

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(1)435/99-00
(These minutes have been seen
by the Administration)

Ref: CB1/PL/TP/1

Panel on Transport

Minutes of meeting
held on Monday, 11 October 1999, at 9:00 am
in the Chamber of the Legislative Council Building

Briefing on the Chief Executive's Policy Address 1999

Members present : Hon Mrs Miriam LAU Kin-ye, JP (Chairman)
Hon Edward HO Sing-tin, SBS, JP
Hon Albert HO Chun-yan
Ir Dr Hon Raymond HO Chung-tai, JP
Hon LEE Wing-tat
Hon Mrs Selina CHOW LIANG Shuk-ye, JP
Hon CHAN Wing-chan
Hon CHAN Kam-lam
Hon Andrew CHENG Kar-foo
Dr Hon TANG Siu-tong, JP

Member attending : Hon Emily LAU Wai-hing, JP

Members absent : Hon LAU Kong-wah (Deputy Chairman)
Hon LEE Kai-ming, SBS, JP
Hon Andrew WONG Wang-fat, JP
Hon LAU Chin-shek, JP
Hon TAM Yiu-chung, GBS, JP
Hon FUNG Chi-kin

Public officers attending : Mr Nicholas NG, JP, Secretary for Transport
Mr Robert FOOTMAN, JP, Commissioner for Transport

Mr C K LAU, JP, Director of Highways (Atg)

Mr Kevin HO, Deputy Secretary for Transport

Miss Linda LAI, Deputy Secretary for Transport

Miss Margaret FONG, Deputy Secretary for Transport

Mr Thomas CHOW, Deputy Secretary for Transport

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

Staff in attendance : Ms Pauline NG, Assistant Secretary General 1
Mr Andy LAU, Senior Assistant Secretary (1)6

Action

I Briefing by the Secretary for Transport on the Chief Executive's Policy Address 1999

The Chairman drew Members' attention to the publication "Hong Kong Moving Ahead - A Transport Strategy For The Future" issued by the Transport Bureau and tabled at the meeting. She advised members that the Panel would discuss the findings of the Third Comprehensive Transport Study at its forthcoming meeting to be held on 26 October 1999.

(Post meeting note : A copy of the publication was circulated to all Members of the Council after the meeting vide LC Paper No. CB(1)96/99-00).

2. At the Chairman's invitation, the Secretary for Transport (S for T) briefed members on the policy objectives of the Transport Bureau as outlined in the 1999 Policy Address.

Sustainable transport policy

3. Noting that the principle of sustainable development was one of the primary focuses in this year's Policy Address, Miss Emily LAU enquired how Government was going to fine tune its transport policy to cater for the change. In connection with the Government's policy to accord priority to railway development, she asked if Government would advance the implementation of railway projects ahead of the full population growth in an area. Likewise, she also enquired whether the Administration would review the need for implementation of various road projects which were less environmentally friendly than railways.

Action

4. S for T advised that the principle of sustainable development was not new and it had long been a Government's policy to examine and implement practical measures to reduce pollution generated from transport sources. In the years ahead, the Government would focus more on this aspect of work. On railway development, he said that it would form the backbone of the public transport network, serving major corridors which had the heaviest traffic flow. As such, there was an ongoing need to expand the railway networks to meet the transport needs of commuters. To this end, the Government were implementing five major railway projects and also formulating plans for the further expansion of the railway networks. In the course of planning, the Government would take into consideration the phased developments and the target population of the catchment areas and ensure that adequate infrastructure would be provided in a timely manner to cater for the development of the areas along the rail.

5. As to whether there was a need to review the programme for various road projects, S for T said that as the catchment areas of the various rail lines could not cover every part of the territory, there was a need to develop and improve the road networks so as to relieve the existing demand and to cope with future transport needs of commuters. The Government would regularly review the implementation programme of road projects before substantial funds were allocated to these projects.

Liquefied Petroleum Gas Taxi Scheme

6. Mr CHAN Wing-chan expressed concern about the difficulties faced by the taxi trade in the course of the implementation of the Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) taxi scheme. He pointed out that the prices of LPG taxis were being manipulated by major taxi suppliers and asked what measures would be introduced to assist the trade.

7. S for T replied that the LPG taxi scheme was under the direct steering of the Planning, Environment and Lands Bureau. However, the Transport Bureau would maintain close contact with the trade. The Government would also ensure that adequate supporting facilities would be in place to facilitate the smooth conversion of LPG taxis. Regarding the price of LPG taxis, he said that Hong Kong was a free market economy and the prices of LPG taxis would be determined by market force. However, the Government would ensure that the vehicles run in Hong Kong would comply with the specifications set out by the Government. At the request of Mr CHAN, S for T undertook to provide the number of LPG taxi suppliers in Hong Kong.

(Post meeting note : The required information was circulated vide LC Paper No. CB(1) 142/99-00).

Competition among bus service providers

8. Mr LEE Wing-tat pointed out that at present, there were four major franchised bus operators in Hong Kong and basically they provided bus services in their respective service areas. In order to enhance competition among bus service providers, the Government should introduce appropriate measures with a view to

Action

opening up the bus services market to safeguard consumer interests. Mr LEE also highlighted the unsatisfactory situation whereby buses and public light buses were not allowed to operate in the North-west Transit Service Area and Tsing Yi respectively. He called on the Administration to open up the public transport market.

9. S for T advised that the Government was committed to bringing in healthy competition among service providers to ensure commuters choice. The Government's commitment was illustrated by the granting of a new franchise to New World First Bus Services Limited in replacement of the China Motor Bus Company. However due to the high population density and limited spaces in Hong Kong, the Administration could not allow unlimited growth of bus services in the territory. In this regard, he cited the recent complaint about the over-provision of buses on Hong Kong Island and said that there was a need to rationalize the bus networks with a view to minimizing wasteful competition and duplication of services.

