

**Opening remarks by Secretary for Transport and Housing
at meeting of Legislative Council Panel on Transport
on 10 July 2012**

Chairman,

Thank you for inviting me to the meeting today. As transport and traffic matters are closely related to people's daily life, the new Administration is committed to ensuring that our transport policies and measures continue to meet the public needs as appropriate.

First of all, I would like to report the latest status of **major transport infrastructure** projects. Construction works of the West Island Line, South Island Line (East), Kwun Tong Line Extension and Hong Kong section of the Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link have commenced, and are expected to be completed by 2014 and 2015 respectively. Separately, funding for the main works of the Shatin to Central Link was approved by the Legislative Council in May this year. The relevant construction works will begin soon.

As regards the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge, another **cross-boundary transport infrastructure** project, works within the Mainland waters in respect of the main bridge, tunnel and artificial island have commenced and are progressing well. The Bridge is expected to be completed and commence in 2016. The funding for the associated local projects was approved by the Finance Committee in November last year and May this year respectively. Reclamation works for the Hong Kong Boundary Crossing Facilities commenced at the end of last year, and works for the Hong Kong Link Road began in end May this year. We are pressing ahead with the local projects for completion by 2016 so as to tie in with commissioning timetable of the Bridge.

In the light of the development of the community, we commissioned a consultancy study in March 2011 to review and update the Railway Development Strategy 2000. The study aims at taking a forward looking approach by allowing early public engagement in the discussion process for updating Hong Kong's long-term railway development blueprint, as well as making timely reservation of land for railway corridors and ancillary facilities. The two-stage study will take about 24 months to complete. The Stage 1 public engagement exercise, which consults the public on the ideas of the three major regional railway corridors serving the New Territories, is underway and will end on 21 July 2012. In Stage 2, the consultants will review the relevant ideas based on the public opinions collected. They will also assess potential bottlenecks in the future railway network, and propose local enhancement schemes such as constructing parallel lines, extensions or spur lines, or adding new stations. The Stage 2 public engagement exercise is tentatively scheduled

to start at the end of this year.

On formulating **cross-boundary transport arrangements**, we will continue to supervise the cross-boundary transport services implemented at existing control points, and monitor cross-boundary traffic at land crossings to see if the existing arrangements need to be revised to achieve better efforts. We will also conduct detailed studies to draw up cross-boundary land transport arrangements for new control points (such as the Hong Kong Boundary Crossing Facilities of the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge and Liantang/Heung Yuen Wai boundary control point).

We are also pushing ahead with our **local road infrastructure** projects, including Stage 1 works for widening of Tolo Highway and Fanling Highway, Central-Wan Chai Bypass and Island Eastern Corridor Link, and widening of Tuen Mun Road. The planning and design of a number of projects are also underway. They include Tuen Mun-Chek Lap Kok Link, Tuen Mun Western Bypass, Central Kowloon Route, Tseung Kwan O-Lam Tin Tunnel, as well as Stage 2 works for widening of Tolo Highway and Fanling Highway.

In addition, we are planning to carry out improvement projects in various districts to enhance the pedestrian environment in business, shopping and leisure areas with heavy pedestrian flows. Proposed schemes include the pedestrian subway system in Causeway Bay, footbridge system in Mong Kok and pedestrian environment scheme in Yuen Long Town. The Highways Department is consulting the public on the design options with a view to further refining the schemes.

We secured funding approval from the Legislative Council in July last year for taking forward the design of **barrier-free access facilities** retrofitting works at about 180 existing footbridges, elevated walkways and subways, as well as phase 1 retrofitting works of barrier-free access facilities. We have commenced Phase 1 retrofitting works and plan to apply for funding approval for phase 2 this year, aiming to complete the bulk of the works by 2016-17.

