

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(1)1609/06-07
(These minutes have been seen
by the Administration)

Ref : CB1/PL/TP/1

Panel on Transport

**Minutes of meeting held on
Friday, 27 April 2007, 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-ye, GBS, JP
Hon LAU Chin-shek, JP
Hon LAU Kong-wah, 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 Jeffrey LAM Kin-fung, SBS, JP
Hon LEUNG Kwok-hung
- Members attending** : Hon TAM Yiu-chung, GBS, JP
Dr Hon Fernando CHEUNG Chiu-hung
- Members absent** : Hon Miriam LAU Kin-ye, GBS, JP
Hon Ronny TONG Ka-wah, SC
- Public Officers attending** : **Agenda item IV**
Mr Philip YUNG
Deputy Secretary for the Environment, Transport and Works
(Transport) 1

Ms Annette LEE
Deputy Secretary for the Environment, Transport and Works
(Transport) 3

Mrs Millie NG
Principal Assistant Secretary for the Environment, Transport
and Works (Transport) 1

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

Mr Donald NG
Principal Assistant Secretary for the Environment, Transport
and Works (Transport) 6

Miss Cindy LAW
Assistant Commissioner for Transport/New Territories

Mr David TO
Assistant Commissioner for Transport/Planning

Mr Wilson SO
District Planning Officer/Tuen Mun and Yuen Long
Planning Department

Agenda item V

Miss Cathy CHU
Deputy Secretary for the Environment, Transport and Works
(Transport) 2

Mrs Millie NG
Principal Assistant Secretary for the Environment, Transport
and Works (Transport) 1

Ms Carolina YIP
Deputy Commissioner for Transport/
Transport Services & Management

Mr Don HO
Assistant Commissioner for Transport/ Management and
Paratransit

Mr Carey WONG
Principal Transport Officer/Planning/Ferry
Transport Department

Agenda item VI

Miss Cathy CHU
Deputy Secretary for the Environment, Transport and Works
(Transport) 2

Mrs Millie NG
Principal Assistant Secretary for the Environment, Transport
and Works (Transport) 1

Ms Carolina YIP
Deputy Commissioner for Transport/
Transport Services & Management

Mr Don HO
Assistant Commissioner for Transport/
Management and Paratransit

**Attendance by
invitation** : **Agenda item V**

Hong Kong and Kowloon Ferry Holding Ltd

Mr Nelson NG
Director and General Manager

Miss April LAM
Management Executive

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)1407/06-07 - Minutes of the meeting held on 23 March 2007)

The minutes of the meeting held on 23 March 2007 were confirmed.

II Information papers issued since last meeting

(LC Paper No. CB(1)1379/06-07(01) - Road Safety Bulletin published by The Road Safety Council

LC Paper No. CB(1)1417/06-07(01) - Information paper on "Temporary Retention of Two Supernumerary Posts in the Transport Branch of the Environment, Transport and Works Bureau" provided by the Administration

LC Paper No. CB(1)1418/06-07(01) - Information paper on "Amendments to the Road Traffic (Construction and Maintenance of Vehicles) Regulations (Cap.374A)" provided by the Administration

LC Paper No. CB(1)1429/06-07(01) - Information paper on "Replacement of Specialized Vehicles for Tsing Ma Control Area" provided by the Administration

LC Paper No. CB(1)1457/06-07(01) - Information paper on "Proposed Reduction of the Passenger Embarkation Fee for Cross-boundary Ferry Terminals" provided by the Administration)

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

III Items for discussion at the next meeting scheduled for 25 May 2007

(LC Paper No. CB(1)1409/06-07(01) - List of outstanding items for discussion

LC Paper No. CB(1)1409/06-07(02) - List of follow-up actions)

Regular meeting

3. Members agreed that the following items proposed by the Administration would be discussed at the next regular meeting scheduled for 25 May 2007 –

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- (a) Safety of reversing goods vehicles; and
- (b) Lok Ma Chau Spur Line Fares.

Special meeting

4. Members highlighted public concern about the variable pay scheme (the scheme) for members of the Management Committee of the Kowloon-Canton Railway Corporation (KCRC), under which KCRC had, despite the drop in its revenue and the recent rail incident at Tai Po Market Station, topped up the 2006 variable pay pool for members of the Management Committee, including those senior KCRC staff who had expressed publicly their views on matters concerning the corporation's corporate governance in a manner contrary to established procedure. Having regard that public money was involved, the Panel saw a need to discuss the scheme. The Panel also agreed that the Chairman and other members of the Managing Board of KCRC, who made the above top-up decision, should be invited through the Administration to appear before the Panel to exchange views with members on the related matters.

5. In recognition that concerns about the scheme might need to be addressed before the planned completion of the scrutiny of the Rail Merger Bill within May 2007, members concurred that a special meeting should be scheduled as soon as practicable to discuss the scheme.

(Post-meeting note: A special meeting was subsequently scheduled for Saturday, 5 May 2007, from 9:00 am to 11:00 am to discuss the scheme and the financial proposal on "Temporary retention of two supernumerary posts in the Transport Branch of the Environment, Transport and Works Bureau for a period of six months from 1 July 2007 to 31 December 2007, to follow through the implementation of the proposed rail merger".)

Future discussion items

6. Mr WONG Kwok-hing proposed to add a new item on "Measures to enhance the safety awareness of pedestrians" to the Panel's list of outstanding items for discussion, so as to highlight the importance of preventing traffic accidents arising from pedestrians listening to MP3 while crossing the road. In this regard, he would like to know whether the Transport Department (TD) had collected any statistics on such traffic accidents.

7. Mr LEE Wing-tat also proposed to add a new item on "Progress update on bus-bus interchange scheme" to the above list. According to him, progress in this regard seemed to have come to a standstill.

