

Legislative Council Panel on Transport

2008-09 Policy Agenda

Transport-related Policy Initiatives of the Transport and Housing Bureau

Introduction

The 2008-09 Policy Agenda sets out the Government's new and on-going initiatives. This paper elaborates on those initiatives that are relevant to the land transport portfolio.

2. We have been pressing ahead with our work in planning and implementing the construction and improvement of our transport infrastructure, with emphasis on developing railways as the backbone of Hong Kong's transport system. We also aim at improving the quality of public transport services, and maintaining an efficient public transport network by coordinating various public transport services. On the other hand, we will work on reducing congestion and promoting safety through the management of road traffic. We will also continue to support environmental improvement measures in transport-related areas.

Issues in Focus

3. The Policy Address sets out two main priorities on the transport

front. One is the tolls for harbour crossings. In view of the public's concern about traffic congestion at the harbour crossings and the different toll levels, the Government will commission a consultancy study on this issue. While the complexity of the problem should not be underestimated, we will endeavour to find a long-term solution that is feasible in transport, financial and legal terms, and develop strategies for possible negotiations in the future.

4. The second is improving the pedestrian environment. We will take forward pedestrian schemes to minimise vehicle-pedestrian conflicts and improve roadside air quality. Our focus will be on improving the pedestrian environment in business districts, shopping centres, and leisure areas with heavy pedestrian flows. For example, we will consider constructing additional pedestrian subways in Causeway Bay linking the MTR station with Victoria Park as well as the busy streets in the heart of Causeway Bay and its junction with Happy Valley; extending the footbridge system in Mong Kok to cover its central part and the Tai Kok Tsui area; and developing a footbridge system at Castle Peak Road (Yuen Long) in the Yuen Long town centre. We expect to put forward specific proposals as early as possible.

2008-09 Policy Agenda – New Initiative

Chapter 3 – Investing for a Caring Society

- (a) Establish an assessment system on the provision of hillside escalator links and elevator systems.**

5. We are aware that there is an increasing demand for the provision of hillside escalator links and elevator systems, and members of the public have put forward quite a number of proposals for these systems. The Transport Department has commenced a consultancy study on establishing a ranking system on the provision of these systems. The study is expected to be completed in early 2009. The proposed ranking system will provide comprehensive evaluation criteria for the objective determination of the merits and priority of the concerned proposals in a fair and transparent manner.

2008-09 Policy Agenda – On-going Initiatives

Chapter 1 - Undertaking Ten Major Infrastructure Projects for Economic Growth

(b) Proceeding actively with the investigation and preliminary design study of the proposed Tuen Mun-Chek Lap Kok Link and Tuen Mun Western Bypass.

6. The proposed Tuen Mun-Chek Lap Kok Link and Tuen Mun Western Bypass will provide an alternative access to the Airport and reduce the travelling distance between the Northwest New Territories and Lantau. The two projects together with the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge, the Kong Sham Western Highway, etc. will form a strategic road network which will facilitate the economic development of Hong Kong. In January 2008, the Finance Committee approved the funding for the investigation and preliminary design study of these two projects which commenced in May 2008 and August 2008 respectively.

7. To facilitate our work on the design study, we launched the public engagement activities to solicit views from the public in September 2008. We shall take into account the views collected in the design of the two projects. We target to commence the construction works in 2011 for completion in 2016.

(c) Overseeing the construction for the improvement of the expressway section of Tuen Mun Road and finalising the preparatory work for the widening of the town centre section.

8. In April 2008, the Finance Committee approved the funding for improving the expressway section of Tuen Mun Road to meet current highway standards. Highways Department (HyD) is assessing the tenders for the first phase of works. Construction works are expected to commence in 2008 for completion in phases by 2014.

9. The proposed widening of the town centre section of Tuen Mun Road was gazetted under Roads (Works, Use and Compensation) Ordinance (Cap. 370) in April 2008. HyD is now resolving the objections received. Subject to the smooth completion of the necessary statutory procedures, we aim to submit the funding application to the Finance Committee for construction by mid-2009.

(d) Continuing to foster closer co-operation between the Hong Kong International Airport and Shenzhen Airport and pressing ahead with the study on the feasibility of establishing a direct rail link between them with a view to completing the study in 2008.

10. The HKSAR Government and the Shenzhen Municipal Government formed the Task Force on Airport Co-operation in January 2008. The Task Force held two meetings and has established two expert groups, one to pursue the study of establishing a rail connection between the Hong Kong International Airport and the Shenzhen Airport, and the other to pursue other airport business co-operation.

11. The Task Force has commissioned a consultancy study to examine the feasibility and economic benefits of connecting the two airports with a rail link. We aim to complete the first stage study in 2008. Separately, the two airports signed a framework agreement in May 2008 on passenger facilitation. Relevant projects were implemented in August 2008 to provide more convenient passenger transfer services.

