

立法會
Legislative Council

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**Public Works Subcommittee of the Finance Committee
of the Legislative Council**

**Minutes of the 12th meeting
held in Conference Room 1 of the Legislative Council Complex
on Saturday, 28 February 2015, at 9:00 am**

Members present:

Hon Alan LEONG Kah-kit, SC (Chairman)
Hon LEE Cheuk-yan
Hon CHAN Kam-lam, SBS, JP
Hon Emily LAU Wai-hing, JP
Hon Abraham SHEK Lai-him, GBS, JP
Hon Frederick FUNG Kin-kee, SBS, JP
Hon WONG Kwok-hing, BBS, MH
Prof Hon Joseph LEE Kok-long, SBS, JP, PhD, RN
Hon CHAN Hak-kan, JP
Hon CHAN Kin-por, BBS, JP
Dr Hon LEUNG Ka-lau
Hon IP Kwok-him, GBS, JP
Hon Paul TSE Wai-chun, JP
Hon LEUNG Kwok-hung
Hon Albert CHAN Wai-yip
Hon Claudia MO
Hon Michael TIEN Puk-sun, BBS, JP
Hon Frankie YICK Chi-ming
Hon Charles Peter MOK, JP
Hon CHAN Chi-chuen
Hon CHAN Yuen-han, SBS, JP
Hon Dennis KWOK
Dr Hon Fernando CHEUNG Chiu-hung

Hon SIN Chung-kai, SBS, JP
Hon IP Kin-yuen
Dr Hon Elizabeth QUAT, JP
Dr Hon CHIANG Lai-wan, JP
Hon Christopher CHUNG Shu-kun, BBS, MH, JP
Hon Tony TSE Wai-chuen, BBS

Members absent:

Hon WU Chi-wai, MH (Deputy Chairman)
Hon Albert HO Chun-yan
Hon James TO Kun-sun
Hon LEUNG Yiu-chung
Hon TAM Yiu-chung, GBS, JP
Hon Ronny TONG Ka-wah, SC
Hon Cyd HO Sau-lan, JP
Hon CHEUNG Kwok-che
Hon Gary FAN Kwok-wai
Hon CHAN Han-pan, JP
Dr Hon Kenneth CHAN Ka-lok
Hon LEUNG Che-cheung, BBS, MH, JP
Hon Kenneth LEUNG
Hon Alice MAK Mei-kuen, JP
Dr Hon KWOK Ka-ki
Hon Christopher CHEUNG Wah-fung, SBS, JP
Dr Hon Helena WONG Pik-wan
Ir Dr Hon LO Wai-kwok, BBS, MH, JP

Public officers attending:

Mr YEUNG Tak-keung, JP	Deputy Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury (Treasury) ³
Mr WAI Chi-sing, JP	Permanent Secretary for Development (Works)
Mr Thomas CHAN Chung-ching, JP	Deputy Secretary for Development (Planning and Lands) ¹
Ms Anissa WONG, JP	Permanent Secretary for the Environment

Ms Jasmine CHOI Suet-yung	Principal Assistant Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury (Treasury) (Works)
Mr Daniel CHUNG Kum-wah	Director of Drainage Services
Mr TAI Wai-man	Chief Engineer (Project Management) Drainage Services Department
Miss Amy YUEN Wai-yin	Assistant Director (Water Policy) Environmental Protection Department
Mr HON Chi-keung	Director of Civil Engineering and Development
Mr WONG Hok-ning	Head of Geotechnical Engineering Office Civil Engineering and Development Department
Ms Amy CHEUNG Yi-mei	Assistant Director (Territorial) (Acting) Planning Department

Clerk in attendance:

Ms Sharon CHUNG	Chief Council Secretary (1)2
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Staff in attendance:

Ms Anita SIT	Assistant Secretary General 1
Mr Fred PANG	Senior Council Secretary (1)2
Mr Hugo CHIU	Senior Council Secretary (1)6
Ms Christina SHIU	Legislative Assistant (1)2
Ms Christy YAU	Legislative Assistant (1)7
Ms Haley CHEUNG	Legislative Assistant (1)9

Action

The Chairman advised that there were six funding proposals on the agenda for the meeting. The first two items on the agenda were those carried over from the previous meeting of the Subcommittee on 10 February 2015. He reminded members that in accordance with Rule 83A of the Rules of Procedure ("RoP") of the Legislative Council ("LegCo"), they

should disclose the nature of any direct or indirect pecuniary interests relating to the funding proposals under discussion at the meeting before they spoke on the item. He also drew members' attention to Rule 84 of RoP on voting in case of direct pecuniary interest.

