

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(1)2489/11-12
(These minutes have been seen
by the Administration)

Ref : CB1/PL/TP/1

Panel on Transport

Minutes of meeting held on
Monday, 6 February 2012, at 4:30 pm
in Conference Room 3 of the Legislative Council Complex

- 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, GBS, JP
Hon Ronny TONG Ka-wah, SC
Hon KAM Nai-wai, MH
Hon Starry LEE Wai-king, JP
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
Hon Albert CHAN Wai-yip
- Member absent** : Hon CHAN Hak-kan

**Public Officers
attending** : **Agenda item IV**

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

Mr Patrick CHAN, JP
Deputy Secretary for Transport and Housing
(Transport) 3

Miss Erica NG
Principal Assistant Secretary for Transport and
Housing (Transport) 2

Mr LEUNG Tak-fai
Assistant Commissioner/Technical Service
Transport Department

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

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

Agenda item V

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

Mr Patrick CHAN, JP
Deputy Secretary for Transport and Housing
(Transport) 3

Miss Petty LAI Chun-yee
Principal Assistant Secretary for Transport and
Housing (Transport) 6

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

Mrs Magdalen WONG TSE Bing-sum
Principal Executive Officer/VALID & Licensing
Transport Department

Mr Stephen Harvey VERRALLS
Chief Superintendent of Police (Traffic)
Hong Kong Police Force

Mr Eric CHENG Tak-ming
Senior Superintendent of Police
(Traffic Management & Prosecutions Bureau)
Hong Kong Police Force

Mr YEUNG Yiu-chung
Chief Inspector of Police (Management)
(Traffic Management)
Hong Kong Police Force

Agenda item VI

Mr Edward TO W H
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 Macy NG
Senior Council Secretary (1)2

Ms Emily LIU
Legislative Assistant (1)2

Action

I Information papers issued since last meeting

- | | | |
|---------------------------------|-------|---|
| (LC Paper
CB(1)729/11-12(01) | No. - | Submission from a member of the public on the permitted operating areas for New Territories taxis |
| LC Paper
CB(1)729/11-12(02) | No. - | Further submission by a member of the public on MTR's Student Travel Scheme |
| LC Paper
CB(1)734/11-12(01) | No. - | Issue 27 of the Road Safety Bulletin published by The Road Safety Council |
| LC Paper
CB(1)837/11-12(01) | No. - | Memorandum referring to the Panel the views and concerns raised by Islands District Council members on the policy on outlying island ferry services |
| LC Paper
CB(1)837/11-12(02) | No. - | Memorandum referring to the Panel the views and concerns raised by Islands District Council members on the proposals of freezing the fare of MTR Tung Chung Line and the provision of fare concessions to residents of Tung Chung |
| LC Paper
CB(1)837/11-12(03) | No. - | Memorandum referring to the Panel the views and concerns raised by Islands District Council members on the proposal of resurfacing South Lantau Road |
| LC Paper
CB(1)860/11-12(01) | No. - | Submission from the 18th Editorial Board of The Hong Kong Institute of Education Students' Union on the combination of KMB routes 74K and 275 |
| LC Paper
CB(1)931/11-12(01) | No. - | Submission from a member of the public on Government's handling of contracts relating to deployment of advanced traffic detection |

technologies in Hong Kong)

Members noted the above papers issued since the last meeting.

II Proposal of rescheduling of the regular meetings of March to June 2012

2. The Chairman said that as some members disagreed to his proposal of rescheduling the regular meetings of April to June 2012, details of which were issued to members on 26 January 2012 vide LC Paper No. CB(1)927/11-12, the Clerk would propose other dates for members' further consideration.

Clerk

(Post-meeting note: The revised proposal of rescheduling the regular meetings of April to June 2012 was issued to members on 8 February 2012 vide LC Paper No. CB(1)1025/11-12.)

