

立法會

Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(1)831/08-09

(These minutes have been
seen by the Administration)

Ref : CB1/PL/TP/1

Panel on Transport

Minutes of meeting held on Friday, 19 December 2008, at 8:30 am in the Chamber of the Legislative Council Building

- Members present** : Hon CHEUNG Hok-ming, SBS, JP (Chairman)
Hon Andrew CHENG Kar-foo (Deputy Chairman)
Ir Dr Hon Raymond HO Chung-tai, SBS, S.B.St.J., 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
Hon KAM Nai-wai, MH
Hon WONG Sing-chi
Hon IP Wai-ming, MH
- Members absent** : Hon Abraham SHEK Lai-him, SBS, JP
Hon Ronny TONG Ka-wah, SC
Hon Mrs Regina IP LAU Suk-ye, GBS, JP
- Public officers attending** : **Agenda item III**
Ms Eva CHENG
Secretary for Transport and Housing
Mr Philip YUNG
Deputy Secretary for Transport and Housing (Transport) 1

Mr Alan CHU
Deputy Secretary for Transport and Housing (Transport) 3

Mr WAI Chi-sing
Director of Highways

Mr Albert CHENG
Project Manager /Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge

Agenda item IV

Ms Eva CHENG
Secretary for Transport and Housing

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

Mr WAI Chi-sing
Director of Highways

Mr Albert CHENG
Project Manager /Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge

Mr WAN Man-lung
Principal Government Engineer (Railway Development)

Agenda item V

Ms Eva CHENG
Secretary for Transport and Housing

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

Mr CHOW Ying-shun
Project Manager / Major Works
Highways Department

Mr BOK Kwok-ming
Chief Engineer/Major Works
Highways Department

Ms YING Fun-fong
Chief Engineer/Transport Planning
Transport Department

Mr Maurice YEUNG Kwok-leung
Principal Environmental Protection Officer

Clerk in attendance : Ms Joanne MAK
Chief Council Secretary (1)2

Staff in attendance : Ms Sarah YUEN
Senior Council Secretary (1)6

Miss Winnie CHENG
Legislative Assistant (1)5

Action

I Information papers issued since last meeting

- (LC Paper No. CB(1)387/08-09(01) - Submission on railway fares from a member of the public
LC Paper No. CB(1)409/08-09(01) - Submission on extension of bus fare concessions from Tin Shui Wai Kai Fong Society)

Members noted the above papers which had been issued after last meeting.

II Items for discussion at the next meeting scheduled for 23 January 2009

- (LC Paper No. CB(1)406/08-09(01) - List of outstanding items for discussion
LC Paper No. CB(1)406/08-09(02) - List of follow-up actions)

2. Members noted the Administration's paper on the bus fire/smoke incidents on 10 December 2008, which was tabled at the meeting. Members agreed to discuss the item on "Recent bus fire/smoke incidents" at the next regular meeting to be held on Friday, 23 January 2009, at 8:30 am.

(Post-meeting note: The above paper was issued to members vide LC Paper No. CB(1)466/08-09(01) on 22 December 2008.)

3. Members also agreed to discuss "Regulatory arrangements for cross-boundary vehicles" proposed by the Administration at the next regular meeting.

4. Members also agreed to hold a special meeting on Thursday, 8 January 2009, at 2:30 pm to discuss the following items –

- (a) Fare concessions ceased to be offered by bus companies and MTR Corporation Limited (MTRCL); and
- (b) MTRCL's commitment not to increase fares.

III **Hong Kong – Zhuhai - Macao Bridge**

(LC Paper No. CB(1)406/08-09(03) - Administration's paper on Hong Kong - Zhuhai - Macao Bridge

LC Paper No. CB(1)434/08-09(01) - Administration's paper on assessment of economic benefits and cost allocation for Hong Kong - Zhuhai - Macao Bridge Main Bridge among the three governments

LC Paper No. CB(1)407/08-09 - Background brief prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat)

5. The Secretary for Transport and Housing (STH) briefed members on the Administration's paper setting out the progress of the planning work for the Hong Kong – Zhuhai – Macao Bridge (HZMB) and a funding application to be made to the Public Works Subcommittee (PWSC) and the Finance Committee (FC) for funding support for the preliminary design and site investigation for the HZMB Main Bridge.

