

立法會

Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(1)527/06-07
(These minutes have been seen
by the Administration)

Ref : CB1/PL/TP/1

Panel on Transport

**Minutes of meeting held on
Friday, 24 November 2006, at 10:45 am
in the Chamber of the Legislative Council Building**

- Members present** : Hon Andrew CHENG Kar-foo (Chairman)
Hon CHEUNG Hok-ming, SBS, JP (Deputy Chairman)
Ir Dr Hon Raymond HO Chung-tai, SBS, S.B.St.J., JP
Hon Mrs Selina CHOW LIANG Shuk-yee, GBS, JP
Hon LAU Kong-wah, JP
Hon Miriam LAU Kin-yee, GBS, JP
Hon LI Fung-ying, BBS, JP
Hon Tommy CHEUNG Yu-yan, JP
Hon Albert CHAN Wai-yip
Hon WONG Kwok-hing, MH
Hon LEE Wing-tat
Hon Ronny TONG Ka-wah, SC
- Member attending** : Hon TAM Yiu-chung, GBS, JP
- Members absent** : Hon LAU Chin-shek, JP
Hon Jeffrey LAM Kin-fung, SBS, JP
Hon LEUNG Kwok-hung
- Public Officers attending** : **Agenda item IV**
Miss Cathy CHU
Deputy Secretary for the Environment, Transport and Works
(Transport) 2

Miss Angela LEE
Principal Assistant Secretary for the Environment, Transport
and Works (Transport) 1

Mr Don HO
Acting Deputy Commissioner for Transport/
Assistant Commissioner for Transport
(Management and Paratransit)

Mrs Lily LAM
Principal Transport Officer/New Territories
Transport Department

Mr Ken HUI
Chief Transport Officer/Taxi Planning
Transport Department

Mr B D M HANCOCK
Chief Superintendent of Police/
Traffic Branch Headquarters

Mr LAU Fu-sang
District Commander/Airport District
Hong Kong Police Force

Mr Michael CHIU
Senior Superintendent (Administration)
(Traffic Branch Headquarters)
Hong Kong Police Force

Mr Howard ENG
Airport Management Director
Airport Authority Hong Kong

Mr WONG Yiu-fai
Head of Technical Services & Procurement
Airport Authority Hong Kong

Agenda item V

Mr Philip YUNG
Deputy Secretary for the Environment, Transport and Works
(Transport) 1

Ms Sharon HO
Principal Assistant Secretary for the Environment, Transport
and Works (Transport) 5

Mr CHOW Ying-shun
Project Manager/Major Works
Highways Department

Mr TO Kam-biu
Chief Engineer/Transport Planning
Transport Department

Mr LEE Yan-ming
Chief Engineer/Traffic Engineering (New Territories West)
Transport Department

Clerk in attendance : Mr Andy LAU
Chief Council Secretary (1)2

Staff in attendance : Ms Sarah YUEN
Senior Council Secretary (1)6

Miss Winnie CHENG
Legislative Assistant (1)5

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- I Confirmation of minutes and matters arising**
(LC Paper No. CB(1)294/06-07 - Minutes of the meeting held on
24 October 2006)

The minutes of the meeting held on 24 October 2006 were confirmed.

- II Information papers issued since last meeting**
(LC Paper No. CB(1)167/06-07(01) - Referral from the Complaints
Division on the transport
arrangements for the commissioning
of Hong Kong-Shenzhen Western
Corridor and Sheung Shui to Lok Ma
Chau Spur Line
LC Paper No. CB(1)199/06-07(01) - Letter from the Administration dated
27 October 2006 regarding Western
Harbour Tunnel Company Limited's
Net Revenue Statement for

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- 2005-2006
- LC Paper No. CB(1)200/06-07(01) - Letter from the Administration dated 27 October 2006 regarding Route 3 (Country Park Section) Company Limited's Net Revenue Statement for 2005-2006
- LC Paper No. CB(1)209/06-07(01) - Submission from 的士、小巴權益關注大聯盟 on issues relating to the establishment of the new Tuen Mun Ferry Terminal
- LC Paper No. CB(1)313/06-07(01) - Information paper on "749TH - Road L18A in Area 18 Tuen Mun" provided by the Administration
- LC Paper No. CB(1)321/06-07(01) - Information paper on "143TB - Improvement to pedestrian subway system at Kwai Fuk Road roundabout provided by the Administration
- LC Paper No. CB(1)326/06-07(01) - Administration's response to the submission from 的士、小巴權益關注大聯盟 on issues relating to the establishment of the new Tuen Mun Ferry Terminal (LC Paper No. CB(1)209/06-07(01))