III Items for discussion at the next meeting scheduled for 1 March 2012

(LC Paper No. - List of outstanding items for discussion
CB(1)961/11-12(01)
LC Paper No. - List of follow-up actions)
CB(1)961/11-12(02)

3. Members noted that the Administration had proposed to discuss the following items at the next regular meeting on 1 March 2012 –

- (a) Ad hoc quota trial scheme for cross-boundary private cars (the Scheme);
- (b) Trial use of thermal patcher for small scale resurfacing of bituminous pavement; and
- (c) Access to franchised buses for persons carrying oxygen cylinders.

4. With reference to his letter tabled at the meeting (LC Paper No. CB(1)1004/11-12(01)), Mr WONG Sing-chi proposed holding a special meeting before 1 March 2012 to discuss the Scheme as it had aroused wide public concern. He also requested the Administration to submit a paper to provide details about the Scheme for members' discussion.

5. The Chairman invited members' views on whether a special meeting should be held before 1 March 2012 to discuss the matter. Mrs Regina IP, Miss Tanya CHAN and Mr WONG Kwok-hing considered that a special meeting should be held to discuss the matter, given the wide public concern on the Scheme and limited information about it available. Mrs Regina IP enquired about the number of quotas which would be issued under the Scheme and whether the Scheme was a reciprocal agreement which required compliance from both governments of Hong Kong and the Mainland.

6. Under Secretary for Transport and Housing (USTH) responded that the Administration was fully aware of the public's concern about the matter. He clarified that the Scheme would be implemented in two phases, starting with the issue of ad hoc quotas to Hong Kong private cars, which would be implemented in March 2012, to be followed by Guangdong private cars at a later stage upon satisfactory implementation of the first phase. He supplemented that the Scheme had been discussed at the Panel meetings previously and Panel members generally welcomed the proposal to issue ad hoc quotas. The general response of the public was also positive at that time. There were also opinions that the Scheme should be implemented as soon as possible. He added that the Administration was finalizing the details of the first phase of the Scheme with Guangdong government and it would announce the details, including the number of quotas, as soon as possible.

7. In respect of the second phase of the Scheme, USTH said that the Administration would take into consideration factors such as road safety, capacity of road networks, as well as environmental protection, in working out the relevant arrangements. Experts of the two governments would further discuss the specific arrangements for the second phase of the Scheme after the first phase had been implemented for some time and proven to be smooth in operation. As there was no concrete timetable for the second phase at the moment, the number of quotas for which had yet to be discussed. He further said that the Administration considered it appropriate to discuss the first phase of the Scheme at the next regular meeting in March.

8. In response to the Chairman and Mr Ronny TONG, USTH assured members that, like the first phase of the Scheme, the Administration would report the details of the second phase to the Panel before its implementation. Miss Tanya CHAN opined that Panel members should be duly consulted instead of just being informed of the details of the second phase of the Scheme.

Admin
Clerk

9. Summing up, the Chairman concluded that members in general considered the subject important and warranted urgent discussion at a special meeting to be held before 1 March 2012. He requested the Administration to provide a paper on the Scheme, including the procedures of consulting Legislative Council (LegCo) Members on the second phase of the Scheme. He said that members would be informed of the date of the special meeting as soon as possible.

(Post-meeting note: The special meeting was scheduled for 16 February 2012 at 8:30 am and the next regular meeting was rescheduled to 9 March 2012 from 8:30 am to 10:45 am.)

IV Use of electric vehicles on expressways

(LC Paper No. - Administration's paper entitled "Use of electric vehicles on expressways"
CB(1)961/11-12(03)
LC Paper No. - Paper on "The Use of electric vehicles" prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat)
CB(1)961/11-12(04)

10. USTH briefed members on the salient points of the Administration's paper on proposed legislative amendments to the Road Traffic (Registration and Licensing of Vehicles) Regulations (Cap. 374E) and the Road Traffic (Expressway) Regulations (Cap. 374Q) to allow the use of certain types of electric vehicles (EVs) on expressways without having to obtain expressway permits.

