

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(1)2950/10-11
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by the Administration)

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Panel on Transport

**Minutes of meeting held on
Friday, 24 June 2011, at 8:30 am
in Conference Room A of the Legislative Council Building**

- Members present** : Hon Andrew CHENG Kar-foo (Chairman)
Hon CHEUNG Hok-ming, GBS, JP (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 Abraham SHEK Lai-him, SBS, JP
Hon LI Fung-ying, SBS, JP
Hon Tommy CHEUNG Yu-yan, SBS, JP
Hon WONG Kwok-hing, MH
Hon Jeffrey LAM Kin-fung, SBS, JP
Hon Ronny TONG Ka-wah, SC
Hon KAM Nai-wai, MH
Hon WONG Sing-chi
Hon IP Wai-ming, MH
Hon Mrs Regina IP LAU Suk-ye, GBS, JP
Hon LEUNG Kwok-hung
Hon Tanya CHAN
- Members absent** : Hon CHAN Hak-kan
Hon Albert CHAN Wai-yip

Public officers attending : **Agenda item IV**

Mr YAU Shing-mu, JP
Under Secretary for Transport and Housing

Miss Erica NG
Deputy Secretary for Transport and Housing
(Transport) 3 (Acting)

Miss Cinderella LAW Fung-ping
Assistant Commissioner/Administration & Licensing
Transport Department

Mr Walter FOO Hang-hing
Senior Engineer/Vehicle Regulations & Standards
Transport Department

Mr Harry CHAN
Chief Engineer/Road Safety & Standards
Transport Department

Agenda item V

Mrs Apollonia LIU LEE Ho-kei
Principal Assistant Secretary (Transport) 5
Transport and Housing Bureau

Mr CHUI Wing-wah
Assistant Director/Technical
Highways Department

Mr NIP Chi-kwong
Chief Highway Engineer/Research & Development
Highways Department

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

Staff in attendance : Ms Sarah YUEN
Senior Council Secretary (1)2

Ms Emily LIU
Legislative Assistant (1)2

Action

I Confirmation of minutes

(LC Paper No. CB(1)2518/10-11 - Minutes of meeting on 28 March 2011)

The minutes of the meeting held on 28 March 2011 were confirmed.

II Information papers issued since last meeting

(LC Paper No. CB(1) - Submission from "請關注中環碼頭巴士總站停止運作群組" and "Action group against the stop operating of Central Pier's Bus Terminus" on improvements that should be introduced to the public transport arrangements at Central Piers

LC Paper No. CB(1) - Memo referring to the Panel the views and concerns raised by Wong Tai Sin District Council members at their meeting-cum-luncheon with LegCo Members on 12 May 2011 about the number of bus routes from Choi Hung Road to Kwun Tong, as well as the Administration's response to the concerns

LC Paper No. CB(1) - Memo referring to the Panel the views and concerns raised by Sai Kung District Council members at their meeting-cum-luncheon with LegCo Members on 5 May

LC Paper No. 2490/10-11(01)	CB(1) -	2011 about the progress of the Hiram's Highway Improvement project, as well as the Administration's response to the concerns
LC Paper No. 2490/10-11(02)	CB(1) -	Submission from a bus captain of New World First Bus Services Limited complaining about the working hours of bus captains
		Submission from a member of the public on improvements that should be introduced to the public transport arrangements at Central Piers)

2. Members noted the above papers issued since the last regular meeting.

III Items for discussion at the next meeting scheduled for 22 July 2011

(LC Paper No. CB(1)2514/10-11(01)	No. -	List of outstanding items for discussion
LC Paper No. CB(1)2514/10-11(02)	No. -	List of follow-up actions)

3. Members agreed to discuss the following items at the Panel's July regular meeting –

- (a) Franchises of New World First Bus Services Limited, Long Win Bus Company Limited and Citybus Limited (Franchise for Airport and North Lantau Bus Network);
- (b) Issue of Certificate of Particulars of Motor Vehicles; and
- (c) Outlying island ferry services.

4. Members also agreed to advance the Panel's July regular meeting originally scheduled for 22 July 2011 to 11 July 2011 at 8:30 am to facilitate attendance of the meeting by members, and that ferry operators should be invited to take part in the discussion of the agenda item in paragraph 3(c) above.