Head 704 – Drainage

PWSC(2014-15)49 160DS Tuen Mun sewerage, stage 1
346DS Upgrading of Tuen Mun sewerage, phase 1

2. The Chairman said that the proposal, i.e. PWSC(2014-15)49, was to upgrade part of 160DS and part of 346DS to Category A at an estimated cost of \$722.5 million in money-of-the-day ("MOD") prices for implementing sewerage works in seven unsewered areas and Siu Lam in Tuen Mun. The Subcommittee had commenced deliberation on the proposal at the last meeting on 10 February 2015. At members' request, the Administration had provided supplementary information on village sewer connection, which had been circulated to members vide LC Paper No. PWSC120/14-15(01) on 26 February 2015.

Planning on village sewerage

3. The Chairman advised that towards the end of the last meeting, Dr Fernando CHEUNG had enquired about: (i) the villages in Hong Kong which had not yet been included in the village sewerage programme ("VSP"); and (ii) the Administration's plan for extending the public sewerage network to these villages. He invited the Administration to respond to Dr CHEUNG's enquiries.

4. Assistant Director (Water Policy), Environmental Protection Department ("AD(WP)/EPD") advised that there were currently around 900 villages in Hong Kong. As at end-2014, around 170 villages had been sewered, while the sewerage infrastructure of some 300 villages had been included in the Public Works Programme. As for the remaining villages, preliminary planning for sewerage works was being carried out for around 170 villages, while the other some 200 villages were not included in such planning. The Administration was extending the public sewerage network to the unsewered villages having regard to the prevailing environmental pollution and development circumstances of individual villages.

5. Dr Fernando CHEUNG considered that the progress of the Administration's work on village sewerage was unsatisfactory. Pointing out the importance of protecting the natural environment against sewage pollution, he enquired whether the Administration had a time-table for

providing public sewers for all the villages in Hong Kong. Ms Emily LAU shared Dr CHEUNG's concern. She urged the Administration to allocate more resources to village sewerage works. In her view, the Administration should not only consider the population of a village when deciding whether to provide the village with public sewerage facilities. Mr Albert CHAN commented that the pace of the Administration's efforts in village sewerage works had fluctuated in the past two decades.

6. AD(WP)/EPD responded that the planning for village sewerage was usually complex and time consuming, involving issues related to land resumption or technical difficulties, etc. As such, the Administration did not have a time-table for the sewerage works for villages that were still under preliminary planning. She further advised that villages not included in the VSP were mainly remote with small populations. The house owners would be required to install private on-site sewage treatment facilities like septic tanks for the sewage produced in their premises. The Administration would review the coverage of the VSP from time to time. Permanent Secretary for the Environment ("PS for E") added that the Administration accorded high priority to sewerage works and had spent over \$45 billion on such works in recent years. In implementing the VSP, the Administration would determine the priorities for individual villages having regard to a host of factors including the population, the environmental impacts of the discharge of sewage on the vicinity, the views of the residents and the technical issues involved. The Administration would keep the Panel on Environmental Affairs ("EA Panel") abreast of the progress of the VSP.

7. At the request of Dr Fernando CHEUNG and Mr Albert CHAN, the Administration was required to provide the following information on its village sewerage works since 1997, in the form of a table, for the some 900 villages in Hong Kong:

- (i) for the sewered villages – the number of such villages, the percentage of such villages out of all the some 900 villages, the commencement and completion time (year and month) of the relevant sewerage works for individual villages, with information about whether the works were carried out for village houses, low-density developments or licensed structures in individual villages;
- (ii) for the unsewered villages that had been included in the VSP and works were in progress or to commence – the number and names of such villages;

- (iii) for the unsewered villages that would be included in the VSP according to the Administration's plan – the number and names of such villages; and
- (iv) for the unsewered villages that the Administration had no plan to include in the VSP – the number and names of such villages.

