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4 March 2015

Establishment Subcommittee  
Legislative Council Complex  
1 Legislative Council Road  
Central, Hong Kong  
(Attn : Mr Jason Kong)  
[Fax: 2978 7569]

Dear Mr Kong,

**Establishment Subcommittee**  
**Follow-up to meeting on 16 February 2015**

Thank you for your letter of 24 February 2015. I am writing to provide supplementary information in response to the questions raised by Members of the Establishment Subcommittee (“ESC”) relating to the proposed creation of a supernumerary post of an Administrative Officer Staff Grade C to oversee and steer the Roles and Positioning Review (“RPR”) of the Public Transport Strategy Study (“PTSS”).

Public transport-oriented policy (Items (a) and (f) of incoming letter)

The public transport-oriented policy and the principle of according priority use of the roads to public transport services as laid down in the Second Comprehensive Transport Study remain valid. As explained in EC(2014-15)18 and the supplementary LC Paper No. ESC53/14-15 (01), given that Hong Kong is a small and densely-populated city with limited road space, and the public are concerned about the impact of road traffic on air quality, we will continue to adopt a public transport-oriented policy for our city. At the ESC meeting on 16 February, we have reaffirmed that the PTSS would be based on the abovementioned guiding principle. In so far as the priority use of roads by public transport services is concerned, the Transport Advisory Committee (“TAC”) submitted its Report on Study of Road Traffic Congestion in Hong Kong to the Government in December 2014. We are studying the suggestions

proposed therein in detail with the departments concerned, and will respond at an appropriate juncture. When conducting the PTSS, we will explore how to further promote the priority use of roads by public transport services in the context of the implementation of measures to alleviate traffic congestion and in the light of actual road situations. In response to Members' comments on Enclosure 1 to EC(2014-15)18, our revised version is at the Annex.

Meanwhile, the Government has all along been making an effort to take forward the concept of "barrier-free transport". In response to Members' comments on the Revised Enclosure 2, we would like to reiterate that we will take into account various factors (including the actual operating situation and environment as well as long-term financial viability) in a holistic manner to determine how best to approach the various topical issues under the Topical Study. The factors set out in the preamble of the Revised Enclosure 2 are factors which should be considered on an equal basis; they are not meant to be overriding directions.

Issues covered by the PTSS and the report (Items (b), (c) and (d) of incoming letter)

There are a wide range of policy issues in relation to public transport services. The topics under the PTSS are drawn up by the Transport and Housing Bureau in conjunction with the Transport Department ("TD"). These issues are of long-standing concerns to Legislative Council ("LegCo") Members, the public transport trades and the public, and have been given priority as they are time-sensitive. The PTSS will not cover policies that have been working well or issues that can be effectively handled under the existing mechanisms. We consulted the LegCo Panel on Transport on the work plan for the PTSS on 25 November 2014. The panel paper can be found at <http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr14-15/english/panels/tp/papers/tp20141125cb1-238-6-e.pdf>.

As regards the scope of the RPR of the PTSS, the major topics are set out in Enclosure 1 to EC(2014-15)18. We will commission a consultant to assist in carrying out the RPR. The consultant will canvass views from various stakeholders (including LegCo Members, the public transport trades and the public). Subject to the views collected, topics may be added or removed. Given that we plan to complete the RPR in about two years, we have to be selective with respect to the scope of and actual topics for the review.

In the course of the PTSS, we will report progress to the Panel on Transport as appropriate. Upon the completion of both parts (i.e. the RPR and the Topical Study) of the PTSS, we will submit a consolidated report to the LegCo. When the consultant has completed the RPR and submitted a formal

consultancy report to the Government, we will release the report to the LegCo and the public.

As regards the impact of Mainland visitors on our public transport services, we will follow up on this issue when examining the long-term development of various public transport services in the course of the RPR. We will also provide information to the Panel on Transport for analysis as appropriate.

Impact of cross-boundary vehicles on traffic (Item (e) of incoming letter)

The TD and Highways Department frequently review the development of transport infrastructure in Hong Kong. For conducting strategic assessments on major highway developments, the two departments make regular forecasts on traffic demand across Hong Kong using transport modelling and the latest planning data (including forecasts of cross-boundary traffic), with a view to updating the requirements, scale and implementation timetables of major highway projects. Traffic impact assessments will also be conducted at individual boundary control points (“BCPs”) under planning to analyse the impact of cross-boundary traffic using the respective BCPs on local roads, so as to ensure that such traffic does not exceed the handling capacity of our road networks. In addition, since 1982, the governments of Guangdong and Hong Kong have been jointly implementing and administering a quota system which covers all cross-boundary vehicles (excluding goods vehicles and Lok Ma Chau-Huanggang cross-boundary shuttle buses) to regulate and control cross-boundary traffic.

