

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(1)2408/06-07
(These minutes have been seen
by the Administration)

Ref : CB1/PL/TP/1

Panel on Transport

**Minutes of meeting held on
Monday, 9 July 2007, at 2:15 pm
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 Miriam LAU Kin-ye, GBS, JP
Hon LI Fung-ying, BBS, JP
Hon Tommy CHEUNG Yu-yan, SBS, 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 SIN Chung-kai, SBS, JP
Hon TAM Yiu-chung, GBS, JP

Member absent : Hon Ronny TONG Ka-wah, SC

Public Officers attending : **Agenda item IV**
Ms Eva CHENG, JP
Secretary for Transport and Housing

Agenda item V

Ms Eva CHENG, JP
Secretary for Transport and Housing

Ms Rosanna LAW
Principal Assistant Secretary for Transport and Housing
(Transport) 2

Ms Emily MO
Acting Principal Assistant Secretary for Transport and
Housing

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

Mr Albert YUEN
Assistant Commissioner for Transport/Bus and Railway

Mr LEUNG Tak-fai
Chief Engineer/Road Safety & Standards
Transport Department

Mr David TSANG Man-wai
Senior Engineer/Vehicle Safety
Transport Department

Mr Blake D M HANCOCK
Chief Superintendent of Police
Traffic Branch Headquarters

Ms Shirley CHU Ming-po
Senior Superintendent of Police, Administration
Traffic Branch Headquarters

Agenda item VI

Ms Eva CHENG, JP
Secretary for Transport and Housing

Mr Philip YUNG
Deputy Secretary for Transport and Housing (Transport) 1

Ms Annette LEE
Deputy Secretary for Transport and Housing (Transport) 3

Ms Sharon HO
Principal Assistant Secretary for Transport and Housing
(Transport) 5

Mr Donald NG
Principal Assistant Secretary for Transport and Housing
(Transport) 6

Mr CHENG Ting-ning
Project Manager/Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge
Highways Department

Mr CHEUNG Chi-hoi
Chief Engineer 1/Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge
Highways Department

Miss Cindy LAW
Assistant Commissioner for Transport/New Territories

Mr David TO Kam-biu
Assistant Commissioner for Transport/Planning

Agenda item VII

Ms Eva CHENG, JP
Secretary for Transport and Housing

Ms Annette LEE
Deputy Secretary for Transport and Housing (Transport) 3

Ms Rosanna LAW
Principal Assistant Secretary for Transport and Housing
(Transport) 2

Mr David TO Kam-biu
Assistant Commissioner for Transport/Planning

Mr LO Yat-cheung
Principal Transport Officer/Management
Transport Department

Mr Norman MAK
Deputy Project Manager/Major Works 1
Highways Department

Agenda item VIII

Ms Eva CHENG, JP
Secretary for Transport and Housing

Ms Annette LEE
Deputy Secretary for Transport and Housing (Transport) 3

Ms Rosanna LAW
Principal Assistant Secretary for Transport and Housing
(Transport) 2

Mr David TO Kam-biu
Assistant Commissioner for Transport/Planning

**Attendance by
invitation**

: Agenda item V

The Kowloon Motor Bus Company (1933) Limited/
Long Win Bus Company Limited

Ms Winnie NG
Executive Director

Mr Tim IP
Operations Director

Citybus Limited/New World First Bus Services Limited

Mr Samuel CHENG
Managing Director

Mr William CHUNG
Head of Operations

Mr Paul LI
Head of Engineering

New Lantao Bus Company (1973) Limited

Mr Peter MOK
Executive Director

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)2021/06-07 - Minutes of the meeting held on 25 May 2007)

The minutes of the meeting held on 25 May 2007 were confirmed.

II Information papers issued since last meeting

(LC Paper No. CB(1)1730/06-07(01) - Information paper on "PWP Item No. 7811TH – Ping Ha Road Improvement – remaining works (Ha Tsuen Section)" provided by the Administration

LC Paper No. CB(1)1732/06-07(01) - Referral from Legislative Council Members' meeting-cum-luncheon with Northern District Council on provision of section fares and bus-bus interchange schemes by franchised bus companies

LC Paper No. CB(1)1737/06-07(01) - Brochure on "More About KMB" provided by The Kowloon Motor Bus Co. (1933) Limited

LC Paper No. CB(1)1769/06-07(01) - Brochure on "More About Long Win" provided by Long Win Bus Company Limited

LC Paper No. CB(1)1828/06-07(01) - Information paper on "Expansion of the red light camera system" provided by the Administration

LC Paper No. CB(1)1843/06-07(01) - Letter from a member of the public complaining about the service of MTR Corporation Limited and Kowloon-Canton Railway Corporation

LC Paper No. CB(1)1863/06-07(01) - Submission from a Yuen Long District Council Member on Rail Merger Bill

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- LC Paper No. CB(1)1888/06-07(01) - Submission from Taxi & P.L.B. Concern Group complaining about the operator selection exercise for two new scheduled public light bus routes
- LC Paper No. CB(1)1983/06-07(01) - Executive summary of the report of the study entitled "Strategic Review of Public Light Buses in Hong Kong")

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

III Items for discussion at the next meeting

- (LC Paper No. CB(1)2023/06-07(01) - List of outstanding items for discussion
LC Paper No. CB(1)2023/06-07(02) - List of follow-up actions)

3. To avoid clashing with the meeting of the Panel on Economic Services, members agreed to reschedule the July regular meeting of the Panel originally scheduled for 18 July 2007 to Friday, 20 July 2007, at 10:45 am. They also agreed to discuss the item on "ferry services in Hong Kong" at the meeting.