(Post-meeting note: The Administration's supplementary information was circulated to members vide LC Paper No. PWSC137/14-15(01) on 20 March 2015.)

8. Mr Albert CHAN said that, for remote villages, it was not cost-effective for the Administration to connect the village houses via sewers to a centralized sewage treatment system. He enquired whether the Administration would consider providing small localized sewage treatment plants for remote villages, which, in his view, was a less expensive alternative compared with the existing system of centralized treatment at regional sewage treatment works. The former might also be rolled out at a faster pace. He requested the Administration to provide a time-table for the study on other alternatives for village sewerage.

9. PS for E responded that with the progress made in the village sewerage projects, the larger villages and many small villages had already been served by the public sewage system. The Administration would study the feasibility of other alternatives to provide sewerage for the remote villages with small populations and report the progress to EA Panel as appropriate.

Village sewer connection

10. Mr Albert CHAN said that residents in rural villages in general welcomed the laying of public sewers to their villages, though they might have different views on the locations of the reception points along the public sewers. He called on the Administration to consider changing its existing policy of requiring village house owners to make house connection at their own costs. Otherwise, the house connection rate would remain low, and the money and efforts spent on the VSP would become futile. He also said that the pollution caused by sewage in villages in remote areas was usually more serious and difficult to handle.

11. PS for E said that the Administration's policy was to provide a public sewer with reception points up to or as near as practicable the lot boundaries of village houses to facilitate the house owners to connect their sewage to the public sewer, subject to constraints on-site such as space, gradient or land ownership. For the sake of fairness and respect for private property rights, the Administration would not provide public sewers inside private properties. The relevant stakeholders, including Heung Yee Kuk, were fully aware of the existing policy and accepted such arrangements.

12. Mr Albert CHAN criticized that the Administration had twisted the views of villagers in asserting that they agreed to the existing house connection arrangements. He suggested that the Administration should provide relevant meeting records to substantiate its claim. PS for E said that the existing policy and practice on house connection had been working well for a long time and the overall connection rate of different villages was satisfactory.

Public dry toilets in the rural areas

13. Expressing concern about the sanitary conditions of public toilets in the rural areas, Ms Emily LAU requested the Administration to provide information on the number and names of villages which had public dry toilets, i.e. toilets with no flushing, and the Administration's plan to improve the situation.

(Post-meeting note: The Administration's supplementary information was circulated to members vide LC Paper No. PWSC137/14-15(01) on 20 March 2015.)

14. The item was voted on and endorsed. Mr Albert CHAN requested that the item be voted on separately at the relevant FC meeting.

Head 705 – Civil Engineering

PWSC(2014-15)50 769CL Pilot Study on Underground Space Development in Selected Strategic Urban Areas

15. The Chairman said that the proposal, i.e. PWSC(2014-15)50, was to upgrade 769CL to Category A at an estimated cost of \$70.0 million in money-of-the-day prices for conducting a pilot study on underground space development ("the Study") in four strategic urban areas, namely, Tsim Sha Tsui West ("TSTW"), Causeway Bay, Happy Valley and Admiralty/Wan Chai.

The Panel on Development had been consulted on the proposal on 27 May 2014 and Panel members in general supported the submission of the proposal to the Subcommittee for consideration. The supplementary information provided by the Administration at the request of the Panel was at Enclosure 3 to the discussion paper. A report on the gist of the Panel's discussion had been tabled at the meeting.

16. At the invitation of the Chairman, Director of Civil Engineering and Development ("DCED") briefed members on the proposal.

Purpose of developing underground space in the urban areas

17. Pointing out that there were sizable parks and open space in the four selected areas, Dr Fernando CHEUNG expressed concern that developing the space underneath those parks/open space would affect public access to and enjoyment of the parks/open space. He questioned whether the Administration already had a pre-determined position that the underground space to be developed in the four selected areas would be used mainly for commercial and retail purposes. He considered that, if underground space was to be developed, such space should be used to address the shortage of space for providing social service facilities as well as undertaking arts, cultural, and recreational activities. Ms Emily LAU, Mr SIN Chung-kai and Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung shared Dr CHEUNG's views. Mr LEUNG considered that the accountability official concerned (i.e. the Secretary for Development) should be present to explain the Administration's underlying objective for developing underground space in the four selected areas.

