



## **Civic Exchange's Written Submission to the Legislative Council Panel on Transport on the Public Transport Strategy Study**

24 November 2014

### Introduction

1. In principle, Civic Exchange supports the Government's plan to undertaking a Public Transport Strategy Study. Given Hong Kong's dense population, compact urban morphology, high mobility need, and people's growing concern over the adverse impact of motor vehicles on the environment, Civic Exchange argues that it is a top priority in this city to develop a public transport system that is sustainable – efficient, low-emission, low-carbon, inclusive and affordable, as an attractive alternative to private cars.

### Role and Positioning Review

2. Based on the challenges mentioned above, Civic Exchange agrees that railway, as an environmentally friendly mass carrier, should form the backbone of Hong Kong's public transport system. It was a policy set out by the Government after the completion of the *Third Comprehensive Transport Study* in 1999, and one that underpinned the *Railway Development Strategy 2000*. According to the latest *Railway Development Strategy 2014* announced in September this year, railway will rightly remain at the top of Hong Kong's modal hierarchy.
3. Other than railway, priority should also be given to other efficient road-users, such as franchised buses and trams. Franchised buses have always carried a significant share of passengers in Hong Kong, and should continue to do so in the foreseeable future irrespective of plans to construct more new rail lines, as buses are flexible in routes and services, and will complement very well with the rail network. Trams, on the other hand, are often considered as a legacy mode in Hong Kong with a diminishing role. However, modern electric tram systems are serving many major cities in other parts of the world as a clean and community-friendly transport mode. It is a sustainable public transport option that could play an important role in Hong Kong.
4. In this respect, Civic Exchange encourages the Government to not only review and determine the respective role of franchised buses and trams under the Role and Positioning Review, but to also identify ways to improving their operational

efficiency and service quality (such as speed and shorter travel time). For example, bus-only lanes and tram-only lanes should be implemented to give them priority in the use of road space over less efficient road-based modes, such as taxis and private cars.

#### Topical Study: The First and Last Miles in Public Transport Planning

5. Civic Exchange agrees that the eight issues proposed to be covered by the Topical Study are important. However, Civic Exchange would like to recommend a ninth topic on the first and last miles of public transport, which is extremely important and relevant to Hong Kong.
6. As highlighted in the discussion paper submitted to this Panel by the Transport and Housing Bureau<sup>1</sup>, over 12 million or 90 per cent of Hong Kong's total passenger trips each day are made on public transport. Unlike private transport users, which basically travel from door to door (origin to destination), public transport patrons usually traverse their first mile (from origin to public transport boarding point) and last mile (from public transport alighting point to destination) by walking, cycling or even short-distance feeder services. The first mile and the last mile are therefore an important part of the total public transport journey, the quality of which would probably affect passenger's modal choice between public and private transport.
7. Specifically, enhanced walkability to rail and bus stations will significantly improve pedestrian access to the public transport system. It can be done through better walkway connection, way-finding, and universal access. A comfortable and safe pedestrian environment will certainly encourage people to walk and ride public transport.
8. Similarly, cycling is a feasible option for the first and last miles. In some of Hong Kong's new towns, like Tai Wai, Shatin and Ma On Shan, many residents like to bicycle from home to the public transport station. Safe, dedicated bicycle lanes and properly managed bicycle parking facilities should be provided to enhance the quality of the total public transport journey.

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<sup>1</sup> Transport and Housing Bureau, "Public Transport Strategy Study – Work Plan", discussion paper submitted to Legislative Council Panel on Transport, CB(1)238/14-15(06), November 2014.  
<http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr14-15/english/panels/tp/papers/tp20141125cb1-238-6-e.pdf>

9. Civic Exchange therefore sees the need to include *the integration of walking and cycling with public transport* in the Topical Study, as a way to improve the first and last miles experience, and to further encourage public transport use in Hong Kong.

#### Enquiries

10. For further information and discussion, please contact Mr. Simon Ng, Chief Research Officer of Civic Exchange, at [kwsng@civic-exchange.org](mailto:kwsng@civic-exchange.org) or 2893-0213.

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