

**Written Submission to LegCo EA Panel Meeting on
Sustainable Transport Policy Scheduled for 15 January 1999**

Railways

1. New roads and increasing traffic leads to more noise and poorer an quality. On its own, continuing to build new roads to meet traffic demand is clearly not a sustainable solution (paradoxically, better road conditions may encourage more to use roads) and will ultimately reduce, rather than increase, people's mobility. Traffic demand has to be managed and reduced, couple with investment in clean, efficient mass transit.
2. At present, the "prudent commercial principle" for investment in railways means that these are provided when they are commercially viable. Roads on the other hand are financed directly from revenue and road-users (tunnels excepted) are not charged directly for their use.
3. The Government needs to reconsider its financing of railways and to construct them as an integral part of the transport system of both old and new development areas. Property development associated with surface rail should accrue to the railway. The possibility of amalgamating the two railway organisations to achieve the benefit of cross financing should also be considered.

Road Pricing

4. Road pricing, although a useful economic tool to discourage unnecessary trips. But to be effective, high charges will be needed and no doubt interest groups will put up resistance.
5. Early results from Singapore show that ERP (Electronic Road Pricing) does not really deter road usage. If alternative routes exist to avoid congested centres, it may help assist better distribution of the load. Our focus must remain avoidance of journeys.

Planning

6. Landuse planning is also the key to sustainable transport strategy. Presently, many trips are made due to residents commuting into the central city. The redevelopment of urban residential areas for commercial use will nevertheless continue with alarming consequences for congestion along commuter routes. Deliberate policies of decentralisation led by Government, to create a counterflow should be a policy planning objective. Land values should not dictate the imperative planning objective.
7. Roads and railways should also be placed underground where possible. Whilst expensive in terms of construction and possible delay to the completion of essential infrastructure, it can alleviate problems of noise, poor air quality and adverse visual impact whilst freeing space above ground. It should be considered an investment in the future.

Pedestrians

8. More attention should be given to the needs of pedestrians. In the Central Business District, it has been found that up to 20% of people walk to work. There should be a deliberate policy to extend and improve pedestrian networks.
9. The mid-level escalator, although its usage has not been spectacular, has more than paid for itself in terms of relieving the rush hour flows and development of the property values and utility as an entertainment area alongside the track.
10. Shatin New Town has succeeded in separating pedestrians from the vehicle traffic layer. When existing urban renewals are carried out, more plans for segregating pedestrian from vehicles should be made as well as pedestrian only areas.

Freight

11. The impact of freight transport needs to be addressed, since this is the fastest growing use of road space. Container traffic is also very damaging on the roads which are designed for normal traffic.

12. As the factories which feed our ports are located further and further away in Guangdong because of cost factors, Government should urgently reexamine the feasibility of construction of a freight railway to link up with China's network.

Diesel

13. The trials of LPG taxis have shown them to be practical in the Hong Kong environment to replace the particulate spewing diesel. The shortage of safe filling LPG stations will be solved but we are now awaiting a decision from Finance Bureau on the amount of duty to be levied on vehicular LPG to enable a successful conversion to the less effective LPG from diesel.
14. This together with the problem of boot-leg and dirty diesel from China, has to be resolved. Revenue and the environment are not always in step.
15. The oil companies need to explain why vehicular fuel in Hong Kong is so much more expensive than elsewhere.
16. Efforts to bring in "City Diesel" has been successfully blocked by the existing cartel. Experience elsewhere has shown that City Diesel has been very effective in cutting down the worse sort of emissions of large vehicles like buses.
17. A bold policy to replace taxis and mini-buses, even at public expense, would be widely acclaimed. Emissions from other diesel vehicles also need tighter control.

Competition

18. Competition is often good to bring innovation and convenience. Unless there are a substantial number of competitors, it is too easy to form effective cartels, hence there has to be a public watchdog to ensure a cost effective service is delivered.

19. Nevertheless, competition means duplication. This can be seen in Central during the rush hours when the different buses jockey for customers. At other times, those buses are largely empty. Reason would dictate the use of smaller buses during non-peak hours but there is no room to store them.
20. In our congested transport environment, too much competition may be a bad thing. An enlightened but knowledgeable watchdog authority is likely to do a better job.

Chairman, ACE
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