2. Members noted the information papers issued since last meeting.

III Items for discussion at the next meeting scheduled for 15 December 2006

- (LC Paper No. CB(1)296/06-07(01) - List of outstanding items for discussion
LC Paper No. CB(1)296/06-07(02) - List of follow-up actions)

3. The Chairman said that in order to enhance road safety, he would consider introducing a private bill to the said purpose. He would brief members on the legislative proposal at the next meeting scheduled for 15 December 2006.

4. After deliberation, members agreed to discuss the following four items at the next meeting. In view of the heavy agenda for the meeting, members also agreed to advance the meeting time to 10:00 am.

- (a) Private bill proposed by Hon CHENG Kar-foo;
(b) Measures to combat drink driving;

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- (c) Improvement to Tung Chung Road between Lung Tseng Tau and Cheung Sha; and
- (d) Traffic and transport arrangements for the commissioning of Hong Kong – Shenzhen Western Corridor and Sheung Shui to Lok Ma Chau Spur Line.

5. Members further agreed to add the following items to the Panel's list of outstanding items for discussion –

- (a) "Design of control boxes attached to traffic light poles at pedestrian crossings" proposed by Mr WONG Kwok-hing. Mr WONG would like the Administration to conduct an overall review of the design of control boxes attached to traffic light poles and electronic audible traffic signal installations at pedestrian crossings. He also called on the Administration to adopt a standardized design of such facilities to facilitate use by persons with disabilities; and
- (b) "Review of public light bus (PLB) operations" proposed by Mr Albert CHAN. In consideration of the recent media reports on triad infiltration in PLB operations, Mr CHAN would like to review with the Administration measures to tackle the problem and other monitoring issues relating to red minibus (RMB) operations, as well as the progress of work in respect of the conversion of RMB to green minibus.

IV Review of the roles and functions of taxis and van-type light goods vehicles in the transport services sector

- (LC Paper No. CB(1)296/06-07(03) - Information paper provided by the Administration
- LC Paper No. CB(1)297/06-07 - Background brief on review of the roles and functions of taxis and van-type light goods vehicles in the transport services sector prepared by the Secretariat
- LC Paper No. CB(1)293/06-07(01) - Referral from the Complaints Division on illegal operation of van-type light goods vehicles
- LC Paper No. CB(1)347/06-07(01) - Submission from Taxi Dealers & Owners Association Limited
- LC Paper No. CB(1)359/06-07(01) - Submission from的士、小巴權益關注大聯盟)

6. Members noted the following three submissions on this agenda item tabled at the meeting –

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- (a) Submission dated 23 November 2006 from Sai Kung Taxi Operators Association Ltd.;
- (b) Submission dated 24 November 2006 from The Hong Kong Union of Light Van Employees; and
- (c) Submission dated 24 November 2006 from New Territories Taxi Drivers' Rights Alliance.

(Post-meeting note: The above submissions were issued to members vide LC Paper No. CB(1)376/06-07 dated 27 November 2006.)

7. The Deputy Secretary for the Environment, Transport and Works (Transport)2 (DS/T2) briefed members on the Administration's paper on the operation and roles of taxis and light goods vehicles (LGVs), and measures taken by the Administration in response to the claims by the taxi trade that individual LGVs might be engaged in illegal carriage of passengers for hire or reward. Members noted that on grounds that the regulation of illegal carriage of passengers for hire or reward by LGVs was already provided in the existing legislation, the Administration believed that with the continued enforcement actions by the Police, the new administrative measures to be implemented at the airport and the enhanced publicity, the Administration could effectively combat illegal carriage of passengers for hire or reward by individual LGVs. As such, the Administration saw no need to, as the taxi trade proposed, amend the Road Traffic Ordinance (RTO) (Cap. 374) and its subsidiary legislation to better confine the operation of LGVs to carriage of goods for hire or reward to clarify grey areas.

