

Legislative Council Panel on Transport

2014 Policy Agenda

Transport-related Policy Initiatives of the Transport and Housing Bureau

Introduction

The 2014 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.

Railway development

- (a) Reviewing and updating the “Railway Development Strategy 2000”, with a view to reporting to the public in 2014 on the way forward for the railway projects beyond 2020.**

2. Railway projects have profound impact on the society, people's livelihood and economic development. It often takes eight to ten years for a railway project to take shape from formulation of ideas, conceptual planning, consultation with stakeholders, detailed design, to actual construction and completion. To allow early planning for railway development beyond 2020, the Government has commissioned a consultant to conduct a study for the Review and Update of the “Railway Development Strategy 2000”, with a view to updating the long-term railway development blueprint for Hong Kong to cater for the latest development needs of the society. To engage the public in the discussion

as early as possible and to map out the future railway development of Hong Kong together with the community, we conducted two stages of Public Engagement exercise.

3. Having considered the comments collected in the two rounds of Public Engagement exercise, the consultant has largely completed the study and prepared specific recommendations. It will submit the final report to the Government soon. The Government will consider the consultant's overall recommendations in formulating the blueprint for railway development beyond 2020, having regard to transport demand, cost-effectiveness and development needs of New Development Areas. We will report to the public the way forward for the new railway projects later this year.

4. In addition, since the Government has decided to first lift the development moratorium at the south of Pok Fu Lam, i.e. the area close to Wah Fu Estate, for public housing development and the future redevelopment of Wah Fu Estate, we will actively consider taking forward the South Island Line (West) to address the additional transport demand of the district in the long run.

(b) Overseeing the construction of the West Island Line for timely commissioning in 2014.

5. The West Island Line ("WIL") is an extension of the Island Line from Sheung Wan to Kennedy Town. The construction works of the WIL commenced in July 2009. The progress has been satisfactory and we expect that the railway will be commissioned by the end of this year. We will continue to keep in touch with the Central and Western District Council and the local community regarding the construction progress and the associated

matters.

(c) Overseeing the construction of the South Island Line (East) and the Kwun Tong Line Extension for timely commissioning in 2015.

6. The South Island Line (East) (“SIL(E)”) is a new railway corridor from South to North of Hong Kong Island. It starts from South Horizons on Ap Lei Chau to Admiralty via Lei Tung, Wong Chuk Hang and Ocean Park. The Kwun Tong Line Extension (“KTE”) is an extension of the Kwun Tong Line from Yau Ma Tei to Whampoa. The construction works of the SIL(E) and KTE commenced in May 2011. The progress of both railways has been satisfactory and we expect that the railways will be commissioned in 2015. We will continue to keep in touch with the District Councils and the local community regarding the construction progress and the associated matters.

(d) Overseeing the construction of the Shatin to Central Link for timely phased commissioning in 2018 and 2020.

7. Upon its completion, the SCL will form two strategic railway corridors, namely the “East West Corridor” and the “North South Corridor”. The “East West Corridor” will connect the Ma On Shan Line with the West Rail Line; while the “North South Corridor” will extend the existing East Rail to Admiralty Station. The construction works of the SCL commenced in July 2012. The progress has been satisfactory and we expect that the Tai Wai to Hung Hom section will be commissioned in 2018, while the Hung Hom to Admiralty section in 2020. We will continue to keep in touch with the District Councils and the local community regarding the construction progress and the associated matters.

8. Upon commissioning, the SCL will be a new railway between the New Territories and urban area. It is anticipated that about 23% of the passengers (i.e. about 74 000 passenger daily) travelling from the New Territories to Kowloon (including the East Rail Line and Ma On Shan Line) will use the East West Corridor for East Kowloon and East Hong Kong. It will divert the passenger flow on the East Rail Line thus relieving the peak loading of Tai Wai to Kowloon Tong section during the morning peak.

Improving road transport

(e) Overseeing the construction of the Central-Wan Chai Bypass and Island Eastern Corridor Link with target commissioning in 2017.

