

NOTE FOR PUBLIC WORKS SUBCOMMITTEE OF FINANCE COMMITTEE

Supplementary Information on 121TB - Duplication of Pedder Street Footbridge

INTRODUCTION

When Members considered PWSC(2000-01)25 on **121TB** – Duplication of Pedder Street Footbridge at the Public Works Subcommittee meeting on 17 May 2000, the Administration undertook -

- (a) to review the design and maintenance system for the new escalators of the proposed footbridge to avoid frequent breakdowns of the escalators; and
- (b) to examine the feasibility of operating the new escalators on an automatic on/off mode.

THE ADMINISTRATION'S RESPONSE

Review of Design and Maintenance System

2. In the light of Members' concern, we have examined (in conjunction with the Electrical and Mechanical Services Department) the escalators on the existing footbridge. The breakdowns are usually caused by jamming of the step/comb plates by debris from the shoes of pedestrians or overloading resulting from the carriage of heavy goods. We believe these can be overcome by improving the maintenance and management of such escalators, and the breakdowns do not reflect any fundamental design fault. To increase the reliability of the new escalators, we will install cleansing mats in front of the new escalators to intercept debris and we will both clean the escalators and their mats more frequently.

3. Experience has also shown that the breakdowns of escalators are not attributable to exposure to weather conditions. For this reason, it is neither necessary nor desirable to have the new escalators enclosed as this may create

ventilation problems and constitute a fire hazard to the pedestrians. The new escalators are also designed specifically for outdoor environment.

Installation of Automatic on/off Switches

4. We have considered Members' suggestion to install automatic on/off switches for the new escalators. In order to achieve an acceptable level of efficiency, an escalator with automatic on/off mode would only be justifiable if the average usage rate is less than three pedestrians per minute. Since the estimated pedestrian flow of new escalators at Pedder Street would far exceed this usage rate, the automatic on/off switches will not be a useful addition.

5. Besides, the automatic on/off switches may create safety problems to pedestrians under some circumstances. For example, a pedestrian with fast walking speed may have stepped on the escalator already when the sensor activates the escalator, and the unexpected activation of the escalator may cause him/her to fall down. In fact, the escalator supplier advises that two of its clients have requested on safety ground to remove the automatic on/off system after installation.

6. On balance, we see no strong justification of installing automatic on/off switches at the proposed escalators. We shall keep a close watch on their operation to ensure their a smooth and safe operation.
