

立法會

Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(1)1231/99-00

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by the Administration)

Ref : CB1/PL/TP/1

LegCo Panel on Transport and LegCo Panel on Environmental Affairs

Minutes of Joint meeting held on Thursday, 20 January 2000, at 2:30 pm in the Chamber of the Legislative Council Building

Members present : LegCo Panel on Transport

- * Hon Mrs Miriam LAU Kin-ye, JP (Chairman)
- * Hon LAU Kong-wah (Deputy Chairman)
Hon Albert HO Chun-yan
- * Ir Dr Hon Raymond HO Chung-tai, JP
Hon LEE Wing-tat
- * Hon CHAN Wing-chan
Hon CHAN Kam-lam

LegCo Panel on Environmental Affairs

Hon Christine LOH (Chairman)
Hon Ronald ARCULLI, JP
Hon CHEUNG Man-kwong
Hon LAW Chi-kwong, JP

(* Also members of the LegCo Panel on Environmental Affairs)

Members absent : LegCo Panel on Transport

- Hon Edward HO Sing-tin, SBS, JP
Hon LEE Kai-ming, SBS, JP
Hon Mrs Selina CHOW LIANG Shuk-ye, JP
Hon Andrew WONG Wang-fat, JP
Hon LAU Chin-shek, JP
- * Hon Andrew CHENG Kar-foo
Hon TAM Yiu-chung, GBS, JP

Hon FUNG Chi-kin
Dr Hon TANG Siu-tong, JP

LegCo Panel on Environmental Affairs

Hon HUI Cheung-ching (Deputy Chairman)
Hon Martin LEE Chu-ming, SC, JP
Prof Hon NG Ching-fai
Hon Margaret NG
Dr Hon LEONG Che-hung, JP
Hon Mrs Sophie LEUNG LAU Yau-fun, JP
Hon WONG Yung-kan
Hon Emily LAU Wai-hing, JP
Hon CHOY So-yuk

(* Also members of the LegCo Panel on Environmental Affairs)

**Public officers
attending** : **Item II**

Environment & Food Bureau

Mr Howard CHAN
Principal Assistant Secretary for Environment & Food

Transport Bureau

Mr Brian LO
Principal Assistant Secretary for Transport (2)

Environmental Protection Department

Mr TSE Chin-wan
Assistant Director of Environmental Protection (Air)

Mr MOK Wai-chuen
Principal Environmental Protection Officer
(Motor Vehicle Emissions)

Electrical & Mechanical Services Department

Mr WONG Sek-cheung
Senior Engineer (Gas Systems)

Transport Department

Mr Derek GOULD
Assistant Commissioner for Transport (Administration)

Item III

Environment & Food Bureau

Mr Howard CHAN
Principal Assistant Secretary for Environment & Food

Transport Bureau

Mr Brian LO
Principal Assistant Secretary for Transport (2)

Mrs Agnes ALLCOCK
Principal Assistant Secretary for Transport (7)

Transport Department

Mr Alan KAM
Deputy Commissioner for Transport

Environmental Protection Department

Mr TSE Chin-wan
Assistant Director of Environmental Protection (Air)

Mr Elvis AU
Assistant Director of Environmental Protection
(Environment Assessment & Noise)

**Attendance by
invitation**

: Item II

Vocational Training Council

Mr MAK Ping-fun
Assistant Executive Director (Industrial Training)

Mr WONG Chun-keung
Manager of Automobile Industry Training Centre

Mr I Seymour-Hart

Head of Department of Automotive Engineering
Hong Kong Institute of Vocational Education
(Lee Wai Lee)

Clerk in attendance : Items I and II

Mrs Constance LI
Chief Assistant Secretary (2)2

Item III

Mr Andy LAU
Chief Assistant Secretary (1)2

Staff in attendance : Items I and II

Miss Betty MA
Senior Assistant Secretary (2)1

Item III

Ms Sarah YUEN
Senior Assistant Secretary (1)4

I Election of Chairman

Miss Christine LOH was elected Chairman for the discussion of agenda item II, while Mrs Miriam LAU chaired the discussion of item III.