Enforcement actions against illegal transport activities

8. Ms Miriam LAU, Mr WONG Kwok-hing and Mrs Selina CHOW opined that the numbers of successful prosecutions against illegal carriage by LGVs of passengers for hire or reward were relatively low when compared to the rampant illegal operation of LGVs. Ms LAU sought details on the enforcement and prosecution actions taken by the Police

9. DS/T2 advised that until late November 2006, the Police had filed eight prosecution cases against illegal carriage by LGVs of passengers for hire or reward and all cases were convicted. She also explained that as the Police needed to gather sufficient evidence before prosecution actions could be instituted, it was inevitable that not all investigations would result in successful prosecutions. The Chief Superintendent of Police/Traffic Branch Headquarters (CSP/TBH) supplemented that there were approximately ten more prosecutions in the pipeline, and overall speaking, the number of prosecutions instituted in 2006 was much higher than those in 2004 and 2005. In evaluating the effectiveness of the enforcement actions taken by the Police, it should be noted that the Police had to combat all forms of illegal transport activities at the airport

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instead of those by LGVs only. There were indeed 78 successful prosecutions against illegal transport activities in 2006 involving LGVs, taxis and a range of other vehicles.

10. In response to Ms Miriam LAU about the penalties imposed by the court for the conviction cases, CSP/TBH reported that seven of the cases resulted in suspension of driving licence for a period of twelve months. The fines imposed were between \$1,000 and \$2,500. In his view, the above penalties had a strong deterrent effect for both the drivers concerned and other drivers.

11. In reply to Ms Miriam LAU on the scale of enforcement actions against illegal transport activities at the airport, CSP/TBH assured members that actions were taken where appropriate with uniformed and plainclothes operations at the Passenger Terminal, Car Parks and all suspect areas within the airport boundary averaging about 400 per month. In carrying out the operations, the Police would adopt an even-handed approach and would take enforcement actions against illegal transport activities such as touting and illegal carriage of passengers for hire or reward by different vehicles including taxis, private cars and other types of vehicles and not just LGVs. Where illegal activities involving LGVs were concerned, actions were predominantly taken at Car Park 1 since most such activities occurred there. As to the steps involved, the Police would approach loitering and suspicious vehicles for initial enquiries with the driver and passenger(s) involved. Subject to sufficient evidence, the driver would be arrested for further enquiries. In the light of the evidence gathered, decision would be made as to whether prosecution should be instituted.

12. Mr WONG Kwok-hing referred to the latest trends in solicitation for hire or reward to travel in LGVs and taxis, which involved dissemination of name cards, provision of service through calling centres, etc., and queried if the existing legislation could keep up with the above developments to enable the Administration to effectively take enforcement actions against such solicitation activities. In response, DS/T2 assured members that active efforts against solicitation had been made at the airport. As a result of stepped-up police patrol, there were around 40 and over 15 successful prosecutions against solicitation by taxis and LGVs respectively in 2006.

13. Mr LAU Kong-wah considered that adequate enforcement actions should be taken against illegal transport activities. In this respect, the Police should proactively take actions against touting activities not only in the airport but also in other places taking different forms. Mr CHEUNG Hok-ming shared his view, and enquired whether the eight successful prosecution cases of illegal carriage of passengers for hire or reward by LGVs were all confined to the airport, in particular at Car Park 1. He was concerned that if enforcement actions were too focused at the airport, illegal transport activities elsewhere might go unnoticed.

14. In response, CSP/TBH said that the majority of the eight cases were confined to Car Park 1 but Police operations would not only be focussed on problem spots within the airport but also across the territory with full co-operation from other regional traffic units.

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Suggestions to amend the law

15. Pointing out that both the taxi trade and the LGV trade were willing to comply with the relevant legislation, Mr LAU Kong-wah considered it necessary for the Administration to introduce legislative amendments to the RTO to facilitate enforcement. In his view, the Administration should review the appropriateness of using "客貨車" as the Chinese translation of van-type LGVs which had misled the public that LGVs could also be used for the carriage of passengers. The Administration should also address the problems associated with the lack of a clear definition of "goods", so that some operators of van-type LGVs had the impression that they could legitimately carry luggage as well as its owner to and from the airport.

