

立法會

Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(1)885/99-00
(These minutes have been seen
by the Administration)

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Legislative Council Panel on Transport

Minutes of Meeting held on Friday, 17 December 1999, at 10:45 am in Conference Room A of the Legislative Council Building

- Members present** : Hon Mrs Miriam LAU Kin-ye, JP (Chairman)
Hon LAU Kong-wah (Deputy Chairman)
Hon Edward HO Sing-tin, SBS, JP
Hon Albert HO Chun-yan
Ir Dr Hon Raymond HO Chung-tai, JP
Hon Mrs Selina CHOW LIANG Shuk-ye, JP
Hon CHAN Wing-chan
Hon CHAN Kam-lam
Hon LAU Chin-shek, JP
Hon Andrew CHENG Kar-foo
Hon TAM Yiu-chung, GBS, JP
Dr Hon TANG Siu-tong, JP
- Non-Panel member attending** : Hon NG Leung-sing
- Members absent** : Hon LEE Wing-tat
Hon LEE Kai-ming, SBS, JP
Hon Andrew WONG Wang-fat, JP
Hon FUNG Chi-kin

**Public officers
attending**

: Item IV

Transport Bureau

Mr Nicholas NG Wing-fui
Secretary for Transport

Miss Margaret FONG
Deputy Secretary for Transport

Mr Brian LO
Principal Assistant Secretary for Transport

Transport Department

Mr Robert FOOTMAN
Commissioner for Transport

Mr Thomas THUMB
Assistant Commissioner for Transport

Hong Kong Police Force

Mr I J STENTON
Chief Superintendent, Traffic

Item V

Transport Bureau

Miss Margaret FONG
Deputy Secretary for Transport

Ms Doris CHEUNG
Principal Assistant Secretary for Transport

Transport Department

Mr Robert FOOTMAN
Commissioner for Transport

Mr Thomas THUMB
Assistant Commissioner for Transport

Item VI

Transport Bureau

Ms Shirley LAM
Principal Assistant Secretary for Transport

Transport Department

Mr Robert FOOTMAN
Commissioner for Transport

Mr Thomas THUMB
Assistant Commissioner for Transport

Item VII

Transport Bureau

Miss Margaret FONG
Deputy Secretary for Transport

Mr Brian LO
Principal Assistant Secretary for Transport

Transport Department

Mr Robert FOOTMAN
Commissioner for Transport

Mr Alan LUI
Assistant Commissioner for Transport/
Management & Licensing

Hong Kong Police Force

Mr I J STENTON
Chief Superintendent, Traffic

Clerk in attendance : Mr Andy LAU
Chief Assistant Secretary (1)2

Staff in attendance : Miss Irene MAN
Senior Assistant Secretary (1)6

I Confirmation of minutes and matters arising
(LC Paper No.CB(1)612/99-00) -- Minutes of meeting held on
26 October 1999)

The minutes of meeting on 26 October 1999 were confirmed.

II Information papers issued since last meeting

2. Members noted that no information paper was circulated since the last meeting.

III Items for discussion at the next meeting scheduled for 28 January 2000

(LC Paper No.CB(1)596/99-00(01) - List of follow-up actions
LC Paper No.CB(1)596/99-00(02) - List of outstanding items for
discussion)

3. Members agreed to delete the following items from the list of outstanding items for discussion :

- (a) The Ombudsman's report on Taxi Licensing System;
- (b) Tate's Cairn Tunnel Company Ltd's financial restructuring; and
- (c) The design of existing MTR and KCR stations and the resulting noise pollution problem.

4. Members agreed to discuss the following items at the next meeting scheduled for 28 January 2000:

- (a) Review of Transport Advisory Committee; and
- (b) Review on green minibus operations in Kowloon and New Territories East.

IV Measures to deal with speeding offences

(LC Paper No.CB(1)596/99-00(03))

5. Members generally agreed that there was a need to introduce measures to deter the more serious speeding offences.

Speed limit categorization

6. Dr Raymond HO considered that there was a need to streamline the existing structure of the speed limit categorization. In his view, two categories (ie. 70 km/h for urban roads and 100 km/h for rural roads) would suffice. Mr CHENG Kar-foo, however, opined that a three-tier structure would be more appropriate. The limits should be 50 km/h for urban roads, 80 km/h for urban trunk roads and 110 km/h for expressways. Mr TAM Yiu-chung remarked that there was a need to streamline the speed limit categorization and to provide adequate warning signs to enhance road safety.

7. Mr CHAN Kam-lam highlighted a number of traps for motorists: the speed limit of roads being too low and the lack of warning signs to advise motorists of abrupt changes in speed limit on carriageways. He called on the Administration to review the speed limit of roads before increasing the penalties for speeding offences. On the structure of speed limit categorization, he indicated support for a two-tier structure as suggested by Dr Raymond HO.

