

Legislative Council Panel on Transport

Measures To Combat Speeding

PURPOSE

This paper seeks Members' views on a package of proposals to combat speeding.

BACKGROUND

2. Speeding remains a significant problem in Hong Kong. From 1996 to 1998, the Police on average took out about 200,000 prosecutions by way of fixed penalty tickets annually for speeding offences, representing 9% of the total number of fixed penalty tickets issued. With the opening of new expressways, the problem of speeding on expressways has become more acute. The number of speeding offences on expressways rose sharply by 60% in 1997 and 103% in 1998. Statistics on prosecutions and accidents involving speeding are at Annex A.

3. It is believed that the following factors have contributed to commitment of speeding offences -

- (i) with the advent in road design and construction and improved performance of motor vehicles, the existing speed limit of some of our roads may have become too low;
- (ii) current methods of enforcement against speeding offences only allow small road coverage and limited effectiveness; and
- (iii) the demerit points relating to speeding offences have not been revised since 1982 whereas the fines on speeding offences have not been revised since 1994. They may have lost some of their deterrent effect.

4. The Transport Bureau has stated in the 1998 Policy Objective our intention to introduce measures to improve conditions for road users. As part of the package, we have been considering the following measures-

- (i) to conduct a comprehensive review of the speed limit of major roads and expressways;
- (ii) to improve the method of enforcement on speeding offences;
- (iii) to review penalties for speeding offences; and
- (iv) to strengthen community education and publicity on speeding.

(A) Review of Speed Limit

5. The speed limit imposed on a road is the maximum speed that is legally allowed which must not be exceeded at any time. Section 40(1) of the Road Traffic Ordinance (Cap. 374) imposes a general speed limit on all roads at 50km/hr, unless the Commissioner for Transport specifies a different speed limit by a notice in the Gazette. On roads where limits exceeding 70km/hr are allowed, Section 40(5) of the Road Traffic Ordinance (Cap. 374) imposes a maximum speed limit on medium goods vehicles, heavy goods vehicles and buses at 70km/hr.

6. Speed limits on our roads vary with the type of roads. The limits are 50km/hr for the vast majority of urban roads, 70 or 80km/hr for rural and urban trunk roads and 80 or 100km/hr for expressways. In our review, we have considered streamlining the structure of the speed limit categorisation and have concluded that there should be three main categories-

- (i) low band : 50km/hr;
- (ii) middle band : 70km/hr or 80km/hr; and
- (iii) high band : 100km/hr or higher.

7. The criteria in determining the speed limit of a road are set out in the Transport Planning and Design Manual which are drawn up on the basis of internationally accepted highway design and engineering practices. These criteria include -

- (i) The type of roads such as expressways, primary distributors or urban roads.

- (ii) Geometric design standards such as gradient, alignment and width.
- (iii) Road surface characteristics e.g. skidding resistance and texture depth of the surface material.
- (iv) Other design features such as frontage access, grade separated junctions, parking, stopping, loading and unloading restrictions.

8. The speed limit of all new roads are reviewed within 2 years after commissioning and then every 3 to 6 years thereafter. Speed limits may be adjusted upwards or downwards having regard to the following factors -

- (i) the original design speed;
- (ii) the number and nature of accidents on the road;
- (iii) the actual average speed of vehicles travelling on the road; and
- (iv) changes in road characteristics which might lead to a change in pedestrian and vehicular flow.

The objective of such reviews is to ensure that a right balance is struck between traffic flow and road safety.

9. The Transport Department is conducting a review of the major roads and expressways in the territory. The review comprises three phases. Phase I and II have been completed and Phase III is expected to conclude in mid-1999. Recommendations of the first two phases are at Annex B for reference. The preliminary findings suggest that there is scope to relax the speed limit on some of our roads.

10. As far as possible, one single speed limit will be applied to a road. In the circumstances where the road is of considerable length and it is not practicable to maintain one speed limit for the entire road, big speed limit repeater signs will be introduced to forewarn motorists of any abrupt change in speed ahead of 20km/hr or more.

(B) Review of Enforcement Methods

11. Fully automated Speeding Enforcement Cameras have been installed at Tolo Highway and Fanling Highway. The cameras will put long sections of the two expressways under 24-hour surveillance and substantially enhance deterrent effects and enforcement capabilities. We have plans to install similar systems along the Eastern Corridor, Tuen Mun Road and North Lantau Highway in the next three years.

12. The conventional speed enforcement devices like laser gun and radar require manual operation. A team of two Police officers will be required to cover a short section of road and for only a short duration. We are reviewing the manning requirements to identify possible efficiency gains.

