

**Opening Remarks by the Secretary for Transport and Housing
at the LegCo Special Finance Committee Meeting (Transport)
on 25 March 2009**

Honourable Chairperson,

Today, I would like to brief Members on the part of the Estimates and our priority areas under the Transport portfolio in the new financial year.

2. The allocation for the transport portfolio in the new financial year is \$20.36 billion, of which it includes the provision required for the implementation of a number of cross-boundary and domestic transport infrastructure projects this year.

3. Firstly, on **cross-boundary transport infrastructure** front, one of our priority areas this year of course is to commence the construction works of the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge (HZMB). The Bridge, an infrastructure straddling the Guangdong Province, Hong Kong and Macao, has been put into the National Expressway Network. Apart from its connectivity with the Western Pearl River Delta (PRD), the Bridge will connect with the Jing-Zhu Expressway through which Beijing can be reached; and also connect with the expressways in the vicinity where Guangxi, Yunnan or countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations can be reached. The HZMB has very important strategic value of further enhancing the economic development of the Mainland and Hong Kong.

4. We achieved considerable progress on the HZMB in the past year. The preliminary design for the HZMB Main Bridge commenced in mid-March. The selection of the leading loan bank for the provision of loan facilities for the HZMB Main Bridge has largely been completed. In the coming months, we will finalize the financing arrangements for the Main Bridge, and seek funding from the Finance Committee in mid-2009 for Hong Kong's split of the project cost of the Main Bridge.

5. For works in Hong Kong, the planning of the Hong Kong Boundary Crossing Facilities and the Hong Kong Link Road, public engagement and the Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA) for these projects are nearly completed. We aim to submit the EIA report to the Environmental Protection Department in mid-2009. We aim to commence construction of the Main Bridge before end-2009 and synchronized completion of the works in Hong Kong with the Main Bridge.

6. In the same league of strategic importance in connectivity is the Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link (XRL). The XRL will put Hong Kong onto the national rail network. Journey between Hong Kong and major cities in the Mainland, especially those in central and southern regions of the Mainland, will be more comfortable and convenient. Through interchanging with the PRD Rapid Transit System, the XRL will also connect Hong Kong with major PRD cities. The railway scheme was gazetted in November 2008. We are now handling objections

lodged by members of the public to the railway scheme. We will continue our efforts in taking forward the further planning and public engagement of the Hong Kong Section of the XRL, with the construction expected to commence by end 2009.

7. On **local rail networks**, the Kowloon Southern Link and the Tseung Kwan O Extension (Phase II) will soon be commissioned. We are now critically assessing the financial proposals of the West Island Line project, and aim to submit the funding application to the Finance Committee in mid 2009 and to commence the construction works as soon as possible. We will also continue to oversee the further planning of the Shatin to Central Link, the South Island Line (East) and the Kwun Tong Line Extension.

8. We are pressing ahead with our **local road infrastructure** progressively. Improvement works of Tuen Mun Road has commenced. We will spare no efforts in the preparatory works of projects like, the Central-Wan Chai Bypass, the Tuen Mun-Chek Lap Kok Link and the Tuen Mun Western Bypass, the Central Kowloon Route and the Tseung Kwan O-Lam Tin Tunnel, etc.

9. On **civil aviation**, we will strengthen Hong Kong's position as an international and regional aviation centre on various fronts. We will actively develop the Hong Kong-Shenzhen Airport Rail Link (ARL) proposal. We aim to strengthen the direct links between the two airports, which will be conducive for them to complementing each other fully. The proposed ARL will shorten the distance between the Hong Kong International Airport (HKIA)

and the PRD, which will help expanding the catchment of the HKIA. We are now conducting further studies on the ARL, which are expected to be completed in mid-2009.

10. Separately, we will continue to proactively pursue expansion in the bilateral air services arrangements with our aviation partners in support of the development of the aviation industry. At the same time, we will continue the review of the Air Transport Licensing Authority's regulatory regime with a view to implementing initiatives arising from the review. We will also allocate additional resources for air traffic control. Moreover, we will continue to work with the Hong Kong Airport Authority in implementing the airport mid-field expansion project and completing the Airport Master Plan 2030 Study.

11. On **maritime and logistics development**, we will continue to reinforce Hong Kong's status as an international maritime centre and a regional logistics hub. Apart from enhancing our Shipping Register service, we will continue to collaborate with the shipping industry to promote the professional maritime services in Hong Kong. In addition, the Consultancy Study commissioned by the Civil Engineering and Development Department to look into the feasibility of constructing Container Terminal 10 at Southwest Tsing Yi will commence at the end of this month. On the logistics development front, we would continue to work with the industry on the training programme for the freight logistics sector, and the On-Board Trucker Information System project. At the same time, we will continue to strengthen

cooperation with the Guangdong authorities to facilitate cross-boundary freight activities and to enhance its cost-effectiveness.

12. On **road safety**, we will continue to enhance road safety through implementing new measures on legislation, enforcement and education fronts. This year, we will focus on combating drink driving through reviewing legislation for heavier penalties, strengthening of enforcement, and enhancing education and publicity. With regard to further penalties for drink driving, we will explore the feasibility of introducing a scale of penalties according to different levels of blood alcohol concentration; a new offence of dangerous driving causing serious bodily harm; as well as bringing in “aggravating factors” such as drink driving to all dangerous driving offences. We will also closely monitor the effectiveness of the new measures and penalties that have been introduced since 9 February, which will be used as a reference in formulating any legislative amendments.

13. Chairperson, in conclusion, we have a clear way forward. We will continue to press ahead with our strategic cross-boundary and domestic transport infrastructure projects. We will also reinforce Hong Kong's status as an international and regional aviation, maritime and logistics centre. My colleagues and I will maintain close communication with the LegCo with a view to winning Member's support to our works.

14. My colleagues and I would be pleased to answer questions from Members. Thank you Chairperson.

Transport and Housing Bureau
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