Implementation timetable

6. Members in general considered that the HZMB project was important in enhancing cross-boundary transport infrastructures and the close cooperation in the Pearl River Delta (PRD) among Hong Kong, Macau and Guangdong as well as in job creation. Mr WONG Kwok-hing asked whether the completion of the HZMB project would be synchronized with the commissioning of the Tuen Mun Western Bypass (TMWB), which was linked up to the landing point of HZMB at North West Lantau, so that the traffic along the Hong Kong section of HZMB would be smooth and congestion could be avoided in North Lantau and Tuen Mun.

7. STH and the Director of Highways (D of Hy) responded that it was Administration's plan to ensure that the HZMB related projects, including the Hong Kong Boundary Crossing Facilities (HKBCF) and the Hong Kong Link

Road (HKLR) would be completed at the same time as that of TMWB and the Tuen Mun – Chek Lap Kok Link (TM-CLKL). This would allow the early formation of a strategic highway network for Northwest New Territories and Lantau, and would address the future traffic demand of Northwest New Territories and provide a much-needed second land route to the Hong Kong International Airport. The strategic highway network would maximize the transport and economic benefits of the above-mentioned projects. D of Hy said that the investigation and preliminary design studies for HKBCF and HKLR had commenced after securing funding support from FC. Public consultation on the alignments of TM-CLKL and TMWB had also begun.

8. In response to Ms Miriam LAU's enquiry about the position of the HZMB Main Bridge project, D of Hy said that the HZMB Advance Work Coordination Group Project Office on the Mainland had started inviting tenders for the preliminary design and site investigation for the Main Bridge on 1 December 2008. However, the relevant contract would not be awarded until the current funding proposal was approved by FC. The preliminary design for the Main Bridge was expected to be launched in April 2009.

Regulatory arrangements for cross-boundary private cars

9. Referring to paragraph 10 of the Administration's paper, Mr WONG Kwok-hing sought details of the proposal of introducing ad hoc quotas for cross-boundary private cars, such as the allocation criteria and measures to prevent light goods vehicles from operating illegally. STH responded that the Administration intended to further seek members' views when the Panel discussed the "Regulatory arrangements for cross-boundary vehicles" at its next regular meeting. The Administration's initial thinking was that the quotas should be introduced in a gradual and controlled manner taking into account the handling capacity of Hong Kong's road networks. The Administration and the Guangdong side had set up an expert group to examine the feasibility of ad hoc quotas with a view to drawing up an implementation framework. The Administration aimed to roll out a trial scheme at the Shenzhen Bay Port as soon as possible. The trial, if proven successful, would pave the way for future implementation of the arrangements at HZMB. As to the allocation criteria, STH said that the applicants would need to take out appropriate third-person insurance and provide proofs of permission to drive on the Mainland. In order to prevent illegal operation of light goods vehicles, drivers might be disallowed from applying for the ad hoc quotas frequently, say, not more than once every two months, at the initial stage.

10. Ir Dr Raymond HO considered that the adoption of the mode of "separate locations of BCFs" to serve HZMB was far from satisfactory as Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macau all belonged to the same country. The Deputy Chairman also considered that this arrangement would be very inconvenient to drivers using the bridge. STH explained that the three

governments had decided so after years of negotiations and careful consideration of various issues. She said that there was a need to fast-track the HZMB project, and there was no room for re-opening negotiation on the matter.

Toll level

11. Mr LAU Kong-wah considered that an affordable toll level should be set for HZMB and it would be appropriate if it was set at \$100 as reported by the press. STH responded that the toll level could not be determined yet because the financing arrangements for HZMB had yet to be finalized. To encourage the use of HZMB, the three governments had agreed to set the toll at a level no higher than what was necessary to cover daily operational cost and loan repayment. She said that it was the consensus of the three governments that HZMB was not intended to make profits. The feasibility study had looked at a few toll options. For example, under one of the options, the toll level for private car was between \$100 and \$200, while that for lorry was between \$200 and \$300. STH stressed that these levels were planned based on very conservative traffic forecasts and there should still be room for toll reduction.