Mode of operation of ferries (Item (g) of incoming your letter)

In response to Members’ suggestion in applying the current management model of the Cross-Harbour Tunnel to ferry operation (i.e. the vessels should be purchased by the Government while the management of the operation should be outsourced), we will consider the suggestion when examining the role and long-term financial viability of ferry service under the Topical Study.

Yours sincerely,

(Peggy NG)  
for Secretary for Transport and Housing

c.c.:

Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury	(Attn: Ms Esther Leung)
Secretary for the Civil Service	(Attn: Mr Eddie Mak)
Commissioner for Transport	(Attn: Ms Macella Lee)

Revised Enclosure 1

**Public Transport Strategy Study –  
Issues covered by the Roles and Positioning Review**

On the basis of further promoting the priority use of the roads by public transport having regard to the public transport-oriented policy and actual road situations, the Roles and Positioning Review will examine the roles and positioning of various public transport services against the background of using the railway as the backbone of our public transport system, taking into account the further expansion of the railway network. The public transport services under review include franchised buses, public light buses (PLBs), taxis, non-franchised buses (NFBs), Light Rail, trams and ferries. The major topics include –

- (a) to review the extent to which the roles and positioning of various public transport services as laid down by the Third Comprehensive Transport Study remains applicable. In the course of the review, we will need to take into account the availability of multi-modal choices and the delicate balance of the operating environment;
- (b) in light of the findings of (a) and the prevailing operating environment of various public transport services, to review whether some service adjustment should be made to ensure the long-term and healthy development of the public transport services. The major review areas will include issues previously raised by the Legislative Council (LegCo), transport trades and the public such as –
  - (i) **franchised bus service:** to promote bus route rationalisation to enhance network efficiency, and having regard to the implications for other public transport services, to explore whether it is feasible and desirable for franchised buses to attract more passengers by introducing different types of new services (e.g. point-to-point express routes, seat-only service, premium service with additional facilities (such as Wi-Fi)); and to explore whether it is feasible and desirable to install real-time bus arrival information systems for service improvement. During the process, we will carefully evaluate the long-term operational and

financial implications of the proposals for the franchised bus trade, and the passenger demand for these new services;

- (ii) **PLB service:** having regard to the implications on other public transport services, to explore whether it is feasible and desirable for PLBs to increase the number of passenger seats. We will carefully assess the long-term operational and financial implications for the PLB trade, other public transport services and road traffic. To enable an earlier start of our study, on this topic, we will include this issue under the Topical Study to examine the present situation and listen to Members' views;
- (iii) **taxi service:** having regard to the implications on other public transport services, to explore whether it is feasible and desirable to introduce new types of taxi service. For example, some LegCo Members have in the past suggested the introduction of premium taxi service to meet different passenger demands. However, as there is already an alternative service provided by hired cars, we have to carefully assess the implications on the supply and demand of taxis as well as for other trades before deciding whether the suggestion is feasible and desirable;
- (iv) **NFB service:** there are currently over 7 000 NFBs in Hong Kong, providing different types of service comprising tour service, hotel service, student service, employees' service, international passenger service, residents' service and contract hire service. At present, the fare of NFB service is not subject to regulation, enabling services provided by NFBs to be more flexible in meeting market demand. Whilst the overall operation has been satisfactory, a slightly tight supply of school buses may have occurred. As such, we will look into the issue of school bus service in detail under the Topical Study. As for the other NFB services, the situation of their demand and supply is generally stable. Nonetheless, having regard to the commissioning of new infrastructures in the pipeline, we will review whether there is a need to allow certain flexibility on NFB operation as appropriate to meet new service demands;
- (v) **long-term development of the Light Rail:** the LegCo Panel on Transport raised the issue on the long-term development of the Light Rail before. We will conduct an in-depth review. Major topics to be covered will include (1) the feasibility of increasing carrying capacity with the original design of the system; (2) the

feasibility of upgrading the existing system to increase the carrying capacity; (3) the long-term demand of North West New Territories for public transport services; and (4) the roles of various public transport services including Light Rail in meeting such demand; and

- (vi) **tram service:** to explore whether it is feasible and desirable to introduce modern tram system, vis-à-vis other public transport services, in new development areas.

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