

立法會

Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(1)760/02-03

(This minutes have been seen
by the Administration)

Ref : CB1/PL/TP/1

Panel on Transport

Minutes of meeting held on Friday, 22 November 2002, at 10:45 am in Conference Room A of the Legislative Council Building

Members present : Hon Miriam LAU Kin-yee, JP (Chairman)
Hon Abraham SHEK Lai-him, JP (Deputy Chairman)
Dr Hon David CHU Yu-lin, JP
Hon Albert HO Chun-yan
Ir Dr Hon Raymond HO Chung-tai, JP
Hon Mrs Selina CHOW LIANG Shuk-ye, GBS, JP
Hon CHAN Kwok-keung
Hon Andrew WONG Wang-fat, JP
Hon LAU Chin-shek, JP
Hon LAU Kong-wah
Hon Andrew CHENG Kar-foo
Hon TAM Yiu-chung, GBS, JP
Dr Hon TANG Siu-tong, JP
Hon Tommy CHEUNG Yu-yan, JP
Hon Albert CHAN Wai-yip
Hon LEUNG Fu-wah, MH, JP
Hon WONG Sing-chi
Hon LAU Ping-cheung

Non-Panel members : Hon LAU Wong-fat, GBS, JP
attending Hon Emily LAU Wai-hing, JP

**Public Officers
attending : Agenda item IV**

Environment, Transport and Works Bureau

Dr Sarah LIAO
Secretary for the Environment, Transport and Works

Mr Paul TANG
Deputy Secretary for the Environment, Transport and Works
(Environment & Transport) T1

Highways Department

Mr C K MAK
Director of Highways

Mr M L WAN
Deputy Project Manager/Major Works

Agenda Item V

Environment, Transport and Works Bureau

Miss Margaret FONG
Deputy Secretary for the Environment, Transport and Works
(Environment & Transport) T3

Ms Doris CHEUNG
Principal Assistant Secretary for the Environment, Transport
and Works (Environment & Transport)

Security Bureau

Mr Michael WONG
Deputy Secretary for Security

Mr Alan CHU
Principal Assistant Secretary for Security

Transport Department

Mr Peter LUK
Assistant Commissioner/New Territories

Immigration Department

Mr LAW Yiu-tung
Commander, Border Division

Customs & Excise Department

Mr CHEUNG Kwok-fu
Head of Control Points Command

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

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

Miss Winnie CHENG
Legislative Assistant 5

Action

I Confirmation of minutes and matters arising

(LC Paper No. CB(1)307/02-03 - Minutes of meeting held on
25 October 2002)

The minutes of meeting held on 25 October 2002 were confirmed.

II Information papers issued since last meeting

(LC Paper No. CB(1)247/02-03(01) - Information paper provided by the
Administration on Appointments to
the Managing Board of the Kowloon-
Canton Railway Corporation;

LC Paper No. CB(1)341/02-03(01) - Information paper provided by the
Administration on Proposed creation
of a permanent directorate post as
Administrative Assistant to the
Secretary for the Environment,
Transport and Works; and

LC Paper No. CB(1)351/02-03(01) - Further information paper provided by
the Administration on Appointments
to the Managing Board of the
Kowloon-Canton Railway

Action

Corporation)

2. Members noted the above information papers issued since last meeting.
3. Referring to the two papers provided by the Administration on Appointments to the Managing Board of the Kowloon-Canton Railway Corporation (KCRC) (LC Paper Nos. CB(1)247/02-03(01) and CB(1)351/02-03(01)), Mr LAU Kong-wah said that the Administration had not honoured its undertaking given during the course of deliberation on the Kowloon-Canton Railway Corporation (KCRC) (Amendment) Bill 2001 that it would consider appointing individuals from green groups and grass root organizations, as well as Members of the Legislative Council to the KCRC Managing Board. As such, he suggested that the matter should be discussed by the Panel soon, preferably at its next meeting. Members agreed to include the item on the Panel's list of outstanding items for discussion.
4. Members noted that the Administration intended to submit the staffing proposal on the creation of a permanent directorate post as Administrative Assistant to the Secretary for the Environment, Transport and Works as set out in LC Paper No. CB(1)341/02-03(01) to the Establishment Subcommittee for consideration on 11 December 2002.
5. In view of complaints about the excessive railway noise inside MTR Tseung Kwan O Line train compartments, the Chairman advised that she had requested for relevant information from the Administration so as to facilitate members' understanding of the subject matter. She invited members to note the information paper provided by the Administration on the matter which was tabled at the meeting. As a related matter, she informed members that the Subcommittee on matters relating to railways formed under the Panel would organize a site visit to the MTR depots at Kowloon Bay and Tseung Kwan O on 26 November 2002 to observe the maintenance work of the MTR system.