(Post-meeting note: At the request of the Administration and with the concurrence of the Chairman, the item on "Improvement to Sunny Bay Interchange" was subsequently added to the agenda for the meeting.)

IV Opening remarks by Secretary for Transport and Housing

4. Members welcomed the Secretary for Transport and Housing (STH), congratulated her on her assumption of the STH post, and indicated wish to build up a close working relationship with her. STH thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to share her preliminary vision on the transport policy with the Panel. Pointing out that all important policies had to be worked out through thorough public debate to ensure smooth implementation, she undertook to consult the Panel on all major transport issues, and highlighted the following foci of her work in future –

- (a) To effect early commencement of cross-boundary and internal transport infrastructure projects, so as to improve the transport infrastructure, increase the employment opportunities, and expedite the economic growth of Hong Kong. Where cross-boundary transport was concerned, the Shenzhen Bay Port (SBP) had just been commissioned, to be closely followed by the commissioning of the Sheung Shui to Lok Ma Chau Spur Line. As to the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge (HZMB) and the Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link (ERL), there was a need to actively pursue them, and the Administration would examine

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Kowloon-Canton Railway Corporation's project proposal on ERL as soon as practicable to enable its early construction. Local road projects would also be kept under close monitoring. Regarding rail development, the Administration would closely monitor the construction of the Kowloon Southern Link project to ensure its timely completion in 2009. To address public concerns about the progress of the West Island Line, South Island Line and Shatin to Central Link (SCL), the Administration would, within six months after completion of the legislative process for the rail merger, report to the Panel SCL's implementation timetable and alignment. All in all, forward planning would be made for cross-boundary transport infrastructure, while internal infrastructure projects would be taken forward expeditiously;

- (b) To closely monitor the fare levels and quality of various public transport services, so as to address public concerns about the reasonableness and transparency of public transport fares;
- (c) To implement traffic management measures and enact new legislation to enhance road safety. These included the initiatives to improve the co-ordination of the deployment of public transport resources in the event of a major transport incident, the enhancement of the intelligent transport systems to provide timely traffic information to motorists, the expansion of the red light camera system, the legislative amendment exercise to increase the penalties for drink driving and dangerous driving, etc;
- (d) To support environmental improvement measures in transport-related areas, such as by reducing roadside emissions and traffic congestion. In this regard, the Administration was looking forward to increased exchange with members on new measures to gear up efforts in this area. Meanwhile, the Administration would also continue discussion with members on existing measures such as bus route rationalization and use of environmentally-friendly buses to operate on busy roads; and
- (e) To conclude the rail merger exercise as soon as possible so as to enable the public to enjoy the fare reduction and other benefits associated with the rail merger at the earliest opportunity.

5. Summing up, STH reiterated that the Administration would regularly communicate with members on all major transport issues, and looked forward to close co-operation with the Panel.

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V Safety of franchised bus operation

(LC Paper No. CB(1)2023/06-07(03) - Information paper provided by the Administration

LC Paper No. CB(1)1407/06-07 - Minutes of the meeting held on 23 March 2007)

6. At the invitation of the Chairman, the Deputy Commissioner for Transport/Transport Services & Management (DC for T/TS&M) updated members on the progress of measures implemented to further enhance the safety of franchised bus operation (the reported progress).

Retrofitting of seat belts/additional horizontal guard rail on franchised buses

7. Mr LAU Kong-wah enquired about details of the additional horizontal guard rail to be installed across the upper deck windscreen of pre-1997 design buses for further protection to front seat passengers. He was concerned that horizontal guard rail might not be so effective as compared to seat belts in preventing passengers from being thrown out from the upper saloon of the bus after collision with another vehicle. In response, DC for T/TS&M showed members some pictures of the rail and pointed out that this additional device would help minimize the possibility of passengers being thrown out.

8. Noting from the Administration that it was neither feasible nor cost effective to retrofit seat belts on bus types designed before 1997, Mr Jeffrey LAM enquired about the details, in particular the financial implications including the effect on fares, of retrofitting seat belts on pre-1997 design buses. In reply, DC for T/TS&M explained that the technical problems concerned were twofold. Firstly, these buses were not designed to have seat belts. If seat belts were to be retrofitted on these buses, extensive disassembly and rebuilding of the bus body structure would be required so as to provide sufficient structural strength for anchoring the seat belts. Secondly, there were approximately 29 different bus types which were designed before 1997. If seat belts were to be retrofitted on these buses, each bus type would have to be evaluated and tested individually to accommodate the seat belt configuration. The time required for redesigning each bus type would be about two years and the work could not be done concurrently due to the limitation of resource and facilities. As for cost, the redesign cost for each bus type of the pre-1997 design would be around HK\$ 4.3 million (or \$124.7 millions for all the 29 types). Given the above technical and cost implications and that consideration would be given to advancing the vehicle replacement of old buses where feasible, the Administration did not consider it practical and cost-effective to retrofit seat belts on pre-1997 buses. Instead, the Administration would pursue with bus companies the retrofitting of seat belts on post-1997 design double deck buses progressively within two years because, after examining the option with bus manufacturers, it had been found that it would be technically feasible to retrofit seat belts on the four exposed seats at the front row directly behind the windscreen on the upper deck of post-1997 design buses without significant redesign and strengthening work as the structure of most such buses had been reinforced in this area to take possible

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seat belt fitment.

9. In reply to Mr Jeffrey LAM on the availability of sufficient supply of suitable seat belts for retrofitting on post-1997 buses, DC for T/TS&M advised that this was also one of the reasons why the retrofitting programme had to be spread over a period of two years.