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IV Traffic and transport arrangements for the commissioning of Shenzhen Bay Port and Sheung Shui to Lok Ma Chau Spur Line

- (LC Paper No. CB(1)1409/06-07(03) - Information paper provided by the Administration
- LC Paper No. CB(1)1440/06-07(01) - Letter from Hon CHEUNG Hok-ming dated 23 April 2007
- LC Paper No. CB(1)1454/06-07(01) - Administration's response to Hon CHEUNG Hok-ming's letter dated 23 April 2007
- LC Paper No. CB(1)1440/06-07(02) - New submission from Hongkong Guangdong Boundary Crossing Bus Association Limited
- LC Paper No. CB(1)1004/06-07(05) - Information paper entitled "Traffic and Transport Arrangements for the Commissioning of Hong Kong - Shenzhen Western Corridor" provided by the Administration
- LC Paper No. CB(1)771/06-07(04) - Information paper entitled "Public Transport Arrangements at Sheung Shui to Lok Ma Chau Spur Line" provided by the Administration
- LC Paper No. CB(1)1004/06-07(06) - The Administration's response to issues raised at the meeting on 26 January 2007
- LC Paper No. CB(1)771/06-07(05) - Background brief on boundary control points prepared by the Secretariat
- LC Paper No. CB(1)1002/06-07 - Minutes of the meeting held on 26 January 2007
- LC Paper No. CB(1)1147/06-07 - Minutes of the meeting held on 2 March 2007)

8. Members noted the following papers tabled at the captioned meeting –

- (a) Administration's response to Hon CHEUNG Hok-ming's letter dated 23 April 2007; and
- (b) Submission dated 26 April 2007 from Non-franchised Public Buses Workers Association.

(Post-meeting note: The above papers were issued to members vide LC Papers Nos. CB(1)1454/06-07(01) and 1473/06-07(01) dated 30 April 2007.)

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9. The Deputy Secretary for the Environment, Transport and Works (Transport)1 (DS(T)1) briefed members on the Administration's paper for this agenda item, which provided in response to the concerns raised by members and deputations at the Panel meeting on 2 March 2007 further information on the public transport arrangements at the two new crossings (the two crossings) of Sheung Shui to Lok Ma Chau Spur Line (Spur Line) and the Shenzhen Bay Port (SBP) (also known as Hong Kong – Shenzhen Western Corridor) and on the traffic impact on Northwest New Territories (NT) brought about by the commissioning of SBP.

Views and concerns about the traffic impact on Northwest New Territories brought about by the commissioning of Shenzhen Bay Port

10. Mr TAM Yiu-chung highlighted and shared the concerns of members of the Tuen Mun District Council (TMDC) about the traffic impact of the commissioning of SBP on Northwest NT, in particular Tuen Mun Road (TMR), especially as the projected daily vehicular traffic of SBP might amount to some 30 000, and that there was news that starting from 1 July 2007, when SBP was commissioned, the franchisee of Route 3 (the Franchisee) would stop offering concessionary tolls to all categories of vehicles, which in his view would amount to toll increase (the likely revision of tunnel tolls), so that vehicles might use the alternative, non-tolled TMR instead. He and members of TMDC therefore hoped that all measures designed to mitigate the impacts could be implemented as early as practicable.

11. In response, DS(T)1 reported that widening of Yuen Long Highway and improvement to San Tin Interchange had already completed to ensure smooth traffic flow from SBP to the town centre of Tuen Mun. The widening of Castle Peak Road, which ran parallel to TMR, had also been partially completed with the remaining part to be completed within 2007. These completed and soon-to-be completed traffic improvement measures would improve traffic in Northwest NT. In recognition of local concerns, the Administration would also endeavour to take forward as soon as practicable improvement measures that had already been planned, such as the widening of TMR at Tsing Tin Interchange from dual-2 lane to dual-3 lane carriageway. The Administration had also been actively studying long-term transport infrastructure proposals under the Northwest NT Traffic and Infrastructure Review to ensure that the new transport infrastructure beyond 2016 would be provided in a timely manner. Some of the investigation and engineering feasibility studies on the above proposed road projects would be completed in one to two months' time. A decision on which road project to be taken forward in the light of the traffic needs of Tuen Mun and Northwest NT, as well as the development needs of Hong Kong as a whole would then be made and reported to the Panel for consultation.

12. Noting the above timetable, Mr TAM Yiu-chung reminded the Administration to ensure that timely measures would be taken to prevent congestion of the already saturated TMR, which could bring the traffic in the area to a standstill. The traffic flow in the area should also be closely monitored in the early days of SBP's commissioning. He further drew the Administration's attention to TMDC's comment that senior officials

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from the Environment, Transport and Works Bureau (ETWB) instead of only the subject officers of relevant departments should attend their meetings to address their concerns about the traffic impact of SBP's commissioning on TMR. In response, DS(T)1 assured members that the Administration had always kept the traffic flow of TMR under close monitoring. Such efforts would be geared up after the commissioning of SBP. As to TMDC's comment on the attendance of Government officials at their meetings, he emphasized that the Administration attached great importance to DC meetings and had always endeavoured to send the most appropriate representatives to attend the meetings. The Commissioner for Transport himself also attended DC meetings from time to time. Both ETWB and the departments concerned would continue to stay in close touch with TMDC on transport matters in Tuen Mun.

Admin

13. Mr WONG Kwok-hing also highlighted TMDC's concern about the possible deteriorating congestion in Tuen Mun upon the commissioning of SBP. At his suggestion, members agreed that a site visit to TMR together with TMDC and TD should be arranged after the commissioning of SBP to ascertain its impact on the traffic condition in the area.

Admin

14. Mrs Selina CHOW referred to the projected daily vehicular traffic of SBP from 2007 to 2016 as set out in the paper, and asked the Administration to report to the Panel the actual cross-boundary vehicle flow of SBP six months after its commissioning. She also enquired about the Administration's contingency measures should the vehicle flow of SBP increase more quickly than anticipated, and asked whether in working out the above projections, the Administration had separately prepared estimates on SBP's traffic impact on TMR. Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung also cast doubt on the Administration's projections on the daily vehicular traffic from 2007 to 2016 as presented in paragraph 13 of the paper.

Admin

15. In response, the Assistant Commissioner for Transport/Planning said that the 2007 projection of 29 800 was already as high as about 70% of the total vehicle flow at the other three land crossings. In projecting the traffic flow of TMR using the computer model developed by TD, future land use developments in the area, economic growth, and committed improvement to the adjoining road networks had been taken into account. It was found that the traffic flow would for a long period of time after the commissioning of SBP be within manageable levels even during rush hours. Notwithstanding, various measures had been pursued to improve TMR's capacity in preparation for increase in traffic load arising from SBP's commissioning. Efforts were also being made to take the long-term improvement measures forward more expeditiously. Mrs Selina CHOW, however, opined that given the time required to implement the measures, they might not be able to solve the congestion on TMR in a timely manner if the above projections were wrong and too conservative. In response, DS(T)1 undertook to provide details on the contingency measures readily available for TD to tackle traffic congestion.