Legislation governing the use of EVs

11. Mr WONG Kwok-hing enquired about the estimated number of EVs in Hong Kong and how many of them would benefit from the legislative amendments. Mr WONG also asked about the classification of EVs in Hong Kong.

12. USTH said that as at end-2011, there were about 309 EVs registered for use in Hong Kong, excluding those registrations under processing. They comprised mostly private cars and motor cycles. Other classes of EVs included electric medium goods vehicle, electric light goods vehicles, electric private light buses, electric private buses and special purpose EVs. USTH said that the proposed legislative amendments would facilitate the use of EVs on expressways in Hong Kong as owners of suitable EVs would no longer be required to apply for expressway permits. However, it was difficult to

estimate the number of EVs which would benefit from the legislative amendments.

13. Mr WONG Sing-chi asked about the definition of EVs, and which of them required to be issued licenses and whether any classes of them were not allowed to drive on roads. He pointed out that about a decade ago, a kind of electric bikes (i.e. bikes equipped with electric motors) commonly used by rural residents in North Districts had been refused registration and not permitted for use on cycling tracks or public roads. He further asked whether the electric bikes similar to the above kind which were commonly used in Taiwan and on the Mainland would be regarded as EVs in Hong Kong.

14. USTH responded that under regulation 4(1) of Cap. 374Q, no person should use a vehicle on an expressway unless the vehicle belonged to one of the types specified in Cap. 374Q and with engine cylinder capacity not less than 125 cubic centimetres. As EVs were powered by electric motors and did not have internal combustion engines with cylinders, they did not meet the current requirement for use on expressways as stipulated under regulation 4(1) of Cap. 374Q. The owners of suitable EVs were required to apply for expressway permits which authorized them to drive their vehicles on expressways. In order to facilitate the use of EVs on expressways in Hong Kong, the Administration proposed that regulation 4(1) of Cap. 374Q be amended to permit EVs that fulfilled certain technical requirements such as the "rated power" to run on expressways without having to obtain expressway permits.

15. Assistant Commissioner/Technical Service (AC/TS) of Transport Department (TD) supplemented that unlike diesel or petrol-driven vehicles, EVs were powered by electric motors and they included the types as mentioned by USTH in paragraph 3 above. As regards the electric bikes referred to by Mr WONG Sing-chi, they fell under the definition of motor vehicles as stated in the Road Traffic Ordinance (RTO) (Cap. 374). However, as they failed to meet the construction and safety requirements under the Road Traffic (Construction and Maintenance of Vehicles) Regulations (the C&M Regulations), they could not be registered and licensed under the RTO for use on roads. USTH agreed to further provide more details of the statutory construction and safety requirements of a vehicle under the C&M Regulations for members' reference.

Admin

Criterion for determining which EVs should be allowed to run on expressways

16. Mr KAM Nai-wai noted that a rated power of 7 kilowatts was recommended on expert advice for adoption as the minimum threshold for electric private cars, and 3 kilowatts for electric motor cycles and motor tricycles to run on expressways. According to the Administration's paper, at the above proposed minimum thresholds on "rated power", the electric motors of EVs should be capable of generating continuous motor power to drive EVs at a cruising speed of 80 kilometres per hour or above to match the main traffic speed on expressways. Mr KAM asked who had been consulted in drawing up the above requirements. He also asked about the numbers and classes of EVs which could meet the requirements.

17. AC/TS responded that academics from the Department of Electrical and Electronic Engineering of the University of Hong Kong and the Department of Electrical Engineering of the Hong Kong Polytechnic University who specialized in studying EVs had been consulted. They considered that "rated power" of the electric motors was suitable for use as the criterion for determining which EVs should be allowed to run on expressways. When drawing up the required rated power output, reference had been made to those EV models which were currently or would be available in the local market. He said that based on the criterion of the required rated power output, the large majority of registered EVs in Hong Kong would be able to comply. He also confirmed that there were at present 172 licensed electric private cars and 15 licensed motor cycles in Hong Kong and they were all suitable to run on expressways. AC/TS further explained that since expressways were designed to cater for high volume of traffic at high speed, and the design speed for new expressways was generally 80 kilometres per hour or above, EVs allowed to run on expressways must be able to quickly attain a speed compatible with that of the main traffic stream for safety as well as traffic management purposes.

