

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(1)1233/99-00
(These minutes have been seen
by the Administration)

Ref : CB1/PL/TP/1

Legislative Council
Panel on Transport

Minutes of Meeting held on
Friday, 25 February 2000, at 10:45 am
in Conference Room A of the Legislative Council Building

Members present : Hon Mrs Miriam LAU Kin-ye, JP (Chairman)
Hon LEE Wing-tat
Hon LEE Kai-ming, SBS, 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

Members absent : 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 Andrew WONG Wang-fat, JP
Hon FUNG Chi-kin
Dr Hon TANG Siu-tong, JP

Public officers : **Agenda Item IV**
attending

Transport Bureau

Miss Margaret FONG
Deputy Secretary for Transport

Mr Brian LO
Principal Assistant Secretary for Transport

Transport Department

Mrs Dorothy CHAN
Acting Commissioner for Transport

Mr Louis HUNG
Acting Assistant Commissioner for Transport

Mr C W KWAN
Chief Traffic Engineer/Hong Kong

Planning Department

Mr Augustine NG
Assistant Director of Planning/Territorial

Agenda Item V

Transport Bureau

Miss Margaret FONG
Deputy Secretary for Transport

Mr Brian LO
Principal Assistant Secretary for Transport

Transport Department

Mrs Dorothy CHAN
Acting Commissioner for Transport

Mr Alan KAM
Deputy Commissioner for Transport

Hong Kong Police Force

Mr William TANG
Chief Superintendent, Traffic

Agenda Item VI

Transport Bureau

Ms Linda LAI
Deputy Secretary for Transport

Mr Davey CHUNG
Principal Assistant Secretary for Transport

Highways Department

Mr L T MA
Government Engineer/Railway Development

**Attendance by
invitation**

: Agenda Item IV

Ove Arup & Partners

Mr Wilfred LAU
Director

Mr John Mark T. LUCAS
Associate

Agenda Item VI

Kowloon-Canton Railway Corporation

Mr James BLAKE
Senior Director, Capital Projects

Mr Ian THOMS
Director, West Rail

Mrs Irene YAU
General Manager, Corporate Affairs

Mr J JESUDASON
General Manager, Construction

Mr Gregory YUEN
Project Manager (North)
Mr C N FUNG

Project Manager (South)

Mr C K YEUNG
Senior Public Affairs Manager - West Rail

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

Staff in attendance : Ms Alice AU
Senior Assistant Secretary (1)5

Action

I Confirmation of minutes and matters arising

- (LC Paper No. CB(1)1042/99-00 - Minutes of the joint meeting of the Transport Panel and the Environmental Affairs Panel held on 16 December 1999; and
LC Paper No. CB(1)1043/99-00 - Minutes of meeting held on 28 January 2000)

The minutes of meetings held on 16 December 1999 and 28 January 2000 were confirmed.

II Information papers issued since last meeting

2. Members noted that no information paper had been issued since the last meeting.

III Items for discussion at the next meeting

- (LC Paper No. CB(1)1041/99-00(01) - List of outstanding items; and
LC Paper No. CB(1)1041/99-00(02) - List of follow-up actions)

3. Members agreed that the next regular Panel meeting originally scheduled for 24 March 2000 would be held on 29 March 2000 at 10:45 am to make way for Special Finance Committee meetings to examine the draft Estimates 2000-01, and the following items would be discussed:

- (a) Latest development of the Ma On Shan to Tai Wai Rail Link and Kowloon-Canton Railway Extension to Tsim Sha Tsui;
(b) Octopus ticketing system; and

(b) Driver Improvement Scheme.

(Post-meeting note: The meeting on 29 March 2000 had subsequently been rescheduled to be held from 8:30 am to 10:30 am.)

4. Highlighting members' concerns about the existing structure of speed limit categorization raised at previous meetings when the proposal to increase the fixed penalty and Driving-Offence Points for serious speeding offences was discussed, Mrs Selina CHOW opined that the Administration's reply circulated vide LC Paper No. CB(1)1031/99-00 failed to convince her that the present speed limits of roads were reasonable and that there was a direct relationship between accidents and speeding. She therefore requested that the subject matter be further deliberated by the Panel before the legislative proposal to increase the penalty for serious speeding offences was put to the Legislative Council for consideration.