II Control of diesel vehicle emissions - vehicle maintenance and vehicle testing

(LC Paper No. CB(1)808/99-00(01))

Training and licensing of vehicle mechanics

2. Mrs Miriam LAU noted that the Vocational Training Council (VTC) would run a wide range of training programmes for in-service vehicle mechanics and technicians. She asked how the Administration could ensure that the vehicle maintenance trade would actively participate in these training programmes, especially those courses for tackling emission problems from diesel vehicles. Mrs Miriam LAU also expressed concern as to whether there would be sufficient training places for LPG vehicle mechanics. She noted that while VTC would

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increase its annual training capacity from 180 to 400 for LPG vehicle mechanics, the trade had previously indicated a demand of 800 places.

3. Principal Assistant Secretary for the Environment and Food (PAS(EF)) responded that the VTC currently provided automotive training courses on vehicle maintenance to the trade. To help the vehicle maintenance trade to tackle emission problems from diesel vehicles, VTC would organize special courses in 2000 for vehicle mechanics on the use of dynamometer and control of diesel vehicle emission.

4. Assistant Executive Director (Industrial Training) of the VTC (AED(IT)/VTC) added that VTC designed its training courses for the trade based on the advice of its Automobile Training Board which comprised representatives of vehicle distributors, small and medium size garages, trade associations, trade unions and government departments. AED(IT)/VTC said that the maximum annual training capacity for LPG vehicle mechanics could be further increased to 500 instead of 400, but VTC would not propose to over-stretch its workshop facilities in order to allow time for repairs and maintenance. Given that there were some 5 000 vehicle mechanics, it was anticipated that about 20% of them would require training on servicing diesel engines. The annual provision of 2 000 training places on the use of dynamometer would be adequate to meet the trade's demand. VTC would step up publicity to encourage participation in the training courses. PAS(EF) said that the Administration would also enlist the assistance of representatives of the trade to encourage technicians to attend these courses. The Administration would follow up with the VTC on the training progress.

5. Head of Department of Automotive Engineering, Hong Kong Institute of Vocational Education (Lee Wai Lee) (HD(AE), HKIVE(LWL)) referred members to Appendix B of the information paper. He said that different types of courses on motor vehicle engineering were provided in HKIVE(LWL), including part-time certificate courses, full-time diploma courses and other specialist short courses tailor-made for the industry. An advanced craft course had also been introduced in December 1999 for both fresh graduates and "return to learn" in-service mechanics. One of these advanced craft modules would deal with LPG fueled vehicles. Upon the completion of the fitting-out works of its LPG workshop in the next few months, the Institute could provide an annual training capacity of 120 places for LPG vehicle mechanics.

6. Mrs Miriam LAU asked whether HKIVE(LWL) could expand its training capacity for LPG vehicle mechanics so that the demand of the trade could be fully met.

7. HD(AE), HKIVE(LWL) responded that the Institute's training capacity was restrained by its limited teaching staff. At present, the two certificated instructors in the Institute could train a total of 120 mechanics a year. The

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Institute had requested additional funds in the next financial year for two additional instructors to attend overseas certification course. When the instructors had attained the certification requirements, the Institute could double its training capacity for LPG vehicle mechanics from the next financial year.

8. On the training demand, PAS(EF) clarified that although more than 800 applications for training on LPG vehicle maintenance had been received from the trade at the end of 1999, some of the applicants had now completed training. Senior Engineer (Gas Systems) of EMSD supplemented that 235 LPG vehicle mechanics had since completed training in VTC, and 145 had been registered with EMSD. It was expected that more mechanics would complete training and register with the EMSD in the coming months.

9. Mr LAW Chi-kwong expressed concern about the availability of appropriate equipment in the workplaces for the vehicle mechanics and technicians to apply the advanced knowledge and skills after training. PAS(EF) said that the trade had reflected similar concern to the Administration. The technical problems faced by the trade, particularly those of the small scale vehicle repair workshops, would be examined by the Working Group.

10. Echoing Mr LAW's concern, Mr CHAN Wing-chan said that the Administration should seriously consider ways to address the problems faced by small scale vehicle repair workshops in coping with the rising vehicle maintenance standards. It was impossible to require all workshops to be equipped with different diagnostic equipment given the size and cost of equipment. Consequently, the trade might not be able to carry out necessary repair works for all types of vehicles in meeting the stricter requirement on emission standard.