18. Mr Jeffrey LAM echoed with AC/TS that there should be some requirements imposed on the speed level of vehicles running on expressways as that in overseas, since it was dangerous for vehicles driving at a low speed together with those at a high speed. He opined that clear guidelines on the required speed level and use of traffic lanes should be provided to drivers.

19. Ms LI Fung-ying expressed support for promoting the use of EVs for environmental protection in Hong Kong. She, however, expressed concern about the safety implications of allowing motor cycles and motor tricycles with relatively light weight to run on expressways while many heavy goods

vehicles were running concurrently on the same road. She asked whether the Administration had assessed the safety issues of its proposal.

20. USTH said that when determining which types of EVs that would be allowed to run on expressways, road safety was the prime consideration of the Administration. AC/TS supplemented that motor cycles and motor tricycles which had been issued with expressway permits were currently allowed to run on expressways, and so far, no safety problem was observed. The legislative amendments only aimed to facilitate the use of certain types of EVs of which the rated power output of the electric motor reached the prescribed threshold to run on expressways without having to obtain the expressway permits.

Promoting wider use of EVs in Hong Kong

21. While supporting the use of EVs for they were zero-emission, Mr Jeffrey LAM expressed concern that the number of EVs in Hong Kong remained small. Although the Administration had set up a Pilot Green Transport Fund for a commitment of \$300 million to encourage the transport sector to test out green and low-carbon transport technology, the Fund was only applicable to commercial vehicles. While private EVs would only benefit from the waiver of First Registration Tax, he could not see any incentives provided by the Administration to encourage members of the public to switch to using EVs. Pointing out that EVs were much more expensive than other diesel or petrol-driven vehicles and EV chargers were not available in many private residential premises or buildings/large shopping centres, Mr LAM opined that the Administration should provide financial incentives for the public to procure private EVs. He opined that there should be a comprehensive EV charging network and other ancillary facilities, and the Administration could take the lead to provide EV charging facilities in all public housing estates.

22. USTH replied that while the promotion of wider use of EVs was under the purview of the Environment Bureau (ENB), the Transport and Housing Bureau and the TD would render full cooperation and support to ENB. As far as he understood, some measures had been taken by the ENB to promote wider use of EVs, such as promoting the setting up of EV chargers at commercial or residential car parks, encouraging different EV manufacturers to introduce their EVs into Hong Kong, earmarking \$180 million in 2011-2012 Policy Address for franchised bus companies to purchase 36 electric buses for trial runs on a number of routes to assess their performance in different conditions, setting up the Pilot Green Transport Fund for application by the transport trades, and waiving First Registration Tax on EVs. As regards financing the public to procure private EVs, USTH said

Admin

that this would involve the use of public fund and the Administration had to ensure its prudent use carefully. At Mr Jeffrey LAM's request, USTH agreed to relay the request to ENB.

23. In response to the Chairman, USTH said that the Administration planned to submit the above proposed legislative amendments to Cap. 374E and Cap. 374Q to the LegCo for negative vetting in the second quarter of the 2011-2012 legislative session.

V Trade licence

(LC Paper CB(1)961/11-12(05)	No. - Administration's paper entitled "Trade licence"
LC Paper CB(1)961/11-12(06)	No. - Relevant press cuttings
LC Paper CB(1)1004/11-12(01)	No. - Submission from H.K.L.H.D. Motors Association Limited)

24. USTH briefed members on the Administration's paper on its proposal to introduce a new form of trade licence (new trade licence) for the re-export trade of left-hand drive (LHD) vehicles, and to improve the control mechanism to prevent the abuse of trade licence. Details of the proposal were at the Annex of the paper. Members noted that the Administration aimed to introduce the proposed legislative amendments into the LegCo for approval by negative vetting within the current legislative session.

