

Legislative Council Panel on Transport

2006-07 Policy Agenda

Transport-related Policy Initiatives of the Environment, Transport and Works Bureau

Introduction

The 2006-07 Policy Agenda just issued sets out the Government's new and on-going initiatives. This note elaborates those initiatives that are relevant to the transport portfolio of the Environment, Transport and Works Bureau.

2006-07 Policy Agenda – New Initiative

Vibrant Economy

Plan actively for the widening of the town centre section and improvement of the expressway section of Tuen Mun Road

A descriptive account of the initiative

2. As Tuen Mun Road was built over 20 years ago according to the design standards of the time, its design is not totally in line with the current expressway standards. While road safety has not been compromised, we are now actively planning for the widening of the town centre section and improvement of the expressway section of Tuen Mun Road, to improve traffic flow and to further enhance road safety.

3. We propose to widen the town centre section from dual 2-lane to dual 3-lane in order to alleviate the possible traffic pressure during peak hours thereat. We anticipate that the proposed widening at the town

centre section, together with the planned reconstruction and improvement to Tuen Mun Road to upgrade the expressway section to the prevailing expressway standards, will further improve the overall operation of the road. We plan to consult the Tuen Mun District Council on the projects in November 2006.

2006-07 Policy Agenda – On-going initiatives

Effective Governance

Continuing to work closely with the stakeholders to put in place a voluntary registration scheme for vehicle mechanics to enhance the standard of the vehicle maintenance trade

Progress Made/Present Position

4. Proper maintenance of vehicles is an effective means to prevent road accidents and is conducive to the enhancement of road safety. Sub-standard maintenance services also create nuisance to vehicle owners and can cause air pollution, with corresponding negative impacts on the health of the public. We therefore consider it necessary to enhance the standard of the vehicle maintenance trade through a registration scheme for vehicle mechanics.

5. With the assistance of the Vehicle Maintenance Technical Advisory Committee comprising representatives from professional institutions, trade associations and training institutes, we are finalizing the details of the registration scheme, and aim to launch it in early 2007.

Vibrant Economy

Continuing to pursue the preparatory work for the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge, with a view to finalising and submitting the feasibility study report to the Central Government for approval, and commencing the construction work as soon as possible

Progress Made/Present Position

6. The Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge (HZMB) Advance Work Co-ordination Group (AWCG) set up by the governments of Hong Kong, Guangdong and Macao has already reached agreement on the alignment and landing points of the HZMB. The feasibility study for the HZMB has also been substantially completed. The two remaining issues which we are now studying relate to the boundary crossing facilities (BCF) and financing arrangements.

7. As for the BCF arrangement, the AWCG has agreed to adopt the mode of “separate locations of BCF”, and has commissioned the China Highway Planning and Design Institute (HPDI) to study the detailed arrangements for and possible locations of the BCF. The AWCG has also commissioned the HPDI to conduct the study on the financing arrangements of the HZMB. After the relevant proposals have been agreed by the AWCG, the feasibility study report will be finalized and submitted to the Central Government for consideration. Once approval is obtained, the design and construction work of the HZMB will commence.

8. On another front, preparatory work in relation to the North Lantau Highway Connection (NLHC), which is the infrastructure connecting the HZMB and the North Lantau Highway, will be synchronized with the programme of the HZMB. We are now evaluating the possible alignment options of the NLHC and assessing the impacts of the project in various

aspects, including transport and the environment. Upon confirmation of the preferred alignment of the NLHC, we will go through the relevant statutory procedures and commence the construction of NLHC to tie in with the programme of the HZMB.

Continuing to monitor Kowloon-Canton Railway Corporation's engineering and business studies on the combined project of the Hong Kong section of Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link and the Northern Link, and to discuss with the Mainland authorities concerned the best way to proceed with the project

Progress Made/Present Position

9. We have invited the Kowloon-Canton Railway Corporation (KCRC) to proceed with further planning of the Northern Link (NOL) and the Hong Kong section of the Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link (ERL) as a combined project. The KCRC is now conducting the engineering/business study and preliminary site investigations of the NOL and ERL. We expect that the KCRC will submit its study report to the Government in mid-2007.