18. Pointing out that the Administration should accord top priority to increasing housing land supply, Mr Albert CHAN enquired whether the underground space to be developed would be used for relocating government buildings/facilities so as to release land for developing housing. In his view, shopping facilities for visitors from the Mainland should be provided near the border areas rather than in the underground space in the urban areas.

19. Mr IP Kwok-him and Mr Frankie YICK supported the proposal to carry out the Study. Mr IP considered that there was a need for developing more space for the operation of the retail business in Hong Kong. He enquired about the criteria for selecting the four strategic areas, the direction of the Study and the scale of the underground space development to be implemented. Mr YICK opined that, given the limited amount of funding sought, it was impossible for the Study to cover all possible uses of the underground space in the four selected areas. He considered it acceptable for the Administration to have a pre-conceived position on the uses of the underground space to be developed.

20. DCED stressed that the Administration did not have any pre-determined position on the uses of the underground space in the four areas. He explained that the Study was aimed to evaluate the overall opportunities and challenges of underground space development in the four study areas. The Administration would formulate an Underground Master Plan for each of the four areas with a view to improving the congested urban environment at the ground level, enhancing connectivity by creating alternative passages linking up with existing and planned underground space developments and MTR Stations, creating new space for commercial and other uses, and identifying priority projects for early implementation. Underground space offered an alternative source for land supply for different uses, including housing new facilities or relocating existing above-ground facilities that were incompatible with the urban setting, thereby releasing valuable surface land for other beneficial and compatible land uses. Overseas experience (like the development of *Les Halles* in Paris) revealed that the use of underground space could help relieve heavy traffic and pedestrian flows at the ground level and bring in economic benefits.

21. DCED further explained that the four strategic areas had been selected for three reasons. First, they were densely developed nodes for commercial, residential, entertainment and tourism purposes and their further development was hindered by the complex urban setting in the areas and limited land resources. Secondly, these four areas were mostly covered by existing and/or planned MTR networks and served as transportation hubs to the nearby areas. Thirdly, there were sizeable parks or open space in the four areas making it more feasible for early implementation of large-scale underground space development.

22. Regarding the development of land for housing purposes, DCED said that the Administration accorded high priority to enhancing housing supply and had adopted a multi-pronged approach to increasing housing land supply. Referring to paragraph 15 of the discussion paper (PWSC(2014-15)50), he advised that the relevant District Councils ("DCs") consulted on the Study requested that opportunities for improving the living environment of the public should be explored by way of underground space development, such as provision of public space, cultural, arts and recreational facilities.

23. DCED further said that there was a need to provide more land to meet the continued demand for accommodating economic activities to sustain Hong Kong's economic development and provide new employment opportunities. He pointed out that, from 2004 to 2013, the growth in commercial stock (about 16%) lagged substantially behind the gross domestic

product growth (about 43%). The vacancy rate of commercial premises was low and stood at around 7% only in 2014.

24. Dr Fernando CHEUNG said while the Administration stressed that it did not have any pre-determined position on the uses of the underground space to be developed, it was stated in the discussion paper that one potentially practicable approach to increasing land supply was through the enhanced use of underground space "for commercial and other suitable uses". Dr CHEUNG said that this statement, together with the Administration's response to a written question raised by Hon Jeffrey LAM on the development of underground space at the LegCo meeting of 3 July 2013, and the findings of the Bauhinia Foundation Research Centre that the cost of underground space development was around four times of that of ground development, made him believe that the underground space to be developed in the four selected areas would be used mainly for commercial and retail purposes to cover the development cost. He held the view that, given the acute shortage of land for housing and welfare facilities, the Administration should not accord priority to developing land for commercial uses. He further suggested that, if the Administration had no pre-determined position on the uses of the underground space to be developed in the four areas, it should revise the words "for commercial and other suitable uses" in the paper to specify other possible uses, like the provision of arts, cultural, social service and recreational facilities. The Chairman also cast doubt as to whether overseas experience like the development of *Les Halles* in Paris could apply to Hong Kong and enquired whether the main objective of the Study was to create commercial floor space in the core urban areas.