16. In response, DS/T2 explained that the linchpin of investigating whether an LGV had illegally carried passengers for hire or reward under the RTO was whether the journey concerned involved the element of carrying passengers for hire or reward. The type and quantity of goods and the number of passengers carried on board while the service was rendered was not the key of the matter. In the case where both goods and passengers were carried on an LGV, enforcement officers might have reasonable suspicion that someone had contravened the RTO by using an LGV to carry passengers for hire or reward, and they might initiate investigation if the following two criteria were satisfied –

- (a) The passengers needed to travel to the destination; and
- (b) Individual passengers on the LGV could travel to the destination with their belongings by public transport modes.

DS/T2 advised that in 2005, an LGV driver prosecuted for carriage of passengers for hire or reward claimed that the luggage carried on his vehicle were goods and that the passenger on board was to take care of the goods. Based on all the evidence presented to the court, the court did not accept his explanation and the LGV driver was convicted.

17. CSP/TBH supplemented that the current legislation was indeed quite clear. The Police could take action on the basis of direct observation, the evidence given by the witnesses and circumstantial evidence. They also had no difficulty in deciding whether there was sufficient evidence to institute prosecutions. If in doubt, they could always consult the Department of Justice. The Police would continue with the enforcement against illegal transport activities.

18. Mr LAU Kong-wah expressed concern that notwithstanding the explanation of the above linchpin, the two criteria highlighted therein were new and difficult to understand and hence there were still grey areas regarding the legislation, particularly in determining whether a passenger could travel to the destination with their belongings by public transport modes and the need to travel to the destination. Addressing his concern, DS/T2 pointed out that the two criteria were only the linchpin of conducting Police

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investigations. In determining whether prosecution should be instituted, statements from the driver and the passengers concerned, as well as other circumstantial evidence would all be taken into consideration. If the case was brought to the court, apart from the two criteria, the court also had to consider each case on its own merits, taking into consideration the reliability of all the available evidence.

19. The Chairman opined that given the remoteness of the airport, the larger carrying capacity of LGVs, and their popularity among the travelling public, the problem of illegal operation by LGVs would persist unless the RTO was amended to plug existing loopholes. He asked if the Administration would consider amending the RTO to define clearly the meaning of "goods", and relax the restriction on the use of LGV service should the quantity and weight of luggage exceed a certain limit.

20. In response, DS/T2 stressed the need to ensure the orderly operation of the transport market, and considered it undesirable to legitimize illegal service of LGVs notwithstanding public demand. As such, LGVs should not be allowed to carry passengers for hire or reward whatever the quantity or weight of the luggage. She further reiterated that the merit of the existing legislation was that whether an LGV was carrying passengers for hire or reward was not determined by the type of goods carried on board while the service was rendered but by whether the journey concerned involved the element of carrying passengers for hire or reward. As a result, among the cases involving carriage of passengers for reward by LGVs where prosecution was successfully instituted in 2005 and 2006, the number of passengers carried ranged from one to three. In these cases, no goods were found on the LGVs or one to six pieces of effects/baggage were carried on board. If, however, the definition of "goods" was reviewed and revised as proposed, not only would the above merit be diminished but the Administration would in effect be expanding LGVs' scope of operation. Moreover, in recognition that goods vehicles did carry a great variety of goods, it would not be desirable to rigidly specify the goods or effects permitted on a goods vehicle, having considered the actual operation mode of the freight industry.

New administrative measures to be introduced at the airport to combat illegal transport activities

21. Ms LI Fung-ying questioned why although both taxis and LGVs were involved in illegal activities, new measures against such activities at the airport were mainly targeted at LGVs. Addressing her concern that the Government's policy in this regard might be unfairly tilted at LGVs, DS/T2 emphasized that taxis and LGVs were treated equitably and as such prosecutions were instituted against both types of vehicles should they engage in illegal activities. In fact, as at mid November 2006, prosecution had successfully been instituted against 39 cases of taxi touting. As to the new measures, they were also not directed at LGVs. Same as LGVs, taxis would be barred from using Car Parks 1 and 4 at the airport, which had been used for illegal transport activities, and had to park at Car Park 5 instead. The only new measure that would solely affect LGVs was the provision of a new loading and unloading area for LGVs at the airport. However, this new measure would not affect LGV drivers conducting legitimate freight

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business at the airport and was in fact welcomed by them since they could continue to use the loading and unloading facilities provided by the airport authority at the same charge.