12. The Deputy Chairman asked about the controlling authority to decide over the tolls for HZMB, and whether the toll levels charged by the three governments would be different. Project Manager/HZMB (PM/HZMB) responded that the same toll level would be charged to all motorists using the bridge regardless where they got on the bridge. The Deputy Chairman asked that, given the disparity in income levels among the three territories, whether this charging arrangement would discourage Mainland motorists from using HZMB. He also expressed concern about whether the Mainland would assume a controlling role over the management and in setting the toll level of HZMB because it had made the largest share of contribution to the project cost.

13. STH reiterated that it was the consensus of the three governments that HZMB was not intended to make profits, and there might be room for downward adjustment of the toll level after full repayment of the loans. She pointed out that apart from the toll level, the convenience enjoyed and time saved from the use of HZMB would attract users. PM/HZMB added that at present vehicles travelling from western PRD to Hong Kong would have to travel via Zhongshan and Humen Bridge and the distance was 214.8 km. With the commissioning of HZMB, the distance from Zhongshan to Hong Kong would be shortened to 66 km. Thus, the vehicle operating cost for goods transportation would be significantly reduced as a result of better road network, reduced traffic congestion and vehicle maintenance needs, and increased speed of travelling.

Suggestions to boost the patronage and cost-effectiveness of HZMB

14. Ir Dr Raymond HO suggested that consideration should be given to expanding the HZMB project to include a rail link to effect a convenient loop for rail transport as well, in order to promote the PRD regional co-operation. To boost patronage of HZMB, he also suggested introducing a "park-and-ride" scheme under which parking facilities would be provided on Lantau to enable drivers, after crossing HZMB from the Mainland or Macao, to change to use the Airport Express for traveling to urban Hong Kong. In this way, cross-boundary passenger flow could be enhanced without increasing road traffic volume in Hong Kong. STH responded that the Administration had looked at this and considered that rail connection with the Mainland through the Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link, which would be connected to Shibi in Guangzhou and onward to the national high-speed rail network, including the Beijing-Guangzhou Passenger Line and Hangzhou-Fuzhou-Shenzhen Passenger Line, would achieve a higher strategic value and cost-effectiveness. She added that the Administration would also consider introducing the suggested "park-and-ride" scheme if parking facilities could be identified in North Lantau for the purpose.

15. Mr LAU Kong-wah further suggested that to boost patronage of HZMB, the Administration should explore allowing Hong Kong motorists to drive to Zhuhai or other places on the Mainland, without having to apply for permissions in advance, park their vehicles there and travel to other places. In this connection, he asked whether the three governments had examined the adequacy of necessary supporting facilities in their respective territories to cater for increases in visitors in case a "park-and-ride" scheme was introduced. STH responded that Macao had already indicated that its road network would have difficulty in accommodating increases in vehicular traffic and it was necessary for Macau to implement a "park-and-ride" scheme. She further said that while the suggestion could be further considered, the Administration was initially of the view that it was not advisable to introduce the suggested "park-and-ride" scheme on a mandatory basis without giving drivers a choice.

16. Mr KAM Nai-wai expressed concern as to whether HZMB would become a white elephant like the Shenzhen Bay Port, which though toll-free with BCFs co-located, had been under-utilized, because of a lack of sufficient connecting transport infrastructure in Zhuhai and Macao. He urged the Administration to expedite its study on various related issues which would affect the patronage of HZMB, including the provision of adequate road connecting infrastructure for HZMB, introduction of ad hoc quotas for cross-boundary vehicles and the "park-and-ride" scheme as suggested by members.

17. STH acknowledged that connecting transport infrastructure for the Shenzhen Bay Port was unsatisfactory at the moment pending improvement of

the traffic condition of the existing connecting road network of Shenzhen. The Guangdong authorities had undertaken to complete the construction of the Guangshen Yanjiang Expressway as soon as possible and, after that, the connection for the Shenzhen Bay Port would be improved. STH reiterated that the Administration and the Mainland authorities had been studying the introduction of ad hoc quotas for cross-boundary vehicles. In this connection, an expert group had been set up to examine the feasibility of ad hoc quotas with a view to drawing up an implementation framework.