11. PAS(EF) said that the use of dynamometers for vehicle owners/mechanics to test the smoke emissions of their vehicles was becoming more popular and such equipment was available on the market. The Administration would look into ways to promote the use of such facilities by the trade. Although the Administration welcomed the proposal for setting up a centralized diagnostic testing centre by private sector, it would need to carefully consider the suggestion for government to provide subsidy in the establishment of the centre. Any direct government subsidy might interfere with the free market competition principle and discourage the relevant trades to invest in new testing and diagnostic equipment. To assist the trade to properly maintain vehicles, the Administration believed that it would be necessary to adopt a two-pronged approach to upgrade the servicing standards of the trade and to update the trade on their knowledge about the advanced technology applied in vehicles.

12. Referring to Appendix A of the information paper, Mrs Miriam LAU asked about the content of and the target date for completing the 168 training classes on emission control (diesel engine). She asked whether the three-evening

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course would be adequate to provide the necessary training to the technicians. Manager of Automobile Industry Training Centre, VTC (Manager/AUTC, VTC) said that the courses on emission control (diesel engine) covered the fundamental principle of diesel engines, causes for smoky vehicles and ways to prevent smoke emission with a demonstration on the dynamometer smoke test. As participants of this course were already in possession of the basic knowledge of diesel vehicle maintenance, the course emphasized on ways to tackle the emission problem from diesel vehicles. The 168 classes would be completed within one year.

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13. Mrs Miriam LAU sought assurance as to whether the training on emission control was adequate to meet the needs of the industry. Manager/AUTC, VTC responded that based on the experience in organizing joint seminars with the Environmental Protection Department (EPD) on vehicle maintenance to prevent smoke emission, a three-evening training course on emission control for diesel engines should be adequate for mechanics to master the necessary knowledge and skills. Mrs Miriam LAU requested the Administration to consult the trade on the adequacy of such training.

Working Group on Vehicle Maintenance Services

14. Mr LAU Kong-wah noted that the Working Group on Vehicle Maintenance Services (the Working Group) would take one year to complete its study and to make recommendations on measures to improve vehicle maintenance. Mr LAU asked whether the timetable could be advanced. Mr LAU also asked whether the Working Group would look into the working environment of the vehicle repair workshops, in addition to the standards of service of the vehicle maintenance trade.

15. PAS(EF) responded that the terms of reference and timetable for the Working Group were set out in Annex 2 of the Administration's paper. The Working Group would study the standards of service of the vehicle maintenance trade, issues relating to the vehicle repair workshop and the feasibility of introducing a regulatory mechanism for the trade. It aimed to complete its study in about one year and put forward recommendations on measures to improve vehicle maintenance. An interim report on the progress of its study would be available in six months. He pointed out that the Working Group was subject to a very tight schedule as it would need to have a thorough understanding of the operation of the vehicle maintenance trade before recommending solutions to the problems of the trade. Nevertheless, immediate improvement measures would be taken as and when necessary pending the Working Group Report.

Making vehicle maintenance manuals available to the public

16. Mrs Miriam LAU enquired about the progress of making vehicle maintenance manuals available to the public. Noting that the Administration was exploring the feasibility for an independent party to establish a vehicle technical

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information database which could be accessible by the trade, Mrs LAU asked about the timetable for establishing the database.

17. In reply, PAS(EF) said that according to the submission from the Motor Traders Association (MTA) to the joint meeting of the Panels on Environmental Affairs and Transport on 16 December 1999, MTA was prepared to release the relevant parts of the vehicle service manuals under certain conditions. Representatives of MTA had been invited to attend a meeting with the Administration scheduled for February 2000 to work out the arrangements for the trade to obtain the service manuals.

18. HD(AE), HKIVE(LWL) said that the Department of Automotive Engineering of HKIVE was conducting a feasibility study on the vehicle technical information database, which was expected to be completed in about three months. A funding proposal would then be made to seek additional manpower for maintaining and updating the computer database. It was expected that the vehicle technical information database could start operation on a limited scale from April 2000, subject to funding approval for additional staff. In addition, the HKIVE intended to make available manuals for all types of vehicles in the market to the public either in the library of the Institute or by electronic means. It also aimed to provide advisory consultancy service to the trade in the long term.

19. Mrs Miriam LAU expressed concern that MTA might give different excuses, such as the absence of necessary equipment in the trade to cope with the service standards, in order to avoid releasing the vehicle maintenance manuals. She asked whether the Administration had any solution to these problems. Mr LAW Chi-kwong shared Mrs LAU's concerns. He said that the Administration could consider introducing legislation to require MTA to make available the maintenance manuals to the public in the event that MTA imposed unreasonable conditions for the release of such manuals.

