

立法會 *Legislative Council*

LC Paper No. CB(1)1449/02-03
(These minutes have been seen
by the Administration)

Ref : CB1/PL/TP/1

Panel on Transport

**Minutes of meeting held on
Friday, 28 February 2003, 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
Ir Dr Hon Raymond HO Chung-tai, JP
Hon Mrs Selina CHOW LIANG Shuk-yee, GBS, JP
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
Hon Tommy CHEUNG Yu-yan, JP
Hon Albert CHAN Wai-yip
Hon LEUNG Fu-wah, MH, JP
Hon WONG Sing-chi

Non-Panel Members attending : Hon Cyd HO Sau-lan
Hon WONG Yung-kan
Hon IP Kwok-him, JP

Members absent : Hon Albert HO Chun-yan
Hon CHAN Kwok-keung
Dr Hon TANG Siu-tong, JP
Hon LAU Ping-cheung

**Public Officers
attending**

: Agenda item IV

Environment, Transport and Works Bureau

Mr Paul TANG

Deputy Secretary for the Environment, Transport and Works

Mr Raymond W F HO

Principal Assistant Secretary for the Environment, Transport
and Works (Transport and Works)

Highways Department

Mr C K MAK

Director of Highways

Mr WAN Man-lung

Principal Government Engineer/Railway Development

Agenda item V

Environment, Transport and Works Bureau

Mr Paul TANG

Deputy Secretary for the Environment, Transport and Works

Highways Department

Mr C K MAK

Director of Highways

Mr TSUI Wai

Chief Engineer/Major Works

Transport Department

Mr LEUNG Tak-fai

Chief Engineer/Road Safety & Standards

Environmental Protection Department

Mr Elvis W K AU

Assistant Director of Environmental Protection
(Environmental Assessment & Noise)

Mr K S CHAN

Principal Environmental Protection Officer (NP)

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

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| (LC Paper No. CB(1)965/02-03 | - Minutes of joint meeting held with Security Panel on 6 January 2003; |
| LC Paper No. CB(1)940/02-03 | - Minutes of meeting held on 14 January 2003; and |
| LC Paper No. CB(1)961/02-03 | - Minutes of meeting held on 24 January 2003) |

The above minutes of meeting were confirmed.

II Information papers issued since last meeting

- (LC Paper No. CB(1)975/02-03(01) - Information paper on Progress report of speed limit review 2002 provided by the Administration)

2. Members noted the above information paper issued since last meeting.
3. In response to Mrs Selina CHOW's enquiry about the criteria adopted by the Administration in carrying out the speed limit review, the Chairman referred Mrs CHOW to the previous progress report provided by the Administration.

(Post-meeting note: The last progress report on the review of speed limit and installation of road markings and warning signs at identified road sections was issued vide LC Paper No. CB(1)100/00-01(04).)

III Items for discussion at the next meeting scheduled for 21 March 2003

- (LC Paper No. CB(1)954/02-3(01) - List of outstanding items for discussion; and
LC Paper No. CB(1)954/02-03(02) - List of follow-up actions)

4. Members went through the Panel's lists of outstanding items for discussion and follow-up actions (LC Paper Nos. CB(1)954/02-03(01) and (02) respectively).

Action

5. Mrs Selina CHOW expressed concern about the implementation programme of the Transport Information System under the Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS). Members agreed to request the Administration to provide a progress update on the development of ITS in Hong Kong.

6. Referring to item 12 on the list of outstanding items for discussion, both Mr Abraham SHEK and Mr CHENG Kar-foo considered that the Administration should make every effort to complete its study on the proposed merger of MTR Corporation Limited (MTRCL) and Kowloon-Canton Railway Corporation and arrange to brief members early on its decision.

7. After deliberation, members agreed to discuss the following items at the next regular meeting scheduled for 21 March 2003:

- (a) Progress update on bus-bus interchange (BBI) schemes; and
- (b) Progress update on fare adjustment mechanism.

On item (a) above, members agreed to invite franchised bus operators to attend the discussion on this item.

(Post-meeting note: At the request of the Administration, discussion on item (b) above was deferred to a later meeting. Instead, the item on "Progress update on intelligent transport system" would be discussed at the meeting on 21 March 2003.)

IV Island Line Extensions, Route 7 and South Hong Kong Island Line

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| (LC Paper No. CB(1)954/02-03(03) | - Supplementary information paper provided by the Administration; and |
| Ref: ETWB(T)CR 11/1016/99 | - Legislative Council Brief on Island Line Extensions, Route 7 and South Hong Kong Island Line provided by the Administration) |

8. The Chairman said that at the previous Panel meeting held on 24 January 2003, members were briefed about the Administration's latest proposal in respect of the Island Line Extensions (ILE), Route 7 and South Hong Kong Island Line (SIL) as set out in the Legislative Council Brief issued on 21 January 2003.