IV Measures to enhance safety of reversing goods vehicles

(LC Paper No. CB(1) - Administration's paper on
2514/10-11(03) measures to enhance safety of
reversing goods vehicles

LC Paper No. CB(1)2517/10-11 - Paper on measures to enhance
safety of reversing goods
vehicles prepared by the
Legislative Council
Secretariat
(Background brief)

LC Paper No. CB(1) - Submission from Federation
2514/10-11(04) of Hong Kong Transport
Worker Organizations

LC Paper No. CB(1) Powerpoint presentation
2716/10-11(01) materials provided by the
Administration)

5. The Under Secretary for Transport and Housing (USTH) briefed members on the approach proposed to be adopted by the Administration to enhance safety of reversing goods vehicles (GVs), namely, that all new GV's would be required to be equipped with the reversing video device (RVD) where feasible, while the GV trade would continue to be encouraged to use escort(s), and to install reversing aids including additional rear view mirror, reversing sensor and RVD on a voluntary basis. The Assistant Commissioner for Transport/Administration & Licensing (AC for T/A&L) then briefed members with the aid of power-point on the GV accident statistics due to reversing which showed a decline over the years; as well as the progress of the various traffic management measures taken to enhance the safety of reversing GV's.

The reversing video device

Views and concerns about the proposed approach in ensuring installation

6. Some members considered the progress in mandating fitting of the RVD on GV's slow, and called for more active efforts in this regard. Mr KAM Nai-wai highlighted the number of traffic accidents involving reversing GV's and the fatalities so caused, and expressed great regrets and disappointment at the Administration's decision not to require the installation of RVD's on all GV's at this stage. He further stated that Members belonging to the Democratic Party were of the opinion that to ensure road safety, where technically feasible all GV's, old or new, should be required to install the RVD. A timetable in this regard should also be worked out. In his view,

the number of GVs which really had difficulty in fitting the device was small and, by granting exemption to these GVs the Administration could impose the above requirement without further delay.

7. USTH responded that the Administration attached great importance to road safety. The causes of reversing accidents were more related to driving attitude, and although the number of traffic accidents involving reversing vehicles was small, additional assistive devices would still be helpful even though the installation could not prevent all such accidents. As such, the Administration proposed a dual approach to enhance the safety of reversing GVs by requiring all new GVs to be equipped with the RVD, while actively encouraging owners of existing GVs to fit RVDs voluntarily.

8. Highlighting the example of the retrofitting of safety seat belts, Ms Miriam LAU pointed out that with technological development, retrofitting of the RVD on GVs should become more feasible in due course. Meanwhile, other measures could be taken to improve the situation. USTH indicated agreement with her, explaining that by first taking forward the proposal of requiring all new GVs to be equipped with RVDs, the equipment and installation standards could be improved over time, thereby facilitating retrofitting on existing GVs.

9. Mr Jeffrey LAM pointed out that while the RVD designed and installed as an integral part of a GV would automatically operate when the GV reversed, RVDs which were retrofitted might need to be manually switched on. As such, retrofitting of the device might not help ensure safety if the driver was too lazy to turn it on, or had simply forgotten to do so. He therefore considered it necessary to make the auto activation of retrofitted RVDs a requirement. AC for T/A&L responded that auto activation was technically feasible, and agreed to follow up.

Concerns about the installation progress

10. Ms LI Fung-ying, the Chairman, the Deputy Chairman and Mr IP Wai-ming considered the increase in the percentage of GVs fitted with RVDs voluntarily from around 6% to 15% during the past three years inadequate because, despite the drop in the number of traffic accidents involving reversing GVs, such accidents could cause deaths. In response to Ms LI on an estimate of the number of existing GVs which could be fitted with the RVD but had not done so, USTH explained that the Administration considered it more appropriate to require only new GVs to be equipped with RVDs while encouraging retrofitting of the device on existing GVs because RVDs designed and installed by vehicle suppliers as an integral part of a new

vehicle were more reliable. On the other hand, as reflected by the GV trade, not only was there difficulty in retrofitting RVDs on heavy vehicles but retrofitted RVDs were also not reliable and durable. He further assured members that if the approach of requiring all new GVs to be equipped with the RVD was adopted, so that more GV owners could see the usefulness and benefits of the RVD, the number of GVs voluntarily fitted with the device would continue to increase.