10. The Chairman found the reported progress unsatisfactory, and did not accept that additional horizontal guard rail should be installed across the upper deck windscreen of pre-1997 design buses in place of seat belts. This was because, although the additional guard rail might prevent front seat passengers from being thrown out, without the protection of seat belts these passengers might get hurt hitting against the rail during a collision. Moreover, pre-1997 design buses might make up more than half of the existing bus fleet, and some of them might not get replaced until eight years later because they were relatively new. He was concerned that technical and financial viability was being used as an excuse for refusing to retrofit seatbelts on pre-1997 design buses at the expense of passenger safety, and called upon the Administration to liaise with the bus companies on the possibility of retrofitting seat belts on those relatively new pre-1997 design buses.

11. In response, STH pointed out that it took time to effect changes and, although the Chairman was not completely satisfied, some progress in enhancing bus safety had in fact been made. While the Administration would continue to pursue further progress through different channels, it should be noted that there were genuine technical difficulties in retrofitting seat belts on pre-1997 design buses. Moreover, measures other than seat belts could be implemented to enhance bus safety. For example, by on-going improvement to the working schedule and training of bus captains. The Transport Department (TD), bus companies and bus captain unions would continue to exchange views in this regard.

12. Noting the technical difficulties in retrofitting seat belts on pre-1997 design buses, Mr WONG Kwok-hing proposed that the Administration should restrict buses which did not have seat belts in their exposed seats from operating on expressways. In response, DC for T/TS&M agreed to examine the proposal with bus companies to try to deploy as many buses with seat belts on such routes as possible. She however also pointed out that in consideration of the above technical difficulties, the Administration had already recommended the installation of additional guard rail on pre-1997 design buses for further protection to front seat passengers. Moreover, even on expressways buses could not run too fast because the law stipulated that the maximum speed of buses would not be more than 70 km per hour on any road with speed limit in excess of 70 km an hour. Further, all franchised buses in Hong Kong were subject to stringent safety requirements and road worthiness tests as stipulated in the legislation.

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13. Mr WONG Kwok-hing recalled that he had made a similar proposal when bus safety was last discussed, and enquired when the Administration could finish considering his proposal. In reply, DC for T/TS&M reported that discussion with the bus companies in this regard was already under way and time was required to effect the bus deployment. The Administration would later report the position in writing. In this regard, Mrs Selina CHOW commented that it might help relevant parties to consider the proposal if the Administration could ascertain whether bus accidents mainly occurred on expressways.

14. Mrs Selina CHOW further opined that while passenger safety was very important, regard should also be given to professional advice when pursuing the retrofitting of seat belts on pre-1997 design buses. In addition, cost considerations should be taken into account because bus companies were commercial entities and should not be expected to operate at a loss, not to mention that cost increase might be passed on to passengers through fare increase. There was hence a need to maintain a proper balance in this regard. The Administration noted her views.

15. Ms Miriam LAU questioned why it would take 18 months to install the additional guard rail across the upper deck windscreen of pre-1997 design buses, which should be relatively simple. In reply, Ms Winnie NG, Executive Director of The Kowloon Motor Bus Company (1933) Limited/Long Win Bus Company Limited (KMB/LWB), said that as far as KMB/LWB was concerned, the installation work could complete in eight months. Mr Samuel CHENG, Managing Director of Citybus Limited/New World First Bus Services Limited (Citybus/NWFBS), elaborated that owing to the lead time required for procurement of the relevant materials, Citybus/NWFBS's original plan was that the additional guard rail would be installed when a bus was due for annual inspection. Hence its proposed 18-month installation timetable. He however agreed to shorten the period to twelve months. Mr Peter MOK, Executive Director of New Lantao Bus Company (1973) Limited (NLB), explained that NLB did not have double-deck buses.

Wearing of seat belts where provided

16. Mr LAU Kong-wah asked when the Administration would make wearing of seat belts if fitted on franchised buses a legislative requirement. In response, DC for T/TS&M advised that, in recognition of the time required to prepare bus passengers for familiarizing with the idea of wearing seat belts on buses, as a first step the Administration would continue to encourage bus passengers to wear seat belts where provided through education and publicity. Consideration would be given to making this a legislative requirement when bus passengers were accustomed to the practice.

17. Ms Miriam LAU referred to the preliminary passenger survey conducted by TD to gauge the views of bus passengers on the wearing of seat belts. Highlighting its findings that the majority of the respondents agreed to mandating wearing of seat belts where available, she enquired why the Administration was still undecided on making the practice a legislative requirement. In response, DC for T/TS&M confirmed that this

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was already the policy direction which the Administration was heading. As such, after encouraging bus passengers to wear seat belts where provided through education and publicity, and ensuring that seat belts were retrofitted at the four seats on the first row on the upper deck of post-1997 design buses, the Administration would start the relevant legislative process. In response to Ms LAU's view that the above efforts should be made in parallel, DC for T/TS&M agreed to review the relevant consultation and legislative timetables. Ms Winnie NG of KMB/LWB added that KMB/LWB would gladly co-operate when a policy decision in this regard was made.

The vehicle replacement programme

18. In response to Mr LAU Kong-wah on the timetable of the vehicle replacement programme mentioned in paragraph 6(e) of the Administration's paper, DC for T/TS&M reported that according to the bus companies, it would take about eight years to replace all pre-1997 design buses.