(Post-meeting note: The paper provided by the Administration was subsequently issued to members vide LC Paper No. CB(1)353/02-03(01).)

III Items for discussion at the next meeting scheduled for 20 December 2002

- (LC Paper No. CB(1)308/02-03(01) - List of outstanding items for discussion; and
LC Paper No. CB(1)308/02-03(02) - List of follow-up actions)

6. Members noted that the Administration proposed to discuss the following items at the next regular Panel meeting scheduled for 20 December 2002:

- (a) Widening of Yuen Long Highway between Lam Tei and Shap Pat Heung Interchange;

Action

- (b) Shenzhen Western Corridor and Deep Bay Link;
- (c) Shatin New Town Stage II - Construction of Road T3; and
- (d) Better co-ordination of public transport services in North West New Territories arising from the commissioning of West Rail.

7. After deliberation, members agreed to discuss items (a) to (c) proposed by the Administration at the next meeting scheduled for 20 December 2002. As suggested by Mr LAU Kong-wah, the item on "Appointments to the Managing Board of KCRC" would also be discussed. The Chairman of KCRC should also be invited to the meeting to join the discussion. In view of the heavy agenda, the meeting would be held from 10:30 am to 1:00 pm. As for item (d), members agreed that as it fell under the purview of the Subcommittee on matters relating to railways, it would be discussed by the Subcommittee at a meeting to be scheduled.

(Post-meeting note: The Subcommittee on matters relating to railways agreed at its meeting held on 27 November 2002 that the item on "Better coordination of public transport services in North West New Territories arising from the commissioning of West Rail" would be discussed at its next meeting scheduled for Friday, 20 December 2002, at 4:30 pm.)

IV Widening of Tolo Highway

- (LC Paper No. CB(1)308/02-03(03) - Information paper provided by the Administration; and
- LC Paper No. CB(1)309/02-03 - Background brief on the Project - "Widening of Tolo Highway" prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat)

8. Members noted the background brief prepared by the Secretariat on the project (LC Paper No. CB(1)309/02-03).

9. At the invitation of the Chairman, the Director of Highways (D of Hy) introduced the paper provided by the Administration (LC Paper No. CB(1)308/02-03(03)) and briefed members on the background in relation to the design and planning for the provision of noise barriers for the project.

10. D of Hy said that as part of the widening project, noise barriers were being erected along Tolo Highway to provide noise mitigation to noise sensitive existing and planned developments. The provision of noise barriers was in accordance with the recommendations of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) for the project completed in April 1997. The EIA study was carried out in accordance with the

Action

administrative procedures set out in the Technical Circular issued by the then Works Branch and the then Planning, Environment and Lands Branch. When the EIA Ordinance (EIAO) (Cap. 499) and its associated Technical Memorandum came into operation in April 1998, the noise planning standards for road traffic noise stipulated in the Hong Kong Planning Standards and Guidelines (HKPSG) became statutory standards. Under the EIAO, the Administration was required to consider noise impacts on planned as well as existing uses. Subsequently, the EIA permit was approved in November 1998, and the construction of this project commenced in March 1999.

11. Updating members on the progress of the project, D of Hy said that the widening works had been completed and it was expected that the widened main carriageway would be open to traffic by early 2003. As for the installation of noise barriers, he advised that about 70% of noise barriers had been completed, with over 95% of the foundation works completed, 85% of the supporting structures for noise barriers erected, and 40% of noise barrier panels installed.