13. The Speed Enforcement Camera only automates the detection part of the enforcement process. The prosecution part (identification of drivers, issue of fixed penalty tickets and paper work for court proceedings if necessary) will continue to be handled normally by the Police. On average, it took about three months to process a speeding case. The Government is examining the feasibility of further automation to provide an integrated processing system that will lead to improvements in the law enforcement process.

(C) Review Of Fixed Penalties And Demerit-Offence Points

14. Under Section 41 of the Road Traffic Ordinance, speeding is punishable by a maximum fine of \$4000. Over 98% of speeding offences are punished by way of fixed penalties and demerit points, as follows -

Offence	Fixed penalty	Demerit points
Driving in excess of speed limit ≤ 15 km/h	\$320	0
Driving in excess of speed limit > 15 but ≤ 30 km/h	\$450	3
Driving in excess of speed limit > 30 but ≤ 45 km/h	\$450	5
Driving in excess of speed limit > 45 km/h	\$450	8

15. The demerit points were set in 1982. The fixed penalties were last adjusted in 1994. In our review, we have considered the need to update the penalties, with regard to the following principle -

- (i) the system should be simple and easy to understand;
- (ii) it should provide sufficient deterrent effect; and
- (iii) penalties should be commensurate with the severity of offences including disqualification and summons for more severe cases.

16. It is proposed that the category of offences should be refined from the present 15km interval to 10km intervals. Fines should also be updated. Two options for revising demerit points have been considered -

Offences	Proposed Fixed Penalties	Proposed Demerit Points	
		Option A	Option B
Driving in excess of speed limit ≤ 10 km/h	\$400	0	1
Driving in excess of speed limit > 10 but ≤ 20 km/h	\$600	3	4
Driving in excess of speed limit > 20 but ≤ 30 km/h	\$800	6	7
Driving in excess of speed limit > 30 but ≤ 40 km/h	\$1,000	10	10
Driving in excess of speed limit > 40 km/h	summon	disquali- fication	disquali- fication

17. In setting the appropriate levels of demerit points in respect of different levels of speed, there are two proposed structures. Option A simply lowers the existing “no point” threshold limit from 15 km/h to 10 km/h. This approach is based on the existing system which imposes no demerit point on drivers of less severe speeding cases. A more stringent approach is at Option B which discards this “no

point” threshold by imposing different levels of demerit points on all drivers. Such an approach will further strength the deterrent effect, but could attract criticisms from some road users, particularly professional drivers, of being too harsh. In addition, disqualification and summons have been included in the more severe cases.

18. We will be consulting interested parties including the various transport trade on these proposals before taking a view on how to go forward.

(D) Publicity and Education

19. Enforcement apart, much needs to be done in publicity and community education. We need to increase the awareness amongst the general public that the risk of collision climbs sharply with every kilometer in excess of the legal speed limit. The Government will continue to spread the message against speeding through a proactive publicity programme which includes APIs and campaigns. In 1998, speeding was included as one of the priority messages in our Road Safety Campaign and will again be featured prominently in the 1999 campaign. We are also reviewing how best to strengthen community involvement in our road safety initiatives through the Road Safety Council.

20. As part of the efforts to increase community education on safe driving, we are also exploring the feasibility of introducing a Driver Improvement Scheme to improve driving behaviour and altitude for drivers who have committed minor traffic offences e.g. speeding in excess of speed limit by a certain margin. The concept is that the Scheme may be used either as an alternative to prosecution or to supplement enforcement actions. Details of the Scheme are still under consideration.

ADVICE SOUGHT

21. Members’ views are invited on the proposed package to combat speeding as set out in paragraphs 5 to 20.

Speeding : Prosecution and Accidents Statistics

I. Number of Prosecutions

All speeding offences	1995	1996	1997	1998
Summon/arrest	4,584	3,559	3,190	3,468
Fixed penalty tickets	179,728	212,294	203,177	191,293
Total	184,312	215,853	206,367	194,761
% change compared with previous year	N.A.	+17.1%	-4.4%	-5.6%

Note:

Summons/arrest is taken when the speed is greater than 45km/hr over the limit or when in accident

II. Speeding on Expressway

	Year		
	1996	1997	1998
Number of Offences	19,635	31,333	63,454
% Increase	-	+60%	+103%

III. Breakdown of Speeding Statistics in excess of Speed Limit

Speed in excess of limit	1995	1996	1997	1998	4-year average %
15 km/h or less	55,640	50,315	32,902	26,804	14
> 15 but \leq 30 km/h	111,593	144,703	151,562	149,938	77
> 30 but \leq 45 km/h	14,805	18,258	18,913	15,676	8
> 45 km/h	2,274	2,577	2,990	2,343	1
Total	184,312	215,853	206,367	194,761	-

IV. Number of Accidents

	1995	1996	1997	1998 (Jan-Nov)
Expressways only	9	20	6	2
% change	N.A.	+112%	-70%	N.A.
All roads	66	73	38	25
% change	N.A.	+11%	-48%	N.A.