9. The Central-Wan Chai Bypass and Island Eastern Corridor Link project (CWB) is very important in coping with the serious traffic congestion of the northern coast of Hong Kong Island. The Highways Department commenced the construction works in 2009 with a view to commissioning the CWB in 2017. It will only take about five minutes to drive from Central to Island Eastern Corridor at North Point. The east-west traffic on the Hong Kong Island will become more direct and smoother.

(f) Preparing for the implementation of the Central Kowloon Route, with a view to commencing its construction in 2015.

10. We need to construct the Central Kowloon Route (CKR), linking Yau Ma Tei Interchange in West Kowloon with the Kai Tak Development and Kowloon Bay in East Kowloon, so as to reduce the traffic volumes along the major east-west corridors, thus relieving the existing traffic congestion

problem and coping with future traffic need. Upon completion of all the preparatory works and obtaining of funding approval from the Legislative Council Finance Committee, it is envisaged that the main works of CKR could commence in 2015 for completion in about five years. Upon the commissioning of the CKR, the journey time between West Kowloon and Kowloon Bay via CKR would take around 5 minutes, thus resulting in a saving of 25-30 minutes in comparison to the journey time without CKR.

(g) Continuing our efforts in improving the traffic distribution among the road harbour crossings, and considering and implementing measures to enhance traffic management with a view to reducing congestion along major transport corridors.

11. To improve the traffic distribution among the three road harbour crossings, we put forward three specific options to adjust the toll levels of the Cross Harbour Tunnel and Eastern Harbour Crossing for public consultation in 2013. We are studying the views received during the public consultation and following up with relevant stakeholders. We will carefully consider a host of factors, including the views received and the latest traffic situation, etc. in formulating the way forward.

12. To help reduce congestion along major transport corridors, we will continue to study the introduction of new technologies, including intelligent transport systems, to enhance the effectiveness of traffic management and efficient use of limited road space along these corridors.

(h) Continuing to pursue bus route rationalisation vigorously to enhance network efficiency, improve service quality, and ease traffic congestion, whilst reducing roadside air pollution.

13. The Government and franchised bus companies have pursued bus route rationalisation more vigorously over the past year. In addition to the annual route development programmes, bus routes are rationalised through the Area Approach. Under this approach, the entire district, instead of individual routes, is used as the basis for reviewing and re-organising bus services holistically. Bus routes which are seriously under-utilised will be cancelled and new routes will be introduced to meet new demand. Meanwhile, internal feeder and external routes serving a district as well as interchange arrangements will be strengthened, and interchange concessions will be offered as far as possible. These arrangements can enable bus services to better meet the needs of local residents in overall terms, while alleviating traffic congestion and reducing roadside air pollution. They can help bring a win-win situation to the community.

14. Rationalisation proposals under the Area Approach for North District and Tuen Mun have been implemented and their operation over the past several months has generally been satisfactory. Drawing on the experience in these two districts, we will rationalise bus routes serving other districts in phases under the same approach. We are working to apply the Area Approach in Yuen Long/Tin Shui Wai, Tai Po, Tsing Yi and Sha Tin/Ma On Shan in 2014.

15. At the same time, to enhance public acceptance of route rationalisation, and taking into account the experience of the Tuen Mun Road Bus-Bus Interchange (“BBI”), we will explore setting up BBIs at more locations, introducing additional and more attractive interchange routes and interchange fare concessions, and providing better hardware facilities. For instance, we hope to set up a BBI in Tsing Sha Control Area within this year to tie in with the implementation of the rationalisation

proposals for Sha Tin under the Area Approach.