Guiding principles on the provision of noise barriers

12. While acknowledging wide public concern about the noise barriers being installed along the Tolo Highway, the Secretary for the Environment, Transport and Works (SETW) stressed that noise barriers were provided to mitigate the problem of excessive traffic noise suffered by residents. When answering a related question raised at the Council meeting held on 6 November 2002, she had already undertaken to review the provision of noise barriers under this project so that a right balance could be achieved. She informed members that the Administration would take into account the following guiding principles:

- (a) The Administration must comply with the statutory noise planning standards and requirements stipulated under the EIAO in respect of the planning for new roads. In brief, the level of traffic noise generated from new roads must be kept below 70 dB(A) for residential dwellings and 65 dB(A) for educational institutions. If it was envisaged that traffic noise generated would exceed the noise limit, the relevant department or developer must adopt all practicable direct measures such as adjusting the alignment and erecting barriers or enclosures to reduce the impact of excessive traffic noise.
- (b) The planning for new developments must likewise comply with similar noise standards and requirements. In fact, some of the noise barriers being provided along Tolo Highway were for planned noise sensitive receivers (NSRs). As such, the provision of such noise barriers might not seem justified at this stage. As a result of the review, the Administration would consider whether the installation of such noise barriers could be deferred. In future, the Administration would also ensure that the installation of

Action

noise barriers would synchronize with the completion time of future developments.

- (c) As for the noise impact of existing roads, it was estimated that about 300 000 residential units were being affected by 655 excessively noisy roads. In December 2000, the Government announced a new policy to address traffic noise on existing roads. 29 existing roads were identified for retrofitting of noise barriers while 72 roads as candidates for resurfacing with low noise material. For roads where such engineering solutions were not adequate or technically not feasible, the Administration would examine the feasibility of implementing traffic management measures with a view to alleviating traffic noise impact on residents nearby. However, given the limited scope of retrofitting and resurfacing as well as the traffic impact of road closure schemes, the Administration would need to review how best the problem could be resolved.
- (d) When planning for the provision of noise barriers, its cost-effectiveness should be carefully considered. While the Administration had a statutory duty to protect the affected dwellings from excessive traffic noise, it would also have to ensure that the most cost-effective means was adopted. Factors such as the number of dwellings to be benefitted as well as the unit cost for protecting such dwellings should be taken into account.
- (e) The Administration would need to review the design of noise barriers, in particular their potential visual impact. This was in fact a major concern in respect of the noise barriers being erected along Tolo Highway.

SETW also said that she would welcome any views on members on these guiding principles. While thanking SETW for sharing this information with members, the Chairman said that the wider policy issues involved in the Administration's measures to abate traffic noise would more appropriately be discussed at a joint meeting with the Environmental Affairs Panel.

(Post-meeting note: The joint meeting was subsequently scheduled for Thursday, 23 January 2003, at 4:30 pm.)

Provision of noise barriers along the widened Tolo Highway

13. The Chairman sought elaboration on the outcome of the Administration's review on the provision of noise barriers along Tolo Highway. In response, SETW said that some noise barriers might be removed while some others might be deferred to a later date to tie in with the planned developments. Notwithstanding, she assured members that the level of protection offered to the affected dwellings would not be undermined. When the review was finalized, the Administration would inform members of the details

Action

in due course.

14. Mr LAU Kong-wah considered that as a matter of principle, noise barriers should be provided to relieve the suffering of those people who lived in close proximity of noisy roads, no matter how small their numbers were. However, he was seriously concerned about the need for providing noise barriers on some sections of the highway, including those which were very far away from the affected dwellings with noise levels barely exceeding the statutory limit, those along the hillside where no future development would be possible, and those before the Science Park which already had its own noise barriers. To avoid a wastage of public funds, Mr LAU suggested that the Administration should consider adopting alternative mitigation measures where possible and revisit the timing for the installation of noise barriers for planned developments.