22. In reply to Ms LI Fung-ying on the timetable for the designation of the new loading and unloading area for LGVs at the airport, DS/T2 advised that as some construction works were involved, the new loading and unloading area was expected to be ready by mid 2007.

23. Mrs Selina CHOW cast doubt on the effectiveness of the new measures in tackling the problem of illegal carriage of passengers for hire or reward by LGVs. In particular, she opined that the proposed permission to park at the loading or unloading area with payment of fees charged at 30-minute intervals was difficult to implement, and called for tighter measures to discourage loitering in the area. DS/T2 took note of Mrs CHOW's view but remarked that there was a need to provide loading and unloading facilities at the airport to allow LGVs to conduct their legitimate business at same level of charge as before. The charge for using the LGV loading and unloading area would be \$40 for the first 30 minutes and it would increase progressively. In future, as activities of LGVs would be restricted to the new loading and unloading area, it was unlikely that illegal activities could go unnoticed. She assured members that the Administration was committed to combating illegal transport activities at the airport. The Administration would monitor the situation after implementation of the new measure.

24. In response to Mrs Selina CHOW on the anticipated impact of providing the new loading and unloading area for LGVs, CSP/TBH advised that the restriction of LGVs' activities at the area would help reduce the extent of illegal activities of taxis and LGVs at the airport. As a corollary, this could also help the Police to concentrate their resources for monitoring and taking more focused enforcement actions against them at the airport.

The relevant transport policy

25. Mr Albert CHAN opined that the conflict between taxis and LGVs might have been caused by Government's transport policy, which in his view was seriously tilted in favour of rail transport, leaving very little room for other modes of public transport to operate. As a result, while MTR Corporation Limited (MTRCL) was making huge profits and expanding its market shares, taxis, PLBs, non-franchised buses and LGVs had to fight over the very little market share left. In particular, the market shares of the four trades above might further shrink after the rail merger. He therefore urged the Administration to conduct an overall review of Government's transport policy to ensure the viability of different transport modes, and map out measures to help the four trades survive such as by allowing them to operate at the boundary control points. In response, DS/T2 explained that under the current transport policy and relevant law, the role of goods vehicles was to provide service for the carriage of goods and hence it was an offence to use LGVs for carrying passengers for hire or reward. As to the other transport modes, in recognition of the increasing competition they faced with the

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widening choice of transport services, the Administration was planning to allow taxis to provide service at the new boundary control points. New green minibus routes might also be introduced where appropriate.

26. Mr Albert CHAN, however, opined that there should be an overall policy review to strengthen the roles of the four trades at all boundary control points in a planned manner instead of according them new service opportunities at new control points as and when appropriate. In response, DS/T2 explained that the above reported plan was already the result of an earlier policy review. She further pointed out that due to space constraint, it would not be feasible to allow the road transport modes to operate at some existing boundary control points such as the one at Lo Wu. The Administration would continue to explore measures to improve the operating environment of the transport trades.

Illegal offer of discounts on taxi fares

27. In considering that the business of taxis was also affected by the illegal offer of discounts by some taxi drivers, Mr WONG Kwok-hing pointed out that the problem had become more serious with the involvement of syndicates, and urged the Administration to map out further measures to tackle it. In the Chairman's view, the problem should be addressed by discouraging passengers from negotiating the fares. He therefore opined that while the Administration should examine the need to reduce taxi fares, it should also review the need to amend the relevant legislation to prohibit negotiation of taxi fares.

28. In response, DS/T2 explained that the Administration had been liaising with the taxi trade for the past two years on how the problem could be solved, in particular on whether legislative amendments should be introduced to make it an offence for passengers to bargain on taxi charge not according to taxi meters. Since members of the trade had diverse views in this regard and the matter was sensitive, time was required to achieve a consensus on the way forward. In fact, as indicated in the response to the questionnaire issued by the Administration at the request of urban taxis, only about eight out of the 27 urban taxi associations supported the above proposed amendments. Notwithstanding, the Administration would continue to work out a solution to the problem in consultation with the taxi drivers and operators of Hong Kong, Kowloon and the New Territories.

29. As to whether taxi fares should be reduced, DS/T2 cautioned that the issue was highly sensitive which had yet to be discussed with the taxi trade. She also highlighted the experience in 2002 where the proposal for reducing taxi fares was shelved due to strong opposition from some members of the taxi trade.