18. On the connecting transport infrastructure in Zhuhai and Macao, STH advised that the link road on the Zhuhai side would be 13 kilometres long. PM/HZMB supplemented that construction of the connecting road would be synchronized with that of HZMB. As a result, HZMB would be connected to the existing and new highway networks in the western PRD, including the Taiyuan-Macao Expressway to be completed in 2012-2013, which would be connected to the Guangdong West Coastal Expressway, and onward to Guangxi, Zhanjiang and Hainan in the west. Mr Jeffrey LAM requested the Administration to further provide information on the economic development zones to which these expressways led so that members could have a full picture of the strategic value of HZMB. He opined that the economic benefits generated by the HZMB project would be significant if good connecting transport infrastructure would also be provided to facilitate and promote economic cooperation among the three territories.

19. STH responded that with the transport link provided by HZMB to the vast market in western PRD, it was envisaged that significant economic benefits would be generated to Hong Kong's commerce and trade as well as service industries. Mr Jeffrey LAM said that there seemed to be a lack of road linkage for connection of Zhanjiang with Guangxi, though the existing road networks were able to link up HZMB to Zhanjiang. He considered that if such a road linkage was not provided, the economic value of HZMB could not be maximized. PM/HZMB said that HZMB would become a part of Guangdong's major highway system, thereby connecting Hong Kong to all major cities of the Mainland.

20. The Deputy Chairman also considered that the Administration should provide further details on the relevant connecting road infrastructures in the three territories that could affect HZMB's economic value. STH agreed to supplement details of the direct road links connecting HZMB to the strategic expressway network on the Mainland.

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(Post-meeting note: The requested information was issued to members vide LC Paper No. CB(1)591/08-09 dated 14 January 2009.)

Economic benefits to Hong Kong

21. Ir Dr Raymond HO expressed concern that, while Hong Kong would contribute RMB ¥6.75 billion to the construction cost of the HZMB Main Bridge, the economic benefit brought about by the project to Hong Kong companies might be limited only. He said that given the high unemployment rate particularly of the construction industry, the Administration should strive to maximize creation of job opportunities for local workers through implementation of the HZMB project. Ms Miriam LAU also asked whether it was expected that Hong Kong companies would not be engaged for the construction of the HZMB Main Bridge.

22. STH responded that local workers might not be hired for the construction of the HZMB Main Bridge as it would be carried out in Mainland waters and tendering work had to be conducted in accordance with the law and regulations of the Mainland. D of Hy said that companies were required to provide proofs of satisfying the practising requirements issued by Mainland authorities in order to submit tenders. In order to encourage Mainland companies interested in submitting tender to form joint venture with foreign companies to bid for the contracts in relation to the HZMB Main Bridge project, it was specified in the tendering requirements that particular weight would be given to the factor of international experience of the companies submitting tender. STH invited members to note that the implementation of the HKBCF, HKLR, TM-CLKL and TMWB projects were estimated to create about 18 000 jobs during the construction stage.

23. Ms LI Fung-ying asked how far the local workers would be able to benefit from the 18 000 new jobs. D of Hy explained that given the large scale of the HKBCF, HKLR, TM-CLKL and TMWB projects involving a total capital cost of over \$40 billion, local workers would certainly benefit from the projects.

24. Mr Albert CHAN queried whether the HZMB project was in the best interest of Hong Kong or, rather, it would end up benefiting more the neighbouring regions, as the commissioning of HZMB would provide greater convenience for Hong Kong residents to travel to Macao and the Mainland for consumption activities there. STH responded that the benefits of the HZMB project had been worked out according to well-established international standards and practices for assessment of economic value of traffic infrastructure. Even without taking into account the potential investments in the three territories induced by the project, other benefits already anticipated from the project should well justify its construction.

Costs to be borne by Hong Kong

25. Ms LI Fung-ying noted that the split of the three governments' subsidy to the project cost of the HZMB Main Bridge had been determined in accordance with the principle of Equalization of Benefit to Cost Ratio, which was an approach to equalize the ratio of the estimated benefit obtained to the estimated cost incurred for a joint investment from different territories with different economic status. Pointing out that the estimated benefit might not be entirely accurate, she asked whether a mechanism was in place for making adjustments to the amounts of contribution by the three governments where necessary. D of Hy said that there was no such a mechanism as there would be great difficulty in deciding on the methodology to be used for making any adjustments. He pointed out that the amounts of the three governments' contribution to the project cost had been apportioned very carefully in accordance with well-established international practices.