25. DCED reiterated that there was a need to provide more land to meet the continued demand for accommodating economic activities; however, the Study would not only focus on increasing the supply of commercial floor space.

26. Mr Albert CHAN held the view that the current-term Government lacked a strategy for comprehensive planning for land development in Hong Kong. He cautioned that the Study, which concerned precious land resources in Hong Kong's core urban areas, should not be lopsided towards commercial development. The Administration should conduct a comprehensive planning for land development in Hong Kong and should not adhere uncritically to arbitrary proposals made by people close to the Chief Executive.

27. DCED responded that Hong Kong had been using underground space for many years. The Study proposed at the meeting was to explore the development of underground space in the four strategic areas in a more

systematic and holistic manner. He added that underground shopping streets were common in many overseas cities, such as Paris, Tokyo and Montreal.

Other studies on underground space development

28. Mr Tony TSE supported the proposal. He asked, in the scenario that the four strategic areas were not recommended for underground space development by the territory-wide study commenced by the Civil Engineering and Development Department ("CEDD") in December 2013 ("the Territory-wide Study") in relation to the initiative stipulated in the 2013 Policy Address to further explore the potential of developing underground space in the urban areas of Hong Kong, what action the Administration would take in respect of the Study. Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung made a similar enquiry. DCED advised that the Territory-wide Study would, among others, recommend 15 potential areas, excluding the four strategic areas, for underground space development.

29. Mr SIN Chung-kai enquired whether the Administration had considered including Kowloon East and the Central harbourfront in the Study. Noting that one of the four strategic areas was TSTW, he was concerned that the Study might overlap with the relevant planning studies associated with the Hong Kong Section of the Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link ("XRL") and the West Kowloon Cultural District ("WKCD") projects.

30. While expressing support for the proposal, Miss CHAN Yuen-han considered that the Administration should develop Hong Kong's underground space in a holistic manner. She suggested that the Administration should also examine the feasibility of developing underground space in Kai Tak Development ("KTD") and its adjacent areas, including Kwun Tong, To Kwa Wan and Wong Tai Sin, as these four areas were likely to have heavy pedestrian flows in future, given the Administration's initiative to develop Kowloon East into a smart city. Her suggestion was echoed by Dr CHIANG Lai-wan.

31. DCED advised that other urban areas than the four under the proposed Study would be covered by the Territory-wide Study. On the concern about the potential overlapping between the Study and other planning studies relating to development in TSTW, DCED said that there would be a basement development in WKCD and the Study would examine ways to improve the connectivity among the WKCD basement, the central part of Tsim Sha Tsui ("TST") and the terminus of XRL. He added that KTD would be less densely populated than the four strategic areas and was therefore not included in the Study.

32. Responding to the Chairman's enquiry about how the Study and the Territory-wide Study could complement each other, DCED advised that, as the Territory-wide Study had already been conducted for a certain period, its interim findings would be useful reference for the Study.

33. Considering that the Study and the Territory-wide Study were similar in nature, Dr Fernando CHEUNG enquired why the Administration did not wait for the completion of the Territory-wide Study before taking forward the Study. DCED advised that Enclosure 3 to PWSC(2014-15)50 had set out the justifications for conducting the Territory-wide Study and the Study concurrently.

Scope of the Study

34. Mr CHAN Chi-chuen said that the Administration should provide the definite boundary for each of the four strategic areas. He asked whether the Study would examine the connectivity between the Admiralty/Wan Chai and Causeway Bay strategic areas.

35. Assistant Director (Territorial) (Acting), Planning Department responded that the three strategic areas in Hong Kong Island were close to one another and the Study would identify possible measures to enhance the connectivity among them. She undertook to provide a plan showing the major street names and places marking the boundaries of the four strategic areas.

(Post-meeting note: The Administration's supplementary information was circulated to members vide LC Paper No. PWSC125/14-15(01) on 9 March 2015.)