20. The Chairman said that the Panel strongly supported the release of maintenance manuals by the MTA to the vehicle maintenance technicians and the public. The Chairman requested and PAS(EF) agreed to revert to the Panel on the progress of the Administration's discussion with MTA on the matter.

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Establishment of diagnostic testing centres

21. Mr LAW Chi-kwong enquired about the Administration's position on the proposal to procure dynamometers for use by vehicle owners to check the maintenance conditions of their vehicles free of charge. PAS(EF) said that the Administration had provided an initial response at the meeting on 16 December 1999. He recapitulated that significant expenditure would be incurred for procuring the equipment and providing testing venues. In addition, the provision of free dynamometer service for use by vehicle owners could lead to direct

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competition with existing operators of diagnostic testing centres and would have undesirable impact on investment in the field. The Administration considered that the more cost-effective way was to utilize the existing dynamometers now available in the designated emission testing centres which would be increased to six shortly. The Administration would continue to examine ways to encourage the provision of such facilities.

22. Mr LAW Chi-kwong said that since only a limited number of vehicle repair workshops were equipped with dynamometers, it would be inconvenient for vehicle owners to approach these workshops only for the use of their dynamometer. He said that the Administration should not rule out the need to provide assistance if necessary.

23. Mrs Miriam LAU asked about the details of the pilot scheme to allow vehicle owners/mechanics to test the smoke emissions of their vehicles on the dynamometers. Assistant Director of Environmental Protection (Air) of EPD (AD/EPD) responded that the pilot scheme aimed at encouraging vehicle owners to use dynamometers to test the smoke emissions of their vehicles before their vehicles were spotted as smoky. The Administration would hire the spare capacity of existing designated diagnostic testing centres for use by vehicle owners and vehicle mechanics free of charge. The Administration was now working out the detailed arrangements, aiming at launching the pilot scheme around May/June 2000.

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24. Members considered that there had been slow progress in providing the use of dynamometers. They urged the Administration to expedite actions to enable responsible vehicle owners to take preventive measures to reduce smoke emissions of their vehicles. As the Administration was proposing heavier penalty for smoky vehicles, it would be unfair to vehicle owners if they were unable to take preventive measures for smoke emissions of their vehicles simply due to the lack of necessary equipment in the market.

Other measures to reduce vehicle emissions

25. The Chairman noted that the Administration proposed to penalize drivers for idling engines and would start public consultation shortly. She asked whether the proposal could be implemented at a faster pace. PAS(EF) responded that the Administration aimed to put forward for consultation around first quarter of 2000 different options of regulation and the legislative and enforcement aspects of the proposals.

26. Mrs Miriam LAU referred members to the views put forward by one deputation at the last meeting that proper driving method would contribute to reducing vehicle emissions. She suggested the Administration to make more efforts to educate the public on good driving practices.

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27. AD/EPD responded that the Administration had launched public education programmes, such as promotional leaflets and joint seminars with automobile associations, on ways that individuals and different sectors could contribute to reducing air pollution and eco-driving. The Administration was seeking additional financial provision for stepping up the publicity programmes. AD/EPD agreed to provide details to the Panel when the concrete plan was available.

Fixed penalty fine for smoky vehicles

28. Mr CHAN Wing-chan said that professional drivers and drivers' associations had expressed much concern about the legislative proposal to increase the fixed penalty for smoky vehicles. The trade considered that complementary measures, such as the provision of training and necessary equipment, should be put in place before introducing stricter requirements on vehicle emissions. They had also requested for a grace period or transitional arrangement for the trade.

29. Mr LAW Chi-kwong said that Members belonging to the Democratic Party were of the view that the Administration had taken an unduly long period to draw up the legislative proposal to increase the fixed penalty level for smoky vehicles. He urged the Administration to expedite the legislative timetable and the implementation of complementary measures.

30. Mrs Miriam LAU commented that the Administration should consult the transport and vehicle maintenance trade on the proposed increase in fixed penalty for smoky vehicles.