10. The Mainland side has already started its construction work of the Shibi-Longhua section of the ERL. Construction of the remaining section from Longhua to the boundary will tie in with the project programme of the Hong Kong section of the ERL. We have exchanged views with the relevant Mainland authorities regarding the connection between the Hong Kong and Mainland sections and other technical issues. We will continue to keep close contact with the Mainland authorities so that the new rail will be able to provide the greatest convenience for both Hong Kong and Mainland passengers.

Implementing the proposed merger of the Mass Transit Railway and the Kowloon-Canton Railway systems, including completing the necessary legislative process

Progress Made/Present Position

11. The Government and the MTR Corporation Limited (MTRCL) have reached an understanding on the structure and terms for the merger of the Mass Transit Railway and Kowloon-Canton Railway systems and signed a non-binding Memorandum of Understanding on 11 April 2006. The proposed merger will bring overall benefits to the community and balance the interests of all stakeholders.

12. We are taking necessary steps to implement the rail merger. The Rail Merger Bill was introduced into the Legislative Council on 5 July 2006. The Legislative Council has set up a Bills Committee to scrutinise the Bill. MTRCL's minority shareholders would be invited to approve the merger proposal if and after the Bill has been approved by the Legislative Council. We hope the relevant procedures to implement the merger would be completed as soon as possible; this would enable the travelling public to benefit from the fare reduction sooner as a result of the merger.

Continuing to actively pursue the planning of various proposed railway projects giving careful consideration to changing community needs. The work includes planning the Shatin to Central Link and West Island Line, and assessing the viability of the South Island Line

Progress Made/Present Position

Shatin to Central Link (SCL)

13. We are examining the SCL proposal of the KCRC and the proposed SCL Scheme jointly developed by the MTRCL and the KCRC under the merger discussion. We shall also take into account

the planning proposals from Kai Tak Planning Review and Wan Chai Development Phase II Review.

West Island Line (WIL)

14. In the preliminary planning and design stage of the proposed WIL, the MTRCL has conducted two rounds of public consultations. Having taken into account the views of the Central & Western District Council and the local community, the MTRCL has revised its preliminary design. The WIL Revised Project Proposal was submitted to the Government on 31 August 2006. The Government is now looking at the transport and economic performance, as well as the financial implications of the revised project proposal. We shall continue to listen to local views. We hope to reach an early agreement with the MTRCL on the scope, cost and implementation programme for the WIL so that the project can be submitted to the Executive Council for approval.

South Island Line (SIL)

15. We are conducting a study on the impact of the proposed SIL on other public transport modes. The study is scheduled for completion by the end of this year. We shall continue to stay in close touch with the Legislative Council, the Southern District Council, local residents and transport trades.

Continuing to monitor the progress of the Lok Ma Chau Spur Line and the Kowloon Southern Link for timely commissioning in the first half of 2007 and late 2009 respectively

Progress Made/Present Position

Lok Ma Chau (LMC) Spur Line

16. The construction of the LMC Spur Line, including the KCRC's

railway facilities, LMC Terminus, LMC Public Transport Interchange and the Passenger Bridge, has been progressing well. The Spur Line is expected to be commissioned in the first half of 2007, providing much-needed relief to the existing boundary crossings.

Kowloon Southern Link (KSL)

17. Upon the authorization of the KSL scheme under the Railways Ordinance, construction of the KSL started in the end of 2005 and is scheduled for completion in 2009. The progress so far is satisfactory.

Preparing for the commissioning of the Hong Kong-Shenzhen Western Corridor to tie in with the opening of the boundary-crossing facilities at Shekou in mid-2007, including continuing our discussion with the relevant Mainland authorities on the cross-boundary vehicle quota system with a view to further facilitating vehicular movement across the boundary

Progress Made/Present Position

18. Construction works for the Hong Kong section of the Hong Kong-Shenzhen Western Corridor (HK-SWC) were completed in end 2005. We will continue to work closely with Shenzhen Government for timely completion of the remaining works of the Shenzhen section and prepare for the commissioning of the HK-SWC to tie in with the opening of the boundary-crossing facilities in mid 2007.