5. The Deputy Secretary for Transport (DS for T) said that the item on measures to combat speeding was separately discussed by the Panel in early 1999, December 1999 and January 2000. In response to members' concern about the appropriateness of the structure of the existing speed limit categorization, the Administration had provided an information paper which was already circulated to members prior to the meeting held in January 2000. She then briefly highlighted the programme for the review of speed limits, emphasizing that the review was an on-going exercise. She would welcome any suggestions from members and the trade in this regard. Whilst appreciating members' concern about the speed limit categorization, there was a need to introduce measures to deter the more serious speeding offences. The Administration would therefore introduce a legislative proposal to increase the penalty levels for serious speeding offences on 1 March 2000. The Administration was prepared to discuss with members on the outstanding policy issues and provide more information to substantiate the legislative proposal at future meetings of the Bills Committee or the Panel as appropriate.

6. Mrs Selina CHOW remarked that the Administration should adopt a more pragmatic and sincere approach in its consultation with LegCo Panels on legislative and financial proposals to be put forward. In the present case, it would indeed be more constructive and effective if the relevant bill could be presented into the Council after the Panel had concluded its discussion on all major policy issues involved, so that additional work would not be created for the Bills Committee unnecessarily. Given that LegCo Panels had the prerogative to examine the Administration's financial and legislative proposals before they were introduced into the Council, this consultation process should be taken seriously by the Administration.

7. In concluding deliberation, the Chairman advised that when the matter was discussed at the last meeting on 28 January 2000, members had expressed concerns about the application of the speed limit categorization and the justification for increasing the penalty levels for serious speeding offences. The Secretary for Transport (S for T)

advised members that he would try and provide more information to substantiate the legislative proposal to increase speeding penalties when it was put forward to the Legislative Council. Members present at the meeting did not raise any objection to the suggestion made by S for T. On this understanding, the Administration had indicated its intention to introduce the relevant legislation into the Council soon. She also advised members that even if the related legislative proposal was passed by the Legislative Council, the effective date of the legislation had yet to be determined by S for T. In this regard, the outstanding policy issue on speed limit categorization could be further deliberated by the Panel if it was not satisfactorily resolved in the context of the Bills Committee likely to be formed to examine the bill.

IV Pedestrian Schemes

(LC Paper No. CB(1)1041/99-00(03) - Information paper provided by the Administration)

8. At the invitation of the Chairman, the Acting Assistant Commissioner for Transport (AC for T (Atg)) briefed members on the objectives of introducing pedestrian schemes in some of the crowded and polluted spots in Hong Kong. He said that heavy traffic flow and heavy pedestrian flow were the two common features of the identified priority areas. In devising the pedestrian schemes, the Administration was aimed at enhancing road safety on one hand whilst improving the overall environment for pedestrians on the other. He then invited the Government's consultant on the proposed pedestrian schemes to brief members further on the subject matter.

9. With the aid of PowerPoint presentation, Mr Wilfred LAU, Director of Ove Arup & Partners explained that in order to achieve the twin objectives of enhancing road safety and improving the overall environment for pedestrians, there was a need to pedestrianise some of the streets in the areas, either full-time or part-time, and discourage non-essential traffic in the areas together with the implementation of traffic management schemes to minimise the impact on vehicular circulation of the surrounding area arising from pedestrianising some of the streets in the area. He also briefed members on the general concept adopted in devising pedestrian schemes, with particular reference to the Causeway Bay scheme as illustration. Details of the proposal are set out in the information paper provided by the Administration.

Public consultation

10. On the preparatory work for the proposed pedestrian schemes, Mrs Selina CHOW enquired about the Administration's plan to consult the affected shop operators, in particular on the details of the schemes such as the time restriction on vehicular traffic. She opined that while general support from the retail industry was expected given that pedestrianization would improve the general pedestrian environment and bring about a greater concentration of shoppers, due consideration should be given to any views expressed by shop operators in the area so that their daily operations would not be

adversely affected. In reply, AC for T (Atg) said that the Administration would take due consideration of the views put forward by local communities. The Administration had briefed the Wanchai District Council (DC) on the details of Phase I of the Pedestrian Scheme for Causeway Bay. In general, members of the Wanchai DC were in support of the proposal. In the next stage, Wan Chai District Office and Transport Department (TD) would start to consult the affected residents, shop operators and public transport operators concerned.