19. Pointing out that bus safety had been discussed a few times already, Mr LEE Wing-tat found the reported progress too slow. In particular, in consideration of the importance of passenger safety, he considered it too long for the bus companies to take eight years to replace all pre-1997 design buses. He therefore urged the Administration to liaise with the bus companies for acceleration of the replacement programme of pre-1997 design buses, in particular those which operated on expressways at high speed. In response, DC for T/TS&M explained that the Administration would examine with the bus companies advancement of the programme as far as the bus companies' financial situation permitted. It would also urge them to deploy new buses or buses equipped with seat belts to operate on expressways as far as possible. At Mr LEE's request, she also agreed to provide a paper to report on the outcomes of the above talks with the bus companies. In this regard, Ms Winnie NG of KMB/LWB added that KMB/LWB would as far as practicable deploy buses equipped with seat belts at the four seats on the first row on the upper deck to operate on expressways.

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Contributory factors of bus accidents and possible measures to address them

20. Pointing out that buses in London also did not have seat belts but the bus accidents there were not as alarming, Mrs Selina CHOW suspected that speeding to make up for the time lost due to traffic congestion en-route might be the major cause of serious bus accidents in Hong Kong. She therefore called upon the Administration to examine the above correlation and, if established, measures to address that.

21. In response, STH advised that the driver-related contributory factors of bus accidents were, in order of incidence, driving too close to vehicle in front, careless driving when restarting the bus after stopping, and trying to avoid collision or otherwise. Hence speeding might not be a significant factor. The Administration would however examine how speeding ranked in causing bus accidents. DC for T/TS&M supplemented that bus companies had already taken or agreed to take a number of measures to prevent speeding by bus captains. These included installation of speed limiters on buses,

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progressive installation of vehicle blackbox (i.e. tachograph) on buses to record the operation data, including the speed, of buses, etc. In addition, the Administration had also called upon bus companies to report to TD for review and adjustment of the scheduled journey times of bus routes if the actual journey times exceeded the scheduled journey times under the actual operating environment. In 2006 alone, TD had given approval for increasing the scheduled journey times of some 50 bus routes.

22. Mr Albert CHAN was also not satisfied with the reported progress. In his view, the crux of the bus safety problem was that standing passengers were allowed on buses operating on expressways in Hong Kong, which was uncommon in overseas countries and was dangerous because of the presence of heavy vehicles plying expressways at high speed. As such, owing to the importance of passenger safety, there was a need not only to ensure the provision of seat belts on buses operating on expressways regardless of the cost but also to, as he proposed when the issue was last discussed, review whether standing passengers should be allowed on double-deck buses operating on expressways in Hong Kong. If not, it would be illogical to seek to enhance the safety of sitting passengers by retrofitting seat belts while standing passengers were in fact facing greater danger. STH was urged to look at the issue of bus safety from a wider perspective.

23. In response, STH pointed out that progress had in fact been made in enhancing bus safety thanks to the helpful views of members although only those more concrete developments had been reported at this meeting. DC for T/TS&M added that after examination of Mr Albert CHAN's above proposal with bus companies and professionals of the relevant bus manufacturer, it was gathered that the public view was that passengers sitting on the front seats on the upper deck of buses were more vulnerable because, as shown in previous bus accidents, they might get thrown out from the upper saloon of the bus during collision and lose their lives. As such, the Administration had recommended the retrofitting of seat belts on these four seats or, where infeasible, installation of the additional guard rail. She further pointed out that the proposal also had to be examined carefully in recognition of its implications on the carrying capacity and hence operation cost of bus, and likely bus fare increase as a result. The Chief Engineer/Road Safety & Standards, TD supplemented that since standing passengers were mainly clustered behind the front axle of the lower deck of a bus, the possibility of them being thrown out during bus accidents was comparatively smaller than the passengers sitting on front seats on the upper deck.

Working hours of bus captains

24. Mr CHEUNG Hok-ming welcomed the following revisions to the "Guidelines on Working Schedule for Franchised Bus Drivers" (the Guidelines) –

- (a) Guideline A would be further refined to stipulate that a rest time of at least 12 minutes in total should be provided within the first four hours of duty; and

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- (b) Guideline D on the break period between successive working days would be revised from the current 9 hours to no less than 9.5 hours.

25. Mr CHEUNG Hok-ming was however keen to ensure that the above revisions would not adversely affect the wages of bus captains, and the number of bus trips and hence the level of bus service. In response, DC for T/TS&M advised that as she understood, the above two aspects would not be so adversely affected. Representatives of the bus companies confirmed DC for T/TS&M's understanding. Ms Winnie NG of KMB/LWB further supplemented that KMB/LWB bus captains in fact had total service breaks on average of over 30 minutes within six hours of duty as compared to the required 20 minutes. Moreover, while the lunch break stipulation was 30 minutes, KMB/LWB captains had an average of 40 minutes for lunch.

26. The Chairman found it undesirable that no revision had been made to Guidelines B and C, which respectively stipulated that the maximum duty (including all breaks) and the driving duty (i.e., maximum duty minus all breaks of 30 minutes or more) should not exceed 14 and 11 hours. In his view, such long working hours were unreasonable and would affect bus safety. At his request to seek reduction of the above duty periods with the bus companies, STH said that the Administration would continue liaison with relevant parties, in particular bus captain unions, on further improvements to the working schedule of bus captains. Although the unions at present did not see a need to revise Guidelines B and C, the Administration was prepared to examine any new suggestions on the Guidelines.

27. In reply to Mr WONG Kwok-hing on whether the bus companies had ever forced their staff to work overtime, Mr William CHUNG of Citybus/NWFBS explained that Citybus/NWFBS had never forced their staff to work overtime. This was because bus captains could apply for different duties and swap duties with other captains.