15. Ir Dr Raymond HO also queried the need for the Administration to plan for noise barriers in front of the Science Park as no such request had been made by the Science Park.

16. In response, D of Hy reported that about two kilometres of noise barriers originally planned for Pak Shek Kok development area had already been deleted in 2000. SETW added that widening of major roads was designated projects under the EIAO and the provision of direct mitigation measures for NSRs was a mandatory requirement regardless of the choice of users. It was only due to subsequent land use changes that the noise barriers originally planned for Pak Shek Kok development area could be deleted.

17. Notwithstanding the explanation given, Ir Dr HO maintained that laws were enacted to protect the interest of the people. Hence, it was not reasonable to impose the noise barriers on the affected residents which were against their wish. In this connection, he called on the Administration to improve consultation with the users when planning for the provision of noise barriers.

18. D of Hy further said that according to statutory requirements, direct mitigation of noise nuisance at source, such as by the installation of noise barriers, should be considered first. It was only when such measures were technically not feasible could indirect noise mitigation measures be considered.

19. Mr LAU Kong-wah expressed serious concern about the visual intrusion caused by the opaque noise barriers panels which virtually blocked the beautiful sea view for the residents. To improve the situation, he said that the Administration should consider replacing those panels with transparent ones. The Chairman also relayed Mrs Selina CHOW's concern about the need to minimize the visual intrusion created by the noise barriers. Where possible, the noise barriers for planned developments should be deferred to a later date.

Action

20. Mr Albert CHAN also referred to the notorious designs of some public works projects and said that extra effort should be made by the Administration to avoid creating other architectural eyesores for Hong Kong. For noise barriers, visual intrusion should be minimized with the use of lighter materials and a coordinating colour scheme.

21. Expressing concern that Hong Kong's international image was seriously tarnished by poor architectural designs of government projects, Dr David CHU said that the Administration would need to improve its policy making process as well as consultation mechanism. In this respect, he opined that apart from consulting local views, the Administration should conduct territory-wide consultation for projects such as the widening of Tolo Highway which was used by motorists all over Hong Kong.

22. On the choice of colours and materials for noise barriers, D of Hy said that while a judgement on aesthetics was subjective, the aesthetical design of the proposed noise barriers had already been approved by the Advisory Committee on the Appearance of Bridges and Associated Structures. The overriding requirement was that the noise reduction effect should not be compromised. The noise barriers now being provided were mainly of non-transparent absorptive type, which could more effectively reduce reflection of traffic noise to the nearby developments as compared with transparent panels.

23. Noting that the local District Councils and affected residents had not been consulted on the design and choice of materials for the noise barriers, Mr LAU Kong-wah was dissatisfied that the Administration had made such an important decision without taking into account local views. In this connection, the Chairman called on the Administration to consult local views properly on the outcome of its on-going review about the provision of noise barriers for the project.

24. Mr CHENG Kar-foo stressed that as a matter of principle, the Administration should ensure that the design of noise barriers would go with the surroundings of the area. Where possible, trees should be planted to abate traffic noise. Instead of installing the remaining 30% of noise barriers for the present project, he asked whether the Administration would consider this mitigation measure.

25. Instead of resorting to the provision of noise barriers in the first instance, Ir Dr Raymond HO reiterated his call that the Administration should make reference to overseas experience and consider planting more trees along the roads to abate traffic noise. He asked whether the planting of trees as a mitigation measure was precluded by the rigid requirements under the EIAO.

26. In response, SETW stated that as the Administration was reviewing the project, she would welcome any views from members about possible improvements that could be made. Subject to the noise reduction effect to be achieved, the Administration would actively consider the use of transparent panels for future projects. On the planting of

Action

trees as a mitigation measure, she explained that as there were gaps between trees, it would need a large number of trees to achieve the required noise mitigation effect. Due to space restriction, this option might not always be feasible in Hong Kong. However, she agreed that tree planting could help soften the visual intrusion of noise barriers. Where possible, trees would also be planted along the central divider as a supplement.