Admin

16. Ms LI Fung-ying asked the Administration to provide a paper on the contingency measures specifically mapped out for handling congestion of TMR upon

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commissioning of SBP. She also expressed agreement with TMDC that, despite various measures proposed to mitigate the possible traffic impact on TMR upon the commissioning of SBP, little progress had been made in taking the measures forward. She therefore requested further details on the progress of the traffic improvement measures highlighted in paragraphs 15, 16 and 17 of the Administration's paper, in particular the exact progress and specific completion timetables, to facilitate monitoring. DS(T)1 agreed to provide the requested details.

17. Mr CHEUNG Hok-ming shared members' view on the need to ensure smooth traffic along TMR after the commissioning of SBP. He however saw a need to also ensure smooth traffic in another direction, namely, between SBP and Ping Shan where there were many container storage areas. In this regard, he considered Tin Ha Road, Ping Ha Road and Deep Bay Road very important and enquired about improvement works on them. According to him, if these three roads could not adequately cater for the additional traffic flow to be generated by the commissioning of SBP, quite a number of container trucks might need to detour through Tin Shui Wai, thereby imposing additional traffic load on local roads such as Tin Ying Road and Tin Wah Road. In response, DS(T)1 advised that plans were already actively under way to widen both Tin Ha Road and Ping Ha Road.

18. Mr CHEUNG Hok-ming was concerned that the above planned widening works might not be ready in time to address Tin Shui Wai residents' concern about possible overflow of container traffic there. In response, the Assistant Commissioner for Transport/New Territories explained that traffic control and surveillance (TCS) facilities would enable motorists on major approach roads to and from SBP to make route choices based on latest traffic information and facilitate better traffic management. She further assured members that whenever new highway projects were commissioned, TD would in conjunction with the Police closely monitor the traffic condition and introduce improvement measures as necessary. In the case of SBP, information collected from the TCS facilities would be passed to the Police control centre and TD's 24-hour Emergency Transport Co-ordination Centre to facilitate monitoring. Where necessary, real-time information on major traffic incidents would be disseminated to the public in a timely manner through various means.

19. Mr CHEUNG Hok-ming requested the Administration to comment on his earlier submitted written suggestion that the Administration should consider provision of Journey Time Indication System at major approach roads to SBP to help ensure smooth traffic flow there. In response, the Deputy Secretary for the Environment, Transport and Works (Transport)3 (DS(T)3) elaborated that the Administration considered that in a highway network (e.g. SBP and its major approach roads), where the traffic flow was usually smooth, TCS facilities proved effective to enable motorists to make route choices in case of traffic incidents. Therefore, similar to other highway networks in Hong Kong, the Administration would install TCS facilities on SBP and its major approach roads to ensure effective traffic management. The TCS facilities would include, among other things, variable message signs (VMSs) and closed-circuit television (CCTV) systems. The traffic condition of SBP and its major approach roads

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would be monitored by TD's CCTV systems and real-time traffic information would be disseminated to motorists through VMSs.

20. In reply to Mr LEE Wing-tat on the estimated traffic condition in the town centre of Tuen Mun upon commissioning of SBP, DS(T)1 said that according to the Administration's projected vehicle flow of SBP, it was anticipated that the existing and committed road networks, together with necessary improvement measures as set out in the paper, should be able to cope with the traffic (including those to be generated from SBP and the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge) up to at least 2016. Notwithstanding, in consideration that there might be teething problems, the Administration would closely monitor the traffic upon the commissioning of SBP and take special measures as necessary. As to specific commissioning arrangements, such were being planned and would be reported to the Panel when available.

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21. Mr LEE Wing-tat found DS(T)1's estimate above too optimistic because first, the widening of Castle Peak Road in his view could not improve the already existing congestion in two sections of TMR, namely, the uphill section near Siu Lam and the Sham Tseng section. Second, as highlighted by TMDC, vehicles from TMR, Siu Hong Court and Lam Tei had to compete for lanes when entering the Fu Tei Roundabout. He believed that congestion would arise at the roundabout upon commissioning of SBP to abort any relief that might be provided by the improvement works to Castle Peak Road and TMR. Third, widening of TMR had yet to commence and might not complete in time to provide timely relief. He expressed regrets over the slow progress of measures to prepare for the commissioning of SBP despite repeated calls for early action for years. In response, DS(T)1 reported that the widening of TMR had already entered the stage of public consultation and detailed planning and could be completed within a few years. As to the problem relating to Fu Tei Roundabout, the Administration would liaise with TMDC to understand their concerns and take traffic management measures as necessary.

22. Mr Albert CHAN opined that the Administration had acted too passively in taking forward long proposed road projects to cater for the commissioning of SBP, such as the Tuen Mun Eastern Bypass, the Tuen Mun Western Bypass and Tuen Mun – Chek Lap Kok Link, the Link Options between Tuen Mun and Lantau, and the Tsing Yi-Lantau Link, etc. To guard against deteriorating congestion on TMR, he stressed the need for the Administration to act more proactively with forward planning. In response, DS(T)1 said that various improvement measures were being taken to address the concerns on possible congestion on TMR. The Administration would report in due course the result of its study on the long-term transport infrastructure proposals under the Northwest NT Traffic and Infrastructure Review.

The need and measures to rationalize the utilization of Route 3 and Tuen Mun Road

23. Mr WONG Kwok-hing enquired about details of the Administration's discussion with the Franchisee on possible measures to rationalize the utilization of Route 3 and the alternative, non-tolled TMR. In his view, with the substantial surplus of the

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Government, the Administration might as well, as he suggested earlier, buy out the franchise of Route 3 to regain control of it and hence the tunnel tolls, so that the Franchisee could not take the opportunity of the commissioning of SBP to make money by the likely revision of tunnel tolls. He urged the Administration to actively consider his suggestion.

24. In response, DS(T)3 pointed out that the Administration was concerned about possible revision of tunnel tolls, and had reflected to the Franchisee that the Administration regarded that this was not the appropriate time to revise tunnel tolls. Meanwhile, the Administration had been in discussion with the Franchisee about possible ways to achieve a more balanced traffic distribution between Route 3 and TMR. One idea being actively explored was extension of its franchise in exchange for toll reduction. Another option being explored was the recent suggestion put forward by a Member to implement toll reduction on a trial basis. The Administration had put it forward to the Franchisee and would actively examine its feasibility in parallel with the other options, with a view to making progress in the discussion.

