

立法會
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**Panel on Environmental Affairs and
Panel on Transport**

**Minutes of joint meeting held on
Monday, 24 February 2003, at 2:30 pm
in Conference Room A of the Legislative Council Building**

Members present : Members of the Panel on Environmental Affairs

Hon CHOY So-yuk (Chairman)
Hon Cyd HO Sau-lan (Deputy Chairman)
* Dr Hon David CHU Yu-lin, JP
* Ir Dr Hon Raymond HO Chung-tai, JP
Hon Martin LEE Chu-ming, SC, JP
Hon WONG Yung-kan
* Hon LAU Kong-wah
Hon Emily LAU Wai-hing, JP
Dr Hon LAW Chi-kwong, JP
Hon Henry WU King-cheong, BBS, JP
Dr Hon LO Wing-lok
* Hon LAU Ping-cheung
Hon Audrey EU Yuet-mee, SC, JP

Members of the Panel on Transport

Hon Miriam LAU Kin-yee, JP (Chairman)
Hon Abraham SHEK Lai-him, JP (Deputy Chairman)
Hon Mrs Selina CHOW LIANG Shuk-yee, GBS, JP
Hon Andrew WONG Wang-fat, JP
Hon LAU Chin-shek, JP
Hon Andrew CHENG Kar-foo
Hon Tommy CHEUNG Yu-yan, JP
Hon Albert CHAN Wai-yip
Hon WONG Sing-chi

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Member attending : Hon Fred LI Wah-ming, JP

Members absent : Member of the Panel on Environmental Affairs

Hon SIN Chung-kai

Members of the Panel on Transport

Hon Albert HO Chun-yan

Hon CHAN Kwok-keung

Hon TAM Yiu-chung, GBS, JP

Dr Hon TANG Siu-tong, JP

Hon LEUNG Fu-wah, MH, JP

(* Also members of the Panel on Transport)

Public officers attending : **For item II**

Environment, Transport and Works Bureau

Mr Thomas CHOW

Deputy Secretary (Environment)2

Mr C W TSE

Principal Assistant Secretary (Environment)3

Environmental Protection Department

Mr K S CHAN

Principal Environmental Protection Officer (Noise Management and Policy)

Transport Department

Mr S M LI

Assistant Commissioner (Urban)

Highways Department

Mr C W CHOW

Chief Engineer (Major Works)

Clerk in attendance : Miss Becky YU
Chief Assistant Secretary (1)1

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Staff in attendance : Mrs Mary TANG
Senior Assistant Secretary (1)2

Miss Mandy POON
Legislative Assistant 4

I. Election of Chairman

Miss CHOY So-yuk was elected chairman of the joint meeting.

II. Progress of measures to address noise impact of existing roads

(LC Paper No. CB(1) 754/02-03 — Background brief on measures to abate traffic noise
LC Paper No. CB(1) 957/02-03(01) — Paper provided by the Administration)

2. The Chairman recalled that the Panel on Environmental Affairs and Panel on Transport had jointly conducted a site visit on 21 October 2002 to assess the relative difference in noise levels from vehicles passing the Texaco Road Flyover and through the at-grade road section. Another joint visit was made on 14 February 2003 to examine the need for installation of noise barriers at the Tolo Highway. At the last joint meeting on 23 January 2003 to discuss the policy on mitigating road traffic noise, members generally supported the five guiding principles for erecting noise barriers. A member however remained of the view that noise barriers were not the best solution, and that other measures should be mapped out to abate noise impact of existing roads.

3. The Deputy Secretary for the Environment, Planning and Works (Environment)2 (DSETW(E)2) briefed members on the progress of the noise mitigation measures at existing roads by highlighting the salient points in the Administration's paper. He sought members' advice on whether a trial should be launched at the Texaco Road Flyover to assess the effectiveness of the traffic management scheme and its possible impact on local traffic and transport trades.

Noise levels

4. Referring to Annex B to the paper which stated that the typical passing-by noise levels at East Asia Garden, Texaco Road were 80-81 dB(A) for medium/heavy goods vehicles, 80-81 dB(A) for buses, 74-78 dB(A) for motorcycles and 72-74 dB(A) for others, Ms Miriam LAU questioned the accuracy of these measurements which were at variance with that taken at the site visit on 21 October 2002 during which the noise levels were 61-62 dB(A) when there was no vehicle at the flyover, 67-68 dB(A) for small vehicles and 73 dB(A) for large vehicles. The general noise level at the flyover was below 70 dB(A) most of the time. Mr Albert CHAN however pointed out that

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according to his own noise measurement equipment which he brought along to the site visit, the noise level along the flyover was slightly higher than that recorded by the Administration. The passing-by noise level of heavy goods vehicles along the flyover was over 80 dB(A). DSETW(E)2 advised that the noise levels generated by individual vehicles differed according to their model and speed. The Principal Assistant Secretary for the Environment, Transport and Works (Environment)³ added that the noise measurements at Annex B were the actual measurements taken on site. Large vehicles would in general produce higher levels of noise of up to 80 dB(A).

