

NOTE FOR PUBLIC WORKS SUBCOMMITTEE OF FINANCE COMMITTEE

Supplementary information on 720TH - Widening of Tolo Highway/Fanling Highway between Island House Interchange and Fanling

INTRODUCTION

When Members considered paper PWSC(2000-01)60 on **720TH** – “Widening of Tolo Highway/ Fanling Highway between Island House Interchange and Fanling” at the Public Works Subcommittee meeting on 22 November 2000, the Administration undertook to provide information on -

- (a) the feasibility of transplanting all trees more than 20 years' old affected by the proposed road works; and
- (b) the feasibility of recycling/reusing trees which would have to be felled.

THE ADMINISTRATION'S RESPONSE

2. During the investigation and preliminary design stage of the project, we carried out a comprehensive tree survey and aimed to preserve as many trees as possible. Retention of existing trees in-situ was our first priority but where this was impracticable, we gave serious consideration to transplanting such trees before recommending that they be felled.

3. The assessment of whether a tree is suitable for transplanting is based on a number of factors concerning physical and arboricultural practicability. We aimed at transplanting as many trees as possible, in particular those which are native or rare species with above-average form, health and amenity value. However, we faced the following constraints –

/(a)

- (a) in choosing trees suitable for transplanting, we have to strike a balance between the survival rate, practicability, amenity value of the trees and cost of transplantation. Unfortunately, larger and more mature trees are the most difficult and costly¹ ones to transplant and often demonstrate a low survival rate²; and
- (b) the majority of the trees within the project boundary are located on steep slopes adjacent to the existing road. Transplanting would be difficult and dangerous³ because of the lack of safe access for workers carrying out transplanting work using machinery.

4. Our current estimate is that about 15,000 trees would be affected by the project. Of these, we should be able to preserve in-situ some 5,000 trees and transplant another 200. Some 80,000 new trees will also be planted under this project. We will review the tree survey report during the detailed design stage to see if more trees, especially the more mature ones, can be preserved in-situ or can be transplanted.

5. As regards the feasibility of recycling/reusing trees felled during the construction of the project, we will consider the following possibilities -

- (a) felled trees of a diameter 30cm or above can be used for producing Country Park facilities, such as fences, picnic tables and benches; and

/(b)

¹ Transplanting a tree two metres in girth at flat area costs about \$12,000. For a bigger tree seven to eight metres in girth, the cost ranges from \$500,000 to \$1,000,000 depending on the site conditions, the distance of relocation, the state of the tree and its species.

² Mature trees generally have more extensive root zones. We need to prune a large proportion of the tree roots and upper branches to produce a manageable size for transportation to a new location. This affects the tree's ability to survive.

³ Trees growing on steep slopes generally have some roots exposed. To ensure a reasonable survival rate for the trees, there should be minimum disturbance and loss on tree roots. Doing this would not only make the task more difficult but also impose danger on the workers because of limited work space and difficulty in erecting working platforms.

- (b) smaller trees and shrubs can be chipped to produce a mulch that can be used on planting beds as a means of controlling weed growth in place of chemical herbicides. They may also be chipped and composted to produce a soil ameliorate which can be added to new landscape areas.

6. We will further investigate the practicability of the above measures. Where re-use is a practical option, we will specify the procedures and monitoring requirements for the recommended recycling works for implementation under the works contracts.

Transport Bureau
December 2000