10. Regarding the development of new bus service, S for T said that all franchised bus companies would be required to submit an annual Five Year Route Development Plan to the Transport Department for scrutiny. New bus routes would be carefully selected, having regard to the planned developments and transport needs of local commuters. S for T also confirmed that as a general principle, where the population would support a viable package of bus network, the Administration would put out for tender the operating rights of franchised bus services in new developed areas.

Co-ordination among different public transport modes

11. Mrs Selina CHOW expressed concern about the proliferation of non-franchised bus services, particularly the residents' services run by owners of property developments. Commissioner for Transport (C for T) highlighted the difficulties faced by the Department in settling the conflicting interests between general road users and residents of property developments. In tackling the problem, the Department was working in collaboration with the Police and the trade with a view to confining the loading and unloading activities of residents' services to selected areas in the business districts to minimize disturbance to other road users. Public transport services to railway stations would also be improved to facilitate interchange in order to reduce demand for residents' services.

12. On the rationalization and coordination of franchised bus services, C for T advised that the Department had already arranged to rationalize the number of bus stops and bus trips in busy areas. Unnecessary duplication of point-to-point franchised bus services would also be reduced.

Action

13. Regarding the coordination between railways and buses, C for T advised that the coordination of various public transport modes was an on-going task undertaken by the Department. Each year, the Department would review the route development plans put forward by the franchised bus operators. Where necessary, the Administration would strengthen the feeder services to and from railway stations. Further, the Administration was carrying out a study to see how best they could integrate different modes of transport in areas served by the new railways to enhance efficiency. Despite the fact that railway was an efficient carrier, C for T also emphasized the important role played by franchised buses in feeding passengers to various locations. He advised that buses were economic road users and were actually one of the solutions to traffic congestion. At present, franchised buses carried about 35% of all person trips in Hong Kong but its fleet size was only about 6,000.

14. Noting that railway would form the backbone of the transport system in Hong Kong, some members expressed concern that there might not be adequate competition amongst different public transport modes as a result. S for T clarified that according priority to railway did not mean that the Government would restrict the growth of other public transport modes. There was a need to have a balanced development so that healthy competition could be maintained amongst various modes to ensure commuters choice.

15. Some members supported the provision of bus-bus interchanges to ease congestion along major bus corridors. Noting the difficulties encountered by the Administration in searching suitable sites for such purpose, they suggested the Administration explore the feasibility of providing such facilities below Victoria Park and Southorn Playground. S for T noted the member's suggestion and said that he would examine the feasibility of the proposed locations.

Waterborne transport policy

16. Mr HO Chun-yan expressed concern over the ferry service on outlying islands. He pointed out that given the difficult operating environment faced by ferry operators and having regard to the essential role played by ferries to serve residents on outlying island, the Government should formulate policy and render necessary support to ferry operators so as to ensure that a viable service of good quality could be maintained on one hand and the fares of the service could be maintained at acceptable level on the other.

17. C for T advised that the Administration had been working on the provision of a viable service at acceptable fare levels. To this end, the Department planned to conduct a study on the future development of waterborne transport to examine the viability of different types of ferry services and to consider how such services could be provided to best meet passengers' demand and expectations. The Administration took note of Mr HO's view that public consultation should be arranged in the course of the study.

Traffic management measures

Action

18. Mrs Selina CHOW pointed out that in view of the physical constraint in some parts of the Hong Kong Island where the roads were not wide enough to cater for long vehicles, consideration should be given to designating this kind of roads as prohibited zones for long vehicles so as to minimize unnecessary disruption caused to other road users. C for T said that this kind of prohibition was already imposed on certain roads, having regard to the physical constraints and traffic conditions.

Transport Advisory Committee

19. Mr CHAN Kam-lam pointed out that in order to improve the existing fare determination mechanism, there was a need to strengthen the role played by the Transport Advisory Committee (TAC). He enquired whether adequate resources had been granted to the TAC Secretariat to support TAC's monitoring function.

20. S for T advised that in response to members' request, the Administration had arranged to review the roles and functions of the TAC. Upon completion of the review, the Administration had also prepared two information papers for discussion of the Panel. Regarding the resources granted to TAC, he advised that he was not aware of any shortage of secretarial support to the TAC. Recently, two subcommittees had been formed by the TAC to support its research work.

21. Mr CHAN Kam-lam suggested that the item on TAC should be put on the list of outstanding items for discussion by the Panel.

Cross boundary traffic

22. Dr TANG Siu-tong expressed concern about the congestion of cross boundary freight traffic. S for T said that the planning of infrastructure would take into account future demands in cross boundary freight movements. The completion of the new Sheung Shui to Lok Ma Chau Spur Line would help relieve the congestion at Lo Wu rail crossing. The planning of a new Shenzhen - Hong Kong Western Corridor road link would also be underway with a view to easing the cross-boundary traffic in the long run. In the short term, the Administration would introduce a series of traffic management measures such as the provision of additional kiosks to enhance the vehicle handling capacity at the border.

23. Mr CHENG Kar-foo expressed concern about the capacity problem of the East Rail and Tolo Highway. He opined that there was a need to provide additional rail links and roads to ease congestion in North East New Territories.

24. S for T advised that the Administration would examine the future rail links in the context of the Second Railway Development Study which was due for completion in late 1999. Regarding the improvement of the existing East Rail, he said that with the improvement of the signaling system and the modification to the train compartments, the carrying capacity of East Rail would be increased by one-third.

Action

This should be adequate to meet the demand in the near future. In the long run, the Administration would review the transport needs of commuters and plan new facilities to cater for their demand.

II Any other business

25. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 10:05 am.

Legislative Council Secretariat

25 November 1999