

立法會
Legislative Council

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LegCo Panel on Transport

**Minutes of special meeting held on
Monday, 30 August 1999, at 9:30 am
in Conference Room A of the Legislative Council Building**

Members present : Hon Mrs Miriam LAU Kin-ye, JP (Chairman)
Hon LAU Kong-wah (Deputy Chairman)
Hon LEE Wing-tat
Hon LEE Kai-ming, SBS, JP
Hon Mrs Selina CHOW LIANG Shuk-ye, JP
Hon TAM Yiu-chung, GBS, JP
Dr Hon TANG Siu-tong, JP

Members absent : Hon Edward HO Sing-tin, SBS, JP
Hon Albert HO Chun-yan
Ir Dr Hon Raymond HO Chung-tai, JP
Hon CHAN Wing-chan
Hon CHAN Kam-lam
Hon Andrew WONG Wang-fat, JP
Hon LAU Chin-shek, JP
Hon Andrew CHENG Kar-foo
Hon FUNG Chi-kin

Public officers attending : **For Item I**
Transport Bureau

Mr Brian LO, Principal Assistant Secretary for Transport

Transport Department

Mr Robert FOOTMAN, Commissioner for Transport

Mrs Dorothy CHAN, Deputy Commissioner for Transport

Mrs Judy LI, Assistant Commissioner for Transport

Attendance by invitation : For Item I

The Hongkong & Yaumati Ferry Co Ltd

Mr David HO, General Manager

Mr Rayman YUEN, Deputy General Manager

Hong Kong and Kowloon Ferry Limited

Mr Thompson LEE, Director

Ms April LAM, Management Executive

Clerk in attendance : Ms LEUNG Siu-kum, Chief Assistant Secretary (1)2

Staff in attendance : Mr Andy LAU, Senior Assistant Secretary (1)6

I Contingency arrangements for ferry services for school opening day of 1 September 1999

The Chairman advised that the Panel was very concerned about the recent disruptions of ferry services for Peng Chau and Cheung Chau. She informed members that the Panel would follow up on the issue, pending investigation by the Administration. In the interim, the Deputy Chairman had requested a special meeting be convened to review the contingency arrangements for the outlying island ferry services before the commencement of the next academic year on 1 September 1999.

2. At the invitation of the Chairman, the Commissioner for Transport (C for T) briefed members that the existing services run by the Hongkong & Yaumati Ferry Co Ltd (HYF) and the Hong Kong and Kowloon Ferry Limited (HKK) provided adequate capacity to meet the demand on school days. The Transport Department and the ferry operators would closely monitor the situation on 1 September 1999. In case of unforeseen circumstances, they would make the necessary emergency arrangements as and when necessary.
3. The Deputy General Manager of HYF (DGM/HYF) briefed members that the Company had arranged five standby vessels which would be mobilised if necessary to provide supplementary trips from the outlying islands in the morning to meet any unexpected upsurge in demand on the first school day. Additional manpower would also be deployed to ensure smooth operation. On the other hand, as a result of the landslide on South Lantau Road near Lychee Yuen, the Company had already arranged to strengthen the ferry service between Mui Wo and Chi Ma Wan to meet the transport needs of the commuting public.
4. The Director of HKK also informed members that the Company had arranged three standby vessels to meet any unexpected upsurge in demand on the first school day. Furthermore, HKK had already deployed two vessels with a respective capacity of 293-seat and 380-seat for operation between Yung Shue Wan and Central on a full-day basis.
5. Mr LEE Wing-tat remarked that in view of the tight relationship between HYF and certain groups of passengers of the service, a minor conflict between the two sides could be developed into a big incident. He therefore requested the Company to make all necessary arrangements so as to ensure smooth operation on the first school day. To this end, supplementary trips should be provided within five to 10 minutes to meet any excess demand so generated. Mr LAU Kong-wah also asked the Company to make a pledge in this regard.
6. DGM of HYF reiterated that the Company had arranged five standby vessels to provide supplementary trips from the outlying islands. However, in view of the operational requirements and other constraints at piers, the time required for mobilization would vary, ranging from 10 to 15 minutes. However, having considered the travelling pattern, the demand of passengers and the carrying capacity of vessels, there should be sufficient service to meet the demand.
7. Referring to the landslide on South Lantau Road near Lychee Yuen, Mr LEE Wing-tat and Mr TAM Yiu-chung urged the Administration to speed up the necessary clearance with a view to achieving an early reopening of the road.
8. C for T advised that the road was under urgent repair by the Highways Department in collaboration with the Geotechnical Engineering Office. He would continue to liaise with parties concerned with a view to speeding up the related rectification work. To facilitate the travelling of the general public, HYF had already deployed a double decker to operate between Chi Ma Wan and Mui Wo at enhanced

frequencies. A temporary bus service between Pui O and Chi Ma Wan was also introduced.