31. In response to members, PAS(EF) said that the proposal to increase the fixed penalty level for smoky vehicle offence was part and parcel of the comprehensive plan for controlling emissions from diesel vehicles. The vehicle maintenance trade had already been provided training on the dynamometer smoke test and proper vehicle maintenance to prevent smoke emission. The Administration intended to allow a reasonable time, say, six months after the enactment of the legislation for the increase of the smoky vehicle fixed penalty, for the trade and vehicle owners to make necessary maintenance arrangements and for the maintenance trade to upgrade their standards of service, before bringing the stricter penalty on smoky vehicles into effect. On the longer term measures, the Working Group would examine ways to assist the trade to raise the standards of vehicle maintenance.

32. In response to the Chairman, PAS(EF) said that it was the Administration's intention to introduce a resolution to the Legislative Council (LegCo) within this session to amend the Schedule to the Fixed Penalty (Criminal Proceedings) Ordinance. About 6 months after the resolution was passed, the Secretary for the Environment and Food would publish in the gazette the

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commencement notice which was subject to the negative vetting procedures of the LegCo. There would be ample time for Members to scrutinize the legislative proposal. In this connection, he appealed to Members' support to the proposed amendment.

33. The Chairman said that the proposal could be further discussed by the relevant Subcommittee on the legislative amendment, if formed, when the resolution was introduced into LegCo.

III Third Comprehensive Transport Study and the New Transport Strategy - Environmental Impact of Transport Activities

(LC Paper No. CB(1)808/99-00(02) - Information paper provided by the Administration

LC Paper No. CB(1)861/99-00 - Hon Christine LOH's paper tabled at the meeting)

34. As agreed, Mrs Miriam LAU chaired the discussion of this agenda item.

General concerns about the environment and transport activities

35. Pointing out that a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Study was conducted in the context of the Third Comprehensive Transport Study (CTS-3), Miss Christine LOH queried the reasons for excluding many of the key findings and recommendations thereof from the Executive Summary of the CTS-3 and the New Transport Strategy (the NTS) entitled "Hong Kong Moving Ahead : A Transport Strategy for the Future". She was worried about the environmental problems associated with the growth of transport activities as highlighted in the SEA Study and urged the Administration to deliberate and address the problems in the wider context of injecting environmental considerations in transport policy planning and decision making. She also called on the Administration to release more information on the SEA Study to the general public to facilitate discussion. A copy of her submission was tabled and circulated after the meeting vide LC Paper No. CB(1) 861/99-00.

36. Regarding the alleged omission of information relating to the SEA from the Executive Summary of the CTS-3 and the NTS, the Principal Assistant Secretary for Transport (7) (PAS for T(7)) explained that the SEA report was a rather technical and bulky document, which is available to the public on request. The Administration had also set out in plain languages all the essential findings and recommendations of the SEA Study in the Executive Summary of the CTS-3 and the NTS for public information.

37. On members' concern about the non-compliance with the Air Quality Objectives (AQOs) under different transport scenarios as identified in the SEA Study, PAS for T (7) advised that in order to establish the baseline environmental conditions so that the potential deterioration of future transport scenarios could

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be identified, a baseline environmental study was conducted at the beginning of the SEA. The baseline environmental conditions in 1997 was merely a yardstick for measurement and should not be adopted as a standard for assessing future AQOs. Whilst the study had identified a number of problems, it had also recommended a series of mitigation measures to improve the environment. In general, the Administration supported the spirit of CTS-3 and had accepted most of its recommendations in formulating the NTS. She also pointed out that as vehicle emissions was only one of the many air pollutants leading to pollution problems, improvement measures on the transport front alone could not totally resolve the environmental problem.

38. The Deputy Commissioner for Transport (DC for T) added that the SEA Study had not included the benefits of certain air quality improvement measures whose effect had yet to be quantified when the study was under way. It was envisaged that with the implementation of additional air quality improvement measures as recommended, the environmental conditions in future would be better than the ones as projected in the SEA Report.

39. In order to facilitate members' consideration of the effectiveness and priority of different improvement measures, Miss Christine LOH requested the Administration to quantify the benefits of the various improvement measures to reduce vehicle emissions. In reply, PAS(EF) said that the Administration had already provided a written response to a similar question raised by Miss LOH at the Council meeting on 19 January 2000 and the Administration would be happy to provide further information as requested by members.