26. In response to Ms LI Fung-ying's enquiry on how the management and maintenance costs of the HZMB Main Bridge would be shared among the three governments, STH and D of Hy said that the initial thinking was to cover the relevant costs using the tolls collected which would be pooled for use by a management body of the HZMB Main Bridge to be set up for managing and maintaining the Main Bridge.

27. Referring to paragraph 9 of the Administration's supplementary information paper [LC Paper No. CB(1)434/08-09(01)], the Deputy Chairman said that in working out the assessment of direct economic benefits in relation to the HZMB project, due consideration should be given to the possible surge of the value of time saved for passengers of Guangdong and Macao over time, as a result of the rapid economic development of the PRD region.

28. PM/HZMB said that the figures in paragraph 9 only reflected the value of time saved for passengers of Hong Kong, Guangdong and Macao in 2016 as an example. He informed members that estimates had also been made for 2020 and 2035. In 2020, the value of time saved for passengers of Hong Kong and Zhuhai were estimated to be RMB¥58.2 and RMB¥26.2 per hour respectively. In 2035, the value of time saved for passengers of Hong Kong and Zhuhai were estimated to be RMB¥86.1 and RMB¥87.1 per hour respectively. The economic growth and resultant rise in living standard of the regions concerned on the Mainland had been taken into account in estimating the value of time saved for Mainland passengers.

Environmental concerns

29. Mr KAM Nai-wai enquired whether the concerns about the environmental impacts of the HZMB project had been satisfactorily addressed. D of Hy responded that the feasibility study for HZMB covered a wide range of

topics including environment-related issues. Key environmental issues and visual impact along the proposed alignment of the HZMB Main Bridge in the Pearl River Estuary had been studied and assessed to meet the requirements under Mainland laws. The environment-related reports would be submitted to the relevant authorities of the Central People's Government for approval.

30. Mr Albert CHAN expressed concern that before concerns about the environmental impacts of the HZMB project on PRD, in particular the impacts on the habitat of the Chinese White Dolphin and the marine culture, were satisfactorily addressed, the Administration was already seeking funding support for the relevant preliminary design and site investigation. He considered that these issues had to be adequately addressed and if necessary, consideration should be given to holding a joint meeting with the Panel on Environmental Protection.

31. STH said that there were over 40 topics covered by the feasibility study for HZMB, with environmental matters including the impacts on the habitat of the Chinese White Dolphins also covered. In recognition of the likely significant environmental impacts of the HZMB Main Bridge, which would be a 29.6 km dual 3-lane carriageway running across major navigation channels of the Pearl River Estuary with an immersed tunnel of about 6.7 km, a thorough environmental impact study for the project had already been carried out with the report submitted to the State Oceanic Administration for examination. Efforts had also been made in conjunction with an environmental protection fund of the Mainland to ensure proper mitigation of the environmental impacts. As for the environmental impact assessments for the HZMB-related projects within Hong Kong, STH assured members that they would be conducted in a stringent manner in accordance with the Environmental Impact Assessment Ordinance (Cap. 499).

32. Summing up, the Chairman said that the Panel supported submission of the funding application to PWSC for further consideration at its meeting on 21 January 2009. Mr Albert CHAN said that he would oppose to the funding application at the PWSC meeting if the Administration failed to fully address the environmental impact issues.

IV Proposed creation of two Chief Engineer posts in the Highways Department

(LC Paper No. CB(1)406/08-09(04) - Administration's paper on staffing proposal for the planning and implementation of the proposed Hong Kong Boundary Crossing Facilities (HKBCF) of the

Hong Kong–Zhuhai–Macao Bridge (HZMB) project and the Shatin to Central Link railway project)

33. STH and D of Hy briefed members on the proposal to create with effect from 1 April 2009 one supernumerary Chief Engineer (CE) (D1) post in each of the Hong Kong – Zhuhai – Macao Bridge Hong Kong Project Management Office (HZMB HKPMO) and the Railway Development Office (RDO) of the Highways Department (HyD) (the two CE posts) to plan and implement HKBCF of the HZMB project and the Shatin to Central Link (SCL) railway project (collectively referred to as "the two projects" in ensuing paragraphs) up to 31 March 2014 and 2016 respectively.

