

**For discussion  
On 15 November 2013**

**Legislative Council Panel on Transport  
“Universal Accessibility” Programme**

**PURPOSE**

This paper reports on the latest progress of the new policy on “Universal Accessibility” (UA) announced by the Government in August last year. The new policy aims at expanding the scope of the Government’s programme to retrofit barrier-free access facilities to existing public walkways<sup>1</sup> so as to facilitate access of the public. To continue with the implementation of the new policy, we propose to seek approval from the Finance Committee (FC) for an allocation of \$567.696 million in 2014-15 for the block allocation Subhead 6101TX - “Universal Accessibility Programme” under Capital Works Reserve Fund (CWRP) Head 706 – “Highways”.

**BACKGROUND**

2. The Government has been installing barrier-free access facilities at public walkways (for instance, installing ramps in footbridges that only have staircases) for years. During the visits of the Chief Executive and his political team to the 18 districts last year, many elderly asked the Government to install barrier-free access facilities. With the ageing population, we have to speed up our progress, as well as to expand the existing programme to retrofit barrier-free access facilities at public walkways, so as to bring further convenience to the public.

3. The Government announced in August last year that the policy in operation would be enhanced, and a new lift installation programme would be launched to respond to public requests, thereby creating a “universally accessible” environment in the community to improve the accessibility of the public walkways –

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<sup>1</sup> i.e. public footbridges, elevated walkways and subways

- (a) from now on, when considering retrofitting of barrier-free access facilities to existing or newly constructed public walkways, the Government would treat lifts and ramps equally (unless the site conditions dictate one form over another). This is a change from the current practice which gives priority to ramps; and
- (b) as long as site conditions permit, we will still consider installing lifts at walkways where there is already a standard ramp installed. After a lift has been installed, we will evaluate whether to keep the ramp or demolish it for more spacious pavement or to make way for roadside greening.

4. We obtained approval from the FC in January this year to create a new block allocation Subhead 6101TX - “Universal Accessibility Programme” under CWRP Head 706 – “Highways”, together with an allocation of \$2.449 million and \$187.272 million in 2012-13 and 2013-14 respectively, to facilitate the implementation of the works projects under the new policy.

## **CURRENT PROGRESS**

### Original Programme

5. Prior to the announcement of the new policy in August last year, the Government had been taking forward the “Original Programme” of retrofitting barrier-free access facilities to public walkways in response to the recommendation of the Equal Opportunities Commission. The Highways Department obtained approval from the FC in July 2011<sup>2</sup> for commencing the retrofitting works of barrier-free access facilities for ten items, and the design for about 180 items (the estimated number of feasible items at that time) of barrier-free access facilities under the “Original Programme”. The construction and other related costs of the works items mentioned above are now funded by the block allocation Subhead 6101TX - “Universal Accessibility Programme”. The “Original Programme” is currently being implemented as scheduled, with detailed progress as follows:

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<sup>2</sup> i.e. 6167TB - Provision of barrier-free access facilities at public footbridges, elevated walkways and subways — design works and phase 1 construction works

- (a) 10 items for which retrofitting works commenced in 2011 and 2012 are now being carried out as scheduled, and anticipated to be progressively completed from 2014 onwards;
- (b) investigation work for all items has been completed. Among them, about 150 items are confirmed to be technically feasible with the design and retrofitting works progressively commenced, of which:
  - (i) 24 items that commenced the retrofitting works in 2012-13 are now being carried out as scheduled, and anticipated to be completed progressively from 2015 to 2017;
  - (ii) retrofitting works for about 36 items are anticipated to be commenced in the current year (2013-14), and anticipated to be completed progressively from 2016 to 2017;
  - (iii) retrofitting works for about 30 items are anticipated to be commenced in next year (2014-15), and anticipated to be completed progressively from 2017 to 2018;
  - (iv) the construction works of about 60 remaining items will be commenced as soon as possible upon completion of design and after obtaining support from the locals.

6. In summary, the retrofitting works of barrier-free access facilities under the “Original Programme” are currently being implemented as scheduled, and are anticipated to be completed progressively from 2014 to 2018.

### New Items Proposed by the Public

7. When the new policy was announced in August last year, we invited members of the public to further propose lift locations at public walkways where they considered necessary. The new policy received overwhelming response from the public and lift installations at about 250 public walkways were proposed (referred to as the “Expanded Programme”).

8. After detailed analysis and preliminary review of the information provided by the public, we have consolidated the public proposals to a list of items for each of the districts. In the first half of this year, we consulted all District Councils (DCs) on the new policy and invited them to prioritise 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 3 public walkways for priority implementation. Upon completion of consultation, we commenced technical feasibility study and investigation work for the priority items in end June this 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 works by phase in about four years.

9. For the remaining items, after the implementation of first batch of priority items is on track, the Government will review the implementation schedule taking into account the progress of works, views of the DCs, market capacity, resources of the departments and response from the public, etc.

### Proposals Outside the Ambit of the New Policy

10. In the last year, we also received about 2 750 proposals falling outside the ambit of the new policy, involving about 380 locations, including those concerning the MTR Corporation Limited, the Hong Kong Housing Authority, the Link Real Estate Investment Trust and private developments, as well as proposals of hillside escalator/lift systems. We have, after properly consolidating the relevant information, referred to the relevant organisations for consideration and following up. As regards the proposals of hillside escalator/lift systems, which are outside the current

ambit of the UA programme, we will consider and handle them in accordance with the existing public works mechanism.

## **FUNDING APPLICATION FROM DEDICATED SOURCE**

11. As mentioned in paragraph 4 above, we obtained approval from the FC in January this year to create a new block allocation Subhead 6101TX - “Universal Accessibility Programme” under CWRP Head 706 – “Highways” in 2012-13 to facilitate the implementation of the works projects under the new policy. We will follow the established practice of respective block allocation and apply to the FC every year an allocation in one-go according to the forecast on the nature, scale and number of the retrofitting works, so as to finance the Category D items to be undertaken in the coming financial year.

12. We propose to seek approval from the FC an allocation of \$567.696 million in 2014-15 from block allocation Subhead 6101TX - “Universal Accessibility Programme” under CWRP Head 706 – “Highways” to facilitate the implementation of the works projects under the new policy. The proposed funding will be used in the coming year (2014-15) for the construction cost of a total of about 90 retrofitting items (i.e. those mentioned in paragraph 5(b) (i), (ii) and (iii)) under the “Original Programme”, and the costs for technical feasibility studies, investigations and design work for some 50 new retrofitting items proposed by the public under the “Expanded Programme”.

## **ADVICE SOUGHT**

13. Members are invited to comment on our proposed funding proposal. Subject to the Panel’s support, following the procedures of block allocation for other subheads, we will submit the proposal to the Panel on Development on 26 November this year. Then, we will submit the proposal to the Public Works Subcommittee for discussion on 18 December this year, and apply for funding approval for 2014-15 from the FC on 10 January 2014, with a view to continuing the implementation of the projects.

**Transport and Housing Bureau  
November 2013**