40. As to whether the NTS was adequate for the purpose of environmental protection, PAS(EF) advised that the Administration was in support of the new policy objective of providing transport infrastructure and services in an environmentally acceptable manner to ensure the sustainable development of Hong Kong. The Administration also recognised that transport did have an impact on the environment and would implement various measures to alleviate the environmental impacts of transport activities. In fact, the Environment and Food Bureau and the Environmental Protection Department (EPD) were working closely with the Transport Bureau (TB) and the Transport Department (TD) on the implementation details of the measures recommended by the SEA Report. PAS for T(7) also referred members to the multi-faceted approach adopted in the NTS which included the following initiatives:

- (a) Better integration of transport and land use planning;
- (b) Better use of railways as the back-bone of the passenger transport system;
- (c) Better public transport services and facilities;

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- (d) Better use of advanced technologies in transport management; and
- (e) Better environmental protection.

and said that a balance had to be struck between the need to provide transport infrastructure and the need to protect the environment.

41. Highlighting current plans to construct further roads and the Administration's failure to adopt all recommendations put forward in the SEA Report, Miss Christine LOH cast doubt on how sustainable development could be achieved in the area of transport. In response, PAS for T(7) explained that although railways would form the backbone of Hong Kong's transport system, there was still a need to provide transport infrastructure for local access and for the provision of feeder service to railway stations and other emergency service. On the growth and usage of vehicles, she said that the Administration would keep a close watch on the subject matter and consider when, if necessary, suitable measures to restrain their growth and usage would be appropriate.

42. Pointing out that about 40% of the consultancy fees of the CTS-3 was spent on the conduct of environment-related studies, Ir Dr Raymond HO expressed disappointment to the report of CTS-3, which had not placed enough focus on environmental protection. He further proposed that for built-up areas where replacement of the road system by railway was impossible, consideration might be given to prohibiting heavy vehicles from entering the areas so as to reduce the related traffic generation to improve the environment.

43. PAS for T(7) advised that such prohibitions had been implemented by the Administration for traffic and environmental reasons. However, in the course of implementation, there was a need to take into account the interest of different members of the community, having consulted the relevant District Councils and local residents. In some cases, the proposed measure had met with objections out of various considerations. The Assistant Director of Environmental Protection (Environment Assessment & Noise) (ADEP(EA&N)) supplemented that the proposed measure had been implemented on Lai King Hill Road where container trucks were prohibited from entering the road 24-hour daily and on Chuk Yau Road in Yuen Long where heavy vehicles exceeding 23 tonnes were prohibited from entering the road during midnight. Given that the scheme had proved to have worked well, the Administration was considering the feasibility of extending the scheme to other locations. Ir Dr HO remarked that the measure should be adopted as a general policy and be planned and implemented on a territory-wide basis rather than on a road-by-road basis.

44. In response to Mr CHAN Kam-lam's request for information about the implementation schedules and details of the environmental mitigation measures as set out in the SEA Report, the Principal Assistant Secretary for Transport (2) (PAS for T(2)) explained that some of these measures were already being

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implemented or had a definite implementation timetable and their progress would be incorporated in TB's annual progress report on its policy objectives. Some measures however could only be taken into account when the relevant transport projects were implemented and hence, a definite timetable had yet to be drawn up.

45. Notwithstanding the above, Mrs Miriam LAU and Mr CHAN Kam-lam urged the Administration to at least provide details on those measures involving policies so as to facilitate members' comments on the priority of the programme and follow-up on the issues. In response, the Administration assured members that various measures involving policies were being actively examined in close consultation with the relevant bureaux and departments. For example, the Administration was closely monitoring the growth and usage of vehicles with a view to deciding whether measures had to be introduced to restrain their growth and usage. On the provision of incentives for scrapping old cars, the Administration would conduct an open consultation later this year. As to the timetable of vehicle emission controls, it had already been reported at a joint meeting of the Environmental Affairs Panel and the Transport Panel. The Administration would further update members in due course.

46. Pointing out that Hong Kong's pollution problem was very serious, Mr Ronald ARCULLI opined that in developing and implementing the transport strategy for Hong Kong, environmental considerations should take precedence over other considerations.

