);
 - iv. strict loading and unloading control measures;
 - v. bus route rationalization and shift to smaller buses and minibuses;
 - vi. improving public transport and pedestrian mobility along the waterfront, as well as between the hinterland and the waterfront (which has now moved further north - 600 meters between the old and new Star Ferry Pier);
 - vii. providing for a tram line and other facilities for short distance transfer along the water-front and to/from the water-front;
 - viii. the financing and implementation of the Northern Island Line and other rail facilities.

4. Does the CWB and WD 2 Concept Plan meet the Harbour Planning Principles?

- a. The WD2 concept plan fails to identify how land uses incompatible with harbour-front enhancement will be minimized.
- b. Specifically, it is unclear what efforts have been made to reduce the amount of harbour-front land used for surface road infrastructure.
- c. In fact, it appears that ever more traffic will be drawn closer to the harbour-front onto more and wider surface roads.
- d. We support a tunnel as a means to take traffic underground and to reduce the need for surface roads in the harbour-front. However, it is clear from the proposed design of the CWB and the location of slip roads and supporting surface roads that this will not be achieved.
- e. The Expert Panel on Sustainable Transport and the Central Wanchai Bypass did not consider any data on the 'cost' of impairment of the harbour-front and adjoining areas by the CWB and related roads in their study and conclusions.

5. Is the link between the CWB and the Island Eastern Corridor (IEC) designed to facilitate future submerging of IEC and enhancement of the Eastern harbour-front?

- a. The future enhancement of the Eastern Harbour-front is dependent on the future of the IEC. Will it remain as is? Will it be replaced with a tunnel? Will it be widened even further?
- b. A tunnel can be used to replace the IEC and/or to provide for additional capacity in the future.
- c. The link between the CWB and IEC must be designed to allow for continuing the strategic road link in a tunnel (to Quarry Bay).

6. Does the WD2 Concept Plan improve visual access of the harbour and the vibrancy of the harbour-front?

- a. The Concept Plan does not identify strategies for 'activating' the street level in Wanchai North - a critical shortcoming within the current study area (the land north of the corridor)?
- b. The activity drivers identified along the water-front itself are primarily passive and include a fountain and amphitheatre similar to those included in the recent plans for the Central waterfront.
- c. No strategies (such as removal of billboard and fences) have been identified to improve visual access to the harbour.

7. **Is it reasonable and responsible to exclude commercial use of a heliport at the HKCEC without confirming an alternative site on the harbour-front?**
- a. A commercial heliport facility is recommended by a broad section of the community, and can only be provided from a harbour-front site in close proximity to the Central Business District.
 - b. After examining 19 sites, the Economic Development and Labour Bureau has concluded that the best solution was a shared-use of the helipad in Wanchai.
 - c. The Helicopter Working Group has provided detailed information on suitable designs for such facility including area improvement.
 - d. The Harbour Planning Principles call for minimizing incompatible land uses for the harbour-front, which certainly means minimizing the number of heliports around the harbour.
 - e. Is it therefore responsible to eliminate a priori the commercial use of the planned heliport in Wanchai without identifying a realistic alternative?
 - f. (In fact, if any pier is to be converted for shared-use by Government and commercial helicopters, we recommend Central Ferry Pier 1 for its excellent transport connections (including to Arsenal Street), the sound barrier formed by high-rise commercial buildings and the clustering with the Shun Tak heliport. The current users of Pier 1 create little traffic impact and can be relocated to the new Wanchai waterfront.)

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