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30. Mr WONG Kwok-hing asked the Police whether there were difficulties in taking enforcement actions against the problem of illegal offer of discounts by some taxi drivers. He considered it undesirable that the Administration was not prepared to amend the relevant legislation to facilitate enforcement. Apart from causing unfairness to law-abiding taxi drivers, the problem might also induce passengers to file false claims for taxi fares from their employers which were criminal offences. In response, CSP/TBH advised that publicity acts of illegal offer of discounts such as dissemination of name cards and advertising through other means might amount to evidence to sustain prosecution. However, under the existing law passengers involved would not be considered as having committed an offence. As to the likelihood of passengers making false claims as highlighted above, under certain circumstances such might constitute fraud or criminal offence. While the Police were not aware of a large number of such cases, when such cases were reported with sufficient evidence, action would be duly taken.

Other views

31. Ms Miriam LAU opined that the Administration should gear up publicity and education activities to clearly explain to the public the above highlighted linchpin of investigating whether an LGV had illegally carried passengers for hire or reward under the RTO, as well as the risk that passengers might not have the necessary protection since the third party insurance covering the vehicle involved in the delivery of illegal transport service might become invalid in the circumstances. In response, DS/T2 explained that earlier publicity and education activities mainly aimed at reminding the public that LGVs could only be used for the carriage of goods for reward. In the new series of publicity activities to be launched in December 2006, the focus would be placed on the above proposed areas.

V Tuen Mun Road and Central Kowloon Route

- (LC Paper No. CB(1)296/06-07(04) - Information paper provided by the Administration
- LC Paper No. CB(1)298/06-07 - Background brief on reconstruction and improvement of Tuen Mun Road prepared by the Secretariat)

32. With the aid of power-point, the Project Manager/Major Works (PM/MW), Highways Department (Hy D) briefed members on Central Kowloon Route (CKR) and improvement to Tuen Mun Road.

(Post-meeting note: The hard copies of the above presentations were tabled at the meeting and issued to members vide LC Paper Nos. CB(1)376/06-07(04) and (05) dated 27 November 2006.)

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33. Members in general found the above projects long overdue and called for their early implementation. Mr TAM Yiu-chung indicated that Members of the Democratic Alliance for the Betterment and Progress of Hong Kong were in support of the projects. Mr Albert CHAN also indicated support for the projects but regretted that improvement to Tuen Mun Road had dragged on for over 20 years. In response, the Deputy Secretary for the Environment, Transport and Works (Transport)1 (DS/T1) said that with the way forward for these projects now sorted out, efforts would be made to expedite their implementation as far as possible.

Central Kowloon Route

34. Members noted the submission dated 24 November 2006 from The Experience Group, Limited on CKR tabled at the meeting.

(Post-meeting note: The above submission was issued to members vide LC Paper No. CB(1)376/06-07(06) dated 27 November 2006.)

Safety considerations

35. Mr LEE Wing-tat noted that a major part of CKR would be built in the form of tunnel with an approximate length of 3.8 km, which might be the longest tunnel in Hong Kong. He was concerned about the design and provision of traffic diversion facilities and/or emergency exits inside the tunnel for evacuation in the event of fire or traffic accidents. In response, PM/MW assured members that the Administration would ensure that the design of the tunnel would meet with the prevailing fire safety requirements. In this regard, Hy D would liaise with the relevant departments, e.g. the Fire Services Department and the Police Force, to examine in detail the design and provision of evacuation exits inside the tunnel. He assured members that for twin-tube tunnels, cross connections for emergency services would be provided at least every 100 to 500 metres. The ventilation system would be so designed that smoke could be extracted within minutes. A traffic control and surveillance system would also be put in place to monitor the traffic in CKR round the clock to facilitate immediate response to emergencies. Ir Dr Raymond HO agreed that with proper design, safe operation within long tunnels would not be an issue of concern.

Progress

36. Ir Dr Raymond HO indicated support for the adoption of a dual three-lane tunnel configuration for CKR. He however was concerned about the long implementation programme, particularly why construction works could only commence in 2012. In response, DS/T1 and PM/MW explained that the Administration would have to work out the detailed arrangements for relocating the affected government and institutional facilities in Yau Ma Tei area and to consult the local residents on them, before construction of CKR could commence. The present programme was that the reprovisioning of the affected facilities would be completed by 2011. Construction

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works would then start in 2012 for completion in 2016. Given the scale of the project, the implementation programme was already very tight.