47. In response, PAS for T(7) stressed that in recent years, there had been a greater focus on protecting the environment. The Administration's present objective was to strike a balance between the need to provide transport infrastructure and the need to protect the environment. However, should there be a consensus in the community that environmental considerations should take precedence, the Administration would consider fine-tuning the policy to meet public expectation. PAS(EF) also assured members that the Government in general endorsed the principles and initiatives as set out in the NTS which would give due regard to the environment. The Administration would implement measures to alleviate the environmental impact of transport activities.

48. Mr ARCULLI however remained of the view that unless there was a fundamental change in the transport-related policy making and decision process to accord higher priority to environmental considerations, the existing problems would persist.

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Pedestrian facilities

49. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong enquired about the programme of pedestrian schemes and whether the schemes would be implemented on weekdays as well. In reply, PAS for T(2) advised that the Administration had identified a number of crowded and more polluted spots in Hong Kong for the development of pedestrian schemes, and commissioned a consultancy study in 1999 on the development of such schemes. The priority areas were Causeway Bay, Mongkok and Tsim Sha Tsui. Under the proposed schemes, the core areas would be designated as pedestrian priority areas. In these areas, street were classified according to the level of priority given to the pedestrians as follows:

- (a) Fully pedestrianised streets - the streets would be closed to vehicular traffic throughout the day except for emergency vehicles.
- (b) Time restricted pedestrianised streets - vehicular traffic would only be permitted during certain hours of the day mainly for loading and unloading purposes.
- (c) Mixed priority streets - priority was shared between pedestrian activities and vehicles.

50. Noting the above-proposed arrangement where different time restrictions might be imposed on vehicular traffic, Mrs Miriam LAU was concerned about the possible confusion caused to road users. PAS for T(2) stressed that the Administration would try to standardise the time restrictions involved. Moreover, before finalising the implementation details, shop owners, local representatives and the relevant District Councils would be consulted.

51. Mr CHAN Kam-lam enquired why the crossroads outside China Building, Central, which was a hot spots area, was not included as a priority areas for the development of pedestrian schemes. In reply, PAS for T(2) explained that apart from the above mentioned pedestrian schemes, there would be an on-going programme to examine pedestrian schemes for other areas, including Central.

52. In response to Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong's suggestion to consider constructing underground pedestrian walkway systems as a means to protecting pedestrians from the hazards of roadside air pollution, PAS for T(2) advised that the Administration was already liaising with the Mass Transit Railway (MTR) Corporation and the Kowloon-Canton Railway Corporation on plans to provide underground pedestrian facilities between existing MTR and railway stations and buildings in their vicinity.

53. Mr LAW Chi-kwong queried the reasons for excluding the provision of pedestrian footbridges from the paper which set out the strategic transport policy adopted by the Administration. PAS for T(7) replied that the provision of safe

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and convenient pedestrian facilities, including pedestrian footbridge, was one of the fundamental planning considerations in transport and land use planning. The Administration had been proactive in supporting separation of pedestrians from vehicles through pedestrian schemes and grade-separated pedestrian walkway systems.

54. Mr LAW and Mrs Miriam LAU further opined that pedestrian walkway systems should, as a major policy direction, be linked up to encourage reliance on walking for short distance trips. PAS for T(2) noted members' views and assured them that the Administration was well aware of the need to improve pedestrian facilities to reduce road-based traffic. Where built-up areas were concerned, focus would be placed on connecting existing pedestrian facilities and developing pedestrian walkway systems. As for the new towns, the principle of creating pedestrian-friendly environment had already been adopted in the development statement.

Other concerns

55. Mr LAW Chi-kwong was concerned that the cancellation of low-demand public transport services mentioned in paragraph 18 of the paper might adversely affect the general public. He opined that instead of terminating the service, consideration should be given to deploying smaller vehicles for operation or rerouting the service to railway stations. Addressing his concern, PAS for T(7) pointed out that the Administration would take all these into account before implementing any rationalisation proposals.

56. Ir Dr Raymond HO urged the Administration to gear up enforcement against trucks which failed to entirely cover their loads of dusty materials by clean impervious sheeting all along the way to and from the construction site as required by the Air Pollution Control (Construction Dust) Regulation. In response, AEP(EA&N) advised that failure to comply with the above requirement was already an offence under the Summary Offences Ordinance. For new development projects, the contractors of construction sites were also required to clean vehicle bodies and wheels before leaving. Ir Dr HO however maintained that despite the above, enforcement was not strict enough.

IV Any other business

57. There being no other business, the meeting adjourned at 4:35 pm.