25. In response to Mr WONG Kwok-hing's call to more strongly put forth to the Franchisee Government's opposition to the likely revision of tunnel tolls, DS(T)3 pointed out that the toll adjustment mechanism of Route 3 was governed by the relevant legislation and formed part of the agreement between the Government and the Franchisee. The statutory toll levels of Route 3 were last revised in September 2006 but the actual toll levels had remained unchanged since June 2005 as Route 3 had continued to offer concessionary tolls to all categories of vehicles. While the Franchisee could make its commercial decisions within the framework of the relevant legislation, DS(T)3 envisaged that in making a decision on toll revision, the Franchisee would take all relevant factors into consideration.

26. Mrs Selina CHOW was concerned about the additional load the likely revision of tunnel tolls would effect on the public's financial burden. She also opined that the Administration's discussion with the Franchisee had dragged on too long, and urged the Administration to be more decisive in working out measures to rationalize the utilization of Route 3 and TMR. In her view, the Administration had missed the best opportunities to maximize citizens' benefits by buying out Route 3's franchise or asking the Franchisee to reduce tolls, namely, in the early days when Route 3 was operating at a great loss, and in 2003 when the economy was poor, so that Government had greater bargaining power. Now that the vehicles using Route 3 were increasing, the Franchisee would not easily give in to the Administration's requests for toll reduction. In reply to her on the availability of a target date against which the above discussion was progressing, DS(T)3 reiterated that the Administration had been actively exploring with the Franchisee possible rationalization measures. The trial scheme suggestion in paragraph 24 above should add impetus to the discussions and help to make progress.

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27. Mr LAU Kong-wah found it disappointing that contrary to public expectation, the commissioning of SBP might meet with the likely revision of tunnel tolls. According to him, the public had hoped that the commissioning of SBP would be matched with toll reduction to divert traffic to Route 3 to obviate traffic congestion on TMR. He indicated hope for the Administration to work out an effective solution to rationalize the utilization of Route 3 and TMR before commissioning of SBP in July 2007. In response, DS(T)1 reiterated that with phased completion of the widening of Castle Peak Road in 2007 to improve the traffic flow between Tuen Mun and Tsuen Wan and the urban area, the congestion on TMR would be improved. Mr LAU however said that the above might not be true because the Administration's projections of the vehicle flow of SBP were different from those of members. In response to Mr LAU on contingency measures to tackle congestion on TMR when SBP was commissioned, DS(T)1 said that TD readily had measures for handling sudden changes in traffic condition.

28. Mr Albert CHAN opined that the Administration had made great mistakes in planning the transport arrangements for the commissioning of SBP and the Spur Line. Not only had the Administration failed to act decisively in tackling the imbalanced traffic flow between Route 3 and TMR but it had also failed to make progress with the times. As a result, the Franchisee might increase instead of reduce tunnel tolls. He therefore called upon the Administration to buy out the ownership of Route 3. In response, DS(T)3 reiterated that the Administration had already conveyed to the Franchisee the Administration's view that it was not the appropriate time to revise tunnel tolls. It would also continue discussions with the Franchisee about possible ways to achieve a more balanced traffic distribution between Route 3 and TMR. Mr CHAN was not assured. In particular, he considered the Administration's advice to the Franchisee of little use because, according to the relevant franchise and law, the Franchisee could increase tunnel tolls.

29. Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung highlighted Article 105 of the Basic Law, and opined that according to the article, Government could acquire the property of individuals and legal persons by compensating them for lawful deprivation of their property. As such, with public support and substantial surplus of the Government, the Administration should buy out the franchise of Route 3 unless there was corruption and the Franchisee was given favourable treatment as he suspected. He considered it undesirable that the Administration had failed to gain control of such major transport corridors as Route 3 because of the above perceived corruption. In response, DS(T)3 stressed that in considering any option, the Administration would take into account a number of important factors. These included financial implications on the Government, impact on traffic management and the overall public interest.

The relevant quota arrangements

30. Mr Jeffrey LAM noted that to ease congestion at the existing control points, the Administration would encourage existing holders of quotas at other crossings to switch to SBP. In this regard, the Administration would allow a 3-month trial period upon the

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commissioning of SBP, during which existing quota-holders could try to use SBP. In response to him on the subsequent arrangements after the trial period, DS(T)3 advised that for private cars, the Administration would initially issue 1 500 new SBP quotas. Existing holders of private car quotas would also be encouraged to try out SBP during the three-month trial period. These arrangements would be reviewed in conjunction with the Guangdong side after the commissioning of SBP.

31. Mr Jeffrey LAM was concerned that if all existing quota-holders switched to SBP, the traffic load on SBP would be heavy and might cause congestion. He therefore called upon the Administration to get prepared for such a scenario. He also stressed the need to enable relevant parties to make corresponding arrangements early by making known as soon as practicable relevant transport arrangements, in particular on whether the existing holders of quotas at other control points could access both the existing and the new control points. In response, DS(T)3 explained that the purpose of the quota system was to ensure that the volume of vehicular traffic was commensurate with the handling capacity of the crossing concerned. As such, the Administration would closely monitor the traffic situation after the commissioning of SBP, and liaise with the Guangdong authorities to ensure the purpose of the quota system would not be compromised.

32. Mr Jeffrey LAM noted that the Administration had agreed with the Guangdong authorities to issue 300 quotas for cross-boundary coaches before the commissioning of SBP, and that the quotas could be increased as necessary in due course. In reply to him on how the Administration ascertained such need, DS(T)3 said that the Administration would closely monitor the traffic situation and operation of SBP, and review the number of quotas in conjunction with the Guangdong authorities to see whether there was room for further relaxation of the quota arrangements as the relevant trade suggested.

33. Noting the above quota arrangements for private cars, Mr LEE Wing-tat expressed reservation about allowing private cars to use SBP too soon. He further suggested that to avoid congestion on the Hong Kong side, efforts should be made to liaise with the Mainland authorities for control of the traffic flow from Shenzhen to SBP during the morning peak hours of 7:00 am to 9:00 am. DS(T)1 agreed to see if this was necessary and practicable. Mr Albert CHAN, however, did not agree that traffic flow from the Mainland side should be controlled to avoid congestion on the Hong Kong side. In his view, such moves would abort the purpose of providing SBP, which took billions to construct and hence should be fully utilized. Moreover, the freight industry of Hong Kong was already not growing as it should. Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung shared his views, and said that measures to divert SBP's traffic flow effectively instead of blocking the traffic flow to SBP should be taken to prevent congestion. In this regard, the first thing that should be done was to remove the monopoly of Route 3 by buying out its franchise with public money.