37. Ir Dr Raymond HO opined that since the CKR project would involve a number of Government departments, the relevant bureau should co-ordinate their work to expedite the project. In response, DS/T1 assured members that the Environment, Transport and Works Bureau was fully aware of Members' concern about the progress of the CKR project, and would liaise closely with the relevant departments with a view to pursuing the project as quickly as possible.

Cost

38. Mr Albert CHAN pointed out that there was insufficient information in the paper to justify the increase in the APE of 582TH CKR – Consultants' design fees and site investigations from \$99.0 million by \$93.3 million to \$192.3 million to cover the additional cost arising from changes in the alignment and configuration of CKR. He therefore asked for more detailed information, and requested that an itemized price comparison table be provided to the Panel detailing by section the estimated price difference between the original alignment and dual two-lane configuration and the revised alignment and dual three-lane configuration, in particular the price difference arising from the use of immersed tube tunnel to avoid reclamation as well as comparison with the market prices for similar works.

39. In response, PM/MW explained that several factors had led to a substantial increase in the APE of 582TH. First of all, the approximate length of CKR in its revised alignment was 4.7 km, in which an approximate length of 3.8 km would be in the form of tunnel. The length of CKR and that of its tunnel were longer than those in the original alignment by about 21% and 46% respectively. The revision in the alignment resulted in an additional cost of about \$47.4 million. The adoption of a dual three-lane configuration instead of the original dual two-lane configuration would also result in an additional cost of about \$27.5 million. Further, the proposed use of immersed tube tunnel would lead to an additional cost of about \$14.2 million. He undertook to provide the requested details to the Panel after the meeting.

Admin.

(Post-meeting note: The supplementary information was issued to members vide LC Paper No. CB(1)515/06-07 on 14 December 2006.)

Improvement to Tuen Mun Road

Need to mitigate the traffic impact of the commissioning of the Hong Kong-Shenzhen Western Corridor

40. Mr LEE Wing-tat saw a need to expedite the improvement project to obviate any serious traffic congestion on Tuen Mun Road (TMR) when the Hong Kong –Shenzhen Western Corridor (HK-SWC) was commissioned, especially as there was already traffic

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congestion in two sections of TMR even during non-peak periods, namely, the uphill section near Siu Lam and the Sham Tseng section.

41. In response, DS/T1 pointed out that the Administration was fully aware of the need to complete the project as soon as possible so as to cope with, among others, the additional traffic generated by the commissioning of HK-SWC. It was hoped that with close liaison with the relevant district organizations, the parties concerned would support the early implementation of the project after its gazettal. PM/MW added that to relieve existing pressure on TMR, the consultants had been requested to investigate options to improve the uphill section near Siu Lam. The Transport Department (TD) was also examining measures to improve the junction capacity of Castle Peak Road slip road and the slip road of TMR at Sham Tseng Interchange.

42. Mr TAM Yiu-chung opined that in the long run, to cater for increasing traffic arising from HK-SWC, the Government should consider building another trunk road for Northwest New Territories (NT), e.g. construction of the Tuen Mun Western Bypass, in order to solve the traffic congestion problem on TMR. In response, DS/T1 and the Chief Engineer/Transport Planning (CE/TP) of TD reported that the Administration was already exploring other long-term measures to address the traffic impact associated with the commissioning of HK-SWC and other developments in the Northwest New Territories. In fact, different packages of highway projects had been proposed under the Northwest New Territories Traffic and Infrastructure Review (the Review). CE/TP added that in April 2005, a report had been made to the Panel regarding the long-term traffic demand in Northwest NT and the different options for meeting such demands. Further feasibility studies and investigation works on the possible highway packages, including Tsing Yi- Lantau Link, the Tuen Mun Eastern Bypass, the Tuen Mun-Chek Lap Kok Link, the Tuen Mun Western Bypass and other routes linking up Tuen Mun and Lantau Island were being carried out. The studies would cover the impact of the road projects on the local community, the financial implications, the technical problems and the interfaces of these packages with the existing road networks, etc. In brief, long-term transport planning for Northwest NT and the advance work, i.e. the feasibility and investigation studies, for the possible highway packages had already been started.

