

Legislative Council Panel on Transport
Meeting on 23 April 2010 — Follow-up Action
Traffic and Transport Arrangements in South Lantau
Including Tung Chung Road

At its meeting on 23 April 2010, the Legislative Council Panel on Transport discussed the “Traffic and Transport Arrangements in South Lantau Including Tung Chung Road” and carried the motion “That (this Panel) urges the Government to abolish the quota system for tour coaches for Lantau so as to facilitate the development of local tourism economy”. Our response is set out below:

2. We appreciate that members of the public generally expect that the completion of the improvement works on Tung Chung Road (TCR) would bring greater convenience to the residents of south Lantau and help boost the development of tourism economy in the area. On the other hand, south Lantau is a conservation area. It is also reiterated in the Revised Concept Plan for Lantau that the environment of south Lantau should be protected, and the areas for recreational and tourism purposes should be used in accordance with the principles for environmentally sustainable development.

3. Given the above background and having considered the views of the stakeholders, we relaxed moderately the restriction on vehicle access to south Lantau via TCR upon the full opening of the improved TCR in February 2009, while closely monitoring the utilisation of the carriageway. Such relaxation includes allowing a daily maximum of 30 coaches to access south Lantau via TCR, while the original arrangement was prohibition against access of coaches.

4. The Transport Department (TD) has been receiving many different views on the opening up of south Lantau to coaches. Some people think that the quota system should be further relaxed or removed altogether, while others put forward that, with a view to avoiding any damage to the conservation area, which will adversely affect the long-term sustainable development, the area should not be opened to coaches or different needs should be balanced.

5. Recently, TD completed a review on the traffic and transport arrangements for TCR and south Lantau based on the first year’s data¹ and actual traffic conditions upon the full opening of the improved TCR.

¹ The data of the first year following the full opening of the improved TCR refer to the data collected during the period from 6 February 2009 to 5 February 2010.

The number of applications for and utilisation of the 30-coach quota during the 12-month period are as follows:

- (a) on average 11 applications were approved per day for access on Sundays and public holidays, and five for weekdays;
- (b) the number of days on which more than 25 coaches were approved was two – one day with 26 coaches and another day with 27 coaches; and
- (c) the number of days on which no valid application for coach quota was received from coach operators was 49.

The above figures show that the existing daily quota of 30 coaches is sufficient to meet the general demand for group tours to south Lantau.

6. As regards some members' concern that the economic development of south Lantau might be hindered by the coach quota system, TD has put in place a mechanism to cater for major tourism promotional events (such as the Mui Wo Lantern Festival held in March 2010) in the area arranged by various organisations. This would promote the development of local tourism economy and protect the natural environment of south Lantau at the same time.

7. Taking into account the environmental concerns, sustainable development of Lantau Island and also the relevant data collected, we are of the view that the coach quota system to allow a daily maximum of 30 coaches to access south Lantau via TCR should be maintained at the present stage. We shall continue to monitor the applications for access to south Lantau by coaches and their operating situation for future assessment of the impact on aspects including air quality, noise and ecological habitat. We shall also stay in touch with the local communities, the tourism and transport sectors, as well as green groups, and conduct further reviews on the access arrangements for coaches to south Lantau where appropriate.

Transport Department
June 2010