19. We are also continuing our discussion with the Guangdong authorities on the regulatory arrangements for cross-boundary vehicles. We will announce the arrangements and invite quota applications before the commissioning of the HK-SWC.

Continuing to consider measures to regulate traffic including fiscal and traffic management means with a view to reducing congestion along major transport corridors and to consult the community on the proposals

Progress Made/Present Position

20. We will continue to explore all possible measures, including the idea of charging to tackle the traffic congestion issue, to improve the traffic flow along major transport corridors. We will refine our previous traffic models with more up-to-date traffic data, carry out sensitivity tests on various charging scenarios, keep in view the technological developments and make reference to successful experiences in other places. However, we need to emphasize that the aforesaid charging scheme can only be implemented when the Central-Wanchai Bypass is in place. This is because there must be alternative routes with adequate capacity for motorists to bypass the charging zone before an equitable and effective charging scheme can be launched. We will consult the community before we make any decision.

Continuing to implement improvement measures by phases to better co-ordinate the change in non-franchised bus services with demand and to enhance regulation of their operation

Progress Made/Present Position

21. The Transport Advisory Committee completed the review on the regulatory framework and licensing system of non-franchise bus (NFB) operation in July 2004, and proposed to implement a package of measures, aiming to -

- (i) coordinate the change in NFB services with demand;
- (ii) strengthen regulatory control over NFB operation; and
- (iii) enhance effectiveness and efficiency of enforcement actions.

22. Following the completion of consultation with the NFB trade and the Legislative Council Panel on Transport on the recommended measures, Transport Department (TD) further set up a Joint Working Group in March 2005 with the major NFB trade organisations to work out details of the proposed measures to facilitate smooth implementation. After Government's implementation of the measures by phases, the change in the number of NFBs has been stabilised during the past two and a half years. There were 7 206 registered NFBs in end 2003 and only 7 113 NFBs in August 2006.

23. As regards the measures to strengthen regulatory control over NFB operation, such as adding new passenger service licence (PSL) conditions to require stipulation of schedules of service for specified types of service, display of signs in standard format in buses to indicate the types of service being operated by the vehicles and to require PSL holders be held ultimately responsible for contravention of PSL conditions by their buses, TD has completed the consultation on the implementation details of the proposed measures and plans to issue the three-month statutory notification for amending the relevant PSL conditions to all PSL holders in end October 2006. TD will also continue to discuss with the NFB trade and relevant departments on the implementation details of the remaining proposed measures, targeting to have them implemented by the first half of next year.

Environmentally Responsible Development

Promoting the use of environment friendly buses by implementing the provision added in the new bus franchises on the adoption of the latest commercially available and proven environment friendly technologies for acquiring new buses, encouraging bus companies to deploy cleaner vehicles along busy corridors, including the provision of environment

friendly measures as appropriate as a criterion in selecting operators for new bus route packages and enhancing bus service rationalisation to reduce roadside air pollution, noise nuisance, traffic congestion and energy consumption

Progress Made/Present Position

24. We have added a new provision in all the new bus franchises to require the franchised bus companies to adopt the latest commercially available and proven environmental protection technology in setting specifications for acquiring new buses.

25. We are working with franchised bus operators to promote the deployment of more environment friendly buses on busy corridors. By August this year, all buses running on Yee Wo Street and over 80% of buses operating on Hennessy Road, Queensway, Des Voeux Road Central and Nathan Road are already of Euro II and above standards.

26. We will also continue to adopt the provision of environmentally friendly measures as one of the criteria in future exercises for selecting operators for new bus route packages.

27. We have been working out proposals with the franchised bus companies to re-structure and rationalise bus routes through route cancellation, amalgamation, truncation and frequency adjustment, with a view to reducing the number of bus trips, particularly those on the busy corridors. We will enhance the bus route rationalisation plans to help improve traffic and the environment.

2005-06 Policy Agenda

28. The progress of most initiatives included in the 2005-06 Policy Agenda has been covered in the preceding paragraphs. As regards the initiative "discussing with the franchised bus companies to develop a more objective and transparent process for fare adjustment with a view to implementing the new mechanism in 2006", the Government has put in place the bus fare adjustment arrangement since early 2006.

Environment, Transport and Works Bureau

12 October 2006