27. While acknowledging that the Administration was acting in accordance with law in the provision of noise barriers for road projects, Mr Andrew WONG said that there was a need to make suitable planning according to the actual need of the affected residents. Otherwise, something which was done out of good intention might backfire. As such, the Administration would need to learn from this case and consider introducing legislative amendments to provide greater flexibility in the application of noise standards and the provision of noise barriers under the EIAO. The Chairman advised that this matter would be discussed at the forthcoming joint Panel meeting.

28. Mr LAU Kong-wah expressed concern about the inadequate provision of emergency openings along such noise barriers as it would prevent speedy access by emergency vehicles. Taking all these into account, he asked whether the Administration would curtail the installation of noise barriers on some sections of the highway under the project.

29. Addressing Mr LAU's concern, D of Hy stressed that when planning for the provision of noise barriers, the Administration would give due regard to safety implications such as the possibility of any sight-line obstruction. He informed members that emergency doors had been incorporated in the noise barriers erected along the central divider for emergency use by road users. Emergency openings for vehicles had also been provided according to High Speed Road Standards.

30. Mr WONG Sing-chi referred to the excessive and pre-mature provision of noise barriers along Tolo Highway and expressed utmost dissatisfaction about the Administration's procrastination in the provision of noise barriers along Fanling Highway as undertaken by the Administration as far back in 1994. While relaying the strong request from the Northern District Council for the early provision of noise barriers along Fanling Highway, he stressed that the Administration should in future make realistic planning according to the actual need of the affected residents.

31. In response, D of Hy explained that the situation with these two highways was different. While the provision of noise barriers along the widened Tolo Highway was a statutory requirement under the EIAO, Fanling Highway was an existing road affected by excessive traffic noise. As such, the Administration would need to consider this in the context of the retrofitting for existing roads with a noise problem.

32. Acknowledging the concern raised by Mr WONG and the local residents about the noise nuisance from increased vehicular traffic as a result of the round-the-clock

Action

operation of Lok Ma Chau Control Point, SETW said that the Administration would look into the matter very carefully in the context of resolving the problem of traffic noise of existing roads. While noting the explanation given, Mr WONG Sing-chi called on the Administration to install noise barriers along Fanling Highway by 2003.

Financial implications

33. Mr Albert CHAN stated support for the provision of noise barriers to relieve the affected residents from nuisance caused by excessive traffic noise. Following up on SETW's remark that some noise barriers for the present project might be removed or deferred, he cautioned that the Administration should act prudently in this matter and carefully work out the financial implications involved before a decision was made. He was worried that as the project had already proceeded to an advanced stage, any variations might incur additional costs on the Administration's part, such as for removing, storing and relocating the noise barriers, re-tendering future installation works, as well as settling potential claims from the contractor.

34. Mr CHENG Kar-foo echoed Mr WONG Sing-chi's concern about the provision of noise barriers for Fanling Highway and suggested that noise barriers curtailed in this project might be relocated there or to Shatin. He said that the Administration should try to negotiate a deal with the contractor for relocating the noise barriers.

35. Mr LAU Kong-wah also said that the Administration could consider installing the coloured panels in other locations where no visual intrusion would be created.

36. In reply, SETW explained that foundation works for noise barriers intended for planned developments would proceed while the actual installation of the supporting structures and noise barrier panels would be deferred to tie in with the planned developments. However, to avoid spending extra money for new materials, noise barriers already procured might still be used. She assured members that subject to the terms and conditions of the relevant contract, the Administration would carefully consider the scope as well as financial implications of such variations.

37. D of Hy also said that the Administration would uphold the spirit of contract and initiate negotiations with the contractor on this basis. It was envisaged that some savings might be achieved in respect of installation cost. The Administration would also consider whether the noise barrier materials could be used for other locations. At Mr Albert CHAN's request, D of Hy said that the Administration would assess the financial implications involved and provide relevant information to members for consideration.