34. Mr Albert CHAN expressed concern about the Administration's recent trend of creating a new directorate post(s) to take on the work of every new infrastructure project. He suggested that the Secretariat's Research and Library Services Division (RLSD) or the Administration should provide a comparison of the creation of directorate posts for the implementation of the ten Airport Core Programme (ACP) projects in 1991 and that proposed in the current legislative session for implementing major infrastructure projects. He also suggested that, instead of creating posts for every major project, consideration should be given to setting up a project coordinating team for handling relevant projects in order to facilitate flexible staff redeployment and enhance overall cost-effectiveness. STH responded that it might not be appropriate to make the comparison, adding that a special team had been set up outside government staff establishment for the management of the ten ACP projects then. In response to Mr CHAN's request, the Chairman said that RLSD would be asked to compile the requisite information.

RLSD

(Post-meeting note: A Fact Sheet on "Directorate posts created for the Airport Core Programme and directorate posts created or planned to be created for the 10 Major Infrastructure Projects" was issued to members vide LC Paper No. CB(1)569/08-09 dated 12 January 2009.)

35. The Deputy Chairman said that the public would also expect that the Government, like most other organizations, would first consider deploying its existing staff to cope with any additional workload rather than taking opportunity of implementing new projects to create new posts. He considered it necessary for the Administration to explain why it considered there was no room for staff redeployment within the Administration and had to create new posts to cope with additional workload all the time. He further said that while he recognized the urgency and complexity of the two projects, it was necessary to guard against unnecessary expansion of the civil service establishment. He was concerned whether the two proposals would pave the way for creation of

additional directorate posts for other upcoming infrastructural projects.

36. STH assured members that the Administration had considered the possible redeployment to take on the work of the proposed posts, and put up the current proposal only after concluding that staff redeployment was not operationally feasible without affecting the quality of work. D of Hy explained that HyD had always been reviewing its establishment and making internal redeployment to absorb additional workload as far as possible. In fact, one of the CEs who headed the two divisions underpinning the Project Manager/HZMB Hong Kong (PM/HZMB) was re-deployed from within HyD in 2004. Since 2004, HyD had also deleted one supernumerary CE (D2) post and four supernumerary CE (D1) posts with the completion of relevant road and railway projects. One of these posts had been deleted even earlier than planned. D of Hy further explained the distribution of work in HyD as shown in the "Existing and Proposed Organization Chart of RDO of HyD" (Annex E to the Administration's paper), and pointed out that in 2001, there were six CEs in RDO overseeing six railway projects involving a total value of \$100 billion. In 2008, although the number of projects remained the same, the total value involved was \$130 billion. However, the number of CEs in RDO was only five, before the proposed additional supernumerary CE post in RDO was created. The Chairman requested the Administration to provide supplementary information as far as possible to address the Deputy Chairman's concerns about room for staff redeployment elaborated above before the current proposal was discussed by the Establishment Subcommittee (ESC).

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(Post-meeting note: The requested information was issued to members vide LC Paper No. CB(1)575/08-09 dated 13 January 2009)

37. Mr KAM Nai-wai asked about the establishment of Senior Engineers (SE) under the existing numerous CEs of HyD, and whether these CEs would have spare capacity to take on the work of any of the two proposed CE posts. STH reiterated that all the other directorate officers were fully engaged in their respective duties and there was no further scope for internal redeployment. With reference to paragraphs 33 and 34 of the Administration's paper, D of Hy said that with the need for expediting the HKBCF project, a dedicated team would be set up. Other than the temporary redeployment of one SE and one Engineer/Assistant Engineer (E/AE) posts internally, nine non-directorate professional posts would be created to form the dedicated team. As for the SCL railway project, one SE and two E/AE posts would be redeployed within RDO to be put under the purview of the proposed CE post. These three posts together with six more non-directorate posts would be created to form the team under the proposed CE post in RDO.

38. Ms LI Fung-ying opined that apart from justifying the need for the two proposed CE posts, there was a need to justify their retention periods which were proposed to be five and seven years respectively. She considered

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that these periods were exceptionally long and should be reviewed in the interim in the light of the progress of the two projects. D of Hy responded that the proposed retention periods had to tie in with the HZMB project, which would complete in 2016, and the SCL railway project, the first stage of which would also complete in 2016. The Administration would review the continued need of the CE post for the HZMB project in 2013-2014. At Ms LI's request, D of Hy agreed to supplement for ESC's consideration a chart showing the number of existing supernumerary directorate posts in HyD and the dates of their expiry due to completion of relevant railway projects.

