

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL PANEL ON TRANSPORT

Pedestrian Schemes

INTRODUCTION

This paper outlines the objectives and the general concept adopted in devising pedestrian schemes, with particular reference to the Causeway Bay scheme as illustration.

BACKGROUND

2. Pedestrian circulation is one of the fundamental planning considerations in transport and land use planning. The Administration has been proactive in supporting separation of pedestrians from vehicles through pedestrian schemes and grade-separated pedestrian walkway systems. Such measures ensure adequate pedestrian linkages are provided between major activity nodes, minimise conflict between pedestrians and vehicles, reduce traffic volume and associated air pollution and provide a better walking environment for pedestrians.

3. For built-up areas, the Administration has 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 are Causeway Bay, Mongkok and Tsim Sha Tsui.

PEDESTRIAN SCHEMES FOR CAUSEWAY BAY, MONGKOK AND TSIM SHA TSUI

4. Two common features of the identified priority areas i.e. Causeway Bay, Mongkok and Tsim Sha Tsui, are the heavy traffic flow and heavy pedestrian flow in these areas. In devising the pedestrian schemes, the Transport Department has adopted the twin objectives of enhancing road safety and improving the overall environment for pedestrians. In addition to improving the general pedestrian environment through beautification of the area and diversion of vehicular traffic to the periphery to improve the air quality, the schemes also aim to minimize conflict between pedestrians and vehicular traffic thereby reducing the occurrence of traffic accidents involving injuries to pedestrians.

5. To achieve the above objectives, we need to -
- (a) pedestrianise some of the streets in the areas, either full-time or part-time;
 - (b) discourage non-essential traffic in the areas to reduce the traffic flow as well as to reduce the pressure on roads in the surrounding area; and
 - (c) devise traffic management schemes to minimise the impact on vehicular circulation of the surrounding area arising from pedestrianising some of the streets in the area.

General Concept of Pedestrian Schemes

6. Given the substantial commercial, retail and other economic activities in all the three study areas which generate significant transport needs, e.g. loading and unloading, access by public transport, and access to car parks, permanent closure of many of the streets to vehicular traffic will not be a viable option. Instead, the general concept is to reduce the overall vehicular traffic and divert some traffic from the core areas so as to establish pedestrian activity areas in places where pedestrian volume is high.

7. Under the proposed schemes, the core areas (other than the trunk roads) would be designated as pedestrian priority areas. In these areas, streets are classified according to the level of priority given to the pedestrians as follows -

- (a) Fully pedestrianised streets (full-time pedestrianisation) – The streets will be closed to vehicular traffic throughout the day except for emergency vehicles. An illustration is shown in Figure 1;
- (b) Time restricted pedestrianised streets (part-time pedestrianisation) - Vehicular traffic will only be permitted during certain hours of the day mainly for loading and unloading purposes (normally between 12 midnight to 12 noon). An illustration is shown in Figure 2; and
- (c) Mixed priority streets – Priority is shared between pedestrian activities and vehicles. Vehicular traffic will not be restricted but coloured block paving will be introduced to distinguish the mixed priority streets from other traffic streets. Traffic calming measures

will be introduced to reduce traffic flow and speed, and footpaths will be widened to improve pedestrian circulation. An illustration is shown in Figure 3.

8. The proposed pedestrian schemes will improve the general pedestrian environment but will also entail some costs in terms of causing inconvenience to certain sectors whose activities would be affected, e.g. more restrictions on the delivery of goods to shops in the pedestrianised areas; cancellation of on-street parking spaces in the area; and relocation of pick-up/drop-off points for public transport.

Pedestrian Scheme for Causeway Bay

9. The pedestrian scheme for Causeway Bay is used to illustrate how the scheme works.

10. The scheme would be implemented in two phases as shown in Figures 4 and 4A. Phase I mainly consists of one section of full-time pedestrianised street and two sections of part-time pedestrianised streets. A step-by-step approach would be adopted in implementing Phase I of the scheme. Initially, the pedestrianised streets would only be close to vehicular traffic on Sundays and public holidays on a trial basis. This allows us to assess the impact on traffic circulation and pedestrian flow before making the arrangement permanent.

11. Phase II of the pedestrian scheme consists of a number of mixed priority streets together with the removal of on-street parking spaces and the relocation of taxi stands and green minibus (GMB) termini away from the core of Causeway Bay. Footways would be widened to allow equitable use of street space between vehicular traffic and pedestrians. Vehicular traffic would be subject to traffic calming measures. Depending on the public reaction to Phase I of the scheme, we will proceed with Phase II.

12. The pedestrian scheme will be implemented in phases. District Councils, shop operators and public transport operators will be consulted on the details of the schemes. We aim to start the Phase I implementation from mid-2000.

PLANNING FOR PEDESTRIANS

13. Apart from the aforesaid pedestrian schemes in the priority areas, the Planning Department will also commission a consultancy study, "Study on Planning for Pedestrians", later this year focusing on the built-up areas in Hong Kong and Kowloon.

14. The overall objective of the Study is to explore the potential and recommend proposals for more co-ordinated and comprehensive planning for pedestrians with a view to promoting pedestrian schemes in high pedestrian activity areas. The Study will examine the constraints and opportunities, land use, transport, environmental and urban design considerations and other related issues for effective implementation. It will, among the various tasks, identify pedestrian generators and attractors, assess adequacy of existing pedestrian linkages and recommend means of pedestrian connections with a view to making pedestrian walking experience more vibrant. The Study is expected to start in September 2000 for completion in about November 2001.

15. As for the new towns and the Strategic Growth Areas, the principle of creating pedestrian-friendly environment has already been adopted in the development statement. Provision of pedestrian-only or priority areas, grade separated walkway, travelator, sunken road for vehicles will be incorporated, wherever appropriate, in the transport and land use planning for these new development areas at the early planning stage.

ADVICE SOUGHT

16. Members are invited to note the content of this paper and to comment on the general approach to pedestrian schemes.

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