8. The Commissioner for Transport (C for T) advised that speed limits on roads varied with the type of roads. The limits were 50 km/h for the vast majority of urban roads, 70 or 80 km/h for rural and urban trunk roads and 100 or 110 km/h for expressways. He said that the present structure was well understood by motorists and 50 km/h was also widely used in other overseas countries.

9. Mrs Selina CHOW, however, queried the existing criteria in determining the speed limit of roads. She was concerned about the frequent changes in speed limit on carriageways and enquired whether the majority of the fixed penalty tickets were issued under such circumstances. She also enquired whether there was any direct relationship between the occurrence of accidents and speeding and the way in which the Administration solicited views from motorists on the speed limit categorization and its application.

10. Mr CHAN Wing-chan also called on the Administration to review the speed limit of roads before reconsidering the proposal to increase the penalties for speeding offences.

11. Responding to members' questions on the review of speed limits, the Secretary for Transport (S for T) advised that a total of some 40 major road sections were reviewed, and the speed limit on 18 road sections had been revised in stages since March 1999. C for T added that as far as possible, one single

speed limit would be applied to a road. In the circumstances where the road was of considerable length and it was not practicable to maintain one speed limit for the entire road, big speed limit repeater signs would be introduced to forewarn motorists of any abrupt change in speed ahead of 20 km/h or more. On the provision of warning signs, some members pointed out that motorists should be forewarned of any changes in speed limit on carriageways.

12. Mrs Selina CHOW highlighted the potential danger arising from the frequent changes in speed limit. She also queried the basis for lowering the speed limit of roads in case of merging traffic ahead and enquired whether motorists on the centre lane and fast lane could be exempted from observing the reduced speed limit. Her view was echoed by Mr Edward HO.

13. Mr Edward HO also queried the definition of urban roads which were subject to a speed limit of 50 km/h. In his view, the application of the speed limit categorization was too tight and hence, the speed limit of some roads were set too low.

14. C for T advised that speed limit of roads varied with the type of roads and other design features such as frontage access. Unlike the case in the United Kingdom where merging traffic would only occur once every few miles, traffic in Hong Kong merged more frequently, not to mention the fact that there was lesser space for merging. He said that the speed limit of roads was regularly reviewed to ensure that a right balance was struck between traffic flow and road safety. In the course of examination, the Administration would take into account views expressed by interested parties such as the Institute of Advanced Motorists.

Enforcement Methods

15. Mr TAM Yiu-chung pointed out that the Administration should examine the feasibility of further automation so as to avoid unnecessary congestion caused by the Police stopping motorists on carriageways after committing a speeding offence. Dr Raymond HO also requested the Administration to speed up the provision of Speed Enforcement Camera.

16. In response, the Chief Superintendent, Traffic, Hong Kong Police Force (CS/HKPF) advised that a five-year expansion programme involving the installation of 20 camera sites and four cameras per year would be implemented. Since the Speed Enforcement Camera only automated the detection part of the enforcement process, the prosecution part would continue to be handled normally by the Police. As such, the work had to be carried out in phases having regard to the manning requirements. S for T added that the Administration was examining the feasibility of further automation to provide an integrated processing system that would lead to improvements in the law enforcement process. At present, it took time to identify the driver of a speeding case. To streamline the prosecution process, the owner of a vehicle would be required to provide details of the driver,

failing which he would be personally held responsible for the speeding offence. The Administration had yet to finalize the proposal and would consult the Panel in due course before introducing the proposal to the Council.

17. Regarding the reliability of the speed enforcement camera system, CS/HKPF assured members that the system provided a high level of surveillance and enforcement on speeding offences that could not be met by manual operation.

Speeding offences

18. Mr CHENG Kar-foo indicated that he maintained an open mind on the proposal to impose stringent penalties for serious speeding offences. However, in considering that the number of speeding offences, other than speeding in excess of 15 km/h but less than or equal to 30 km/h, was reducing, he queried whether it was an appropriate time to consider the proposed measures to combat speeding. He urged the Administration to review the speed limit of all roads and to assess the traffic movements on the relevant major road sections as set out in Annex A to the paper before re-considering the penalties for speeding offences.

19. S for T advised that the review on speed limits was an on-going exercise. Other road sections were being examined to see whether relaxation of speed limits was justified. Whilst there was no consensus on the increased level of penalties for the less serious offences, there was general support for heavier penalties for excessive speeding (i.e. speeding in excess by more than 30 km/h) as such driving behaviour imposed serious threats to other road users.

20. Noting that for speeding in excess by more than 45 km/h, the means of prosecution could take two forms: a fixed penalty option which carried 10 Driving Offence Points or a summons option which included a mandatory disqualification from driving for six months on convictions, Mr CHENG Kar-foo queried the basis for selection.