Separately, a number of major public transport-related reviews and initiatives are about to start. We will initiate the **review of the MTR Corporation Limited's fare adjustment mechanism** and discuss the matter with the railway company, with a view to completing the exercise by late 2012 or early 2013. We have engaged a consultancy to conduct a study under which the mechanism will be objectively and comprehensively reviewed. The consultants will examine whether and how new elements in addition to the data linked with economic performance, wage index and productivity factor should be introduced in the mechanism so as to reflect such aspects as operating costs, profit level, operational efficiency and service performance of the railway company as well as affordability of the general public, etc., thereby improving the mechanism.

We also plan to commence another review on the **fare adjustment arrangement for franchised buses** in late 2012. Meanwhile, given the expiry of the existing franchises of Citybus Limited (Franchise for Hong Kong Island and Cross Harbour Routes), Kowloon Motor Bus Company (1933) Limited and New Lantao Bus Company (1973) Limited in 2016 and 2017, we will proceed with the relevant preparatory work according to the established procedures regarding the arrangements for awarding or renewing the bus franchises according to the established practice. In parallel, we will review the special helping measures provided for the six major outlying island ferry trunk routes at the end of this year. As usual, we will report the progress of matters concerned to this Panel in a timely manner.

On **vehicle licensing policy**, we thank Members for supporting the passage of the Road Traffic (Registration and Licensing of Vehicles) (Amendment) (No. 2) Regulations 2012 to introduce a new type of trade licence to facilitate the re-export trade of left-hand drive vehicles and to improve the control mechanism for preventing the abuse of trade licences. With the negative vetting period completed on 13 June 2012, the Amendment Regulations formally came into effect on 9 July 2012.

On **road safety**, we will continue our three-pronged approach to enhance road safety through legislation, enforcement as well as publicity and education. The amendment legislation for combating drug driving has been officially implemented since mid-March this year. The new law includes a “zero-tolerance offence”, imposes heavier penalties against drug driving offences, and empowers police officers to require drivers suspected of drug driving to undergo preliminary drug tests. Such measures have yielded initial results. During the three months or so since the commencement of the new legislation, the Police have conducted 55 preliminary drug tests on drivers suspected of drug driving. Eighteen of the drivers were arrested, among which four have been prosecuted. In future, we will, through coordination of the Police, make great effort to conduct the prototype trial for the rapid oral fluid testing device, so as to further facilitate effective enforcement by the Police.

The legislation for enhancing public light bus safety was amended last year and has been formally implemented since mid-April this year. Related measures include imposing a maximum speed limit for light buses, mandating all light buses to install speed limiters, and making the electronic data recording device a basic equipment on new light buses. Subsequent to the enactment of the new law, the Police carried out in May this year a territory-wide enforcement exercise targeting light buses’ operational safety issues, such as whether light buses had exceeded the speed limit and whether they had installed speed limiters as required. During the exercise, the Police seized three light buses for investigation. The Police will conduct the territory-wide enforcement exercise on a regular basis for ensuring operational safety of light buses while the Transport Department will carry out surprise checks randomly to deter illegal

behaviour of light buses.

In the few months ahead, we will strive to take forward the legislative exercise on requiring the installation of the reversing video device on newly registered goods vehicles. Given that the device can help improve reversing safety by reducing blind spots behind goods vehicles and that fitting of the device on new goods vehicles has been confirmed feasible, priority should be accorded to the proposed installation. We have noted that Members of this Panel are in general supportive to our legislative proposal. As such, we plan to start drafting the relevant subsidiary legislation and introduce the proposal in the coming legislative year.

The Chief Executive proposes to re-organise the Government Secretariat. One of the proposals is to **set up a new Transport and Works Bureau** by combining the existing Transport Branch of the Transport and Housing Bureau (except policy responsibilities on maritime, aviation and logistics which will be transferred to the new Commerce and Industries Bureau) with the current Works Branch of the Development Bureau (except policy responsibilities on heritage conservation which will be taken up by the new Culture Bureau). Given the close relation between transport and public infrastructure development works, the new Transport and Works Bureau can effectively plan, manage and implement various public works and transport infrastructure, thus further enhancing the economic development of Hong Kong and promote our connection and integration with mainland transport networks.

My colleagues and I would be pleased to answer questions from Members. Thank you, Chairman.

Transport and Housing Bureau
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