11. AC for T/A&L added that given the current state of technology and the RVDs available in the market, not all GVs could be fitted with RVDs with the necessary scope of vision. Notwithstanding, the GV trade was still willing to experiment with the retrofitting of RVDs, and the percentage of GVs fitted with RVDs voluntarily had already risen significantly.

12. Highlighting the great number of cul-de-sacs in Hong Kong where turning of vehicles might be difficult or impossible, so that vehicles inevitably had to reverse for access, Mr KAM Nai-wai considered it unacceptable that no progress seemed to have been made in ensuring fitting of the RVD on GVs since this issue was last discussed in 2006, and that as reported the Administration was still consulting the GV trade on RVD installation. Mr WONG Kwok-hing echoed his views, adding that considering the fatal nature of reversing accidents, the Administration should take active steps to mandate installation of the RVD as soon as practicable. In response, USTH reiterated that GV drivers' driving attitude was the most important safeguard against traffic accidents. Notwithstanding, he assured members that the Administration would actively pursue the dual approach of installing the RVD on GVs where feasible.

13. The Chairman also expressed disappointment and regrets at the slow progress in ensuring installation of the RVD on GVs. In his view, the proposal of requiring all new GVs to be equipped with RVDs should be taken forward as soon as practicable because the issue had already been discussed for nearly ten years. He therefore requested the Administration to work out a timetable for the proposal for most new GVs which were proven feasible, and provide a paper early in the next legislative session to explain why the legislation for implementation of the proposal could not be enacted, say, in the first quarter of 2012. He further opined that although the GV trade would always prefer self-regulation in retrofitting RVDs, in the public's interest, the Administration should demonstrate greater determination, and target to mandate installation of RVDs on first new and then existing GVs with a more definite programme within this legislative term, in recognition that the costs incurred were insignificant when compared to the lives lost as a result of traffic accidents involving reversing GVs.

Admin

14. USTH noted that members supported the proposal of requiring all new GVs to be equipped with RVDs, and responded that in taking forward the proposal, the Administration had to further consult the suppliers of vehicles and vehicle parts and the GV trade to sort out the relevant implementation details, in particular the exemption arrangements, and the time required for provision of new vehicles installed with RVDs. Only when these specific implementation details were available could the relevant legislative timetable be worked out.

15. Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung pointed out that members had long urged the Administration to implement the proposal of requiring all new GVs to be equipped with RVDs and as such some progress should have already been made in this direction. Highlighting the assertive approach adopted by the Administration in taking forward the currently proposed arrangements for filling vacancies in the Legislative Council, he opined that if there was determination, there was nothing which the Administration could not do. USTH responded that as fitting a RVD had safety implications, it was necessary to confirm with the suppliers of vehicles the availability of RVDs which would meet the requirements and their reliability before mandating their installation.

Proposals on how to expedite the progress

16. Ms LI Fung-ying opined that to expedite the progress of the retrofitting of RVDs on existing GVs, the Administration should subsidize GVs to retrofit RVDs, as in the case of the "Reversing Video Device Sponsorship Scheme for Heavy Vehicles on Construction Sites" launched by the Occupational Safety and Health Council, the Labour Department and the Hong Kong Construction Association.

17. USTH responded that it was Government policy that if any vehicle equipment was required by law, it should be provided and installed by the owner. AC for T/A&L added that some 150 quotas were still available under the above sponsorship scheme for application. Ms LI Fung-ying, however, pointed out that only heavy vehicles operating on construction sites could apply for the subsidy concerned.

18. The Deputy Chairman opined that to expedite the RVD retrofitting progress, efforts should be made to study the approaches adopted overseas to ensure GVs would be fitted with the RVD, and to explore with the GV trade on whether such overseas experience could be applied to Hong Kong.