38. In this connection, both Mr CHENG Kar-foo and Ms Emily LAU highlighted the need for the Administration to ensure the acceptance of local residents before a decision was made to relocate the noise barriers. Mr Albert CHAN remarked that residents in Northwest New Territories would welcome the erection of noise barriers on noisy roads

Action

Admin

there. SETW responded that the Administration would consider the views of local residents before putting forward any relocation proposals. D of Hy also said that the Administration would need some time to review the overall situation. If considered desirable, the Administration would seek the views of members as well as the local community on any concrete plans. He agreed to revert to the Panel on this matter in about six months' time.

Cost-effectiveness of noise barriers

Admin

39. Notwithstanding the statutory requirement to provide direct mitigation for excessive traffic noise generated from new roads, Ms Emily LAU said that it would be as important to consider the cost-effectiveness of any proposed measures. She recalled that when the funding proposal was presented to the Public Works Subcommittee (PWSC) for approval, the relevant paper provided by the Administration did not contain any information in this respect, such as the number of dwellings to be benefitted, the unit cost of protecting each dwelling, etc. To facilitate members' consideration, she requested that such information be set out clearly in future submissions to PWSC. SETW agreed to the suggestion.

40. For the Tolo Highway widening project, Ms Emily LAU noted that about 1 700 existing and planned dwellings would benefit from the provision of noise barriers and that the unit cost for protecting each dwelling was \$80,000. She asked whether the Administration had any guideline in respect of the number of dwellings to be benefitted and the average unit cost for the provision of noise barriers when planning for noise mitigation measures. As there was no requirement under the EIAO to consider the provision of noise mitigation measures from this perspective, she asked whether any legislative amendments was necessary.

41. In reply, D of Hy stated that there was no threshold in respect of the unit cost for protecting each affected dwelling. To supplement, SETW said that as the law stood currently, the Administration was under a statutory duty to provide direct mitigation measures for existing and planned NSRs affected by excessive noise from new roads. However, the Administration also recognized the need to consider the cost-effectiveness of noise mitigation measures and would learn from past experience. Referring to the guiding principles on measures to abate traffic noise, SETW said that she welcomed any views from members on the way forward for putting these principles in practice.

42. Mr Albert CHAN however stressed the need to strike a balance between achieving cost-effectiveness of erecting noise barriers and protecting the interests of the minority neighbourhood against excessive traffic noise. The Chairman advised that members would further discuss these guiding principles with SETW at the forthcoming joint Panel meeting.

Action

43. Noting that the capital cost of the project had been substantially revised downwards from \$2507.2 million to \$873.77 million, with the cost estimate of noise barriers reduced from \$593.1 million to \$140 million, Ms Emily LAU stressed the need for the Administration to properly account for the use of public expenditure. Worrying about the Administration's tendency to inflate the project estimates when seeking funds for public works projects, she said that regular updates should be provided by the Administration to enable members to keep track of the changes in project estimates for public works projects approved by the Finance Committee after the award of contracts. The Administration would also need to ensure that more realistic cost estimates were provided in future.

44. Responding to Ms LAU's further enquiry, the Deputy Project Manager/Major Works confirmed that the final cost of the noise barriers should be in the order of \$140 million. The project cost was reduced mainly due to the deflationary trend. On the advice of Ir Dr Raymond HO, Chairman of PWSC, members agreed that the matter would be referred to PWSC for follow up.

Way forward

Admin 45. Thanking members for their valuable suggestions, SETW said that the Administration would review the provision of noise barriers under the Tolo Highway widening project. Upon completion of the review, the Administration would revert to the Panel on the outcome, including the financial implications involved. Members agreed that the Panel would hold a special meeting for the purpose when the Administration was ready.

46. Mr Andrew CHENG suggested that the Tai Po District Council should also be invited to attend the special meeting. Members agreed to the suggestion.

(Post-meeting note: The item was subsequently scheduled for discussion at the Panel's regular meeting to be held on Friday, 24 January 2003.)

