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Panel on Transport

**Background Brief on
Tuen Mun–Chek Lap Kok Link and Tuen Mun Western Bypass**

Introduction

In his Policy Address this year, the Chief Executive said that the Administration had conducted a strategic review of the transport infrastructure for the Northwest New Territories (NWNT) and Lantau to ensure that it could meet future demand. The Administration's plan was to develop the Tuen Mun Western Bypass (TMWB) and the Tuen Mun – Chek Lap Kok Link (TM – CLK Link) at a cost of over \$20 billion. Upon completion in 2016, there would be a direct access linking up Deep Bay in Shenzhen, NWNT, and the Hong Kong International Airport (HKIA). The logistics industries would stand to benefit from the above direct access which would alleviate the busy traffic along the North Lantau Highway in the future.

2. This paper sets out the background to the Northwest New Territories Traffic and Infrastructure Review (the Review), including the planned implementation of TMWB and TM – CLK Link. It also summarizes members' major concerns when the related matters were discussed by the Council and the Panel on Transport (the Panel).

Northwest New Territories Traffic and Infrastructure Review

3. The Review was set up to assess the "long term" (i.e. 2017-2022) and "very long-term" (2023 and beyond) needs for transport infrastructure in NWNT and North Lantau.

4. In August 2003, the Panel was briefed on the preliminary outcome of the Review. In formulating a long-term strategy for the development of highway infrastructure in NWNT and North Lantau region, a Highway Network Development Plan (the Plan) was developed which combined the existing highway network with possible future extensions. The Administration advised that it would formulate a development sequence of new highway infrastructure projects identified in the Plan and their implementation timeframe, taking into account the planning parameters (such

as population, economic growth, new developments in Lantau and cross-boundary traffic) so that the projects could be implemented in a timely manner to meet forecast demands.

5. In June 2004, the Panel was updated on the latest outcome of the Review. The Administration pointed out that a proposed implementation programme for the necessary infrastructure could only be drawn up when a clearer picture on the traffic demand arising from the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge (HZMB) and the development programme for other major proposals on Lantau were available.

6. In April 2005, the Administration reported to the Panel that the Review had concluded that the "Base Network" would be able to cope with the traffic (including that to be generated from the Shenzhen Bay Port (formerly known as Hong Kong – Shenzhen Western Corridor) and HZMB up to at least 2016. The "Base Network" refers to the road network assumed to be in place in NWNT and Lantau by 2016. The "Base Network" comprises North Lantau Highway Connection between HZMB and North Lantau Highway, Lantau Road P1 from Tung Chung to Sham Shui Kok, the traffic improvement measures for the town centre section of Tuen Mun Road that consist of an additional interchange to connect Tuen Mun Road with Castle Peak Road near Sam Shing Estate to provide an alternative access for the existing road traffic to and from Tuen Mun Road, and other traffic management schemes, which include -

- (a) lengthening of bus bays at Tuen Mun Road southbound near Tseng Choi Street;
- (b) improvement of the merging lane from Tuen Hi Road into Tuen Mun Road;
- (c) modification of the existing and provision of additional directional signs in the town centre of Tuen Mun;
- (d) traffic control and surveillance system and variable message signs for incident management and diversion of traffic;
- (e) widening of Tuen Mun Road at Tsing Tin Interchange; and
- (f) reconstruction and improvement to Tuen Mun Road expressway section.

7. In March 2006, the Council passed a motion on "Expediently improving the traffic arrangements in the western and northwestern parts of the New Territories". The wording of the motion is as follows:

"That, given the impending commissioning of the Hong Kong-Shenzhen Western Corridor at the end of this year, which will substantially increase the traffic load in the western and northwestern parts of the New Territories, this Council urges the Government to formulate as early as possible corresponding

strategies, including:

- (a) buying out the ownership of Route 3 at a reasonable price and opening it up for use by motorists;
- (b) constructing the Easterly Link Road that connects the Deep Bay Link and Route 3, so as to divert the traffic flow from Tuen Mun Road;
- (c) expeditiously completing the extension of Tuen Mun Road;
- (d) implementing the Northern Link project as early as possible and expeditiously completing the Kowloon Southern Link project to perfect the railway network and encourage residents of the Northwest New Territories to make use of the railways for travelling to and from different districts, so as to alleviate the pressure on Tuen Mun Road and Route 3; and
- (e) setting reasonable fares that are acceptable to the public, so as to encourage them to use the railway transport system.

thereby alleviating the deteriorating traffic congestion in that district and avoiding causing great nuisance or inconvenience to local residents; furthermore, the Government may also lower the existing tolls by such means as extending the franchise period of Route 3; and should expeditiously construct the Tuen Mun Western Bypass, the Tuen Mun to Chek Lap Kok Link, as well as the Tuen Mun Eastern Bypass, while the environmental impact of the alignment of the relevant roads must be adequately assessed, with a view to reducing undesirable effects on the local environment; and expedite the various traffic improvements to the Tuen Mun town centre section of Tuen Mun Road."

8. In July 2007, the Administration briefed the Panel on various network options which aimed at providing a new strategic north-south corridor to meet the traffic demand of the region up to at least 2022. The Administration considered that amongst the various network options, the one comprising TMWB and TM-CLK Link clearly stood out in terms of traffic and economic benefit. It would also provide greatest planning flexibility allowing for further expansion of the road network to the urban areas to cope with the traffic demand arising from the "very long term" planning horizon.

9. The Panel concurred with the Administration's views and considered that the proposed network option could provide a direct and alternative access to the Airport and the various proposed major logistics developments at Lantau, thus reinforcing the Airport as an international and regional aviation hub and Hong Kong as a regional logistics centre. It could also help alleviate traffic congestion in the region. At the meeting in July 2007, members also reminded the Administration of the motion which

the Panel passed at its meeting on 22 April 2005 urging the Government to expeditiously study the implementation of TMWB and TM – CLK Link so as to cater for the traffic generated by the commissioning of the Shenzhen Bay Port.

Members' concerns about the traffic situation in NWNT

10. The Panel has all along been concerned about the traffic situation on Tuen Mun Road, particularly upon the commissioning of Shenzhen Bay Port and Deep Bay Link (DBL). It has repeatedly urged the Administration to put in place adequate transport infrastructure to cope with the rising traffic demand in a timely manner.

11. To achieve a more balanced traffic distribution between Route 3 and Tuen Mun Road, the Panel has also reviewed with the Administration and Route 3 (CPS) Company on means to increase the utilization of Route 3 so as to relieve the traffic congestion on Tuen Mun Road. At the meeting on 19 December 2005, the Panel reminded the Administration to discuss with the franchisee of Route 3 possible measures to rationalize the utilization of Route 3 and the alternative, non-tolled routes. It also stressed the need to lower the tunnel tolls so as to achieve traffic diversion purpose. In May 2007, the Panel held a special meeting to follow up the progress of efforts made to enhance the utilization of Route 3. At the meeting, many members urged the Administration and the Route 3 (CPS) Company Limited to work out a pilot scheme on toll reduction for implementation as soon as practicable so that more realistic fundamental parameters and assumptions, e.g. traffic and financial projections, could be made for assessing the feasibility of extension of the franchise in exchange for toll reduction.

12. Regarding the construction and improvement of Tuen Mun Road, the Panel urged the Administration to speed up the related works and to put in place adequate measures to ensure smooth flow of traffic during construction, particularly upon the commissioning of Shenzhen Bay Port.