19. USTH responded that research conducted by the Transport Department (TD) had indicated that GV owners overseas were only encouraged and not mandated to retrofit RVDs. AC for T/A&L supplemented that TD had conducted research into the experience of the United Kingdom (UK), Australia and Canada, and found that they all only mandated the installation of rear view mirrors but not any other auxiliary reversing devices. The UK, however, had also issued reversing guidelines to educate drivers on points to note and how to use auxiliary reversing devices. As to Australia, technical standards of auxiliary reversing devices had been published for reference by vehicle owners and manufacturers. She further elaborated that TD had already been closely liaising with the GV trade to monitor relevant developments, including sharing experience on the use of RVDs. It was noted that the trade and TD shared the view that safety of reversing vehicles hinged more on drivers' driving behaviour and safety awareness than on the availability of reversing devices, which served as an aid only. For example, in the recent accident in Kwun Tong that involved a reversing GV, the GV concerned in fact had both a RVD and an escort.

20. Mr IP Wai-ming opined that instead of just keeping an eye on overseas practices and developments in respect of RVDs, TD should take the initiative to seek expert assistance from the Hong Kong Productivity Council (HKPC), vehicle manufacturers and tertiary institutions to improve RVDs. Mr Jeffrey LAM shared his view. AC for T/A&L responded that close liaison had already been maintained with vehicle manufacturers to look out for the latest available RVDs in the market. However, due to reasons given in paragraph 11 of the Administration's paper for this item (LC Paper No. CB(1)2514/10-11(03)), many RVDs available from the market were unreliable. Notwithstanding, it was believed that if the proposal of requiring all new GVs to be equipped with RVDs would be taken forward first, the operation experience so gained would help accelerate development of RVDs for retrofitting on existing GVs.

21. Mr IP Wai-ming was worried that if factory-fitted RVDs were not available for all GVs, the trade's choice of GVs would be limited, and maintained that TD should more actively seek expert assistance to improve RVDs. In this regard, Ms Miriam LAU also enquired how the Administration intended to take forward the above RVD proposal if factory-built and fitted RVDs were not available for every GV type.

22. USTH responded that when the way forward was finalized after consulting members, TD would further liaise with the GV trade as well as vehicle manufacturers to confirm equipment availability and sort out relevant technical problems and implementation details step by step. In particular,

efforts would be made to ensure improvements to vehicle design to better protect the RVD provided as an integral part of the GV. AC for T/A&L added that as understood from TD's initial contact with vehicle suppliers, many GV models could be supplied together with RVDs. TD had also been liaising with vehicle suppliers regarding retrofitting RVDs on existing GVs. While the above efforts would continue, TD would also approach HKPC as suggested by members.

23. Pointing out that GV owners were in fact willing to fit RVDs and cost was not a consideration, Ms Miriam LAU opined that to expedite the RVD fitting progress, the Administration should help identify reliable, durable and effective RVDs. Apart from those vehicles highlighted in the power-point presentation material, other types of goods vehicles also had difficulty in fitting RVDs due to their operations, for example, cement mixing vehicles, and vehicles operating in construction sites. USTH indicated agreement with Ms LAU's observation above and stressed the need to further liaise with the trade on the fitting of RVDs on the vehicles.

24. Noting that existing GVs would only be encouraged to retrofit RVDs voluntarily, Mr Jeffrey LAM opined that to expedite the retrofitting progress, the Administration should impose a deadline in this regard, after which the licences of GVs not fitted with the RVD would not be renewed. USTH responded that before the feasibility and problems of retrofitting RVDs had been resolved, it might not be appropriate to impose any deadline.

Reversing aids other than the reversing video device

Audible warnings

25. Pointing out that he seldom heard vehicles reversing with audible warnings, Mr KAM Nai-wai questioned whether the Administration had properly enforced the statutory requirement introduced since 2000 for all GVs to be fitted with an automatic device capable of giving an audible warning to nearby pedestrians when reversing. In particular, he enquired whether the Administration had conducted/instituted inspections/prosecutions in this regard in the past. USTH responded that the Police did enforce the above requirement on a routine basis and as follow-up to accidents and complaints. In fact, there were on average over 80 such prosecutions annually in the past. AC for T/A&L added that since the device was prescribed by regulations, proper functioning of the device would definitely be confirmed during the annual inspection of GVs before their licences were renewed.