VI Traffic arrangements for the commissioning of Shenzhen Bay Port and the Northwest New Territories Traffic and Infrastructure Review

(LC Paper No. CB(1)2023/06-07(05) - Information paper provided by the Administration

LC Paper No. CB(1)1609/06-07 - Minutes of the meeting held on 27 April 2007)

Northwest New Territories Traffic and Infrastructure Review

28. With the aid of power-point, the Project Manager/Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge, Highways Department (PM/HZMB) briefed members on the various highway projects considered in the Northwest New Territories (NWNT) Traffic and Infrastructure Review (the Review) to address the long-term needs for transport infrastructure in NWNT and North Lantau and hence obviate congestion on Tuen Mun Road (TMR). Members noted that of the four options introduced in the presentation, the

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Administration recommended Option 2, which comprised the Tuen Mun Western Bypass (TMWB) as well as the Tuen Mun to Chek Lap Kok Link (TM-CLKL).

(Post-meeting note: The presentation material was issued to members by email on 9 July 2007.)

29. Members in general supported Option 2 and called for its early implementation. However, while some members made various proposals on how to improve Option 2, some also found a need to implement other road projects as well.

General comments on the options introduced

30. In response to Mr Jeffrey LAM's query of the feasibility of widening TMR to dual 4-lane configuration as proposed under Options 3 and 3A, PM/HZMB explained that despite physical constraints which made it highly difficult to widen certain sections of TMR, especially at Ting Kau and Sham Tseng interchanges, TMR could be widened to dual 4-lane between So Kwun Wat and Tsing Lung Tau. However, certain parts of this widened section would have no hard shoulders.

31. Commenting on the four possible network options introduced by the Administration, Mr Jeffrey LAM opined that none of them could improve the connection between NWNT and the urban area. He also pointed out that the Liberal Party had all along found a need to construct Easterly Link Road (ELR) for the following reasons –

- (a) ELR could reduce travelling time significantly by diverting traffic right at the exit point at Deep Bay Link, bearing in mind Yuen Long Highway was already very congested and could hardly accommodate the growing traffic of SBP, which could reach some 30 000 vehicles a day; and
- (b) Route 3 could not adequately mitigate the additional traffic load arising from SBP because the way from SBP to Route 3 was long and indirect. There was also great difficulty in rationalizing the utilization of Route 3 and the alternative TMR since TMR was non-tolled. As such, there was a need for early formulation of corresponding strategies to alleviate the possible deteriorating traffic congestion in Tuen Mun and Yuen Long districts after the commissioning of SBP.

Mr LAM also recalled that a number of options for constructing ELR had been explored in the past, and enquired whether the Government had already given up all of them.

32. Commenting on the options in general, Mr CHEUNG Hok-ming pointed out that the Democratic Alliance for the Betterment and Progress of Hong Kong (DAB) was of the view that instead of constructing an additional road parallel to Route 3 as proposed in Option 1, the utilization of Route 3 should be maximized. Options 3 and 3A were also not desirable because both would divert traffic to TMR, which could hardly be

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widened because of physical constraints. If these two options were pursued, TMR might become a bottleneck in future.

Preference for Option 2

33. Mr LEE Wing-tat pointed out that the Democratic Party (DP) found Option 2 preferable for the following reasons –

- (a) Option 2 would provide an alternative access for the existing road traffic to and from TMR. This was important because, according to his own experience, TMR was already congested from time to time, especially the uphill section near Siu Lam and the Sham Tseng section. The additional traffic load to be brought to TMR by the other options would aggravate the already existing congestion on TMR; and
- (b) Option 2 would also provide an alternative route to the Hong Kong International Airport (the Airport) independent from the existing Lantau Link (LL) and North Lantau Highway (NLH). This was important because traffic to and from the Airport were time critical and traffic congestion would seriously compromise the efficiency and competitiveness of Hong Kong's air services and logistics sector. The provision of such an alternative route to the Airport would act as a safeguard against such harmful congestion otherwise possible.

34. Ms Miriam LAU also expressed support for Option 2. This was because firstly, it could meet the anticipated long-term growth in passenger and air cargo throughput of the Airport. Secondly, TM-CLKL would together with HZMB form a more direct and convenient loop linking major cities in the Pearl River Delta (PRD) to make it more convenient for travellers from the eastern part of PRD to take international flights at the Airport, hence increasing the Airport's competitiveness. Thirdly, Option 2 could improve traffic from Tuen Mun to Kowloon by diverting traffic from the Airport away from TMR to TM-CLKL. In response, the Deputy Secretary for Transport and Housing (Transport)1 (DS(T)1) confirmed that the above highlighted advantages of Option 2 were indeed the strategic functions it was expected to perform to meet the transport/traffic needs of both Hong Kong and PRD and to promote Hong Kong's economic growth.

35. Mr Albert CHAN expressed support for Option 2 because it would not go through TMR, which was badly designed and already saturated, and widening works on it were a nuisance to residents in the vicinity and could not complete until 2016. In his view, any effective option to meet the traffic needs of NWNT should divert traffic away from TMR to enable the traffic condition there to improve in due course.

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36. Ir Dr Raymond HO was glad to note the four introduced options. However, he preferred Option 2 because congestion along TMR could not be solved by widening it alone; physical constraints had made it highly difficult to widen the entire length of TMR; and there was a need to provide an alternative route to the Airport independent from the existing LL and NLH.

37. Mr TAM Yiu-chung stated DAB's support for Option 2 because TMWB could help relieve congestion on TMR, facilitate economic co-operation with the Mainland, and optimize air cargo and passenger throughput of the Airport to reinforce the Airport as an international and regional aviation hub and Hong Kong as a regional logistics centre.