(Post-meeting note: The requested information was issued to members vide LC Paper No. CB(1)575/08-09 dated 13 January 2009)

39. Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung expressed reservation about the need to construct HZMB as he considered that the Mainland had adopted a policy of moving industries inland and the economy of Macau was deteriorating. He considered that the two projects could not help much in job creation as the jobs created by them were only short-term. Referring to the current proposal, Mr LEUNG expressed concern that while the Administration created senior posts so readily, it was unfair that there seemed to be a moratorium applied to the creation of junior posts. He also queried why the Administration inclined to create supernumerary posts. D of Hy responded that the current proposal of creating two supernumerary CE posts had been made taking into account of the need to expedite the two projects and their completion schedules.

40. Mr IP Wai-ming recalled that the Administration had given an undertaking before that it would off-set the creation of every supernumerary directorate post by deletion of another, and asked whether two supernumerary directorate posts would be deleted as a result of the current proposal. Referring to paragraph 4 of the Administration's paper, Mr IP sought details on the three supernumerary directorate posts (1 Principal Government Engineer (PGE) (D3) and 2 CE (D1) posts) in HZMB HKPMO. STH responded that the creation of supernumerary posts was considered primarily based on workload and did not have to be rigidly off-set by deletion of other posts. D of Hy supplemented that the PGE and one of the said CE posts were created on a supernumerary basis for six years up to 30 June 2010 while the other CE post was re-deployed from within HyD for the same period. As the HZMB project would not complete in 2010, the continued need for these posts would be reviewed by the end of 2009.

41. Ir Dr Raymond HO expressed support for the current proposal in view of the complexity of the HZMB project which involved three governments and international tendering, and that of the SCL railway project involving the construction of about 17 kilometres of tunnels and nine underground stations. He expressed concern about the sufficiency of non-directorate support to be provided to the two proposed CE posts in order to

ensure their effective operation. D of Hy explained the non-directorate support for the two CE posts as elaborated above. He pointed out that other than temporary internal redeployment, certain new non-directorate professional posts of different disciplines would also be created to ensure that the dedicated teams under the two CE posts could provide the CEs multi-disciplinary support.

42. Though supportive of the implementation of infrastructure projects to create jobs and improve traffic flow, Mr Albert CHAN expressed concern that the current proposal to create a supernumerary CE post for the HKBCF project was put up while examination of issues about the HZMB project, such as its environmental impacts, was not yet completed. Moreover, as the HZMB project would affect not only Hong Kong but also the Pearl River Delta Region, longer time would be required to conduct environmental impact assessments (EIAs) in both territories to ensure preservation of the natural sceneries and precious marine species in the large area covered. He expressed opposition to the creation of the proposed CE post.

43. D of Hy explained that the Administration also attached importance to the conduct of EIA study for HKBCF, and the proposed CE post for the HKBCF project would be responsible for supervising the detailed EIA study for HKBCF, which would be conducted in a stringent manner in accordance with the relevant legislation. He clarified that an environmental assessment for the HZMB project had already been carried out, and key environmental issues along the proposed alignment of the HZMB Main Bridge in the Pearl River Estuary had been reviewed and assessed to meet the requirements under Mainland laws. The relevant report had been submitted to the Central People's Government for consideration.

44. Summing up, the Chairman said that the Panel supported submission of the current proposal to ESC for further consideration at its meeting on 14 January 2009.

V PWP Item 6720TH – Widening of Tolo Highway/Fanling Highway between Island House Interchange and Fanling – Stage 1

(LC Paper No. CB(1)406/08-09(05) - Administration's paper on PWP Item 6720TH – Widening of Tolo Highway/Fanling Highway between Island House Interchange and Fanling – Stage 1)

45. The Deputy Secretary for Transport and Housing (Transport) 1 briefed members on the Administration's paper on its proposal to upgrade part of 720TH - Widening of Tolo Highway / Fanling Highway (collectively referred to as "the two highways" in ensuing paragraphs) between Island House Interchange and Fanling to Category A for the section of Tolo Highway between Island House Interchange and Tai Hang.

