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[English translation for reference only]

Hon. CHAN Kam-lam
Chairman, Panel on Transport
Legislative Council Complex
1 Legislative Council Road
Central
Hong Kong

Dear Chairman,

I note that an agenda item for the meeting on 18 July 2014 is the “Proposal to set up a subcommittee to discuss the future Comprehensive Transport Study in Hong Kong”. I am writing to provide some information on my bureau’s plan to commission a study on public transport strategy (“the Study”) in the near future for reference by the Panel on Transport.

The Third Comprehensive Transport Study (“CTS-3”) completed in 1999 has mapped out some broad directions with respect to the overall arrangement for the transport system. They include better integration of transport and land use planning; better use of the railway as the backbone of our passenger transport system; better public transport services and facilities; better use of advanced technologies in transport management; and better environmental protection. The Government is of the view that these broad directions remain valid from the policy perspective. Meanwhile, we have just

completed the study for the Review and Update of the “Railway Development Strategy 2000”. The Government has therefore no intention to commission a CTS-4 at this stage. Nevertheless, the overall arrangement of our public transport services should indeed be reviewed systemically and in detail in tandem with the development of the railway network. In this connection and as I have mentioned at the Legislative Council earlier, after the release of the blueprint for post-2020 railway development later this year, we shall prepare for the commissioning of the Study to examine the medium and long-term overall arrangement of public transport services in Hong Kong. In particular, the Study will examine the roles and long-term development potential of various public transport modes (including franchised buses, public light buses, taxis and non-franchised buses), amidst our policy to use the railway as the backbone of our public transport system and to further expand the railway network. The objective is to ensure complementarity among the different public transport modes, while affording the community reasonable modal choices.

As regards the seven items mentioned by Hon. WONG Kwok-hing and Hon. TANG Ka-piu in their letter dated 30 June, items (1), (4) and (7) (relating to development potential and roles of different transport modes as well as the Government’s regulatory regime) will be examined when the roles of different public transport modes are reviewed under the Study. As one of the focuses of the Study would be on the long-term development potential and positioning of different public transport modes to allow the travelling public to continue to have multi-modal choices, the issues of operating costs faced by the operators, source of passengers, etc. would be covered. This, to a certain extent, should address items (2), (3) and (6) (relating to supporting facilities, operating costs, fare levels, etc.) of the abovementioned letter. If Members have specific proposals on the abovementioned areas, we stand ready to prepare papers for Member’s discussion at the Panel.

For issues relating to air quality (including energy and vehicle emission as mentioned in item (5) of the abovementioned letter), they are basically under the purview of the Panel on Environmental Affairs. Our view is that it would be more appropriate for these issues to continue to be followed up through that channel.

Upon commencement of the Study, we shall report progress to the Panel on Transport and listen to Members' views at an appropriate juncture. We shall also engage the industry and public in the process. We consider it more appropriate to adhere to the established approach to brief Members on the relevant issues covered by the Study at the Panel and exchange views with Members.

Yours sincerely,
(signed)
Secretary for Transport and Housing

c.c. Commissioner for Transport