43. Mrs Selina CHOW enquired about available measures if the traffic flow in Northwest NT was heavier than projected when HK-SWC was in operation. In this connection, she also expressed concern about the progress of measures taken to encourage motorists to use Route 3 in order to enhance traffic distribution between TMR and Route 3, such as by lowering the tolls of Route 3.

44. In response, DS/T1 informed members that according to the latest traffic projections, the existing and committed road networks together with necessary improvement measures would be able to cope with the traffic demand in the region up to at least 2016, including that to be generated upon the commissioning of HK-SWC. He also said that the Administration had already been conducting further investigation and engineering feasibility studies on the proposed road projects as recommended in the Review. With the completion of the advance work, the Administration could pursue

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further the implementation of individual projects as and when necessary, taking into account the latest changes in various developments in the areas. Meanwhile, the Government was discussing with the franchisee of Route 3 possible measures to enhance its utilization.

The Sham Tseng section of Tuen Mun Road

45. In reply to Mr WONG Kwok-hing's question on measures to solve the problems encountered in widening the Sham Tseng section of TMR, PM/MW explained that although the section could not be widened due to technical problems, Hy D would improve the road design to provide hard shoulders in the vicinity of the Sham Tseng Section of TMR and provide removable central divider at suitable locations to enable the implementation of temporary traffic arrangements as and when necessary.

46. Mr WONG Kwok-hing was concerned that the Sham Tseng section would become a bottleneck in the end. He asked whether the Government had considered other alternatives to solve the perceived problem, including the building of a branch road to divert traffic from this section where necessary. In response, PM/MW clarified that the Sham Tseng section would also be dual 3-lane standard. It was only that road shoulders could not be provided for this section. As such, there should not be any great problem in maintaining smooth traffic flow at this section of TMR. He also said that the Government had considered the option of building a branch road. However, it was concluded that the proposal was not feasible due to substantial financial and technical implications which involved the construction of a long tunnel cutting through nearby hills.

Progress

47. Mr WONG Kwok-hing also saw a need to speed up the improvement to TMR so as to cater for the increasing traffic arising from the commissioning of HK-SWC. Noting that the project would not commence until further consultation with Members when individual projects were ready for funding application, and would be subject to the satisfactory passage of the necessary statutory procedures, he enquired whether the procedures could be streamlined and expedited. In response, DS/T1 said that it was a standing requirement that the Panel be consulted before the Administration submitted the related funding proposals to the Public Works Subcommittee and the Finance Committee for approval. To expedite implementation, the relevant Government bureau and departments would also closely liaise with district organizations with a view to gaining their support for the project.

48. Mrs Selina CHOW opined that the widening of the Kowloon bound Wong Chu Road Interchange section of TMR should be expedited as it would not involve reprovisioning of existing facilities. In response, PM/MW explained that since the widening of the Wong Chu Road Interchange section of TMR was a designated project under the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Ordinance (Cap. 499), there was a need for the project to go through the statutory procedures. Works could only

Action

commence after proper handling of the statutory objections. The proposed timeframe of about six months to complete the statutory procedures was already very tight.

Other concerns and views

49. Mr TAM Yiu-chung opined that in carrying out the improvement project, measures should be taken to avoid disrupting the traffic flow on TMR, especially in the Town Centre Section. In response, DS/T1 assured members that the departments concerned would ensure that proper temporary traffic arrangements would be put in place during construction stage. PM/MW added that Hy D would ensure the setting up of a working group with the relevant government departments, and the contractors concerned to facilitate smooth traffic flow on TMR during the works period. The Government would also consult the Tuen Mun District Council on relevant traffic diversion plans before implementation. In response to Mr Albert CHAN, PM/MW also confirmed that during the construction period, three traffic lanes and two traffic lanes would be maintained for TMR and its town centre section respectively during peak hours.

50. Mr TAM Yiu-chung opined that the design of the noise barriers concerned should be able to tie in with the environment and should not create any adverse visual impact. In this regard, reference might be made to those near Tuen Mun Station of the West Rail. In reply, PM/MW assured members that to secure public support for the project, the noise barriers would be properly designed with particular attention to greening, so as to avoid creating any adverse visual impact on the environment.

VI Any other business

51. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 12:45 pm.