Measures to mitigate road traffic noise

5. Ms Miriam LAU asked if the Administration would consider limiting vehicle speed with a view to reducing traffic noise. DSETW(E)2 explained that there would not be much notable improvement since a difference of 1dB(A) could be achieved, particularly for noise levels between 70 to 80 dB(A), as a result of speed reduction from 70 to 50 kilometres per hour. Besides, speed reduction might not be necessary for inclined roads as heavy vehicles going uphill would unlikely be able to exceed the limit.

6. Ir Dr Raymond HO opined that instead of rigid pavement method using cement in roads and flyovers, flexible pavement method using asphalt should be adopted since asphalt was easier to maintain than cement. Besides, the use of flexible pavement would help reduce the noise generated from vehicles passing over joints commonly found in roads and flyovers using pre-cast units. He further enquired if there had been sharing of experience in road surfacing with countries such as Singapore and Malaysia which did not seem to have as many traffic disruptions due to road maintenance and repair despite the hot climate. The Chief Engineer (Major Works), Highways Department stated that there had been exchange of experience with overseas countries on the use of road surfacing materials. He said that at present, newly constructed expressways and flyovers, including the 72 local roads identified for resurfacing, would be surfaced with asphalt which was a low noise surfacing material. As regards the durability of the road surface, it would depend on the usage as there would be more wear and tear if the roads were frequented by heavy vehicles.

7. Noting that the banning of heavy goods vehicles from residential districts was common in overseas countries, Mr Albert CHAN queried why heavy goods vehicles were given unrestricted access to residential districts in Hong Kong for purposes other than delivery of goods such as dropping off children and delivering invoices. There was thus a need to study the feasibility of imposing restrictions on the access of heavy goods vehicles to residential districts to avoid noise impact on residents concerned, particularly when heavy goods vehicles were already banned from entering the Peak. He stressed that there should not be different treatment for residents at the upper end of property market.

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Traffic management scheme

8. Ms Miriam LAU remained of the view that the use of traffic management schemes was not a suitable arrangement to tackle the noise problem, and that alternative measures which were mutually acceptable to both the trade and the community should be worked out. She then enquired about the progress of research into the noise reducing technology, which in her view might turn out to be the solution to mitigate traffic noise along existing and future roads in the longer term. DSETW(E)2 noted that research on Active Soft Edge Noise Controller was still underway and said that the Administration was not aware of any commercial application overseas. He nevertheless assured members that the Administration would keep an open mind on new technologies that were practicable for mitigating traffic noise and would keep in view the development of such technologies for possible application in Hong Kong.

9. Since the introduction of traffic management scheme would be subject to the results of the trial schemes, Mr Andrew CHENG enquired about the criteria for assessing the effectiveness of the trial. Ms Cyd HO agreed to the need for clear assessment criteria before conducting the trial to ensure that the Administration would not move its goal posts after completion of the trial. Ms Miriam LAU also supported the setting out of objective standards to ascertain the efficacy or otherwise of the trial before deciding on whether the trial should be further extended to other roads. DSETW(E)2 noted members' view but pointed to the need for the Administration to consider how such objective standards should be set. Meanwhile, the Administration intended to compare the noise levels at the receiving end before and after the banning of vehicles during the restriction hours. Members would be informed of the results so that a decision could be made on whether the traffic management schemes should be made permanent at Texaco Road Flyover and whether similar schemes should be implemented at Kwai Chung Road Flyover and at Ngan Shing Street. The transport trade would also be consulted on the impact of the trial scheme on their operation.

10. On the *trial at Texaco Road Flyover*, DSETW(E)2 said that the following options could be considered during the traffic restriction hours from midnight to 6 am -

- (a) banning all vehicles from entering; or
- (b) banning only franchised buses from entering; or
- (c) banning only vehicles travelling uphill.

The banning of franchised buses could be easily implemented through notification to the franchised companies concerned. As regards the proposal of banning heavy vehicles during the restriction hours, DSETW(E)2 said that this was not recommended as there were practical difficulties and safety concerns if the Police were to set up roadblocks to divert heavy vehicles away from the flyover during the trial period.