26. The Chairman highlighted the need to standardize the audible warnings of reversing vehicles by quoting a case where the audible warning given by a

reversing vehicle was a segment of a Beethoven symphony, so that nearby pedestrians slowed down to listen to the music instead of hurrying away from the vehicle concerned. Ms Miriam LAU and Mr WONG Kwok-hing shared his view. AC for T/A&L responded that according to the relevant regulation, the emitted sound of the warning should be intermittent and uniform, and any other sound that might confuse road users should not be emitted.

27. The Chairman pointed out that it might be arguable that the above regulation did not prevent GVs from broadcasting Beethoven symphony "intermittently" as the audible warning. Ms Miriam LAU, Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung and Mr WONG Kwok-hing agreed that music as audible warning should be prohibited. Mr LEUNG and Mr WONG further proposed that the use of spoken warning messages should be stipulated for safe reversing.

28. USTH responded that the Administration would, in response to members' views, examine how audible warnings could be improved. AC for T/A&L added that although the use of spoken warning messages was not provided for in the relevant regulation, the current requirement that the emitted sound should be intermittent and uniform, and that no other sound that might confuse road users should be emitted, could achieve the intended purpose to alert pedestrians of reversing vehicles. As such, the Police could already take action if Beethoven symphony was used as the warning. Moreover, apart from the audible warning, the reversing lamps of a vehicle would also produce white light when the vehicle was shifted into reverse gear. Pedestrians should therefore be properly alerted to a reversing vehicle, and should have responsibility to pay attention to road conditions when crossing the road.

29. Ms Miriam LAU opined that audible warnings given by a reversing GV should be sufficiently loud to alert elderly pedestrians, whose ears might not be as sensitive. In response to her on whether there was any minimum required sound level of the warning, AC for T/A&L advised that the emitted sound was required to be reasonably loud to alert pedestrians to the reversing vehicle. Non-compliance with this requirement would constitute an offence liable to prosecution. She, however, also stressed the importance of striking a balance regarding the sound level of the warning, lest it would cause a nuisance to the neighbourhood.

Escorts and other reversing aids

30. Mr WONG Kwok-hing suggested that pending the enactment of legislative proposals to require the fitting of the RVD on all GVs, the Administration should consider requiring all GVs to have escorts. Mr

LEUNG Kwok-hung shared his view. USTH responded that apart from urging GV drivers to drive slowly and pay attention to the area around the rear of the GVs when reversing, the relevant reversing guidelines also urged GV drivers to designate helpers to assist them in reversing. The helper could be an escort, or a staff member of a nearby shop. As helpers should be easy to find, there might not be a need to stipulate for the use of escorts. Instead, GV drivers should be allowed greater flexibility in meeting their operational needs. Noting the response, Mr LEUNG opined that GV drivers might also seek assistance in reversing from police officers or any other civil servants nearby.

31. Mr WONG Kwok-hing, however, opined that instead of only urging GV drivers to seek assistance in reversing, statutory requirements in this regard should be imposed to ensure compliance, and accountability in the event of an accident. USTH responded that the prevention of reversing accidents hinged on the driver, who should ensure the road conditions were suitable when reversing, and should back slowly and only when it was safe to do so. As such, the driver should seek help from others in reversing where necessary, and there was no need at the present stage to require the provision of helpers on a statutory footing.

32. Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung proposed that a reversing GV could be required to display a visible signal at its rear, such as a red flag, to warn pedestrians.

Views and concerns about the traffic management measures taken to enhance the safety of reversing goods vehicles

33. Mr WONG Sing-chi pointed out that notwithstanding the completion of traffic management improvements at 129 locations, some GV drivers had ignored the warning signs concerned, and had even removed some crash barriers and steel bollards installed. In response to his call for proper monitoring and enforcement efforts to deter such acts, AC for T/A&L emphasized that all road users should comply with traffic and warning signs, and that vandalism was a criminal offence. Apart from taking follow-up actions as necessary if improvement measures were found to have been interfered with during TD's regular patrols, TD would also urge the Police to watch out for any such acts.