9. The Deputy Secretary for the Environment, Transport and Works (DS for ETW) briefly introduced the paper provided by the Administration (LC Paper No. CB(1)954/02-03(03)) in response to members' request raised at the meeting on 24 January 2003, which provided supplementary information on the following:

Action

- (a) evaluation of the economic internal rate of return (EIRR) for SIL;
- (b) distribution of viaduct and tunnel sections of SIL; and
- (c) additional cost for the construction of the North Hong Kong Island Line (NIL) without the protection works.

Route 7 versus SIL

Financial and economic evaluation

Admin

10. In light of the current fiscal deficit faced by Hong Kong, Ms Cyd HO was of the view that SIL would be a better alternative to Route 7, not only in terms of financial commitment but also the availability of a comprehensive railway network to serve the local community. She said that Route 7 alone could not resolve the congestion problem in Southern District as other connecting road network could not be in place to tie in with its opening. Ms HO also requested the Administration to provide information on the number of employment creation for Route 7 and SIL during both the construction and operation stages.

Admin

11. Mr Andrew WONG also expressed support for SIL. However, to further facilitate members' understanding on the economic benefits of the projects, the Administration should illustrate with examples the EIRR calculations for Route 7 and SIL.

12. Mr Albert CHAN opined that the EIRR calculations were misleading for the purpose of comparing Route 7 and SIL because EIRR could not reflect the additional cost to be borne by the passengers to achieve a commercial return for SIL. He was dissatisfied that the Administration's paper had not contained critical information such as MTRCL's estimated financial internal rate of return (FIRR) on SIL and its potential impact on the transport cost of passengers.

13. Citing the serious congestion at the Aberdeen Tunnel which invariably created a social cost, Mr IP Kwok-him took the strong view that Route 7 was urgently required not only to meet the dire transport needs of the residents in Southern District, but also to serve as a strategic trunk road linking the southern part of Hong Kong Island to Northwest New Territories via the Western Harbour Crossing. For a long time, the development of Southern District was hampered by the lack of adequate external road connection. While he did not have any objection to SIL, Route 7 should be implemented first as it was already under planning for quite some time. On the other hand, SIL with its earliest completion date in year 2016 would be of little help in this respect.

14. Commenting on the long time taken for the Administration to decide the way forward for Route 7, the Chairman queried whether the Administration had in fact made up its mind to proceed with SIL and had a definite implementation timetable. She was

Action

not convinced that a railway planned for completion in 2016 could readily serve the tourism developments in Aberdeen.

15. Considering that both Route 7 and SIL would have a role to play in addressing the transport needs of the community, Mr CHENG Kar-foo was concerned that in view of the current fiscal deficit, the Administration was deliberately stalling the planning and implementation of these projects. He was worried that even with SIL and the interim traffic improvement measures developed under the Alternative Alignment Study for Route 7 (the Interim Measures) in place, the critical section of Pok Fu Lam Road and Aberdeen Tunnel would still have capacity problems in year 2016. As such, the resources put on the interim improvement measures would be wasted and another \$10 billion was needed to construct Route 7 anyway. To ensure the timely provision of adequate transport infrastructure for the community, Mr CHENG opined that the Administration should formulate a definite timetable for the construction of Route 7 and SIL by phase. As a first step, the Administration should concentrate on finalizing the alignment of Route 7 and work out ways to address the environmental concerns of the project.

16. Mr Abraham SHEK pointed out that with their different functions, Route 7 and SIL were not mutually exclusive. He concurred with Mr CHENG Kar-foo that the Administration could phase out the implementation of Route 7 and SIL and consider financing the projects through private funding initiatives.

17. In response, DS for ETW explained that when planning for new transport infrastructure, the Administration would first of all ascertain a project's EIRR, i.e. the overall benefit the project would bring to the community. For transport infrastructure, most of the benefits accrued was measured in terms of savings in travelling time for the public and congestion relief to adjacent roads. It was estimated that for year 2016, Route 7 would bring a total time saving of 15 million hours and SIL 20 million hours to the public at large. Taking into account the monetized time savings, as well as other benefits, the net economic benefits less recurrent cost in year 2016 on Route 7 and SIL were \$1.5 billion and \$1.9 billion respectively. For an assumed 40 years operating period, the total time saving and economic benefit generated by SIL was about 1 000 million hours and \$100 billion respectively.

