

Legislative Council Panel on Transport

2009-10 Policy Agenda

Transport-related Policy Initiatives of the Transport and Housing Bureau

Introduction

The 2009-10 Policy Agenda sets out the Government's initiatives in the coming year. This paper elaborates on those initiatives that are relevant to the land transport portfolio.

2009-10 Policy Agenda – On-going Initiatives

Chapter 1 - Developing the Infrastructure for Economic Growth

(a) Pressing ahead for the completion and commissioning of the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge by 2015-16 by finalising the financing arrangement between the three governments concerned and the lead bank in respect of the main bridge and completing its preliminary design for commencement of construction in phases by the end of 2009; and by on-time completion of the necessary statutory procedures for the works within Hong Kong and the detailed design of the boundary crossing facilities and the link road between them and the main bridge.

2. The governments of the HKSAR, the Guangdong Province and the Macao SAR have, on top of their earlier agreement for each of them to be

responsible for the construction of the Boundary Crossing Facilities and link roads within their respective territory, further agreed to jointly 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. On this, the three sides are liaising with their financial adviser and the lead bank on the details of the loan arrangements, including the arrangement of a loan syndicate as well as to finalise the detailed arrangements for borrowing and repayment. The three governments will also finalise the framework for the construction and operation of the Main Bridge with a view to commencing construction before end 2009.

3. As regards the works within Hong Kong, the Finance Committee approved in May 2009 funding of \$620Mn for the detailed design of the HKBCF. The proposed HKBCF and HKLR were gazetted in June to August 2009 under relevant ordinances with the aim that their completion can tie in with that of the Main Bridge.

(b) Pursuing vigorously the Hong Kong section of the Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link, so that construction may start in 2009 with estimated completion in 2015.

4. The detailed planning and design of the Hong Kong section of the Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link (XRL) are almost complete. We will submit the railway scheme to the Chief Executive-in-Council, and subject to its approval, we will seek funding approval from the Finance Committee. The construction work is planned to commence before end of 2009 for estimated completion in 2015. We briefed the Legislative Council Subcommittee on Matters Relating to

Railways of the Panel on Transport the latest progress of the project on 17 September 2009 and 23 September 2009. Details are available in the information papers of the meetings (LC Paper No. CB(1)2582/08-09(01) and CB(1)2656/08-09(01)). Taking into account the long-term economic benefits and various engineering considerations, the present scheme we have proposed is the most feasible one. We will continue to explain to the concerned parties regarding the urgency and the planning details of the project. We will also try our best to provide appropriate assistance to residents affected by land resumption of the project.

(c) Continuing to foster closer co-operation between the Hong Kong International Airport and Shenzhen Airport, including further planning of the Hong Kong-Shenzhen Western Express Line as a multi-purpose railway which complements the planning and development of Qianhai, Shenzhen and northwestern part of the New Territories and exploits the synergy from the complementary strengths of the two airports..

5. The Shenzhen Airport has a wide domestic network covering some 70 Mainland cities, compared with the HKIA's 40, whilst the HKIA has an extensive international network connecting to 110 overseas destinations. For the two airports to fully complement each other and achieve a win-win situation, the Government and the Shenzhen Municipal Government established a Task Force in December 2007 with a view to fostering closer cooperation between the two airports, including the proposal of establishing a rail connection between the two.

6. The pre-feasibility study of the rail link has confirmed that it is technically feasible. To reflect its many functions in supporting the future developments of the two airports, Qianhai and the Northwest districts of

the New Territories, the rail link is now named the “Hong Kong-Shenzhen Western Express Line” (WEL). The Government and the Shenzhen Municipal Government signed a cooperation arrangement on the project in August 2009 to take forward its planning. The future developments mentioned above will greatly affect the further planning of the proposed WEL, including its alignments, functions, and operation requirements etc. We are looking at the way forward for the project together with the Shenzhen side having regard to these considerations.

(d) Monitoring the progress of the West Island Line for timely commissioning in 2014.

7. The West Island Line (WIL) is an extension of the Island Line from Sheung Wan to Kennedy Town. The construction works of the WIL have commenced after the Finance Committee approved the funding support in July 2009. During the construction stage, we will continue to stay in touch with the Central and Western District Council and the local community. We have established community liaison groups for exchanging views on the construction issues. We are confident that the railway will be commissioned in 2014.