Environmental concerns

46. Though supportive of the proposed project, Ms LI Fung-ying expressed concern about the need to move a large amount of trees within the project boundary. She suggested that in considering transplantation of some of the trees, the Administration should have regard to whether those trees were suitable for transplantation and their chance of survival after transplantation. She considered that it might be more practical and cost-effective to have those with only a low chance of survival felled and replant new ones afterwards. The Project Manager/Major Works (PM/MW) explained that the decision to transplant some 190 trees had been made after assessing their post-transplantation survival rate. He said that the Administration planned to plant an estimated quantity of about 3 620 heavy standard trees, 44 000 seedlings, 50 500 shrubs which totalled to approximately 98 780 square metres of woodland planting area. The total number of trees to be planted would outweigh the number of trees affected by the project. Moreover, the different species of the trees to be planted would have flowers and leaves of different colour in various seasons.

47. The Deputy Chairman expressed support for the proposed project as he noted that it had been long awaited by local residents. He stressed the need for planting as many trees as possible on both sides of the two highways to enhance air quality and because trees could also serve the purpose of noise reduction. He suggested that vertical greening should also be considered for the noise barriers to be installed to enhance the aesthetic effect. Ms Miriam LAU said that the use of transparent noise barriers should be considered as far as possible in order not to block the view for drivers.

48. PM/MW responded that the Administration had been making efforts to improve the design of noise barriers, and had been applying greening measures, including vertical greening, to noise barriers on newly built roads. Such measures would also be applied to the noise barriers for this project, and transparent or semi-transparent noise barriers using non-reflective materials would be installed. The Administration would also consult professional bodies, community organizations and District Council(s) (DCs) concerned over the materials and design to be adopted for the noise barriers for this project.

49. Mr IP Wai-ming expressed concern about the plan to fell some 10 900 trees for the Stage 1 construction works and suggested that the scale be reviewed. STH and PM/MW explained that the Administration had sought to minimize the number of trees to be felled. However, as the widening works would have to involve cutting of existing slopes on both sides of the highways, and given the long length (5.7 kilometres) of the section of Tolo Highway to be widened, the tree-felling scale would inevitably be large. PM/MW pointed out that the Administration always upheld the principle that trees affected should be preserved or transplanted as far as possible and should not be felled unless absolutely necessary.

50. Ir Dr Raymond HO expressed support for the proposed project in recognition that the road sections concerned formed an important part of the strategic road link serving the Northeast New Territories. He considered that flexibility should be allowed in considering tree preservation as, in some cases, the trees affected by a works project might not be of any valuable species. He said that the Administration should strike a balance between tree preservation and the need to meet practical traffic demands.

51. Mr Albert CHAN opined that shrubs should be planted in the middle of roads to improve the environment and to minimize the nuisance caused to drivers by headlights of vehicles in the opposite direction. PM/MW responded that shrubs would be planted in the middle of the two highways where feasible. However, due to spatial constraint, it was not possible to plant shrubs throughout the two highways. At Mr CHAN's request, PM/MW agreed to provide supplementary information on the percentage of central reserve area to which shrubs could be planted in the middle of the two highways, before the current proposal was to be discussed by the Finance Committee.

Admin

(Post-meeting note: The requested information was issued to members vide LC Paper No. CB(1)735/08-09 dated 5 February 2009.)

(To allow sufficient time for discussion, the Chairman extended the meeting by 15 minutes.)

Traffic implications

52. Noting that the traffic in some sections of the two highways was already congested during peak hours and that the widening works would take five years to complete, Ms Miriam LAU enquired about the traffic management measures to be taken to alleviate congestion during the construction period.

Admin

53. PM/MW responded that the Administration would implement temporary traffic arrangements, such as lane closures, traffic diverging and other arrangements, during the construction period in order to minimize the traffic impacts. The Administration would consult the relevant DC prior to the implementation of temporary traffic arrangements. The Administration would also require the contractor to set up a traffic recovery unit with towing vehicles to stand by at peak hours to facilitate timely removal of broken-down vehicles so that normal traffic could be resumed as quickly as possible in case of major incidents. At Ms LAU's request, PM/MW undertook to supplement details on these temporary traffic management measures in its paper to be submitted to PWSC.

54. Summing up, the Chairman said that the Panel supported submission of the current proposal to PWSC for further consideration at its meeting on 21 January 2009.

VI Any other business

55. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 10:45 am.

Council Business Division 1
Legislative Council Secretariat
18 February 2009