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From : Clerk to Panel

To : Hon LAU Kong-wah (Deputy Chairman)
Hon Edward HO Sing-tin, JP
Hon Albert HO Chun-yan
Dr Hon Raymond HO Chung-tai, JP
Hon LEE Wing-tat
Hon LEE Kai-ming, JP
Hon Mrs Selina CHOW LIANG Shuk-ye, 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 TAM Yiu-chung, JP
Hon FUNG Chi-kin
Dr Hon TANG Siu-tong, JP

LegCo Panel on Transport

Policy Issues on Road Planning

In discussing the widening of Yuen Long Highway between Lam Tei and Shap Pat Heung Interchange at the Public Works Subcommittee (PWSC) meeting held on 21 October 1998, some members expressed concern about the mechanism for the planning of new roads and road improvements, with particular regard to cost-effectiveness. They commented that the existing dual 2-lane Yuen Long Highway was only completed in 1994 but was already anticipated to be operating beyond capacity by year 2001. They therefore queried the cost-effectiveness of constructing a dual 2-lane carriageway, instead of a dual 3-lane carriageway, in the first place. Another members also commented that new trunk roads in Hong Kong should be built to a minimum configuration of dual 3-lane or have a road widening reserve for subsequent widening.

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2. In view of members' concerns, the Chairman of PWSC suggested that the policy issues on road planning be followed up further by the Transport Panel.

3. With the concurrence of the Panel Chairman, I enclose the relevant PWSC paper and extract of minutes for members' reference. Members may wish to consider at the forthcoming Panel meeting to be held on 27 November 1998 as to whether the issue should be followed up further by the Panel.

(Daniel HUI)
for Clerk to Panel

Encl.

c.c. Hon Mrs Miriam LAU Kin-yee, JP (Chairman)
Hon James TO Kun-sun (Non-Panel Member)
Hon Christine LOH (Non-Panel Member)
Hon WONG Yung-kan (Non-Panel Member)
Hon Jasper TSANG Yok-sing, JP (Non-Panel Member)
Hon Emily LAU Wai-hing, JP (Non-Panel Member)
ASG1
ALA3

Please note paragraph 13 for follow-up action. Thanks.

Extract from the minutes of Public Works Subcommittee meeting on 21.10.98

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PWSC(98-99)28 721TH Widening of Yuen Long Highway between Lam Tei and Shap Pat Heung Interchange

8. Addressing a member's concern about the impact of the proposed roadworks on the village developments along the section of the Yuen Long Highway (YKH) to be widened during and after the construction period, DHy advised that a road widening reserve had been provided when the highway was first constructed. The road widening works would be carried out on the reserve and thus would have minimal impact on the few existing developments along YLH. If existing access roads or pedestrian ways were affected by the works, the contractor would be required to implement appropriate temporary traffic measures to maintain access. Addressing the member's concern about the erection of central divider under the project which would restrict traffic from making turns, he clarified that there already existed a central divider on the YLH and traffic should not be adversely affected by the proposed widening works. PAS/T(5) supplemented that the present proposal only covered the preliminary design and ground investigation works. When the project was ready to proceed to the construction stage, the proposed roadworks would be gazetted and any person who believed that he/she would be adversely affected by such works could raise objections in accordance with the Roads (Works, Use and Compensation) Ordinance.

9. In reply to a member's enquiry about the proposed arrangement of carrying out ground investigations for the detailed design concurrently with the preliminary design of the project, DHy advised that the purpose of the arrangement was to shorten the duration of the detailed design stage so as to expedite the whole project. The arrangement was feasible in this project because the proposed road widening would basically follow the existing alignment of YLH and thus the location and amount of ground investigation works could be ascertained at an early stage. At the member's request, DHy agreed to provide further information on the estimated cost savings as a result of the arrangement.

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10. A member queried the necessity of the proposed road widening if the construction of Route 10 - North Lantau to Yuen Long could be expedited to tie in with the completion of the Deep Bay Link in 2004, thus diverting some cross boundary traffic away from YLH. PAS/T(5) affirmed the need for the proposed road widening and explained that taking into account the scheduled completion of Route 10 by 2007, the volume to capacity (V/C) ratio of YLH without widening would reach 1.49 by year 2011.

11. Noting that the existing dual 2-lane YLH was only completed in 1994 but was already anticipated to be operating beyond capacity by year 2001, members queried the cost-effectiveness of constructing a dual 2-lane carriageway, instead of a dual 3-lane carriageway, in the first place. In this connection, they enquired about the expected life span of new trunk roads under the existing policy. In response, DHy and PAS(T)5 advised that new trunk roads were usually planned to meet traffic demand for 10 to 20 years upon completion. The decision to construct a dual 2-lane carriageway or otherwise depended on the traffic demand forecast when a new road was planned. In the case of YLH (formerly called Yuen Long Bypass), the original purpose of the highway was to divert some traffic away from Castle Peak Road to alleviate traffic congestion in Yuen Long New Town. The traffic demand forecast at the planning stage only justified the construction of a dual 2-lane carriageway while the future need was catered for by providing a road widening reserve along the dual 2-lane carriageway. The Government had been conducting on-going monitoring of the traffic flows on YLH and having regard to recent territory development plans and transport studies, it was anticipated that traffic flows on YLH would increase significantly during the next 10-year period due to substantial population growth in the North-west New Territories and the increase in cross boundary traffic routing through the YLH upon the completion of the Deep Bay Link by 2004. These future developments gave rise to the need for the widening of YLH.

12. In connection with road planning, a member commented that new trunk roads in Hong Kong should be built to the same standard capacity of trunk roads in most other metropolitan cities. The trunk roads should have a minimum configuration of dual 3-lanes or have a road widening reserve for subsequent widening. This would obviate the problem of not having sufficient land for road widening in future. In response, DHy explained that most trunk roads completed in recent years were of the dual 3-lane design. Besides, recent detailed traffic studies had allowed additional road capacities in the assessment and more carriageway widths would be assigned when considered necessary.

13. Taking note of the Administration's explanation, some members were still concerned about the mechanism for the planning of new roads and road improvements, with particular regard to cost-effectiveness. In view of members' concerns, the Chairman suggested that the policy issues on road planning be followed up further by the relevant Panel.

14. The item was voted on and endorsed.

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