11. The Chairman expressed concern about the effectiveness of the consultation exercise and enquired whether the affected parties would be duly informed. Her concern was shared by Mrs CHOW who opined that early notification given to the affected parties and sincere efforts to address their concerns would enhance their understanding and acceptance of the scheme.

12. While endorsing the principle of the scheme, Mr CHAN Wing-chan was concerned about its impact on the livelihood of taxi and minibus drivers and asked whether the views of the trade, such as the Motor Transport Workers General Union had been sought. AC for T (Atg) advised that consultation would be conducted through TD's regular meetings with representatives of the trade.

13. Responding to Mr CHAN Kam-lam's question, DS for T assured members that every effort would be made by TD and HAD to consult all the parties affected by the scheme, including area committees. A district working group had been set up to coordinate views from other related departments on the overall impact of the proposal in the area. Consultation with the residents, shop owners and public transport operators, as well as district organizations and trade bodies would then be conducted through various channels and means. At the request of Mr CHAN and Mrs CHOW, the Administration undertook to brief the Panel on the outcome of the consultation exercise.

Admin.

Time restricted pedestrianized streets

14. On the proposed part-time pedestrianisation, Mr CHAN Wing-chan asked if any assessment had been made on the impact of loading and unloading activities at midnight on residents. Mrs Selina CHOW also remarked that excessive noise created would be of particular concern. Mr Wilfred LAU said that as indicated by related survey results, the majority of loading and unloading activities in Causeway Bay involved light goods vehicles and the whole process would only take about 7 to 20 minutes. Hence, except for exceptional cases, it was envisaged that most of these activities would occur between 7 am and 12 noon.

15. Mr CHAN further asked about the measures to be taken in case traffic congestion at Hennessy Road was further aggravated by the part-time pedestrianization of East Point Road. Mr Wilfred LAU replied that in calibrating the transport model for assessing the overall effect of the pedestrian scheme, it had already taken into account

the associated traffic diversions and impacts arising from the implementation of the scheme.

Mixed priority streets

16. As vehicular traffic would not be restricted in mixed priority streets, Mr CHENG Kar-foo queried whether the intended objectives of improving the environment and traffic flow could be achieved as additional vehicular traffic might be diverted from full-time and part-time pedestrianized streets. He opined that the number of mixed priority streets should be kept to a minimum. Acknowledging Mr CHENG's concern, Mr Wilfred LAU said that efforts had already been made to minimize the number of such streets. However, mixed priority streets were necessary to allow access to car parks in residential and commercial buildings, etc. With suitable design features, it was hoped that non-essential traffic in those streets would be discouraged.

17. Questioning the concept of shared priority between pedestrians and vehicles, Mrs Selina CHOW opined that the designation of cul-de-sac with limited access might be more effective in limiting vehicular traffic. In response, Mr LAU said that practical difficulties were involved in allowing authorized access. The Commissioner for Transport (Acting) (C for T (Atg)) added that she would welcome any suggestion from members to improve the scheme and to address residents' concerns and practical difficulties.

18. Mr CHENG enquired whether similar schemes would be run concurrently in the other two priority areas, i.e. Tsim Sha Tsui and Mongkok. AC for T (Atg) advised that pending consultation with the local DCs, those schemes were planned for the latter half of the year. Expressing general support for the proposal, Mr CHENG urged for the early implementation of pedestrian schemes in Tsim Sha Tsui and Mongkok and requested additional information from the Administration on the progress and details of such schemes. C for T (Atg) agreed to provide the required information.

Admin.

19. The Chairman asked whether an assessment had been made on the level of reduction in vehicle emissions after the implementation of Phase I and Phase II of the pedestrian scheme for Causeway Bay respectively. C for T (Atg) replied that as advised by the Environmental Protection Department, it would be very difficult to quantify the localized impact of the scheme on a single area. But generally speaking, with vehicular traffic being diverted and separated from pedestrian activities, air quality would improve creating a better overall environment.