36. Mr Tony TSE enquired which cost item in paragraph 10 of PWSC(2014-15)50 covered the costs for conducting financial assessments on the cost-effectiveness of the priority projects to be identified in the Study. DCED advised that the costs for conducting financial assessments on priority projects were covered in item (a)(ii) under paragraph 10, i.e. the cost for engineering study and technical assessments. Mr Tony TSE opined that, in view of the importance of the financial assessments, they should be conducted independently, i.e. not by the same consultants responsible for other assessments, and the cost should be listed out separately. DCED said that the various assessments under the Study were all interrelated and CEDD would play a monitoring role and carefully examine the validities of the assessments.

37. Mr Michael TIEN expressed dissatisfaction on the lack of a comprehensive plan from the Administration for receiving shopping tourists and providing sufficient retail space in Hong Kong. He observed that, while the retail volume of Hong Kong had increased by more than 200% in the past decade, local retail areas had not increased correspondingly. He considered that development of underground space would help alleviate the shortage of retail space. In his view, the Administration should accord priority to developing underground space in TSTW and Admiralty/Wan Chai, given the proximity of these two areas to the terminus of XRL and the Exhibition Station/Admiralty Station of the Shatin to Central Link respectively. Pedestrian facilities such as travellators should be installed between TSTW and WKCD/the terminus of XRL. He also considered that the third priority should be accorded to developing underground space in Causeway Bay, since further development in the area should not commence until the North Island Line was commissioned. Mr TIEN further suggested that the Administration should consider assigning the development rights of some of the land along the alignment of the North Island Line to the MTR Corporation Limited ("MTRCL") to fully finance the construction of the railway.

38. DCED took note of Mr Michael TIEN's views. He advised that the Administration would determine the priorities for developing the underground space in the four strategic areas having regard to the results of the Study. The implementation approach would be considered in due course.

39. Dr CHIANG Lai-wan expressed support for the proposal. She suggested that the Administration should provide information on its previous studies, if any, on underground space development. She asked whether the Administration would draw reference to the underground streets located at transport hubs in overseas cities in planning underground space development in Hong Kong, and whether the Study would examine the utilization of the 17-hectare basement of WKCD.

40. DCED responded that the four strategic areas were close to the existing and/or planned MTR networks. He also advised that WKCD's basement would mainly be used for road-based traffic and for housing arts and cultural facilities. The Study would examine how to enhance the basement's connectivity with its adjacent areas.

41. Pointing out that one of the reasons for the delay in the XRL project was insufficient site investigation, Dr CHIANG Lai-wan cautioned that the Administration should learn a lesson from the incident and ensure that the consultant for the Study would conduct a proper site investigation.

Referring to the breakdown of the estimated project cost in paragraph 10 of the discussion paper, the Chairman enquired about the cost arrangements for and the party responsible for conducting site investigation under the Study.

42. DCED said that the Administration had a fair grasp of the geographical details of the urban areas. The construction for individual underground space development projects would only be conducted after the completion of a proper site investigation. DCED further explained that the Study covered some preliminary site investigation works, to be carried out by a contractor at an estimated cost of \$8.3 million, i.e. cost item (b) under paragraph 10 of the discussion paper. The works would be supervised by the consultant to be engaged and the supervision fee was cost item (a)(iv) under paragraph 10, i.e. estimated to be \$1 million.

43. Dr Elizabeth QUAT expressed support for the proposal. She enquired whether the Study would cover the adoption of green technology with a view to reducing the electricity consumption of underground facilities. DCED replied in the affirmative and said that it was easier to maintain a constant temperature in underground space than in above-ground space, the temperature of which was affected by sunshine.

44. Mr WONG Kwok-hing considered that the Study should address the shortage of car parking spaces, particularly those for coaches, in the four strategic areas and explore the feasibility of providing underground space for exhibition and convention. Ms Claudia MO also enquired whether the Study would examine the provision of underground car parks in TST.

45. DCED confirmed that the Study would explore, among others, the feasibility of providing exhibition and convention space and parking spaces for coaches. While the Administration was aware of the shortage of car parking spaces in the four strategic areas, it was the Administration's policy to encourage the use of mass transit systems as far as practicable.