Improving pedestrian environment

- (i) Implementing the policy on “Universal Accessibility” , as announced in August 2012, to further enhance the accessibility of existing public walkways by installing lifts to help the elderly and other people in need to move around with greater ease. After consulting the District Councils in the first quarter of 2013, we are conducting preliminary technical feasibility studies for priority projects identified in each district.**

16. The Government has been installing barrier-free access facilities at public walkways (i.e. public footbridges, elevated walkways and subways maintained by the Highways Department) for years (i.e. the “Original Programme”) on the recommendation of the Equal Opportunities Commission. Investigation work of around 160 items under the “Original Programme” has been completed, with retrofitting works being implemented for completion by phases from 2014 to 2018 as scheduled.

17. In addition, the Government launched the new policy on “Universal Accessibility” in August 2012. There was overwhelming response from the public and lift installations at about 250 public walkways were proposed (referred to as the “Expanded Programme”). In the first quarter of last year, we invited the District Councils (DCs) to prioritize the new items in their districts proposed by the public. The DCs were generally very supportive of the new policy, and each of them selected three public walkways for priority implementation. Upon completion of consultation, we commenced technical feasibility study and investigation work for the priority items in end June last year in accordance with the DCs’ selection.

The work is anticipated to be completed within one year. After completion of the study and investigation, we will report to the DCs the study findings and preliminary proposals for the items. Once a priority item is confirmed to be technically feasible and supported by the district, we will commence its design and construction works as soon as possible. We anticipate completion of these priority items by phases in about four years' time.

(j) Taking forward the higher ranking proposals for the provision of hillside escalator links and elevator systems which are found technically feasible.

18. The Government has established a set of comprehensive, objective and transparent scoring criteria for assessing proposals for the “provision of hillside escalator links and elevator systems” (“hillside escalator systems”) to determine the priority for conducting feasibility studies for the proposed projects. The assessment for the 20 proposals received at that time was completed in 2010 and the result was reported to the LegCo Panel on Transport.

19. The Highways Department has conducted preliminary technical feasibility studies for the top ten proposals by phases, and is now undertaking investigation and preliminary design works, etc. for those proposals preliminarily found to be technically feasible¹. The proposal ranked first has been included into the “Improvement Works on Pedestrian Link Facilities in Tsz Wan Shan” under the Shatin to Central Link project. Construction works commenced in July 2012, and are anticipated to be

¹ Since the proposal ranked tenth, “Lift and Pedestrian Walkway System between Lai King Hill Road and Lai Cho Road” involves two privately owned dangerous slopes, the preliminary technical feasibility study has to be deferred pending the completion of the repair works of the dangerous slopes by the owners.

completed by phases from 2014 to 2016 with smooth progress so far.

20. After reviewing the manpower of relevant departments, we consider there is room for commencing the preliminary technical feasibility study of the proposal ranked eleventh, “Lift and Pedestrian Walkway System between Wo Tong Tsui Street and Kwai Hing Road”. The study commenced in third quarter of last year and would take around one year for completion. For the proposal ranked twelfth (i.e. “Lift and Pedestrian Walkway System at Luen On Street”), we are drawing up the study framework for the project and will commence the preliminary technical feasibility study in due course. Besides, the proposal ranked thirteenth, “Yuet Wah Street Pedestrian Linkage” project is being taken forward by the Civil Engineering and Development Department in relation to the Kwun Tong Town Centre Redevelopment by the Urban Renewal Authority. Construction works commenced in the second quarter of 2013 and is anticipated to be completed by end 2015.

(k) Taking forward proposed pedestrian environment improvement schemes in Yuen Long, Causeway Bay and Mongkok.

21. We are planning projects to improve the pedestrian environment in several areas with high pedestrian flow, such as Causeway Bay, Mong Kok and Yuen Long, in Hong Kong. The projects involve improvement works such as construction of footbridge systems and widening of space for pedestrian activities. This will help create a convenient and comfortable pedestrian environment, thus encouraging the public to walk.

22. Regarding Yuen Long, improvement works which are relatively smaller in scale are being completed progressively. Regarding the design and implementation of the footbridge system, we will closely liaise with

the locals and relevant stakeholders. Regarding the scheme in Causeway Bay, we have carried out two stages of public consultation and are studying the views of the public in drawing up the next step forward. For the footbridge system in Mong Kok, following earlier consultation with the public, we are conducting further studies to optimise the design of the works concerned.