34. Mr WONG Sing-chi hoped that the Administration could take action to prevent and deter such vandalistic acts. In response, USTH assured him that the Administration would act expeditiously to rectify any damage and would follow up on any such cases reported by any members of the Council.

35. Ms Miriam LAU indicated support for the traffic management measures taken to improve road safety. She shared Mr WONG Sing-chi's concern about the vandalistic acts he highlighted in paragraph 33 above, but urged the Administration to give due regard to GV drivers' need to conduct loading and unloading operations when installing crash barriers and steel bollards. The Administration noted her views.

36. Ms Miriam LAU opined that traffic and warning signs should be properly located to make sure the drivers would be aware of them. The Chief Engineer/Road Safety & Standards, TD (CE/RSS) responded that in deciding on the locations of traffic signs, regard would be given to how the vehicles were driven at the roads concerned. Where necessary, the signs would even be erected in pairs to enable them to be visible for drivers, who might be reversing from different directions. In response to Mr Jeffrey LAM, he further confirmed that site visits would be conducted before designing and installing traffic signs.

37. Ms Miriam LAU suggested that as an additional measure, speed limits should be imposed on cul-de-sacs accessible only by reversing in consideration that vehicles moving at a low speed would be safer. CE/RSS responded that in general a vehicle should not reverse at more than 5 kilometres per hour (km/h). However, since the lowest reading on the speedometer of a vehicle was about 15 km/h, it could not tell the driver whether he was driving at a speed below 5 km/h. Thus, there was difficulty in setting 5 km/h as the statutory speed limit for reversing. As such, the current advice given to drivers was that they should reverse at walking pace. It was believed that with this advice, a proper driving attitude and other reversing aids, safety of reversing could be ensured.

Publicity and education efforts

38. Mr WONG Sing-chi and Mr IP Wai-ming opined that more efforts should be made to improve GV drivers' safety awareness because their driving attitude was of paramount importance in minimizing traffic accidents involving reversing GVs. To ascertain the effect of driving safety activities, Mr WONG sought statistics of such activities organized and of their participants.

39. AC for T/A&L responded that TD had all along been organizing dedicated training courses, safety workshops and driving safety seminars targeting at drivers of commercial vehicles such as public light buses, taxis, non-franchised buses and GVs, and four such activities in the past two years

were specially arranged for GV drivers. GV drivers could also enroll for dedicated and professional road safety and driving improvement courses organized by the Employees Retraining Board Skills Upgrading Scheme Plus. In the past five years, some 500 drivers had taken such courses. Over the years, the number of drivers who had taken driving safety seminars/workshops totalled a few thousand.

40. Mr WONG Sing-chi and Mr Jeffrey LAM considered the above education efforts insufficient, pointing out that there were over 100 000 GVs. Mr LAM questioned if insufficient publicity and inconvenient course arrangements were to blame for the low enrolment rate. He proposed that the Administration should consider producing CDs on the training courses to enable more drivers to learn how to reverse vehicles safely.

41. USTH agreed that improving driving attitude was important, and pointed out that since 2009, if a person committed a serious traffic offence or had incurred 10 Driving-offence Points within a period of two years, he would be required to attend a driving improvement course on a mandatory basis. He considered it more effective to adopt the above targeted approach to identify drivers whose driving attitude required improvement. Moreover, considering that the number of commercial vehicle driving licence holders exceeded a million, and that most GV drivers were law-abiding, it might be a nuisance to require all GV drivers to take driving improvement courses.

42. AC for T/A&L added that radio announcements in the public interest had already been produced to alert GV drivers to reverse safely. A leaflet to remind drivers, vehicle owners, shop and factory owners as well as pedestrians on actions that they could take to enhance safety in respect of reversing vehicles had also been distributed through the GV trade. Furthermore, Police regional road safety teams also organized talks at elderly centres, kindergartens and schools to alert the high-risk groups concerned to watch out for reversing vehicles when crossing the road. TD would continue these efforts on strengthening public education.

43. Summing up, the Chairman requested the Administration to report in the 2011-2012 legislative session progress of additional efforts made to enhance the safety of reversing GVs in response to members' views expressed at this meeting.