Call for early implementation of Option 2

38. Mr WONG Kwok-hing called for implementation of Option 2 with no further delay, pointing out that the Panel had already passed at its meeting on 22 April 2005 a motion urging the Government to expeditiously study the implementation of TMWB and TM-CLKL, namely, Option 2, so as to cater for the traffic generated by the commissioning of SBP. Keen to see Option 2's early implementation, he enquired about its timetable, in particular the possibility of making certain progress within the tenure of the third term Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government.

39. In response, STH advised that according to the established procedure, if members found Option 2 agreeable, the Administration would begin to consult the concerned District Councils (DCs), namely Yuen Long DC, Tuen Mun DC and Islands DC, with an aim to submitting a funding proposal to LegCo at the end of 2007. Should the funding proposal be approved, the statutory planning procedure for large-scale infrastructure projects would be followed to take the option forward. PM/HZMB supplemented that the steps involved would include conduct of detailed investigation and preliminary design of TMWB and TM-CLKL, conduct of environmental impact assessment according to the Environmental Impact Assessment Ordinance (Cap. 499), gazettal of the two proposed road schemes under the Roads (Works, Use and Compensation) Ordinance (Cap. 370), and detailed design and invitation of tenders. Given the above steps required, while the Administration would expedite the relevant advance work as far as practicable, implementation of the option would still take considerable time. Moreover, actual construction would be complicated because the two roads together spanned 17 km. They also involved the construction of sea viaducts, and both land and immersed tube tunnels.

40. Mr WONG Kwok-hing, however, opined that since TMWB and TM-CLKL under Option 2 had been examined and debated for a long time, the relevant consultation process could be shortened to enable completion of the option within the tenure of the third term HKSAR Government. In response, STH explained that while the Administration would do its best to expedite Option 2 if endorsed, there remained a need to comply with the relevant statutory planning procedures. Moreover, the views of the concerned DCs should be given due consideration. As such, the Administration

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could only commit that if there was a consensus on the way forward for providing a direct linkage and alternative access to the Airport and the various proposed major logistics developments at Lantau, the Administration would commence the relevant consultation process and seek funding approval from LegCo as soon as practicable.

41. Mr LEE Wing-tat opined that Option 2 should be pursued as soon as possible although he recognized that the construction of roads took years to complete. In this regard, he proposed that some steps in the planning procedure should be conducted in parallel. In particular, in recognition that alignment Option 2 might raise concerns about impacts on the habitat of the Chinese White Dolphin, he urged the Administration to consult the green groups early to allow itself more time to work out solutions with them to expedite implementation of the option. The Administration noted his views.

42. In recognition of the many benefits Option 2 could bring, Ms Miriam LAU called for its early implementation, and opined that while there might be a need to construct other roads as well to improve the traffic condition in NWNT, TMWB and TM-CLKL should be given priority. The Administration noted her views.

43. Mr TAM Yiu-chung stressed the need to implement Option 2 expeditiously to ensure it could be commissioned in time to meet forecast demands in air cargo and passenger throughput of the Airport. In response, STH agreed that the Administration should endeavour to take forward the project as quickly as practicable. However, while acknowledging the importance of early actions, she assured members that all major roads in NWNT would operate within manageable levels up to at least 2016 such that no new major infrastructure projects would be required before then.

Proposals on how to improve Option 2

44. While reaffirming DAB's strong support for Option 2, Mr CHEUNG Hok-ming pointed out that in recognition of the high estimated project cost of Option 2 at about \$20.1 billion, DAB also opined that in preparation for future growth, Option 2 should be further expanded to include a rail link instead of just road connections. In response, DS(T)1 said that the rail link option had already been considered. However, since the link might not be able to increase cargo and passenger flow significantly, and that there was already the Airport Express Line, judging from the operation and engineering perspectives, it might not be advisable to construct a further rail line. PM/HZMB supplemented that rail development required holistic planning and substantial investment. Moreover, since it was technically feasible to add an additional immersed tube tunnel for rail along the one constructed for TM-CLKL in future should the need arise, the Administration considered it more desirable to proceed with the highway network first before further pursuing a rail option, which required detailed study because the relevant engineering requirements were different depending on whether the rail line was for serving passengers or cargoes.

Admin 45. Mr Albert CHAN proposed that while pursuing Option 2, the Administration should also continue to assess the need for other road projects, in particular TMEB, in

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the light of the relevant circumstances. In particular, the Administration should seek to widen Ting Kau Bridge (TKB) in parallel to prepare for its saturation having regard that it was already saturated during peak hours.

46. In reply, PM/HZMB pointed out that while the projected volume to capacity (v/c) ratio of TKB would reach 1.4 in 2021 if Option 2 was not pursued, with the implementation of Option 2 the ratio would be effectively reduced to below 1.2. He then assured members that notwithstanding the implementation of Option 2 if endorsed, the Administration would continue to closely monitor the traffic condition of important transport infrastructures in NWNT, such as TKB and LL and where necessary, map out further long-term measures to meet the traffic needs of the area. Mr Albert CHAN however maintained that there was a need to widen TKB in parallel with Option 2, highlighting the need to make early preparation for traffic growth, in particular that to be brought about by the commissioning of Deep Bay Link. He further pointed out that the widening of TKB could improve traffic flow to and from many directions.

47. Ir Dr Raymond HO shared Mr Albert CHAN's view that other roads should also be constructed to further improve the traffic condition in NWNT. For example, to provide a north-south strategic link between NWNT and Lantau, to construct more bridges parallel to TKB to supplement it, etc. Given the long lead time and need for long-term planning to implement large-scale infrastructure projects, he urged the Administration to consult the public on Option 2 early and widen the scope of consultation to not only Option 2 but also other possible road projects as highlighted above in preparation for future population growth. In this regard, he also asked the Administration whether it was examining any such supplementary road projects.