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Provision of non-franchised bus services at the public transport interchanges of the two crossings

34. Mr LAU Kong-wah considered the public transport arrangements for the commissioning of SBP and the Spur Line unsatisfactory, pointing out that residents of Wanchai and Sheung Wan, who could travel to Huanggang by non-franchised bus (NFB), could not go to the two crossings in the same way. He therefore urged the Administration to note such public demand, and seriously consider members' earlier suggestion of allowing the provision of NFB services inside the public transport interchanges of the two crossings (the PTIs), and to liaise with the Mainland authorities for the purpose. In response, DS(T)3 explained that due to space constraint of the PTIs and the need for corresponding transport arrangements on the Mainland side, it was not appropriate for the Hong Kong side alone to increase the number or type of public transport vehicles accessing the two crossings. Notwithstanding, as undertaken earlier, the Administration would closely review the situation and where necessary, review with the Mainland authorities the need for and feasibility of adjustment of public transport services to meet public demand.

35. Ms LI Fung-ying considered it unfair and discriminatory to deny NFBs access to the PTIs, and questioned if the Administration had done its best to liaise with the Mainland authorities for allowing NFB operators to access the PTIs. In her view, the space constraints of the PTIs could be overcome. Referring to DS(T)3's assurance in response to Mr LAU Kong-wah above, she also queried how the Administration defined "public demand" having regard that the Administration seemed to be oblivious to the trade's demand and the public's demand for NFB service as highlighted by Mr LAU. In response, DS(T)3 confirmed that members' view on the need to allow NFBs access to the PTIs had been conveyed to the Mainland authorities. However, given the size of the two PTIs, the Administration considered that priority should be given to those public transport modes that served the public at large, i.e. franchised buses, minibuses and taxis. In addition, the mode, number of routes, service hours, frequency and carrying capacity of the public transport services to be provided by each side would need to be comparable to one another. Given that the Mainland side would not provide for operation of NFBs at this stage, it would not be appropriate to allow non cross-boundary NFBs to operate at the two crossings. She reiterated that the Administration would monitor closely the traffic situation at the two crossings upon their commissioning, and review the need for and feasibility of adjusting the public transport services provided thereat jointly with the Mainland authorities.

36. Mr Albert CHAN also considered it inappropriate that the Administration should deny NFBs access to the PTIs. In his view, the Administration should provide free choice for cross-boundary travellers instead of deciding for them what transport modes they could take. He found such highhanded and bureaucratic attitude of the Administration undesirable.

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37. Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung opined that it was unfair to deny NFBs access to the PTIs, and said that bigger PTIs should be provided in the first place with better planning having regard that the sites concerned were in fact spacious. The grievances of the operators denied access to the PTIs were therefore justified. He also saw a need for the Secretary for Environment, Transport and Works to attend this meeting to account for the traffic and transport arrangements for the commissioning of SBP and the Spur Line, in particular on why monopoly of certain transport modes was allowed and that nothing could be done to address the NFB trade's concern.

38. In recognition that members were keen to ensure that the Administration could work out effective measures to rationalize the utilization of Route 3 and TMR without further delay in consideration of the impending commissioning of SBP and the likely revision of tunnel tolls by the Franchisee, the Chairman proposed and members agreed to add the item on "Measures to rationalize the utilization of Route 3 and the non-tolled Tuen Mun Road" to the agenda of the special meeting to be scheduled. To facilitate members' discussion, the Panel also agreed to invite the Franchisee, through the Administration, to attend the special meeting to exchange views with members on the related matters.

V Fare increase application by Hong Kong & Kowloon Ferry Holding Ltd.

- (LC Paper No. CB(1)1409/06-07(04) - Information paper provided by the Administration
- LC Paper No. CB(1)1440/06-07(03) - Submission dated 21 April 2007 from Lamma Island (North) Rural Committee
- LC Paper No. CB(1)1454/06-07(02) - Further submission dated 24 April 2007 from Lamma Island (North) Rural Committee
- LC Paper No. CB(1)771/06-07(03) - Information paper provided by the Administration
- LC Paper No. CB(1)628/06-07(01) - Referral from Legislative Council Members' meeting-cum-luncheon with Islands District Council on ferry services to outlying islands
- LC Paper No. CB(1)1002/06-07 - Minutes of the meeting held on 26 January 2007)

Views on the proposed fare increase

39. Mr WONG Kwok-hing referred to the further submission dated 24 April 2007 from Lamma Island (North) Rural Committee (the Committee) (LC Paper No. CB(1)1454/06-07(02)), and recalled that when this agenda item was last discussed at the meeting on 26 January 2007, members requested the Administration to revert to the Panel before making a decision on the application (the application) by Hong Kong and Kowloon Ferry Limited (HKK) to increase the fares (the Fares) of its three licensed

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ferry services for Lamma Island (the ferry services). The Administration, however, had already stated in its paper for this meeting that HKK would be approved to increase the Fares by an average rate of 7.3%. He considered the move disrespectful to the Panel, and expressed dissatisfaction and regrets over it.

40. Mr LEE Wing-tat pointed out that although HKK would be approved to increase the Fares by an average rate of 7.3%, which was 31% lower than the 12.2% it had applied for, it was the second time in three years that the Fares were increased. The above trend was unacceptable because there had been deflation over the past three years and salaries in general had hardly increased. Moreover, fuel prices, which had been quoted as a reason to support the application, had dropped recently. He queried if TD had really done its best to minimize ferry fare increase, or it was indeed collaborating with ferry operators to put up shows of addressing public concern about fare increase by always proposing an unacceptably high rate first and then "successfully" lowering it.

41. In response, the Deputy Commissioner for Transport/Transport Services & Management (DC for T/TS&M) emphasized that TD had not collaborated with HKK as Mr LEE Wing-tat suggested but had followed the normal procedure in considering fare adjustment applications by examining HKK's financial condition and the measures taken by it to achieve cost saving and generate additional revenue, and gauging public acceptability of the proposed fares. The Administration had also briefed the Panel on the application twice including this occasion. It was after taking into account the above basket of factors that approval for the application was given. She further explained that there was a need to increase the Fares again within three years because the last increase had failed to materialize reduction in loss due to increase in the price of fuel, which was one of the major cost components for ferry operation. The average fuel price incurred by HKK before its last fare increase in 2004 was \$2.41 per litre. As the fuel price escalated to an average of nearly \$4 per litre in 2006, the total fuel cost incurred by HKK in 2005 and 2006 had increased drastically. As a result, HKK still suffered from a loss of about \$11 million in the past two years notwithstanding the last fare increase. The fare increase could only slightly improve HKK's poor financial position to obviate problems in cash flow.