9. Given the importance of land-based transport, Mr TAM Yiu-chung urged the Administration to speed up the provision of the Lantau North-South Link Road between Tai Ho Wan and Mui Wo. He also urged the Administration to hold discussions with the local residents with a view to understanding their needs and the services required.

10. C for T noted Mr TAM's remark and said that the Administration also saw a need to provide an additional north-south link road on Lantau to meet the demand of the travelling public. According to the present timetable, the road project would be completed by 2004/05. He also noted the Chairman's remark that to strike a balance between environmental conservation and the transport needs of the Lantau residents, a tunnel option might be considered.

11. Given the long lead time between now and the completion of the said road project in 2004/05, Mr LEE Wing-tat requested the Administration to consider providing temporary piers at Pui O, Cheung Sha and Tong Fuk.

12. C for T replied that the Administration would examine the suggestion in detail but his initial view was that it might not be technically feasible to implement the said proposal due to the shallow ends of the beaches along the various locations. He would provide further information in this regard.

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13. Referring to the comparison of the average patronage, the number of students on board and the carrying capacity broken down by individual routes in Annex A to the paper, Mrs Selina CHOW expressed concern that the carrying capacity might not be adequate to cope with the sudden upsurge in demand during the initial period of a new academic year when parents usually travelled alongside with their kids to schools. She also queried that the average number of passengers as recorded on a weekday in April 1999 might not be representative. Given that the demand for services at certain time slots in the morning peak was already approaching the maximum capacity of vessels, she called on the companies concerned to strengthen their service at the outset rather than arranging supplementary despatches as and when required since it would cause delay and disruption to passengers.

14. DGM/HYF said that based on previous experience and travelling pattern, the existing schedules should continue to provide sufficient carrying capacity to meet the demand. Nevertheless, the Company had arranged five standby vessels to strengthen the service for a particular route as and when required.

15. The General Manager/HYF (GM/HYF) added that the Company would make all necessary arrangements to ensure a smooth operation and to minimize the time required for mobilizing a standby vessel for providing a supplementary trip on a particular route.

16. Referring to the despatch at Peng Chau pier at 7:30 am when the demand was already very close to the capacity of the vessel, Mrs Selina CHOW requested the Company to deploy larger vessel for operation to avoid disruption.

17. DGM/HYF advised that the Company was aware of the situation and had made arrangements to operate a special despatch at 7:20 am to relieve the demand at 7:30 am. To further improve the situation, the Company had ordered a larger vessel with a view to replacing the existing one and the new vessel was expected to come into operation in November 1999.

18. Mrs Selina CHOW and Mr LAU Kong-wah commented that in order to enhance communication between the Company and residents in Peng Chau, the Company should formally announce the arrangements so that residents would exactly know the schedules and future plan of the Company.

19. GM/HYF advised that as the new vessel would come into operation in November 1999, it would create confusion if they altered the timetable at this stage. Given that the existing arrangement worked well and had not created any confusion, they would prefer to maintain the status quo. In concluding, the Chairman asked the company to consider members' suggestion in this regard.

20. Regarding the special arrangements during inclement weather, GM/HYF advised that there were established procedures to be followed by the departments and the Company. In general, suspension of service due to inclement weather would be announced at least one-hour in advance.

21. Mr LEE Wing-tat remarked that in view of the recent incident for the Cheung Chau service when it was suddenly suspended due to a typhoon attack, he asked the Company to review the procedures with departments concerned with a view to improving its communication with the Hong Kong Observatory and end-users of the service.

22. In response, GM/HYF briefed members on the general procedures for special arrangements during inclement weather. He said that when typhoon signal no. 1 was hoisted, the Company would start to monitor the situation closely in collaboration with the Hong Kong Observatory. As to the particular incident quoted by Mr LEE Wing-tat, he said that the incident was an unique case, having regard to the strength and the speed of the typhoon. He said that the Company had maintained close liaison with the Hong Kong Observatory since the hoisting of typhoon signal no. 1 in accordance with established practices. On the day of the suspension, a press release was issued before the hoisting of typhoon signal no. 8, reminding passengers that the ferry service would be suspended at short notice depending on changes to local wind and sea conditions. The services were subsequently suspended on grounds of safety. He stressed that the suspension was necessary to ensure passenger safety and it was rather unusual for the Company to suspend its service prior to the hoisting of typhoon signal no. 8. To avoid the recurrence of similar incident in future, the Company had already requested to meet with the Hong Kong Observatory to review the existing

arrangements.

23. Regarding the current investigation undertaken by the Transport Department on the various ferry incidents, C for T advised that they would examine the nature of the problems, identify the lessons to be learnt and how similar incidents could be avoided in future. To make the report as objective as possible, they would also collect information from local concern groups apart from reviewing the report made by HYF. He expected that the report would be made available by late September.

24. Mr LEE Wing-tat requested the Administration and HYF to look into the frequent breakdown of the Octopus ticketing system.

II Any other business

25. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 10:30 am.

Legislative Council Secretariat
23 November 1999