Regulatory mechanism of the new trade licence for LHD vehicles

25. Mr WONG Kwok-hing noted a submission from H.K.L.H.D. Motors Association Limited expressing support for the Administration's proposal. He, however, expressed concern on how the Administration would monitor the proper use of the new trade licence and whether it would stipulate and restrict the route for driving the vehicle from one site to another.

26. USTH and the Chief Superintendent of Police (Traffic) of the Hong Kong Police Force (CS(T)) said that the Police would monitor the use of the new trade licence through routine patrol. Documentary proof would have to be produced on the spot upon request by any police officer. At present, every holder of a trade licence had to maintain a register of all journeys made by vehicles in use under the trade licence, so as to prove that the licence had been used for permitted purposes upon request by any police officer for inspection. Under the Administration's proposal, a register of journeys would have to be kept for each trade licence and the register should be carried

on board the vehicle and made available for inspection without delay on request by any police officer.

27. Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung expressed doubt about the effectiveness of the above measures in preventing drivers from abusing the use of trade licences for non-permitted purposes, and pointed out that as reported by the press, there had been cases of abused use of trade licences on unregistered and unlicensed luxury cars for joy ride in Hong Kong, claiming to be for permitted purposes of the trade licence. Regarding the limitation on the use of the new trade licence, i.e. it could not be used for driving a LHD vehicle for the purpose of mechanical test or pre-sale demonstration, Mr LEUNG queried how a police officer would be able to prove whether a LHD vehicle was being driven for such purposes during the inspection of the register of journeys produced by the driver concerned.

28. USTH responded that the Administration's proposal also included improvements to be made to the regulatory mechanism applicable to both the existing and the new trade licences to prevent abuse. For example, there were varied practices of holders of trade licences in keeping the register and some drivers did not bring along the register when using the trade licence, thus creating difficulty in enforcement by the Police. The Administration therefore would require that the register of journeys should be made available for inspection without delay on request by any police officer and ensure that the trade licence would be used only by the licence holder or a person authorized by him/her. CS(T) supplemented that the tightened control mechanism would facilitate Police's inspection as the register would record the purposes of the journeys made by the vehicles. The Police were confident that they would be able to carry out the enforcement work effectively.

29. Ms Miriam LAU pointed out that LHD vehicle re-export was a sizeable business in Hong Kong, and the introduction of the new trade licence would not only facilitate LHD re-export trade but would also boost the economy of Hong Kong. She added that since the current trade licence only applied to right-hand drive (RHD) vehicles, the trade claimed that the current arrangements had caused much inconvenience and increased cost to them, as a LHD car dealer had to obtain a movement permit (charged HKD560 for each permit) for each and every LHD vehicle he/she intended to re-export, if such vehicles had to be driven on the roads of Hong Kong. Ms LAU emphasized that the new trade licence proposed by the Administration did not come by easily. It was the result of long discussion between the trade and the Administration for many years. As such, she believed the trade would treasure the new trade licence and would not abuse its use. She also pointed

out that there were many classes of LHD vehicles for re-export and not all of them were luxury cars. In addition, as LHD vehicles were not popular in Hong Kong, any abuse cases would be easily identified. After all, holders of trade licences who were found to breach the licensing conditions might be liable to cancellation of the trade licences. Based on the above, she considered it unlikely that the use of the new trade licence would be subject to abuse. She further said that the trade had expressed the following views concerning the new trade licence:

- (a) the register of journeys should be kept in duplicate (one to be kept in the vehicle and the other by the licence holder), so as to facilitate the licence holder to monitor the proper use of the trade licence; and
- (b) LHD vehicles should be allowed to run on roads in Hong Kong for pre-sale demonstration and carry one passenger apart from the driver, as there had been more and more people buying LHD vehicles from Hong Kong for re-export to overseas and the Mainland.

Ms LAU asked for Administration's response in respect of the above requests made by the trade.