42. Referring to the situation on Cheung Chau, where as he understood visitors had decreased drastically after increase in fares for its ferry service, Mr LEE Wing-tat warned HKK against increasing holiday fares for the ferry services. Mrs Selina CHOW, however, opined that if the place was attractive, visitors would not mind the fare increase. In recognition of rising operating cost, she also said that to strike a balance and ensure fairness there was a need to allow HKK to increase the Fares so as to continue operation. If not, the ferry services would become financially unviable and at the end local residents would suffer.

43. Mr CHEUNG Hok-ming said that the Democratic Alliance for the Betterment and Progress of Hong Kong was opposed to increase in the Fares because Hong Kong's economy had yet to improve to the extent that all could benefit. He however also recognized that it was difficult to require HKK to operate the ferry services at a loss.

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44. Mr Jeffrey LAM pointed out that the residents of Lamma Island would like to stay on Lamma Island where possible. HKK, however, had financial difficulties in operating the ferry services. As such, the Administration should try to strike a balance between the financial viability of the ferry services and local residents' need for transport service to the urban areas, so that the present and subsequent fare increase, if necessary, could be contained within an acceptable range.

The financial position of Hong Kong and Kowloon Ferry Limited

45. Mr WONG Kwok-hing referred to paragraph (1) of the submission dated 21 April 2007 (the Submission) from the Committee (LC Paper No. CB(1)1440/06-07(03)), where queries about the calculation of profits and deficits by HKK were raised, and asked the Administration to respond to them. In response, DC for T/TS&M emphasized that TD had kept HKK's operating account under close scrutiny, and made the following clarifications –

- (a) HKK had spared no effort in taking measures to achieve cost saving and generate additional revenue. The activities queried in paragraph (1)(i) of the Submission were examples of such efforts and had enabled HKK's non-fare box revenue to take up 13% of its total revenue in 2006. Such non-fare box revenue had, contrary to the Committee's query, all been ploughed back to the accounts of the ferry services to cross-subsidize ferry operations;
- (b) As for the Committee's query about HKK's maintenance expenditure, the expenditure had been carefully vetted by auditors and a comparison with other ferry operators had shown that HKK's average maintenance expenditure per ferry was low. It followed that the Committee's other query that the relevant maintenance service might be provided by a subsidiary or associated company of HKK should not be a concern;
- (c) Regarding the Committee's query about the way HKK calculated depreciation, it should be noted that the linear depreciation method presently adopted was commonly used in the commercial sector. The Administration therefore could not find fault with it. In fact, the auditor who audited HKK's accounts was satisfied that the method could fairly and truly reflect HKK's financial position; and
- (d) On the Committee's query about HKK's insurance cost, the Administration also could not find any anomalies. Moreover, past records had shown that over the past three years, only two accidents relating to the ferry services occurred. The Committee therefore might not need to be concerned that the relevant accident rate was high and had led to high insurance cost.

46. DC for T/TS&M went on to point out that as a result of the above, it was reasonable to allow HKK, which had been providing the ferry services satisfactorily and

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had been making various efforts to make the ferry services viable, should be allowed to increase the Fares.

47. Mr WONG Kwok-hing was unconvinced. Pointing out that HKK's maintenance company, which might be associated with it, was making profits, he queried whether HKK was really operating the ferry services at a loss as claimed, or that profits generated were in fact transferred to the maintenance company through awarding it the maintenance contract. In response, DC for T/TS&M emphasized that even if associated, HKK and the maintenance company were operating separately with separate accounts. Moreover, only six ferries were deployed to operate the ferry services but the maintenance company was providing service to a much larger number of ferries. In awarding the relevant maintenance contract, an open tender exercise had also been conducted to identify the lowest bid.

48. Mr LEE Wing-tat cast doubt on whether HKK was really operating at a loss because if so, HKK should refuse to continue operation of the ferry services. Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung shared his view, and suspected that the Administration was transferring benefits to HKK through other channels, such as by awarding it contracts in relation to SBP. He therefore demanded sight of HKK's accounts, and considered it deplorable that HKK should seek to increase the Fares after benefiting in other areas already. In response, DS(T)2 said that the allegations made by Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung were groundless. She emphasized that HKK's accounts had been vetted by professional accountants. All Government works projects were also subject to open tenders and benefits could not be secretly transferred to HKK.

Measures to enhance the financial viability of the ferry services

Measures to increase non-fare box revenue

49. Mrs Selina CHOW opined that to minimize the need for fare increase in future, there was a need to help make the ferry services financially viable by strengthening HKK's capability to generate non-fare box revenue. In response to her on efforts in this regard, DS(T)2 reported that in recognition that the present sub-letting of spaces at piers to tenants which could generate higher rental income, such as restaurants and larger retail shops, were hindered by the need to obtain approval from the Town Planning Board (TPB) for each application for sub-letting and the lack of some fire prevention facilities, resulting in pier premises being under-utilized, the following additional measures (the Measures) were identified for implementation to help improve the situation –

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(a) *Relax land uses and streamline procedures for approval of sub-letting*

Applications to TPB were submitted in April 2007 by TD on a variety of compatible commercial concessions at piers so that the ferry operators did not need to seek TPB's approval for each application for sub-letting. This would greatly help streamline procedures for approval of sub-letting and help improve the sub-letting situation.

(b) *Streamline procedures for approval of sub-letting*

To shorten the processing time for applications by ferry operators to sub-let spaces at piers, the Government Property Agency and relevant departments had jointly reviewed the guidelines on processing applications for commercial concessions at piers. Processing time would be reduced to within one month for relatively straightforward applications and to within three months for more complex applications.

(c) *Upgrade pier facilities*

The piers for outlying island ferry services at Central Pier Nos. 4, 5 and 6 would be retrofitted by the Architectural Services Department to enhance fire prevention facilities. Similar works would be conducted on the roof top of pier premises, which would also be renovated for use as food outlets or show areas.

(d) *Beautification of the pier area*

At present, the covered walkway and the outlook of the vicinity areas of the Central piers are relatively dilapidated and unappealing. A beautification scheme of the covered walkway outside the piers for the outlying island ferry services at Central would therefore be carried out to create a more pleasant and lively environment to attract visitors to the harbour front area.

50. Noting that some of the Measures would take months to implement, Mrs Selina CHOW called for quicker actions. In response, DS(T)2 said that the Administration was already sparing no effort in expediting the progress of the Measures. She assured members that the above proposed new facilities would be provided within one year. Meanwhile, should HKK think of other activities that could help generate revenue for it, such as commercial activities at the piers leased to it, the Administration would be prepared to consider and facilitate such consideration by relevant departments where appropriate.