V Passenger and vehicular traffic conditions at Lok Ma Chau, Man Kam To and Sha Tau Kok

(LC Paper No. CB(1)308/02-03(04) - Information paper provided by the Administration)

47. At the invitation of the Chairman, the Deputy Secretary for the Environment, Transport and Works (Environment & Transport) T3 (DS for ETW(T3)) introduced the Administration's paper on the subject (LC Paper No. CB(1)308/02-03(04)) which set out the current passenger and vehicular traffic conditions at Lok Ma Chau (LMC), Man Kam To (MKT) and Sha Tau Kok (STK) and measures being implemented or planned by the Administration to smoothen passenger and vehicular flows at the control points. She

Action

added that to meet the increasing demand, additional crossings would be provided when the Shenzhen Western Corridor (SWC) and Lok Ma Chau Spur Line were completed in end-2005 and mid-2007 respectively.

Passenger traffic

48. Mrs Selina CHOW expressed support for the early implementation of co-location of immigration and customs facilities at the Huanggang Control Point, and called on the Administration to work closely with the Mainland authorities to firm up relevant arrangements and supporting facilities as soon as possible.

49. With the co-location of clearance facilities, Mr LAU Kong-wah pointed out that with the availability of the more spacious Shenzhen Carport, the Administration should consider opening up the control point to facilitate access by passengers via other means of transport such as taxis, minibuses or franchised buses. In this connection, he asked whether the Administration would consider his suggestion and initiate discussions with the Mainland authorities. He also enquired about the implementation timetable for co-location of clearance facilities at Huanggang.

50. The Deputy Secretary for Security (DS(S)) responded that the Administration was pressing ahead with the concept of "co-location" by conducting various discussions with relevant Mainland experts in a positive manner. Both sides had reached an understanding on matters of principle, i.e. separate immigration and customs clearance would be carried out by both sides, and a designated area would be set up at Huanggang to be managed by the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region in accordance with Hong Kong laws to avoid any confusion of jurisdiction. But as the detailed implementation arrangements were still being worked out, a timetable had yet to be drawn up. The Administration's intention was that the co-location of immigration and customs facilities at Huanggang would be implemented before that at the new control point at SWC. In the meantime, the Administration would make preparatory work on all necessary legislative amendments to be introduced to the Legislative Council next year.

51. On the provision of transport services at LMC, DS(S) stated that upon implementation of co-location of clearance facilities at Huanggang, it was envisaged that the LMC - Huanggang shuttle bus service would continue its service. However, as far as the planning for other alternative transport arrangements, such as for passengers to travel direct to the LMC Passenger Terminal on foot or by taxis, he explained that their feasibility was constrained by a number of difficulties, such as limited throughput capacity, the lack of space for the vehicles to turn around as well as the safety concerns over commuters on foot. No discussions had been held with the Mainland to cater for commuters crossing the boundary on foot.

52. Mr LAU Kong-wah however said that as his suggestion had in fact been raised previously on a number of occasions, he was disappointed that the Administration had

Action

done nothing to follow up on the matter. As the difficulties cited by DS(S) were not insurmountable, he urged the Administration to act expeditiously and examine the policy matters involved so that relevant design and planning issues as well as legislative amendments could be prepared as a package. In this respect, the Administration should also initiate discussions with the Mainland. Otherwise, it would be very difficult to take up the matter afterwards.

53. While noting the member's view, DS(S) stressed that in order to maintain the effective operation of a control point, there was a need to apply control on the number of passenger vehicles that might access the control points, particularly when existing land control points were designed mainly for the use of goods vehicles. Mr LAU Kong-wah suggested that scheduled services could be provided by green minibuses (GMB) via a minor road from Sheung Shui to Lo Wu. A trial scheme could be conducted first. The Chairman also said that it might be possible to allow for the operation of a small number of GMB routes. In response, DS for ETW(T3) said that the Administration's initial view was that the suggestion might not be feasible as the road was a very narrow road. It might not have the capacity to handle frequent GMB services as envisaged. Nonetheless, she agreed to further consider this matter.

54. Citing the unsatisfactory condition at LMC and MKT, Mr Albert CHAN highlighted the need for the Administration to design and plan for the facilities and layout of the control points from the users' point of view so as to facilitate the increasing flow of economic and social activities between Hong Kong and the Mainland. If better traffic arrangements and terminal facilities were provided for the passengers at these control points, it could help alleviate the congestion at Lo Wu. In this connection, he opined that the Administration would need to re-consider the role to be played by LMC and MKT in respect of cross-boundary passenger traffic so that relevant planning and provisions could be made accordingly.