48. In response, DS(T)1 confirmed that the Review was a continuing process. While proposing to proceed with Option 2, the Administration would continue to monitor the progress of various major developments in the region and Hong Kong as a whole, and would take forward further infrastructure projects as and when necessary.

Traffic and transport arrangements upon the commissioning of Shenzhen Bay Port

49. Mr Jeffrey LAM pointed out that according to his personal experience of using SBP, the directional signs were insufficient. The Administration noted his comment.

50. Mr Jeffrey LAM enquired about the progress and details of the Administration's discussion with the franchisee of Route 3 (the Franchisee) on the option of extension of franchise upon its expiry in May 2025 in exchange for toll reduction. In response, the Deputy Secretary for Transport and Housing (Transport)3 (DS(T)3) explained that the Administration had been focusing its efforts on a pilot scheme involving toll reduction for three years (the pilot scheme). As such, there was a need to discuss with the Franchisee the fundamental parameters and assumptions for deriving at the revenue forgone for the three-year period as a result of toll reduction, one of which was the amount of traffic after implementation of toll reduction. Given the opening of SBP, it was suggested that the amount of traffic arising from this factor should be observed over

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the following few months. This would help gather more realistic traffic data for determination of the amount of traffic to be generated after toll reduction. Noting the response, Mr CHEUNG Hok-ming urged the Administration to expedite discussion with the Franchisee to provide short-term relief to the congestion along TMR.

51. Referring to the above highlighted need to observe the traffic arising from SBP, Ms Miriam LAU pointed out that SBP was operating under a quota system under which initially 1 500 new quotas would be issued, while existing holders of quotas for other crossings were encouraged to switch to SBP by surrendering their quotas for other existing crossings. Since many existing quota holders were, as she understood, reluctant to surrender their quotas for other existing crossings pending performance of SBP became clearer, the additional traffic load arising from SBP and hence its impact on TMR might not be truly reflected within the following few months. There was therefore a need for a longer observation period. In reply, DS(T)1 advised that the Administration would continue to closely monitor the traffic situation in the region and operation of SBP.

52. Mr WONG Kwok-hing opined that the Administration's proposal to proceed with Option 2 might help enhance the Administration's bargaining power in its discussion with the Franchisee. In response, DS(T)3 explained that all key factors would be taken into consideration during the discussion. Having regard that the pilot scheme involved toll reduction, there was a need to work out how the revenue forgone should be derived at. This involved an assessment of the amount of traffic after implementation of toll reduction and all relevant considerations such as the commissioning of SBP and other road projects as applicable would be taken into account.

53. In response to Mr WONG Kwok-hing on when the Administration's discussion with the Franchisee could bear fruit, DS(T)3 explained that the Administration and the Franchisee would tackle the issue from different perspectives given that they played different roles. It was considered that observing the amount of traffic arising from SBP over the following few months would help gather more realistic traffic data to facilitate discussion. The Administration would continue to work for an agreement with the Franchisee on the pilot scheme as soon as practicable. As to Mr WONG's question on whether the discussion could wind up within 2007, STH reiterated that time was required to ascertain the amount of traffic arising from SBP, which had only just been commissioned.

54. Mr LEE Wing-tat stressed the need to exercise care in controlling the number of vehicles using SBP. He also pointed out that while hoping to see progress in the Administration's discussion with the Franchisee, DP did not consider it desirable to pressurize the Administration into reaching an early agreement with the Franchisee or the operators of the three road harbour crossings for fear that such undue pressure might place Government in a disadvantaged position. He also recognized that the discussion involved very complicated commercial interests which could not be easily sorted out. He therefore urged the Administration to stick by its principles so as to strike a reasonable deal, and not to compromise too readily. The Chairman also reminded the

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Administration to safeguard public interests and avoid giving the public the impression that it was transferring benefits to large corporations. He further urged the Administration to report on the progress of the discussion in due course.

VII Proposed tolls and other charges for Tsing Sha Control Area

(LC Paper No. CB(1)2036/06-07(01) - Information paper provided by the Administration)

Concerns about Tsing Sha Control Area

55. Noting that the management, operation and maintenance of the Tsing Sha Control Area (TSCA) would be outsourced to an operator, Mr WONG Kwok-hing enquired about the term, and Government's role vis-à-vis the operator when TSCA's tolls were adjusted. In response, DS(T)3 advised that the term would be five years. She also clarified that the operator would be responsible for collection of toll on the Government's behalf.

56. Ms LI Fung-ying noted the Administration's claim that the proposed tolls for part of TSCA, i.e. the section between Sha Tin and Cheung Sha Wan, were generally on a par with Tate's Cairn Tunnel (TCT), and requested specific information on the tolls for TCT and other alternative routes for comparison. In reply, DS(T)3 elaborated that many factors had been taken into consideration when drawing up the proposed toll levels for TSCA. TSCA's strategic position in respect of the container terminals and the Airport was one of the major factors. It was estimated that by going via TSCA instead of the respective alternate routes, motorists travelling from Shatin would save three minutes if going to Kwai Chung Container Terminals, Tung Chung and the Airport; nine minutes if going to Container Terminal No. 9; five minutes if going to West Kowloon; fifteen minutes if going to East Kowloon and from six to 22 minutes if going to destinations like Wanchai, Central and Sheung Wan. Apart from this factor, the Administration had also made reference to the tolls for the alternative routes, such as those for the Lion Rock Tunnel (LRT) and Shing Mun Tunnel (SMT), which adopted a flat toll regime of respectively \$8 and \$5, and those for TCT, which adopted a differential toll regime. The Administration proposed to adopt TCT's differential toll regime because such a regime was fairer by reflecting the degree of road space taken up, plus wear and tear caused by different types of vehicles. DS(T)3 added that when selecting the route to take, a motorist would not only consider the toll levels but also other factors, namely, the shorter travel time and distance. The latter would in turn bring about fuel cost savings. As such, although the proposed tolls for TSCA appeared higher when compared to those for SMT and LRT, motorists using TSCA could in the end save time and money. Moreover, to attract more goods vehicles to use TSCA, the proposed tolls for goods vehicles using TSCA were lower than those for TCT.