30. USTH said that the Administration would give thought to the suggestion in (a) above. As regards the request for allowing carriage of passengers under the proposed new trade licence, the request went beyond the Administration's intention to facilitate the operation of the trade by providing a proper mechanism to allow LHD vehicles for re-export to run on the roads in Hong Kong for legitimate purposes relating to the re-export trade. Such extended use of the new trade licence could easily lead to abuse, allowing the use of LHD vehicles on roads in Hong Kong for non-re-export purposes without being registered and licensed, which was not acceptable from both the traffic management and road safety perspectives. The Administration therefore maintained the view that the new trade licence should only be used for LHD vehicles for re-export purposes. USTH added that in the circumstances that there was a need to carry passengers in the vehicle, a LHD car dealer could apply for a movement permit.

31. Mr Albert CHAN asked about the penalty for abusing the use of trade licence for non-permitted purposes. He considered that the penalty level should be able to achieve a deterrent effect.

32. Assistant Commissioner/Administration & Licensing of TD (AC/A&L) responded that, if any vehicle was upon or used on any road in contravention of the regulations related to trade licence, the holder of the trade licence and the driver concerned would each commit an offence under regulation 60(5) of the Road Traffic (Registration and Licensing of Vehicles) Regulations (Cap. 374E) and would be liable to a fine of \$2,000. The trade licence concerned might also be cancelled. USTH supplemented that if the driver of a vehicle used a trade licence without authorization or for purposes other than those permitted under the law, the holder of the trade licence and the driver concerned might commit an offence under section 4(1) of the Motor Vehicles Insurance (Third Party Risks) Ordinance (Cap. 272). In accordance with this section, no person should use, or cause or permit any other person to use, a motor vehicle on a road unless there was in force in relation to the user of the vehicle by that person or that other person, as the case might be, such a policy of insurance or such a security in respect of third party risks. Using a trade licence for purposes other than those permitted under the law might render the policy of insurance or security ineffective. If a person acted in contravention of this section, he/she would be liable to a fine of \$10,000 and to imprisonment for 12 months, and be disqualified from holding or obtaining a licence to drive a motor vehicle for one to three years. At the request of Mr Albert CHAN, USTH agreed to provide written information on the penalty for abuse of the use of trade licence for members' reference.

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Length of stay of LHD vehicle in Hong Kong

33. Mr Albert CHAN expressed concern on the length of stay of LHD vehicle in Hong Kong, which was originally proposed for six months and was finally set at 12 months. He considered that in determining the appropriate length of stay, due regard had to be given to its impact on the environment, road safety and law enforcement. He asked about the origins and types of LHD vehicles for re-export through Hong Kong.

34. AC/A&L responded that in consulting the trade on the Administration's proposal, the trade had reflected that they could not have full control of the time required to complete the business transactions and relevant formalities to re-export a vehicle and believed that a 12-month period would meet their needs. The Administration considered this request reasonable and was in line with its intention to facilitate the trade's operation. The Administration therefore proposed that the period of stay of a LHD vehicle for re-export be set at 12 months. In respect of the origins and types of LHD vehicles for re-export through Hong Kong, the Administration would provide the relevant information to members after the meeting.

Admin

Concerns about the abuse of the current trade licence for RHD vehicles

35. In response to the Chairman, USTH said that the new trade licence could not be used on LHD vehicles which had stayed in Hong Kong for more than 12 months from the date it was imported into Hong Kong, but there was no similar limitation on the length of stay of RHD vehicles in Hong Kong under the current trade licence.

36. The Chairman expressed grave concern that the above arrangement for the current trade licence would lead to abuse. He said that it had been reported by the press that some people made use of the trade licences to avoid the normal registration and licensing procedures, and payment of the relevant fees and tax. USTH explained that a time limitation on the length of stay of RHD vehicles in Hong Kong was not set for the current trade licence because it was difficult to estimate how long the vehicles concerned would be sold. Imposing such a limitation on the current trade licence would impact on the trade concerned. As such, the Administration would strengthen its efforts on law enforcement to prevent abuse.