55. In reply, DS(S) said that the Administration would always take into account the need of passengers when planning for the facilities at control points. Referring members to the improvement works set out in paragraph 9 of the paper, he said that on-going efforts had been made by the Administration to enhance passenger comfort and convenience at the control points. One of which was the provision of travellers at LMC for coach passengers, which was expected to be completed in 2003. He assured members that the Administration would continue its work in this respect.

56. Acknowledging that the supporting infrastructure and facilities for passengers might not be as well planned because LMC and MKT were primarily intended to handle freight traffic, DS for ETW(T3) also assured members that the Administration would seek continuous improvements in respect of transport arrangements. Noting members' suggestion about the need to provide other means of public transport to facilitate the passengers, she advised that the Administration was now working towards that direction with the recent introduction of fixed-schedule short-distance coach services at MKT and

Action

Admin STK. Mr Albert CHAN however opined that the existing services were far from adequate. At his request, DS for ETW(T3) agreed to provide members with further details about the public transport services being provided at and planned for LMC, MKT and STK control points, such as the frequency of service, etc.

57. Pointing out that shuttle bus services at MKT and STK were well-received, Mr LAU Kong-wah opined that the Administration should find ways to maximize the use of these control points to divert passengers from Lo Wu and LMC. In particular, he suggested that the shuttle buses should be allowed to pick up passengers at additional boarding points during festive days to relieve the congestion at Lo Wu. Group tours from the Mainland could also be encouraged to use these control points instead of Lo Wu and LMC.

58. In response, DS for ETW(T3) said that the Environment, Transport and Works Bureau would work together with the Security Bureau and the Immigration Department to see how the member's suggestions could be pursued, taking into account the capacity of the two control points. However, the provision of shuttle bus services would be regulated by market forces. In this respect, any application from operators would be carefully considered by the Administration.

Freight traffic

59. Relaying the request from the trades, Mrs Selina CHOW enquired about the improvements to be made by the Administration to facilitate the transportation of perishables from the Mainland. DS(S) replied that currently, quarantine inspections by the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department were only carried out at MKT which was opened from 7:00 am to 10:00 pm. Any proposal to extend the inspection and quarantine system, either by way of providing extra food inspection offices or by extending the opening hours of MKT, would incur additional resources and staffing requirements, and must be subject to the agreement of the Mainland authorities. Nonetheless, he would relay the member's concern to the relevant departments for follow up.

60. Referring to the road widening works set out in paragraphs 16 and 17 of the paper, the Chairman pointed out the pressure of cross-boundary freight traffic would continue to build up at LMC until the opening of SWC in 2005. However, as these work items were scheduled to commence in early 2004 for completion in early 2005, she was gravely concerned that serious traffic congestion would be created by their construction. Moreover, she queried the need for these widening works because by the time they were completed, much freight traffic would be diverted off LMC to SWC.

61. In response, DS for ETW(T3) stressed that given the existing heavy traffic flow at LMC, the Administration would take all necessary measures to improve the situation. Notwithstanding the completion of SWC, it was anticipated that LMC would continue to

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attract a significant portion of the cross-boundary freight traffic. The improvement measures would therefore be beneficial in the long term. To address the Chairman's concern, she said that the Administration would plan the widening works carefully so as to minimize any adverse traffic impact. She also said that the Administration would as far as possible make arrangements for all existing traffic lanes to be maintained during the construction stage.

62. As a related issue, Mr LAU Kong-wah enquired about the planning for the Shenzhen Eastern Corridor to connect Liantang in Shenzhen and Lin Ma Hang in Hong Kong. DS for ETW(T3) replied that the planning for this land crossing would be considered in the context of the "Hong Kong 2030: Planning Vision and Strategy" study being undertaken by the Planning Department. The results were expected to be published next year.

VI Any other business

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

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Legislative Council Secretariat
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