51. Commenting on the Measures, Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung said that beautification of the pier area would only benefit commercial operators. The idea was also ironic having regard that while efforts would be made to turn the pier area into a tourist attraction, old tourist attractions like the Queen's Pier and the Star Ferry Pier

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were/would be demolished lightly. He also commented that the new Star Ferry Pier was badly designed.

52. Mr Jeffrey LAM was keen to ensure that the efforts made by the Government to streamline procedures for approval of sub-letting could really bear fruit to help alleviate pressure for future fare increase by HKK. He also suggested that the Administration should as soon as practicable make known its plan on the commercial use of pier facilities and the pier area to increase HKK's revenue, in particular the commercial concessions contemplated, so that local residents could also help work out proposals in this regard. In response, DS(T)2 advised that the concessions contemplated were varied, covering restaurants, fast food shops, retail shops, service trades, telecommunications shops, convenience stores, etc.

53. In recognition that some of the Measures would only materialize in 2008, Ms LI Fung-ying called for earlier actions. She was also keen to ensure that after these efforts had been taken, there would really be no need for fare increase, and that HKK would have spare capacity for increasing the salaries of its staff, which according to her had been frozen for some years. In response, DS(T)2 explained that the Measures really required time to implement, especially as some construction works were involved. She however believed that the Measures, though time-consuming, were necessary because they could enable HKK to increase its non-fare box revenue. She said that based on past experience, non-fare box revenue could make up 20 to 30% of a ferry operator's revenue if the company did well in this respect.

54. Highlighting the implications of ferry fare increase on the restaurants on Lamma Island, Mr Tommy CHEUNG acknowledged the need to enhance the financial viability of the ferry services by relaxing land uses and allowing restaurants to operate at piers. He however stressed the need to ensure that these new restaurants would be different from those already operating on the island so as not to adversely affect the business of the latter. Better still, these new restaurants at piers should also be of varied nature to provide visitors great enjoyment sampling the different restaurants.

Measures to increase fare-box revenue

55. Mr CHEUNG Hok-ming opined that to solve the operational problem of the ferry services at root, it might help if the Government could improve the facilities on Lamma Island, such as by providing the presently shelved municipal services building for North Lamma Island, by widening the narrow road by the pier to accommodate more tourists, etc, so as to attract more people to Lamma Island to boost patronage for the ferry services. DS(T)2 agreed to follow up Mr CHEUNG's proposal with the Home Affairs Department (HAD).

56. To attract visitors to Lamma Island to boost patronage for the ferry services, Mr Jeffrey LAM pointed out that consideration might be given to promoting Lamma Island by highlighting its cultural or heritage characteristics, especially as it was the homeland of certain celebrities, and by providing more facilities for day trips such as barbecue

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facilities. In response, DS(T)2 said that ETWB and TD had already been keeping up close liaison with the Hong Kong Tourism Board and the Home Affairs Bureau who had assured them that they would continue to promote outlying islands through various measures. They would also continue to promote events with strong cultural or heritage characteristics on the islands. Such continued efforts should be able to attract more tourists to the islands.

57. Mr Tommy CHEUNG saw a need for the Administration to organize some activities in conjunction with HKK and the restaurants to promote Lamma Island as a food haven and hence increase patronage for the ferry services. In response, DS(T)2 advised that HKK did from time to time organize promotional activities with the restaurants. Efforts in this regard would be continued to explore more options.

58. Mrs Selina CHOW opined that the solution of the operational problem of the ferry services lay in increasing both patronage and revenues. She therefore saw a need for promoting Lamma Island as a tourist destination in an innovative and creative way. In this regard, the Islands DC and the rural committees concerned should play an active co-ordinating role. In response, DS(T)2 undertook to follow up her view with HAD.

Need for policy adjustments

59. Quoting the ferry services to comment on the Administration's transport policy as a whole, Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung saw a need for all public transport services to be operated by the Government so that loss incurred in one mode of transport could be made up by profits generated from others. If not, the travelling expenses of the general public would all be translated into profits for large corporations as was the present case. In his view, if the Government still refused to take up the responsibility for ensuring adequate and affordable public transport services for all by actively co-ordinating and even subsidizing the services, residents of remote and sparsely populated areas like Lamma Island would continue to suffer.

60. Mr Albert CHAN pointed out that high fares for outlying island ferry services not only affected local residents but also local economy because high fares would discourage people from residing in or visiting the islands. The drop in the numbers of residents and tourists would in turn affect the patronage for ferry services. To put a stop to the above vicious cycle, there was a need for ETWB to co-ordinate efforts from relevant bureaux and departments to tackle the problem in a comprehensive manner instead of in a haphazard way. In addition, the problem should also be addressed in an innovative way, such as by changing the routing of the ferry service from between Lamma Island and Central to between Lamma Island and Aberdeen to shorten the ferry trips and hence save cost. Consideration might even be given to allowing Lamma Island to revert to its old mode of water transport, namely kaitos (small passenger carrying vessels), which were both cheap and flexible to operate. Alternatively, a statutory body responsible for ferry services could be formed and property development rights on roof top of pier premises granted to it to generate profits to subsidize ferry operation. The expiry of the relevant ferry service licences (FSLs) in March 2008 could be taken as an

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opportunity for the above proposed policy overhaul, which might lead to a win-win situation for all.

61. In response, DS(T)2 agreed that viable long-term solutions to the operational problems of the ferry services should be worked out to ensure the services were sustainable in the long run without always having to increase the Fares. As such, in recognition of the general drop in island populations, the Administration would make use of the opportunity of the forthcoming tender exercise for the relevant FSLs in June/July 2007 to modify the requirements on vessel quality and service level, in particular to discuss with the residents concerned whether frequency of service or smaller vessels could be adopted where demand was low. The measures would help save fuel cost which was a major cost burden, so as to optimize the use of ferries, help maintain the Fares at a reasonable level and improve the financial viability of the ferry services. In formulating the tender conditions, TD would take into account the expectations of passengers on quality, level and fare of the ferry services obtained from a passenger opinion survey. These survey findings would be presented to the Islands DC in May or June 2007 for discussion before the tender documents were finalized.

62. Noting the above plan, Ms LI Fung-ying highlighted the need to exercise care for fear that likely reduced frequency of the ferry services might adversely affect the daily life of local residents whose only means of public transport was the ferry services. In addition, visitors to Lamma Island might also be adversely affected. She therefore stressed the need to thoroughly consult local residents on the plan before making any decision in this regard. If not, local residents would be aggrieved. In response, DS(T)2 assured members that as the details of the forthcoming tender exercise would be worked out after consultation with DCs and the Area Committees concerned and in this regard, residents' views would be taken into full consideration.