(e) Finalising details of the financing arrangements for the Main Bridge of the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge with a view to submitting the Feasibility Study Report for the Central Government's approval and tendering out the preliminary design work of the Main Bridge as soon as possible. As regards works within Hong Kong, we are finalizing the investigation and preliminary design study for the Boundary Crossing Facilities and preferred alignment of the Link Road, and commencing the related statutory procedures.

12. The governments of Hong Kong, Guangdong and Macao have, on top of their earlier agreement for each of them to be responsible for the construction of the Boundary Crossing Facilities (BCF) and link roads within their own territory, further agreed to take up the responsibility for

the construction of the Main Bridge. A total contribution of RMB ¥15.73 billion will be made by the three governments and the Central People's Government towards the construction of the Main Bridge, with the remaining funding to be financed by loans. We are exploring different options to finance the remaining construction cost and their respective approval procedures. The three sides have also started discussion on the content of the necessary tri-partite agreement and institutional setup for the implementation of the project. We aim to finalize and submit the Feasibility Study Report for Central Government's approval as soon as practicable, and tender out the preliminary design work of the Main Bridge as soon as possible.

13. As regards works within Hong Kong, we are proceeding actively with the investigation and preliminary design studies for the proposed Hong Kong Boundary Crossing Facilities (HKBCF), and are evaluating the possible alignment options for the proposed Hong Kong Link Road (HKLR). We are consulting stakeholders of the relevant districts and bodies. Upon the completion of these studies, we will go through the statutory procedures and commence the construction of the proposed HKBCF and HKLR to tie in with the programme of the HZMB Main Bridge for synchronized completion.

(f) Pursuing vigorously the Hong Kong section of the Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link, so that its design and planning will be completed within 2008 for construction to start next year.

14. The Government has decided that the Hong Kong section of the Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link (XRL) project would

proceed under the concession approach. Funding for the design and site investigation for the XRL was approved by the Finance Committee in July 2008 and further planning and design of the XRL is in progress. We have started consultation with relevant District Councils and the Rural Committees.

(g) Finalising the gazetted scheme of the West Island Line with a view to commencing construction in 2009.

15. We have examined the MTRCL's Revised Project Proposal for the West Island Line and gazetted the amended scheme in September 2008. We continue to stay in close touch with the Central and Western District Council and the local community in listening to their views. We aim at commencing construction in 2009.

(h) Continuing with the planning and design of the Shatin to Central Link and the Kwun Tong Line Extension with a view to commencing construction in 2010.

16. The 17km Shatin to Central Link will run through six different districts. We briefed the concerned District Councils from March to May 2008 on the project, and we are now in the active planning and design stage. We will consult the public in end 2008/early 2009 for construction to commence in 2010.

17. In respect of the Kwun Tong Line Extension, we have completed the first stage public consultation through conducting roving exhibitions

and forums in the districts in collecting the views of the public for the preliminary design of the railway scheme. When it is completed, we will proceed to the second stage of public consultation later this year.

(i) Continuing with the planning and design of the South Island Line (East) with a view to commencing construction in 2011.

18. We are consulting the public with the preliminary design and in active communication with the relevant District Council and local concern groups in exploring whether some of their suggestions are feasible. We will continue to stay in close touch with the Legislative Council, District Councils, local residents, concern groups and the transport trades to work for the best scheme for the South Island Line.

(j) Continuing to pursue the planning of the Northern Link in conjunction with the planned developments in the New Territories.

19. We are now assessing the planning of the Northern Link in view of the planning and engineering study of the New Development Areas in the Northeast New Territories, so that the Northern Link can be properly integrated with these new developments.

(k) Continuing to monitor the progress of the Kowloon Southern Link for timely commissioning in late 2009.

20. The Kowloon Southern Link (KSL) will link up Nam Cheong Station of the West Rail Line and the East Tsim Sha Tsui Station of the East

Rail Line. The construction progress of the KSL is on schedule and we are confident that the railway link will be commissioned in late 2009.

Chapter 2 -Quality City, Quality Life

(1) 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 as appropriate the adoption of environment-friendly measures 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.

21. 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.

22. We have been 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; over 90% of buses operating on Hennessy Road and Nathan Road; and over 80% on Queensway and Des Voeux Road Central are already of Euro II or above standards.

23. 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.

24. We have been working out proposals with the franchised bus companies to 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, to help improve traffic and the environment.

(m) 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.

25. 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 keep in view the technological developments and make reference to successful experience in other places. We will consult the community before we make any decision.

2007-08 Policy Agenda

26. The progress of most initiatives included in the 2007-08 Policy Agenda has been covered in the preceding paragraphs. We have successfully implemented the Merger of the Mass Transit Railway and the Kowloon-Canton Railway systems in 2007/08, and the merger of the two

railway systems was completed on 2 December 2007.

Transport and Housing Bureau

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