V Improvements in the design of block paving for pavements and its foundation

(LC Paper No. CB(1) 2514 - /10-11(05)	Administration's paper on improvements in the design of block paving for pavements and its foundation
LC Paper No. CB(1)2716/10-11(02)	Powerpoint presentation materials provided by the Administration)

Views on the paving blocks

44. Mr WONG Kwok-hing urged the Administration to use paving blocks that contained a specific percentage of construction and demolition materials or recycled glass in anticipation of an increase in construction wastes as a result of the planned removal of a large number of unauthorized building works. Mr KAM Nai-wai also supported the use of more environmentally friendly paving blocks. The Assistant Director/Technical, Highways Department (AD of Hy/T) responded that the Administration was in fact heading in the above direction and various studies and tests in this regard had been conducted. He, however, pointed out that there were technical limits on the amount of recycled materials to be used in paving blocks. Based on earlier studies and trials, the use of recycled glass not more than 25% of the total aggregates in concrete paving blocks was recommended. Notwithstanding, the Administration would continue to work towards increasing the content of recycled materials in paving blocks.

45. Mr WONG Kwok-hing called upon the Administration to ensure the design of block paving for pavements could suit the needs of visually impaired persons and wheel-chair users. AD of Hy/T responded that tactile guide paths and tactile warning strips were provided for visually impaired persons. Ramps would also be provided as appropriate to ensure barrier-free access for persons with disabilities.

46. Mr WONG Kwok-hing was keen to ascertain whether the paving blocks used in Hong Kong were manufactured locally to provide more local jobs. AD of Hy/T replied in the affirmative.

Current problems

47. Mr KAM Nai-wai expressed concern about tripping caused by stepping that gradually developed between adjacent paving blocks, which was

a common problem with the paving blocks currently used in Hong Kong. Noting that geogrids would be used to tackle the problem, he asked whether all pavements would be so improved in due course. AD of Hy/T responded that only pavements that suffered from exceptional stress to the surfaces as a result of frequent heavy loading/ unloading activities and illegal parking on pavements had the stepping problem. Normally the problem could be effectively addressed by adding a small amount of cement to the sand to improve the stability of the bedding, and this practice had already been made a standard in block paving since 2008. Only when stepping persisted due to poor soil conditions would the geogrid, which was a net made of durable textile that could interlock with surrounding soil, be used to reinforce the bedding.

48. Mr KAM Nai-wai highlighted the serious stepping problem in Theatre Lane, Chiu Lung Street and Lan Kwai Fong, and sought figures on complaints about stepping in the past and how fast they would be handled. He also asked whether and how frequent the Administration conducted inspections to ensure damaged paving blocks would be replaced as necessary in a timely manner.

49. AD of Hy/T responded that the numbers of complaints regarding paving blocks received in 2008, 2009 and 2010 were 960, 734 and 880 respectively but there was no breakdown on complaints specifically about stepping. There were also no statistics at hand on the casualties so caused. He undertook to relay the circumstances in the streets highlighted by Mr KAM Nai-wai above to his colleagues for follow-up, and advised that a mechanism was already in place requiring maintenance contractors to conduct pavement inspections regularly and maintenance works as necessary. He further advised that complaints would be handled within 48 hours where emergency works were required. As to large-scale remedial works necessitating substantial preparation, longer time would be taken but first-aid measures would be taken within 48 hours.

50. Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung sought further details on the maintenance mechanism described above, expressing concern that under the said arrangements, the contractor would tend to conduct as little maintenance works as possible to minimize cost and maximize profits. AD of Hy/T responded that while it was the contractor who conducted pavement inspections and maintenance works, the staff of Highways Department also conducted audit inspections to monitor his performance. The contractor's performance so ascertained would affect the contract payments he received as well as his opportunity to secure future maintenance contracts. At Mr LEUNG's request, AD of Hy/T agreed to provide further information on the

Admin above pavement maintenance mechanism after the meeting, particularly on how the contractor was paid.

VI Any other business

51. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 10:30 am.

Council Business Division 1
Legislative Council Secretariat
30 August 2011