

**For information on
21 February 2014**

**Legislative Council Panel on Transport
Traffic Distribution among Road Harbour Crossings**

PURPOSE

This paper informs Members of the outcome of the public consultation on the three toll adjustment proposals put forward by the Government in 2013 to improve the traffic distribution among the road harbour crossings (“RHCs”) and explains the Government’s latest work plan for improving the traffic distribution among RHCs.

BACKGROUND

2. In February 2013, the Government embarked on a three-month public consultation exercise on three toll adjustment options as proposed measures to improve the traffic distribution among RHCs. All three options involved different degrees of toll reduction at the Eastern Harbour Crossing (“EHC”) and toll increases at the Cross Harbour Tunnel (“CHT”). They aimed to divert traffic from CHT to EHC, thereby reducing the traffic queue at CHT by 30% to 40% with a reduction of about 4 000 vehicles per day, such that cross-harbour traffic queue would not interfere with non-cross-harbour traffic. The main features of the three proposed toll adjustment options are recapitulated at **Annex**.

3. To effect the downward toll adjustment at EHC, the Government proposed to subsidise EHC users by paying the franchisee of EHC the difference between the existing tolls and the reduced tolls at EHC based on actual traffic flow. Depending on the outcome of the public consultation, it was proposed that the selected toll adjustment option should be implemented on a trial basis for 12 months to test its effectiveness.

OUTCOME OF PUBLIC CONSULTATION

4. During the consultation period, we consulted this Panel, the Transport Advisory Committee, eight relevant District Councils (“DCs”)¹, some academics and experts, as well as the transport trades. Altogether we received 106 written submissions from various stakeholders and members of the public through different channels.

5. The public consultation helps focus the community’s discussions on the feasibility and acceptability of taking forward the rationalisation of RHC traffic flow through toll adjustment. As it transpired from the public consultation, rationalising traffic flow among RHCs through toll adjustment is a direction acceptable to the community in general. Nonetheless, views received on the three proposed options were diverse and there was no clear indication of support for any option.

6. Among the 106 submissions received, less than half of the total number of respondents indicated preferences, among which Option A (Resource Management Option) and Option C (Status Quo for Transport Option) were equally popular. The rest of the submissions either opposed all three options, or did not choose any of the three options and suggested that the Government should consider other alternatives.

7. The transport trades in general supported Option C which proposed no change in the tolls for public transport vehicles, while academics and professional bodies mostly supported either Option A or Option C. The eight relevant DCs consulted did not arrive at a clear conclusion or support for a particular option. Some DCs were concerned about the capacity of EHC and its nearby roads to absorb additional traffic, and whether the traffic diverted to EHC would cause congestion in their districts.

LATEST TRAFFIC SITUATIONS AT EHC AND CHT

8. EHC has a design capacity of 78 000 vehicles. The consultant engaged by the Transport Department estimated that an additional 4 000 to 5 000 vehicles would be diverted to EHC each day under the proposed toll adjustment options. In 2012, EHC had a daily average traffic throughput of

¹ The eight relevant DCs are Central and Western District, Eastern District, Kowloon City District, Kwun Tong District, Sai Kung District, Sham Shui Po District, Wan Chai District and Yau Tsim Mong District.

about 71 000 vehicles. Under the toll adjustment options, the EHC throughput was estimated to increase to about 75 000 to 76 000 vehicles, which would still be below its design capacity.

9. In view of the public concern and the changing traffic condition, we have re-assessed the latest traffic flow, the results of which show that EHC's daily average traffic throughput increased to about 72 000 vehicles in 2013. Under the toll adjustment options, the traffic diverted from CHT to EHC could reach up to 5 000 vehicles. The throughput of EHC would then increase to about 77 000 vehicles, which will be quite close to its design capacity.

10. On the other hand, the latest traffic throughput at CHT in 2013 showed a drop of more than 3 000 vehicles per day as compared to 2011. With the overall increase in cross-harbour traffic during the same period (from 2011 to 2013), such drop is believed to be due to a diversion of CHT traffic to either EHC or the Western Harbour Crossing ("WHC").

LATEST WORK PLAN

11. Having full regard to the latest traffic situations at CHT and EHC, the views of the public and concerns of the relevant districts, the Government decides to put in abeyance the implementation of the trial scheme.

12. Nonetheless, the Government will continue to work on the rationalisation of traffic distribution among RHCs to alleviate congestion. The Government initially considers that the commissioning of the Central-Wan Chai Bypass ("CWB") in 2017 would be an opportune time because CWB will help ease the congestion of the connecting roads of WHC. This can provide a basis for the Government to consider toll adjustment at WHC when we draw up the overall scheme to rationalise the traffic distribution among RHCs. Moreover, with the transfer of EHC's ownership to the Government in 2016, there will be greater flexibility in devising a toll adjustment scheme. By then, the condition will become more conducive to our formulating a more comprehensive strategy to rationalise the traffic distribution among RHCs with greater effect.

13. From now to 2017, the Government will continue to closely monitor the traffic situation at all RHCs and their neighbouring areas and implement further traffic management measures when necessary.

14. Traffic congestion is becoming a territory-wide issue. To effectively address the problem, apart from pursuing the rationalisation of traffic distribution among the three RHCs, we also have to consider other medium and long term measures, including further enhancing our mass transport system (including railway and franchised bus network) and other public transport ancillary facilities, studying the trial implementation of electronic road pricing in Central District, fostering a pedestrian friendly environment, as well as facilitating the use of bicycle as a transport mode in new towns and new development areas. We will also work on a review on the long term public transport planning and development and will consult the public and this Panel on specific proposals as and when ready.

ADVICE SOUGHT

15. Members are invited to note the contents of the paper.

**Transport and Housing Bureau
February 2014**

Key features of the three toll adjustment options

	Option A (Resource Management Option)	Option B (EHC Reduction CHT Increase Option)	Option C (Status Quo for Public Transport Option)
Toll adjustment features	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• reduce EHC private car (“PC”) toll by \$5 and the tolls of other types of vehicles correspondingly, such that the tolls would be closer to CHT tolls after adjustment as stated below• increase CHT PC toll by \$5 and increase tolls of other vehicle types in accordance with the resource management principle such that larger and heavier vehicles which occupy more road space and cause more wear and tear to road surface would be charged higher tolls	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• reduce EHC PC toll by \$5• increase CHT PC toll by \$5• adjust the tolls of other vehicle types at both EHC and CHT proportionally in accordance with their original toll structure respectively (with no change in toll structure)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• reduce EHC PC toll by \$5• the reduction in tolls of goods vehicles at EHC is larger than the increase in tolls of goods vehicles at CHT, the differential of which is the largest among the three options, and has the least impact on the goods vehicles trade• increase CHT PC toll by \$10• tolls for public transport vehicles unchanged, except that the tolls for hired taxis at EHC will be reduced by \$10

	Option A (Resource Management Option)	Option B (EHC Reduction CHT Increase Option)	Option C (Status Quo for Public Transport Option)
Traffic assessment			
Estimated queue reduction at CHT	40%	30%	38%
Economic assessment			
Estimated overall economic benefits	\$560 million per year	\$530 million per year	\$520 million per year