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11. Ms Miriam LAU said that the transport trade was concerned about the traffic restriction at Texaco Road Flyover and was opposed to the implementation of trial scheme. She pointed out that the proposed restriction ran contrary to the newly implemented 24-hour border crossing which was intended to relieve traffic congestion through encouraging cargo transport after midnight. Given that the Texaco Road Flyover was one of the main access to the Kwai Chung Container Terminal, any restriction on its use would have impact on the operation of the trade. The situation would be further aggravated if traffic restriction was extended to other roads and flyovers after the trial scheme.

12. While acknowledging the difficulties encountered by the trade, Ms Emily LAU strongly supported the implementation of traffic management scheme on a trial basis. She pointed out that the site visit to Texaco Road Flyover had revealed that the traffic noise problem there was very serious. Given that the nuisance associated with traffic noise was a territory-wide problem and affecting the general public, measures were urgently required to tackle the problem. Notwithstanding, the Administration should endeavour to reach an agreement with the trade. DSETW(E)2 replied that the Administration had tried but in vain to resolve the differences with the trade and it was unlikely that a mutually acceptable solution could be worked out.

13. Mr Albert CHAN noted that any changes would be bound to opposition. Given that the trial was well supported by the District Council and would only last for two weeks, he considered it worth trying. While supporting for a total ban of all vehicles to enable a more comprehensive assessment of the noise impact, Mr CHAN expressed concern about the traffic congestion which might arise from the diversion despite the Administration's assurance that the problem could be resolved through suitable traffic control. DSETW(E)2 reaffirmed that there should not be much traffic congestion arising from the diversion as traffic during the restriction hours was not heavy. Besides, traffic lights could be suitably adjusted to ease traffic flow after midnight if necessary. Ms Emily LAU also supported a total ban on all vehicles as a partial ban would give rise to practical difficulties and safety concerns. She added that the Administration should report the results of the trial to the District Council.

14. In view of the severe impact of traffic noise on the neighbouring community and the limitations of noise mitigating measures, Mr Andrew CHENG supported the ban at Texaco Flyover on the understanding that vehicles could be diverted to at-grade roads. He also asked whether this would represent a policy change if it was decided that traffic restriction would be implemented on a permanent basis for flyovers with high levels of noise. DSETW(E)2 clarified that at present, consideration was being given to implementing traffic management schemes at the Kwai Chung Road Flyover, the Texaco Road Flyover and Ngan Shing Street. The Administration was aware of the economic and traffic impact of traffic management schemes and it had no intention to consider further extending these schemes to other roads or flyovers. Members and the relevant District Councils would be consulted on the outcome of the trial and the way forward before deciding on whether traffic restriction should be implemented on a permanent basis. Given that there were existing legislation governing traffic restriction, no legislative changes would be required if the restriction was to be

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imposed on a permanent basis.

15. On the implementation time-table, DSETW(E)2 agreed with Mr CHAN that the trial should not be conducted in cold weather when windows of the affected units were closed. The optimum time for the trial would be in May or June. Mr Martin LEE however questioned why the trial had to be deferred until May/June when noise measurements could be taken as soon as the equipment was installed outside the affected units. His views were shared by Mr WONG Yung-kan. The Chairman opined that the Administration should decide on the most appropriate time for the trial taking into account all relevant factors.

16. As regards the cost for the trial, DSETW(E)2 said that it would cost over \$2,000 per night for contractors to put in place traffic diversion equipment to block off the flyover. If the traffic restriction were to be implemented on a permanent basis, permanent road signs would have to be installed. Drivers would need to be notified of the restriction as penalties would be imposed for contravention after a grace period.

Way forward

17. Mr Martin LEE said that Members of the Democratic Party were in support of the trial, adding that public interest should prevail, particularly when the noise nuisance was also affecting the trade as an integral part of the community. The Chairman also indicated that Members of the Democratic Alliance for Betterment of Hong Kong supported the trial for a period of two weeks. She however emphasized the need for the Administration to conduct a comprehensive assessment on the effectiveness of the trial taking into account the possible impact on the trade. Mr Abraham SHEK urged the Administration not to overlook the economic implications of restricting traffic at Texaco Road Flyover.

18. Ms Miriam LAU requested that the proposal of banning all vehicles from entering the Texaco Road Flyover from midnight to 6 am for a period of two weeks be put to a vote. Of the members present at the meeting, nine voted for the proposal while five voted against it. The Chairman declared that the proposal was supported.

III. Any other business

19. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 3:20 pm.