Admin

37. The Chairman called on the Administration to come up with effective measures to tackle problems of abuse of use of the current trade licence and to address the concerns raised by members at this meeting before introducing the proposed legislative amendments into LegCo.

VI Improvement on emergency crossings on major roads

(LC Paper No. - Administration's paper entitled
CB(1)961/11-12(07) "Improvement on emergency
crossings on major roads")

38. Members noted the powerpoint slides tabled at the meeting on improvement on emergency crossings on major roads (LC Paper No. CB(1)1004/11-12(03)).

39. Members noted that the Highways Department (HyD) had planned to install movable steel barriers (MSBs) or removable concrete barriers (RCBs), depending on the functions of the crossings, at 127 openings in central dividers of major roads in Hong Kong, and over 90% of the improvement works would be completed by end of 2013. The Chairman asked about the cost of the project and whether the Administration would need to apply for funding from LegCo.

40. Assistant Director/Technical of HyD (AD/T) replied that subject to the length of the barriers, the cost of one set of MSBs ranged from some \$0.4 million to \$0.6 million plus necessary installation costs, and that for RCBs around \$60,000. He confirmed that the relevant costs would be absorbed by the Administration from within the existing resources.

41. Mr Albert CHAN expressed concern that MSBs might not be strong enough to prevent errant heavy vehicles such as trucks from straying onto the opposite traffic lanes during accidents on expressways. He asked whether the Administration had assessed the resisting capability of the MSBs. As regards RCBs, Mr CHAN expressed concern that they could not be opened expeditiously when needed for passage of vehicles during accidents or emergencies as hoisting devices should be used for removing RCBs and the process took time. He enquired whether the Administration had considered using removable water-filled barriers.

42. AD/T said that the Administration had studied the feasibility of using high-strength water-filled barriers. However, findings had shown that although they could contain vehicles during impact, their movement extent during impact had exceeded the relevant allowable limit. As such, they were not used as permanent central dividers for emergency crossings but for temporary traffic arrangements only. He further said that to minimize the possibility of heavy vehicles from straying onto the opposite traffic lanes during accidents, the barriers would be installed at straight road section with better vision as far as possible. He added that the Administration was aware that apart from facilitating opening for passage of vehicles during emergencies and when needed, enhancing the safety of the crossings when not in use during normal times was equally important. For this, the Administration had been studying the replacement of tubular crash gates with more robust barriers with reference to overseas practices. MSBs and RCBs were tested to be better than conventional tubular crash gates in terms of their functions and resisting capability. As such, the Administration had made MSBs and RCBs the standard central dividers for emergency crossings.

43. Mr Albert CHAN maintained that MSBs might not be strong enough to prevent errant heavy vehicles from straying onto the opposite traffic lanes during accidents on expressways where there were many heavy vehicles such as double-decked buses and lorries driving on high speed. In his view, those MSBs were only suitable for installation on low speed roads instead of expressways. He asked whether the Administration planned to install MSBs on Tuen Mun Road and Tolo Highway.

44. AD/T said that MSBs followed the design of the United States' TL-3 standard, which could retain high-speed vehicles from impacting. Although there was not a 100% guarantee that MSBs could prevent heavy vehicles from straying onto the opposite traffic lanes during accidents, MSBs would be able to absorb the impact energy to a large extent and the resistant capability of which was comparable to that of concrete barriers commonly installed. He further confirmed that MSBs or RCBs would be installed on Tuen Mun Road and Tolo Highway. With the aid of powerpoint, he showed a video which illustrated the resistant capability of MSBs being impacted by a private car.

45. Mr Albert CHAN said that although MSBs were able to contain small vehicles during impact, they might not be able to do so for heavy vehicles. He reiterated that MSBs should not be installed on expressways, such as Tuen Mun Road and Tolo Highway. The Administration noted his views.

VI Any other business

46. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 6:25 pm.