46. Ms Emily LAU enquired whether the Study would cover the provision of more above-ground public open space in densely populated areas. Mr SIN Chung-kai suggested that the refuse depot near Southorn Playground in Wan Chai be relocated underground so that the surface land could be released for providing a park. Ms Claudia MO said that the existing underground shopping facilities in TST had already drawn visitors away from the shops at the street level. She sought information about the proposed use of the space beneath Kowloon Park and Southorn Playground.

47. DCED advised that while TST already had some underground developments, their connectivity with the adjacent areas like WKCD could be further enhanced and the Study would examine the issue. The use of the space beneath Kowloon Park and Southorn Playground would be proposed upon the completion of the Study. The Administration would brief the relevant committees of LegCo on the results of the Study in due course.

Impacts of underground space development

48. Mr IP Kwok-him asked whether the works relating to underground space development would have significant adverse impacts on the environment of the neighboring areas. Miss CHAN Yuen-han considered that the Administration should carefully assess the potential adverse impacts (such as air and noise pollution) to be brought by underground space development, and suggested that relevant requirements for environmental protection should be imposed on the implementation of underground space development projects. Dr CHIANG Lai-wan was concerned whether underground space development would affect the structural safety and redevelopment values of the existing buildings, particularly the aged ones, in the four selected areas.

49. DCED responded that Hong Kong already had experience in implementing underground space development in Hong Kong. In taking forward such development, the Administration would accord high priority to the structural safety of the above-ground buildings and deal with land ownership issues.

50. Pointing out that the designed capacities of the existing MTR networks were near saturation, Dr Fernando CHEUNG was concerned that underground space development in the four strategic areas, which were all connected to the MTR networks, would further overload the train services, particularly for the services between the Tin Hau Station and the Causeway Bay Station, and those between the TST Station and the Admiralty Station. He queried whether MTR had sufficient spare capacity to accommodate the additional passengers brought by the development of underground shopping streets, and whether MTRCL would be responsible for the management of the underground space to be developed.

51. DCED responded that the Study would include traffic impact assessments. The North Island Line to be constructed could also help alleviate the passenger load of the MTR networks. It was premature at this stage to consider the management mechanisms as there was no pre-determined position on the uses of the underground space in the four

strategic areas. Dr Fernando CHEUNG was dissatisfied with DCED's response. He said that the Administration should not conceal its position on the uses of underground space from members and avoid answering their questions directly. Mr SIN Chung-kai expressed concern that underground space development would aggravate the traffic congestion and heavy pedestrian flows at the ground level in the four strategic areas. He opined that the Study should explore ways to address such problems. Ms Claudia MO shared Mr SIN's views.

52. DCED responded that the Study would explore how to relieve the heavy traffic and pedestrian flows on the ground and to enhance the connectivity of the four strategic areas. The Study would also include traffic impact assessments which covered the impacts of underground space development on the pedestrian flows at the ground level.

Other issues

53. Miss CHAN Yuen-han remarked that the Administration should thoroughly consult the relevant DCs and carefully consider different views, including those at variance with the Administration's preferred development direction. She stressed that the connectivity and accessibility of the underground space to be developed must be well planned. Mr WONG Kwok-hing concurred with Miss CHAN that the Administration should fully consult the relevant DCs. Ms Emily LAU emphasized the importance of gauging the views of all stakeholders on underground space development in the four selected areas.

54. DCED responded that public engagement exercises would be conducted as part of the Study. The Administration would fully consult the stakeholders, including DCs, and consider their views.

55. The Chairman reminded the Administration of his suggestion made at the meetings of the Public Accounts Committee that the Administration should provide precise information in its papers for LegCo's committees to facilitate members' perusal of the Administration's proposals. If, having considered members' views and concerns expressed at the meeting, the Administration deemed it necessary to amend the proposal to make its intention and positions clear, it should do so before the proposal was considered by the Finance Committee.

56. At 11:57 am, the Chairman suggested that, to allow sufficient time for discussion, the meeting be extended for 15 minutes up to 12:15 pm. Some members expressed disagreement. The Chairman then proposed and members agreed that the meeting should end at 12:00 noon as scheduled.

57. The Chairman advised that discussion on the proposal would continue at the next meeting scheduled for 11 March 2015.

Any other business

58. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 12:00 noon.

Council Business Division 1
Legislative Council Secretariat
16 April 2015