21. CS/HKPF responded that the Police would take into account the driving record of a driver and the actual circumstances before making a decision. He remarked that prosecution by summons would enable the court to make a decision on how to treat the offender having regard to the severity of the incident. The revised proposal targeted excessive speeding activities through the heavier penalties imposed. Mr CHENG Kar-foo said that the Administration should include clear guidelines in the legislation to avoid abuse if the proposal were to be adopted.

22. Noting that some 77% of the speeding cases fell within the category of speeding in excess of more than 15 km/h but less than or equal to 30 km/h, Mr LAU Kong wah enquired whether this was attributable to the fact that the existing speed limit of roads were too low. He therefore requested the

Administration to provide a breakdown of the related statistics with reference to the speed limits of roads.

23. S for T reiterated that the speed limits of roads were reviewed regularly. Speed limits might be adjusted upwards or downwards having regard to the original design speed and the developments along the carriageways. The objective of such reviews was to ensure that a right balance was struck between traffic flow and road safety. He also confirmed that in the course of the review, the Administration had taken into account the views expressed by the transport trade.

24. In view of members' concerns on the subject matter, the Chairman suggested and members agreed to put the item for further discussion at the next meeting to be held on 28 January 2000.

25. S for T replied that the Administration would prepare additional information as requested by members for discussion at the next meeting. He, however, pointed out that as a result of the deferral, the Administration might not be able to introduce the legislation in February 2000. He hoped members would support the revised legislative timetable when it was subsequently introduced into the Council. Members noted the request put forward by S for T.

V Report on parking demand and supply and progress of improvement measures

(LC Paper No.CB(1)596/99-00(04))

26. Mrs Selina CHOW opined that in view of the shortage of parking spaces in most shopping districts, the Administration should consider the parking policy as adopted in other overseas countries whereby a time limit for short term parking would be imposed which was not subject to extension. This would improve the availability of parking spaces in those districts.

27. C for T replied that it was the Administration's target to maintain a 15% availability rate so as to ensure the efficient use of parking spaces. There were two ways to accomplish the said objective: by revising the parking charges regularly or by deploying extra manpower for enforcement. However, the latter option would have wide resource implications.

28. In response, Mrs Selina CHOW considered it necessary for the Administration to review the subject matter, taking into account the policy objective of providing on-street metered parking spaces. Where necessary, the Administration should consider contracting out the enforcement work to enhance efficiency.

29. Mr CHENG Kar-foo expressed grave concern about the shortage of

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parking spaces for container vehicles in the territory, particularly in Tseung Kwan O district. Noting that there was a theoretical surplus of some 5,900 overnight parking spaces for container vehicle, Mr CHENG Kar foo queried the reliability of the information. He also asked for a breakdown of the related statistics by district.

30. The Assistant Commissioner for Transport (AC for T) advised that although the overall provision of parking spaces on a territory-wide basis would be adequate, there would still be shortage of parking spaces in particular districts. The Transport Department would continue to deal with these localized problems. They would examine with parties concerned with a view to providing more parking spaces under short term tenancy agreement. Mr CHENG Kar-foo remarked that apart from speeding up the searching process for providing parking spaces under short term tenancy agreement, the Administration should designate more on-street overnight parking spaces for container vehicles.

31. To address the shortage of parking spaces, Mr Edward HO opined that parking spaces should be excluded from the calculation of the maximum plot ratio stipulated in the Building Ordinance. This would encourage developers to incorporate the provision of parking spaces in their developments for the benefits of the general public. He requested the Administration to liaise with the relevant bureaux/departments with a view to materializing the said proposal. His view was echoed by Mr CHAN Kam-lam. Mr CHAN also indicated that a flexible approach should be adopted in assessing applications from developers for excluding the provision of parking spaces from the calculation of the maximum plot ratio stipulated in the Building Ordinance for various developments, having regard to the public interest at large.

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32. AC for T took note of the member's suggestion and undertook to provide a written response having consulted his counterparts in the Government.

33. The Chairman expressed grave concern about the consistent shortfall of over 3,000 parking spaces for coaches. C for T advised that the assessment of demand for and supply of parking spaces for coaches as quoted by the Chairman had been theoretical. To verify the figures, a survey of illegal on-street parking was conducted during July 1999. The results of the survey indicated that around 600 coaches were illegally parked on streets as compared to the theoretical assessment of 3,200 coaches. The Administration would continue to work on the localized problems identified. They would also re-run the model next year with a view to collecting the latest figures for planning purpose.

34. Regarding the provision of multi-storey car park, C for T advised that by and large, the Government would rely on the private sector to provide such facilities. However, where circumstances warranted, the Government might take up individual project on a need basis.