18. Regarding the FIRR of MTRCL's proposal, DS for ETW said that as SIL was only at a very preliminary stage, it would be too early to consider its FIRR as various factors including alignment, type of railway, fare structure, etc would affect the outcome. Initially, MTRCL's assessment was that SIL would not be commercially viable without government's funding support. Recognizing that MTRCL, as a commercial entity, would require an appropriate commercial rate of return on its investment in new railway projects, the Administration had requested the Corporation to examine modifications to its preliminary proposal with a view to reducing cost and extending the railway line to better serve the population in Aberdeen. The Principal Government Engineer/Railway

Action

Development added that as a very rough estimate, the FIRR of MTRCL's SIL would be about 4% above the rate of inflation.

19. On the fare level of SIL, DS for ETW stated that under MTRCL's proposal, the existing fare structure would be extended to SIL. The Administration was also studying the procedure for adjusting public transport fares. Nonetheless, taking into account the tough competition in the public transport market, railway fares would be set at a competitive level.

20. While noting some members' call for the early implementation of Route 7, DS for ETW said that while Route 7 had been on the drawing board for some time, there were still major issues which had yet to be resolved in view of changing circumstances. For example, the overall planning of Route 7 would need to be revised to take into account various tourism initiatives planned for Southern District. The alignments and configurations of Route 7 would also need to be refined taking into account their environmental, programming, costing as well as transport planning implications. For these reasons, the Administration decided that the planning of Route 7 would be kept under review and that the development of SIL should be considered along with Route 7.

21. DS for ETW added that although Route 7 would be more effective in relieving road traffic, other less expensive alternative means could be considered. In the meantime, the Administration would proceed with the Interim Measures so as to improve local traffic condition along Pok Fu Lam Road to a manageable level without Route 7. As regards the capacity constraint of Aberdeen Tunnel, DS for ETW explained that it was mainly due to the tailback problem of the road network in its downstream areas in Wanchai and Causeway Bay. Upon completion of Central - Wanchai Bypass and Island Eastern Corridor Link by year 2011, there would be general relief in the downstream road network and thus enhanced the throughput of Aberdeen Tunnel.

22. Given the substantial financial requirement, DS for ETW stressed that the Administration had to examine all relevant factors carefully before deciding on the way forward for the two projects and it was unlikely for the Administration to construct the projects at the same time. As Route 7 would be a toll-free road and SIL was not financially viable without funding support from the Government, the private sector might not have a great interest in these projects.

23. DS for ETW further said that SIL would enhance accessibility of the tourists attractions in the Southern District, including the planned re-development of the Ocean Park and help promote Hong Kong's tourism industry. In response to the call from the community, the Administration would consider bringing the project forward in the context of MTRCL's review on its SIL proposal. The Director of Highways (DHy) supplemented that if SIL was given the go-ahead, it would take about seven years to complete.

Action

Other implications

24. Unconvinced by the Administration's reply, Mr IP Kwok-him pointed out that tourism developments in Aberdeen would be better served by Route 7 as coach traffic could be accommodated. He recapped that when the Route 7 project was discussed in September 2001, the Panel passed a motion calling for the early implementation of the Route 7 project from Kennedy Town to Aberdeen which should be constructed primarily in tunnel form. He was dissatisfied that the Administration had not actively pursued this alignment option for Route 7 merely because it could not provide a direct connection to Cyberport. It was unacceptable that the transport need of the local residents was ignored by the Administration.

25. Mrs Selina CHOW also said that the Administration should never make its decision simply because it would incur less on public expenditure. The Administration should be prepared to bear the cost for constructing Route 7 on account of the social benefits it could bring to the community. Moreover, it would not be fair to ignore the interest of other public transport operators who had been serving the residents in the areas. Noting the Administration's stance on constructing Route 7 in tunnel form, she asked whether the Government was under any contractual obligation to provide road connections to Cyberport.

26. In reply, DS for ETW said that the Government was not under any contractual obligation to implement Route 7 via Cyberport. While Route 7 could be built in tunnel form, this option which failed to serve various developments along the coast, could be a disadvantage to the utilization of the Route and the relief on existing roads. This would adversely affect the EIRR of the project.

27. Expressing grave concern about the potential impact of SIL on the operation of other public transport modes including taxis, public light buses and franchised buses, Mr LEUNG Fu-wah queried whether the Administration had considered the social disbenefits caused by SIL's operation in terms of job losses in these sectors when assessing the overall cost and benefit of the project to the community as a whole. The Chairman and Mrs Selina CHOW also expressed grave concern about the potential impact of SIL on the operation of existing public transport services.