Promoting “bicycle friendly” environment

- (1) Developing a comprehensive cycle track network in the New Territories to improve the quality of living. We are carrying out a pilot scheme in Tai Po, under which new improvement measures to cycle tracks would be implemented and new bicycle parking facilities would be installed. We have commissioned a new consultancy study on how to implement these new measures in nine new towns.**

23. We will strive to promote “bicycle friendly” environment in the rural areas, new towns and new development areas, including developing new cycle track network, improving existing cycle tracks and bicycle parking facilities, as well as strengthening publicity and education on cycling safety. The Government will further enhance the “bicycle friendly” policy having regard to relevant overseas experience. We are now carrying out a pilot scheme in Tai Po, under which new improvement measures to cycle tracks will be implemented and new bicycle parking facilities will be installed. The majority of improvement measures are expected to be completed in the first half of 2014.

24. We have also commissioned a consultancy study on how to implement the new measures identified under the Tai Po pilot scheme in

nine new towns. The study will also review the traffic conditions of various bicycle prohibition zones to see whether the prohibition at some of these roads should be maintained, and whether mitigation measures are required. The study is expected to be completed by the end of 2016.

Strengthening external land transport connections

(m) Overseeing the construction of the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge local projects to dovetail with the target commissioning of the Main Bridge within Mainland waters in 2016. Construction of the Hong Kong Boundary Crossing Facilities and Hong Kong Link Road are underway and on schedule.

25. Regarding the progress of the works of the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge (“HZMB”), the construction works of the Main Bridge in the Mainland waters, including the Macao-Zhuhai Boundary Crossing Facilities, commenced in end 2009, and are expected to be completed in 2016 as scheduled. With regard to the Hong Kong Boundary Crossing Facilities (HKBCF), the Hong Kong Link Road and Tuen Mun-Chek Lap Kok Link² projects, they have entered the on-site construction stage as planned. We will closely monitor the progress of the projects to tie in with the commissioning of the Main Bridge in 2016. Upon the commissioning of the HZMB, the transport connectivity between Hong Kong and the Western Pearl River Delta will be enhanced. With its vast human and land resources, the Western Pearl River Delta will provide ample opportunities for Hong Kong businessmen to expand their operation in the Mainland. Besides, various sectors in Hong Kong, such as tourism,

² Tuen Mun-Chek Lap Kok Link consists of the Southern Connection and the Northern Connection. We target to complete the Southern Connection between the HKBCF and the North Lantau Highway substantially by end 2016 in tandem with the commissioning of the HZMB Main Bridge, and the Northern Connection between the HKBCF and Tuen Mun by end 2018 to satisfy the local traffic demand timely.

finance and commerce will stand to gain.

26. To prepare for the commissioning of the HZMB in 2016, the three governments have set up the Co-ordination Group on Cross-boundary Matters to press ahead with the relevant policy studies and discuss the relevant cross-boundary transport arrangements. The scope of the policy studies covers regulation and quota system of cross-boundary vehicles, toll level for cross-boundary vehicles, traffic management, operation and maintenance, rescue and emergency plan, enforcement coordination, customs clearance facilitation, etc. We will, having regard to the functions and characteristics of the HZMB, formulate a comprehensive plan that will complement the local road system to bring the economic benefits of the bridge into full play.

(n) Overseeing the construction of the Hong Kong section of the Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link with target completion in 2015.

27. The construction of the Hong Kong section of the Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link (“XRL”) commenced in January 2010. Construction is now in progress. The foundation works of the West Kowloon Terminus have been completed and the structural works are underway. The works of the tunnel sections are also in progress. We aim to complete the works for the Hong Kong section of the XRL in 2015. Thereafter, it will take six to nine months to conduct various tests and trial run in order to ensure safety and reliability of the railway service.

**Transport and Housing Bureau
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