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

8. The proposed South Island Line (East) railway scheme was gazetted in July 2009 in accordance with the Railways Ordinance. The MTR Corporation Limited (MTRCL) has commenced the detailed design of the SIL (East) and is proceeding with the environmental impact assessment in accordance with the requirements of the Environmental

Impact Assessment Ordinance. We aim at commencing construction in 2011 for commissioning in 2015.

(f) Continuing with the planning and design of the Shatin to Central Link and the Kwun Tong Line Extension with a view to commencing construction as soon as practicable.

9. Since the start of the preliminary design of the Shatin to Central Link, we have been consulting the various District Councils and residents along its proposed alignment. We are pushing ahead with the planning and design work of the project in tandem with public consultation.

10. In respect of the Kwun Tong Line Extension, we have completed the preliminary design and the second stage public consultation through conducting roving exhibitions and forums in the districts. We plan to gazette the scheme under the Railway Ordinance by end 2009 and to start construction as soon as possible.

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

11. 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.

(h) Continuing with the investigation and design of the proposed Tuen Mun-Chek Lap Kok Link and with public engagement on the alignment options for the Tuen Mun Western Bypass.

12. The 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 highway 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. The statutory process for the proposed road scheme of the Tuen Mun-Chek Lap Kok Link formally commenced with the gazettal of the project in August 2009.

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

13. In April 2008, the Finance Committee approved the funding for the improvement of the expressway section of Tuen Mun Road (from Tsuen Wan to Sam Shing Hui) to meet current expressway standards. Construction works commenced in October 2008 for completion in phases by 2014.

14. The Finance Committee has also approved the funding for the construction works of the widening of the town centre section of Tuen Mun Road in June 2009. The construction is expected to commence in end 2009 for completion in end 2013.

Chapter 2 -Quality City, Quality Life

(j) Promoting the use of environment-friendly buses by implementing the provision in the 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.

15. We have included a 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.

16. 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.

17. 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.

18. 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.

(k) 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.

19. We will continue to explore all possible measures to improve the traffic flow along major transport corridors. As regards the idea of charging to tackle the traffic congestion issue, 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.

(l) Taking forward the pedestrian schemes in Causeway Bay, Mong Kok and Yuen Long town centre so as to create space for pedestrian movements, minimise vehicle-pedestrian conflicts and improve roadside air quality.

20. The Transport Department commissioned in March this year a consultancy study on pedestrian environment improvement projects for Causeway Bay and Mong Kok which has resulted in some preliminary conceptual alignment plans. In the plan for Causeway Bay, there will be a pedestrian subway system running from Victoria Park through the central commercial and shopping areas of Causeway Bay to the vicinity of Happy

Valley. For the plan in Mong Kok, the existing footbridge system will be extended to join the Mong Kok and Mong Kok East MTR stations as well as the heart of the district with the vicinity of Tai Kok Tsui. The feasibility studies on the conceptual plans are currently underway. We will consider such aspects as the traffic, environment and engineering feasibility and put forward specific proposals by end 2009 for consultation with the relevant District Councils and the public.

21. For the pedestrian scheme in Yuen Long, the Highways Department commissioned a consultant to organize a public engagement exercise during July and August 2009 to collect public opinion. In September 2009 the Highways Department also appointed an engineering consultant to work out feasible improvement measures taking into account the opinion collected earlier, and a public forum will be organized in end 2009 or early 2010. The consultant will consider the public opinion to be collected when formulating preliminary improvement measures for further consultation with the public (including the Yuen Long District Council). The study is expected to complete in 2010.

(m) Continuing with the assessment of options that are feasible in transport, financial and legal terms to improve traffic distribution among the three road harbour crossings in the light of the recommendations of the consultancy study to be completed before the end of 2009.

22. We commissioned a consultancy study in November 2008 to identify long-term measures to improve traffic distribution among the three road harbour crossings. Such measures should be feasible in transport, financial and legal terms and take into account the capacity of the

connecting road network of each crossing. The study is scheduled to complete by the end of this year.

Chapter 3 –Investing for a Caring Society

(n) Finalising the study on the assessment system on the provision of hillside escalator links and elevator systems with a view to establishing the assessment system by the end of 2009.

23. We reported to the Panel on Transport on 22 May 2009 on the progress of the assessment system on the provision of hillside escalator links and elevator systems. The Transport Department is finalising the study concerned with a view to establishing the assessment system by the end of 2009. The 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.

Transport and Housing Bureau

October 2009