VI Provision of exit numbers on expressways

(LC Paper No.CB(1)596/99-00(05))

35. AC for T briefed members on the proposal to assign exit numbers on expressways. He said that exit numbers, if provided, could be shown on gantry direction signs and be attached to count down markers leading to exit lanes. C for T added that Option 4 which was modelled on the United Kingdom system was considered the best among the four options put forward by the Administration. In brief, it would assign an identical number to exits in both bounds at the same interchange. Any exits which existed only in one bound of the expressway (single exit) would be numbered with alphabet suffix as the preceding exit, say 1A if the preceding exit number is 1. In case the first exit was a single exit, it would be numbered as 1A and the next exit would be 1. In this way, all exits at the same interchange would have identical exit number. Also, exit numbers in each bound would be in a consecutive order.

36. The majority of members present at the meeting indicated their support to the Administration's proposal (i.e. Option 4). Dr TANG Siu-tong, however, opined that he considered Option 2 more desirable as in his opinion, motorists on one side would not be concerned about exits on the other side.

37. Regarding the feasibility of providing road markings, AC for T highlighted the possible maintenance problems. He, however, undertook to examine further on the proposal.

38. Mr Edward HO commented that there were inadequate traffic signs to guide motorists to re-join the slip roads leading to expressways. His views were echoed by some other members. As the subject matter fell outside the scope of the present discussion, the Chairman requested the Administration to take note of members' concern and examine the subject matter further.

VII Any other business

- Motorcycle accident in an autocross club on 12 December 1999

39. The Chairman drew members' attention that a seven-year old boy died in an accident which occurred on 12 December 1999 in a cross-country motorcycling track in Fanling. In view of Mr CHENG Kar-foo's concern about the regulatory mechanism for cross-country motorcycling activities operated by private clubs in private premises, she had invited the Administration to brief members on the matter.

40. C for T advised members that licensing of cross-country motorcycling activities operated by private clubs in private premises was outside the ambit of the Transport Department. He said that under the Road Traffic Ordinance, no person could drive a vehicle on a "road" unless the vehicle was licensed and

registered in accordance with the Ordinance. The driver also needed to hold a valid driving licence before he could drive on a road. The site in question was a private area with access controlled by the owner. It was questionable whether the track inside the private lot could be considered as a "road" defined in the Road Traffic Ordinance. The Administration was seeking legal advice on this. The Police would also submit a report to the Coroner upon completion of the investigation.

41. Mr CHENG Kar-foo expressed grave concern about the apparent lack of Government and statutory control on cross-country motorcycling activities operated by private clubs in private premises. He sought further clarifications from the Administration as to whether an entertainment licence or vehicle/driving licence was required for the operation of cross-country motorcycles in private premises. He also requested the Administration to provide further information on the number of private autocross clubs in Hong Kong.

42. AC for T advised that the private club concerned had applied for a licence to operate cross-country motorcycling activities on another piece of Government land but a licence had never been issued to the applicant by the Administration. Regarding the application of the Road Traffic Ordinance, he advised that as the site in question was on private land with restricted access, it was doubtful whether the Ordinance would apply in the circumstances. He understood that the vehicles used on the club were not registered and licensed by the Transport Department.

43. Noting that the subject was not a transport issue, Mr CHENG Kar-foo criticized that the situation was undesirable as no single department or bureau was responsible for the licensing of the cross-country motorcycling activities in private premises. He urged the Administration to put in place adequate safety guidelines and to introduce a proper regulatory framework for the cross-country motorcycling activities operated by private clubs in private premises.

44. Mr CHAN Kam-lam was of the view that whilst it was of paramount importance to put in place a suitable regulatory framework for the cross-country motorcycling activities in private premises, the related regulations should not be too stringent so as to stifle the development of the activities which was indeed a kind of sports and was also well received in other overseas countries. Further, it was also necessary to enhance public awareness of the potential risks associated with the activities.

45. In response to Dr TANG Siu-tong, AC for T clarified that village vehicles used in the rural areas were subject to a permit system administered by the Transport Department.

46. In concluding deliberation, the Chairman requested the Administration to liaise with the relevant Bureaux with a view to introducing a suitable regulatory

framework with sufficient safety guidelines in place for monitoring the cross-country motorcycling activities in private premises. She also asked the Administration to find out and to report on the number of private clubs providing similar activities in the territory. Pending the Administration's reply, the subject matter would be referred to the Home Affairs Panel for follow-up if no transport-related issue was involved.

(Post meeting note : The required information was circulated to members vide LC Paper No. CB(1)724/99-00 dated 6 January 2000).

47. There being no other business, the meeting adjourned at 12:55p.m.

Legislative Council Secretariat

25 January 2000