20. Reiterating her concerns raised previously on the acute shortage of parking spaces in Causeway Bay, Mrs Selina CHOW asked whether the opportunity would be taken to conduct a parallel trial scheme for designating short term parking spaces as adopted in the City centre of London whereby a specified time limit, say half an hour or an hour, would be imposed which was not subject to extension. In this way, the availability of parking spaces would be improved. While noting Mrs CHOW's suggestion, C for T

(Atg) said that according to existing legislation, no person should park a motor vehicle in a parking space for more than 24 hours. The proposed pedestrian schemes would reduce the number of on-street parking spaces and motorists would be encouraged to park in the peripheral carparks. The provision of short term parking spaces would be examined whenever appropriate.

21. Summing up the discussion, the Chairman said that while members were in general support of pedestrianization, a number of concerns had been raised which required detailed re-thinking by the Administration. In particular, she pointed out that the stretch of Hennessy Road outside the SOGO Department Store which was by far the busiest spot in Causeway Bay, had not been tackled. Without specific measures taken in this respect, the effectiveness of pedestrianization efforts in other streets might be undermined.

22. C for T (Atg) thanked members for their views and support on the proposal and advised that while other measures had been taken to tackle the problem, such as the rationalization of bus stops along Hennessy Road and periodic review of its results; relocation of bus stops away from the core areas in Causeway Bay etc., the Government's consultant would also look into specific measures for improving traffic conditions on Hennessy Road.

V Review of Seat Belt Legislation

(LC Paper No. CB(1)1041/99-00(04) - Information paper provided by the Administration)

23. The Deputy Commissioner for Transport (DC for T) introduced the Administration's paper on the subject which proposed an extension of the seat belt legislation to cover rear seats of taxis, as well as other improvements to the existing seat belt legislation.

24. Referring to paragraph 8 of the paper, the Chairman asked and DS for T clarified that while under existing legislation, the legal responsibility of front seat and middle front seat passengers not wearing seat belt on taxis rested with both the driver and the passengers, the driver could always refuse a hire for non-complying passengers or require them to leave the vehicle and pay the required fare. In addition, a defence of reasonable excuse was also available to the driver. However, that position would change after the new proposal was implemented as only the passengers themselves would be held responsible.

25. Citing practical difficulties encountered by police officers in enforcing seat belt legislation, Mr CHAN Kam-lam asked what measures could be taken to facilitate proper and efficient enforcement. In reply, the Chief Superintendent, Traffic of the Hong Kong Police Force (CS(T)/HKPF) said that the objective of enforcement actions was to ensure

the safety of drivers and passengers. While a deterrent effect was achieved by statutory regulatory regime, publicity and education would also be needed.

26. Mr CHAN further suggested that for the purpose of easy identification, mandatory requirements on the colour of seat belts and the display of sticker on rear wind screen might be useful. Welcoming the suggestions, CS(T)/HKPF advised that discussions would be held with TD. The Chairman added that consultation with the transport trade should be conducted whenever necessary. Mrs Selina CHOW however expressed reservation on the proposed mandatory requirements on the colour of seat belts.

27. Given the effectiveness of the seat belt requirement in reducing accident casualties, Mrs Selina CHOW asked why other classes of vehicles, particularly light goods vehicles, were not included in the present exercise. DC for T explained that priority was given to taxis because they were basically the same as private cars in terms of vehicle type, so there should not be any technical difficulties in the installation of rear seat belts. Moreover, the number of rear seat casualties for taxis were the second highest among various classes of vehicles. In this connection, Mr CHENG Kar-foo requested supplementary information from the Administration on the number of accident casualties for light goods vehicles.

Admin.

(Post-meeting note: The Administration advised that the number of rear seat casualties for taxi were about three times of that of light goods vehicles for the past five years.)

28. In reply to further questions from Mrs CHOW and Mr CHENG Kar-foo, DC for T advised that the existing construction for light goods vehicles and public light buses did not support the proper installation of seat belts. If seat belts were to be installed, substantial modification to the vehicle design and construction was required. The Administration had been pursuing this matter with manufacturers of public light buses and the trade. While it was not practicable to extend rear seat belt legislation to this class of vehicles at the present stage, the Administration would continue to explore other in-vehicle protection measures to enhance passenger safety. In order to address members' concerns on safety, the Chairman urged the Administration to speed up its discussions with car manufacturers.