57. Ms LI Fung-ying stressed the need to really take into account all relevant factors, in particular the impacts of the toll levels on public transport fares, before proposing the tolls for TSCA, so as to ensure the toll levels were conducive to diverting traffic from

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the alternative routes. In response, DS(T)3 reported that Route 8 provided additional road capacity to cope with the increasing traffic along the alternative routes. The Administration had looked into the diversion effect, and estimated that after commissioning of TSCA at the proposed toll levels, the v/c ratio of LRT would drop from the present 1.3 to 1.1, that of SMT from 1.0 to 0.8, that of TCT from 1.2 to 1.0, and that of Tai Po Road from 0.9 to 0.8.

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58. The Chairman considered the above information important and requested that such and further information on the estimated traffic flow at TSCA be provided in the paper on the relevant subsidiary legislation. In this regard, he found the estimate on the drop in the v/c ratio at LRT from 1.3 to 1.1 too optimistic, and expressed concern that given the \$4 toll difference between TSCA and LRT, tolls for LRT might be increased in future to promote use of TSCA and bring the v/c ratio at LRT down as forecast above. He also cautioned that TSCA's proposed toll of \$12 for private car and taxi might spark off heated debate during scrutiny of the relevant subsidiary legislation.

59. Ms LI Fung-ying sought details on the future toll adjustment mechanism of TSCA, how it compared with those of other tunnels, how often would tolls be adjusted and the extent of LegCo participation therein, if any. In reply, DS(T)3 advised that since any toll adjustments would need to be made through the introduction of subsidiary legislation, LegCo would have the opportunity to express views on the proposals.

Concerns about Tsing Ma Control Area

60. Mr Albert CHAN expressed grave concern about the inconveniences the villagers of Tso Wan, a village along the eastern coastline of Lantau Island, had to suffer because the only external connection of the village passed through the Tsing Ma Control Area (TMCA) and was therefore fenced off from the public, so that the villagers had difficulty in accessing the path and were sometimes even questioned when using it. He opined that the above undesirable situation was the result of a planning error in disregard of the villagers' needs. He further expressed regrets that many beautiful hiking trails and good fishing spots situated within TMCA were similarly blocked off because of unreasonable over regulation of TMCA. The Administration was urged to address the above highlighted problems.

61. DS(T)3 said that the Administration had already looked into the problem. She understood there were around four families totalling ten persons living in Tso Wan Village, who needed to use a maintenance path in TMCA to commute. The operator of TMCA understood the villagers' need to use the path and allowed them usage. However, sometimes its staff might need to confirm the villagers' identities out of safety consideration when encountering them on the path. Mr Albert CHAN, however, highlighted the need to allow friends and relatives to visit the villagers as well, and urged the Administration to improve management of TMCA so as not to affect villagers' normal life. STH noted his views.

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62. As for the hiking trails and fishing spots in TMCA, DS(T)3 explained that generally speaking, hikers should adhere to the hiking paths and the Administration did not encourage use of the TMCA area for such purposes because of the existence of many expressways therein. Mr Albert CHAN was not convinced, pointing out that the hiking trails presently blocked from the public because of TMCA were in the past popular hiking trails open to the public. He opined that efforts should be made to adjust road blocking arrangements in TMCA to preserve these hiking trails, especially those leading to the sea, for public use and promotion of Lantau Island as a local tourist spot. He emphasized that the public had the right to use the trails, and found the Administration's above stance bureaucratic. In response, STH reiterated that safety should be of primary concern. Notwithstanding, the Administration was willing to explore practicable solutions to allow persons with need to access the maintenance path without compromising the safety considerations.

63. Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung opined that to solve the above problems highlighted by Mr Albert CHAN, the Administration should consider issuing closed area permits to visitors to regulate access to TMCA. In reply, DS(T)3 said that the operator in practice already allowed access to TMCA by those who needed to use the maintenance route on condition that safety would not be compromised. The Principal Transport Officer/Management, TD supplemented that at present, the operator of TMCA already allowed villagers of Tso Wan Village and their visitors access to the maintenance path of TMCA for the purpose of travelling to and from the village. Notwithstanding, the Administration would further explore measures to better convenience the villagers.

VIII Measures to rationalize utilization of the three road harbour crossings

(LC Paper No. CB(1)2023/06-07(04) - Information paper provided by the Administration)

64. Due to time constraints, the Chairman proposed and members agreed to reschedule discussion on this item to the next meeting of the Panel to be held on 20 July 2007. The Chairman also asked the Administration to provide supplementary information should there be further progress in this regard.

(Post-meeting note: The item was subsequently further deferred to accommodate the inclusion in the agenda for the 20 July meeting of a new item concerning the operation of taxis and light goods vehicles at the Airport.)

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IX Any other business

65. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 4:30 pm.

Council Business Division 1
Legislative Council Secretariat
28 September 2007