V. Casualties and Fatalities

	1995	1996	1997	1998 (Jan-Nov)
Expressways only				
Fatal	1	0	1	0
Serious	3	9	3	1
Slight	13	24	6	3
Total	17	33	10	4
% change	N.A.	+94%	-70%	N.A.
All roads				
Fatal	8	7	8	5
Serious	23	35	22	13
Slight	55	72	49	21
Total	106	114	79	39
% change	N.A.	+7%	-31%	N.A.

Speed Limit Review

List of roads in Phase I (review completed)

Section of Roads	Existing speed limit km/hr	Proposed speed limit km/hr	Change in speed km/hr
Lung Cheung Road			
(Eastbound between Fung Mo Street and Hammer Hill Road)	50	70	+20
(Westbound between Fung Mo Street and Hammer Hill Road)	70	70	-
New Clear Water Bay Road			
(between Clear Water Bay Road at Choi Wan Estate and Shun Lee Tsuen Road)	50	70	+20
Tuen Mun Road			
(between Tsuen Wan and Sham Tsang Interchange)	70	70	-
(between Sham Tsang Interchange and Siu Lam Interchange)	70	80	+10
(between Siu Lam interchange and Wong Chu Road)	70	80	+10
Castle Peak Road			
(between Lam Tei Main Street and Tan Kwai Tsuen Road)	50	70	+20
(between Tan Kwai Tsuen Road and Ping Ha Road)	70	70	-
(between Ping Ha Road and Long Tin Road)	50	70	+20
Princess Margaret Road			
(between flyover and Ho Man Tin Interchange)	50	70	+20
Tai Chung Kiu Road			
(between Lion Rock Tunnel Road and Fo Tan Road)	50	50	-
Fanling Highway			
(Eastbound between San Tin Interchange and Sheung Shui Interchange)	80	100	+20
(Westbound between San Tin Interchange and Sheung Shui Interchange)	100	100	-
Aberdeen Praya Road			
(between Shek Pai Wan Road and the slip road to Aberdeen Main Road)	70	70	-
(between Wong Chuk Hang Road and the slip road to Aberdeen Main Road)	50	70	+20
Gloucester Road			
(Westbound between Cannon Street and Tonnochy Road)	50	50	-
(remaining section between Harcourt Road and Island Eastern Corridor)	70	70	-

List of roads in Phase II (review completed)

Section of Roads	Existing speed limit km/hr	Proposed speed limit km/hr	Change in speed km/hr
Lantau Link (between NW Tsing Yi Interchange and North Lantau Highway Toll Plaza)	80	80	-
Tsing Kwai Highway (between Mei Foo Interchange and Cheung Tsing Tunnel)	80	80	-
Cheung Tsing Highway (between Cheung Tsing Tunnel and NW Tsing Yi Interchange)	80	80	-
North Lantau Highway (between Toll Plaza and Tung Chung)	100	110	+10
Yuen Long Highway (between Lam Tei Interchange and Pok Oi Interchange)	70	80	+10
Kwai Chung Road (between Lai Chi Kok Bridge and Lai Chi Kok Rd) (between Lai Chi Kok Rd and West Kowloon Corridor)	50 50	70 70	+20 +20
West Kowloon Corridor (Tong Mei Rd section southbound)	50	70	+20
West Kowloon Highway	80	100	+20

List of roads in Phase III (review to be carried out)

Section of Roads	Existing speed limit km/hr	Proposed speed limit km/hr
Pokfulam Rd (between Pokfulam Garden and Victoria Rd)	70	To be determined
Route 7 (Central and Western Districts)	50/70	
Gloucester Road	50/70	
Clearwater Bay Road	50/70	
Kwun Tong Bypass	70/80	
Jockey Club Road	50/70	
Sai Sha Road	50	
Route 3 (Ting Kau Bridge and Tai Lam Tunnel)	80	
San Tin Highway	70/80/100	
Fanling Highway	100	
Cheung Pei Shan Road	70/80	