29. Mr CHAN Kam-lam remarked that with the implementation of the proposed extension of seat belt requirement, publicity should be stepped up to enhance the public's awareness that for the proper functioning of seat belts, only three passengers should sit in the rear of taxis. Otherwise, they themselves would have to be responsible for any non-compliance with the new legislation. His views were shared by Mrs Selina CHOW.

VI West Rail Project Update

(LC Paper No. CB(1)1041/99-00(05) - Information paper provided by the

Kowloon-Canton Railway Corporation)

30. The Chairman welcomed representatives of the Kowloon-Canton Railway Corporation (KCRC) to brief members on the progress of, and the key milestones that had been achieved on, the West Rail (Phase I) project.

31. Noting that the project estimate was adjusted downward substantially, Mr CHAN Kam-lam enquired about its effect on the determination of fare. The Senior Director, Capital Projects of KCRC (SD(CP)/KCRC) advised that notwithstanding the lowering of the estimated project cost, it was far too early to commit on any fare at the present moment from the point of view of the commercial viability of the project. The decision on fares would only be taken towards the end of the project.

32. Mr CHAN further asked about the percentage of contracts awarded to local and overseas bidders. Director, West Rail of KCRC (D(West Rail)/KCRC) said that the objective of breaking up the contracts to provide more opportunities to local bidders was quite successful with 45% of the civil construction contracts awarded to contractors from Hong Kong and China and 55% to overseas bidders. It represented a major shift from previous mega projects.

33. In response to Mr LEE Wing-tat, SD(CP)/KCRC confirmed that platform screen doors had been incorporated as an integral part of the design and they would be installed in all stations.

34. Noting that major milestones were essentially on schedule, Mr LEE Wing-tat enquired about the compliance positions relating to minor milestones. D(West Rail)/KCRC replied that there were one or two minor milestones relating to foundation works which were not on schedule. However, these milestones were not key dates which would affect the progress of follow-on activities. They were just milestones for payment purposes. If the works were delayed, they would be reprogrammed to get them back on track.

35. Responding to Mrs Selina CHOW's questions about the number of construction workers and staff working on the project, SD(CP)/KCRC said that the estimated 11 000 construction workers working at various West Rail sites was a peak figure and KCRC did not anticipate any problem in terms of labour procurement. In terms of the 2 000 professional, managerial and support staff cited in paragraph 8 of the information paper, D(West Rail)/KCRC supplemented that about 700 were KCRC staff. 314 were resident site staff provided by the detail design consultant and the rest comprised professionals who were in the management and support services for the contractors. Mrs CHOW enquired whether the 700 KCRC staff were employed on contract terms. SD(CP)/KCRC replied in the affirmative. He added that those staff were employed specifically for the project and they would be kept on board for as long as they were required for the project.

36. Mrs CHOW cautioned that with the gradual pick-up of the economy, KCRC should closely monitor the supply of construction workers with its contractors so as to ensure that no slippage would occur.

Community Relations Programme

37. On community relations programme in relation to blasting and excavation work, Mr LEE Wing-tat opined that more efforts should be taken by KCRC to ensure that the concerns of local residents were adequately addressed and the works properly monitored, such as to conduct site testing to monitor the level of vibration during blasting operations and to publish the results. In reply, SD(CP)/KCRC emphasized that KCRC had taken every precaution during blasting operations. With regard to the problem of cracks found in buildings which residents had alleged was due to blasting operations, the buildings concerned were carefully monitored and records were taken before blasting operations commenced. On-site monitoring had been conducted during actual blasting operations and the results showed that the effects were well within established limits of vibration affecting the structures. Responding to a further question from the Chairman, SD(CP)/KCRC said that information on the general timing of blasting operations was distributed by the community liaison co-ordination groups. However, as the timing of actual blasting operations might vary, it would not be possible to give the exact time.

38. As a general comment, Mr LEE Wing-tat opined that more artistic architectural designs for stations might be adopted as in other countries. In response, SD(CP)/KCRC said that while the design of stations had already been completed and contracts awarded, efforts had been made to represent individual characteristics of the stations as they were designed. For example, the design of Mei Foo station was deliberately aimed at blending the station with the surrounding park environment.

39. The Chairman thanked representatives of KCRC for their attendance and requested that further update be made to the Panel on the progress of the West Rail project.

VII Any other business

40. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 12:55 pm.

Legislative Council Secretariat
23 March 2000