63. Noting that with a fare increase of 7.3%, it was expected that HKK would still face a loss at about \$5 million for year 2007, Ms LI Fung-ying stressed the need for a long-term plan covering policy adjustment and concrete measures to help sustain the ferry services to obviate likely fare increases in future. In response, DS(T)2 pointed out that with the vessel quality and service level suitably adjusted, ferry operators might find operation of the ferry services viable.

64. Mr WONG Kwok-hing was not convinced that the Measures could help HKK, especially as the relevant FSLs would soon expire. To really resolve the operational problem of HKK, he saw a need for a policy change to ensure the long-term financial viability of the ferry services. Pending the policy review, the Fares should be frozen and the FSLs extended. In response, DS(T)2 said that the Administration had already taken nine months to vet the application and consult local residents on it. Moreover, even with the fare increase HKK would still face a loss at about \$5 million for year 2007. There was therefore a need to allow HKK to adjust the Fares so as to maintain its cashflow at a level adequate to meet the daily expenses required to keep the ferry services running and to pay its staff wages.

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65. Summing up, the Chairman expressed dissatisfaction at the Administration for failing to report back to the Panel before approving the application. In his view, the approach was unhealthy and not conducive to improving the relationship between the legislature and the executive. He called upon the Administration to note members' views expressed at the meeting and review its ferry policy accordingly.

VI Proposed creation of one permanent Principal Transport Officer in the Management and Paratransit Branch of Transport Department

(LC Paper No. CB(1)1409/06-07(05) - Information paper provided by the Administration)

66. Commenting on the captioned financial proposal (the proposal), Dr Fernando CHEUNG stated support for the provision of barrier-free transport for people with disabilities (PwDs), and hoped that this approach could really be taken forward as a policy instead of just a slogan. In this regard, he pointed out that the number of declined orders for rebus dial-a-ride service last year exceeded 8 000, and sought to ensure that the proposed creation of one permanent Principal Transport Officer (PTO) (D1) post (the proposed post) in the Management and Paratransit Branch of the Transport Department (TD) to deal with issues relating to taxi services, ferry services and transport services for PwDs would be able to bring about genuine improvements in taxi service, in particular, the introduction of rebus taxis, to supplement rebus service to meet PwDs' travelling needs and hence facilitate their integration into society. He therefore enquired whether the proposed post would be specifically tasked to expedite the introduction of rebus taxis and if so, what the relevant work plan and timetable were.

67. In response, the Assistant Commissioner for Transport/Ferry and Paratransit (AC for T/F&P) drew members' attention to the new type of wheelchair-accessible taxi recently identified by the taxi trade for experimentation in Hong Kong. Members noted that a vehicle manufacturer had also indicated interest in introducing to Hong Kong another type of wheelchair-accessible taxi which was similar to London taxis. It was hoped that more concrete progress could be made in the launch of wheelchair-accessible taxis in Hong Kong by the end of 2007.

68. Noting that the proposed post would be tasked to supervise the Disabled Transport Section of TD the tasks of which included continuous improvement of the accessible facilities for railways network, Dr Fernando CHEUNG highlighted the many requests for improvements to station facilities raised at meetings of the Bills Committee on Rail Merger Bill (the BC), which had yet to be positively addressed, and queried whether the proposed post would be able to effect progress in this regard. He also highlighted various inadequacies and defects found in the design and provision of facilities to facilitate PwDs' boarding and alighting activities, such as accessible facilities for public transport interchanges (PTIs), bus, taxi and public light bus pick-up/drop-off points, footbridges and subways, and considered it undesirable that TD's design guidelines in this regard were not open to the public, and that the design and provision of many PTIs had failed to follow the guidelines. Pointing out that there was

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still a long way to go to effect barrier-free transport for PwDs, he indicated hope for the proposed post to really bring about improvements to address the above problems. In particular, he would like to know how complaints in relation to the above facilities such as PTIs were handled.

69. In response, AC for T/F&P admitted that the design of old railway stations had not included special facilities to cater for the access needs of PwDs. However, the situation had improved and new stations were all fully equipped with the necessary facilities. Efforts were also being made to improve facilities of old stations where practicable by phases. He further reported that one of the tasks of the proposed post was to chair the regular meetings on Access to Public Transport by People with Disabilities, attended by non-government organizations and public transport operators, to steer discussions, and to identify mutually acceptable solutions for dealing with improvement requests expeditiously.

70. Mr LEE Wing-tat pointed out that although one of the reasons given for creation of the proposed post was to provide a barrier-free physical environment and an accessible transport system to facilitate PwDs and the elderly to participate and integrate into the community, he found Government's policy in this regard far from supportive. In particular, he was disappointed at the Administration's negative response to the BC's requests relating to facilitation of PwDs' integration into society. Unconvinced that the proposed post would effect any progress in this regard, he indicated opposition to the proposal.

71. In response, DS/T2 explained that there were many difficulties in providing a barrier-free physical environment and an accessible transport system. For example, there were diverse views from different stakeholders on how to improve the transport services and facilities for PwDs. As such, to facilitate smooth implementation of the above improvement measures, detailed negotiation was required to achieve a consensus among the different stakeholders on the facilities to be provided, and then to follow up with the public transport operators and institutions concerned accordingly. There was therefore a need to create the proposed post to bring about more efforts and hence greater progress in this regard.

72. Mr Albert CHAN indicated opposition to the proposed post on grounds that notwithstanding its demanding portfolio, there might not be a need to create an additional post for the purpose. He also recalled that there was a consensus among eight political parties that the creation of any directorate post should be off-set by the deletion of another. In this regard, he proposed that the tasks concerned be taken up by a directorate officer to be transferred from the Constitutional Affairs Bureau which in his view had spare capacity. Alternatively, the MTR Corporation Limited, which according to him was paying its senior management excessively generous wages, could be asked to bear the cost of the post since it would be responsible for improvement of the accessible facilities for railways network. Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung shared his views, and pointed out that many directorate officers did not have much work to do.

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73. Mr CHEUNG Hok-ming said that he did not have any particular view on the proposal. Summing up the above discussion, the Chairman concluded that most members who had expressed views at this meeting did not support the proposal. He also said that if the Administration could undertake to effect the provision of concessionary fares for PwDs, members might support the proposal.

VII Any other business

74. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 1:00 pm.

Council Business Division 1
Legislative Council Secretariat
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