28. In response, DS for ETW said that the Administration was aware of other public transport operators' concern over the introduction of rail service to the Southern District on their business. Considering the Government's objective to use railways as the major transport mode, the Administration would address such concerns by way of suitable inter-modal co-ordination of public transport services so that healthy competition among service providers was maintained to enable a reasonable choice for passengers. As and when there were more definite proposals on the timetable and alignment of SIL, the Administration would consider the impact on the public transport services in Southern District carefully.

Action

29. Concluding the discussion, the Chairman said that members generally called for an early decision as regards the way forward for the Route 7 and SIL projects. Before a decision was made, the Administration should take various factors into account so as to ascertain their overall cost and benefit to the community.

30. While noting members' call for an early decision in the matter, DS for ETW said that given the complex issues involved, MTRCL's review on its SIL proposal and the Administration's discussion with MTRCL might take a longer time to complete, say by the end of December. In the meantime, the Administration would also seek the views of the relevant District Councils on the projects. He assured members that arrangements would be made to brief members in due course when the decision was taken.

Admin 31. Members were dissatisfied with the Administration's reply and agreed that the Administration should brief the Panel again by the end of the current legislative session on the way forward for the two projects before a final decision was made.

V Widening of Tolo Highway and provision of associated noise barriers

(LC Paper No. CB(1)954/02-03(04) - Information paper provided by the Administration;

LC Paper No. CB(1)968/02-03 - Referral from Legislative Council Members' meeting with Tai Po District Council on 13 February 2003 regarding the widening of Tolo Highway and provision of associated noise barriers; and

LC Paper No. CB(1)927/02-03(02) - Findings of a survey conducted by the Concern Group on Tolo Highway Widening Project on the impact of noise barriers for Tolo Highway, as provided by Ms WONG Pik-kiu, Tai Po District Council member for the visit on 14 February 2003)

32. The Chairman recapped that the subject matter was last discussed at the meeting held on 24 January 2003 where the Panel was briefed about the Administration's proposed modifications to the noise barriers for the Tolo Highway widening project. Subsequently, the Panel conducted a site visit to Tolo Highway on 14 February 2003, which was also attended by representatives of the relevant District Councils. During the site visit, Members expressed regret that the site visit was not attended by any representatives from the Environmental Protection Department (EPD). Having reviewed the proposed modifications on-site, Members requested the Administration to review further whether the noise barriers at the median and for the Conservation Centre at Island House could be removed as far as possible.

Action

33. At the invitation of the Chairman, DHy briefly introduced the supplementary information paper provided by the Administration (LC Paper No. CB(1)954/02-03(04)) in response to the views and concerns expressed by Members during the site visit. Regarding the Administration's attendance at the site visit, DS for ETW explained that as the site visit was primarily conducted to facilitate Members' understanding on the Administration's proposed modifications from an engineering point of view, DEP had not been invited to attend.

Noise barriers at the median and for the Conservation Centre at Island House

34. The Assistant Director of Environmental Protection (Environmental Assessment & Noise) (ADEP/EA) advised that in view of members' concern, EPD had visited the site and reviewed the provision of noise barriers for the Conservation Centre at Island House. The Conservation Centre was essentially an outdoor classroom for organizing plant-themed environmental education activities. Each year, outdoor educational activities would be conducted for about 800 students and 800 teachers. Without the noise barriers, the statutory noise level of 65dB(A) for educational institutions would be exceeded.

35. Mrs Selina CHOW however opined that noise barrier was not the only solution to the problem. Expressing dissatisfaction that the Administration had not actively pursued other options in this case, she asked whether mitigation measures could be provided within the premises of the Conservation Centre to obviate the need for the noise barriers. The Chairman also considered that the Administration should have carefully examined whether alternative engineering measures were available to address the noise impact in the first place. Expressing similar concern, Mr WONG Yung-kan asked whether tree-planting would be a feasible option.

36. In response, ADEP/EA explained that due to various site, engineering and environmental constraints, it would not be feasible to provide adequate mitigation measures within the premises of the Conservation Centre. Apart from the lack of space in the site, tall noise barriers would have to be provided to achieve the required noise mitigation effect. This option would also involve tree-felling. As to tree-planting, it would require very wide and densely planted tree belt to achieve noise reduction effect. Given the limited space, it would not be an effective option for noise mitigation. He added that the mitigation of traffic noise at source would be the most-effective.

37. In reply to Mr WONG Yung-kan's enquiry, DHy said that the Administration had reviewed the possibility of complete or partial removal of the noise barriers at the median which were provided to protect existing and planned developments. It would be possible, without exceeding the statutory noise limit, to trim down the height of the barriers at the median further by 0.5 metre (m) to 1 m at certain sections if the full height and upper 2.5 m canopy sections of the barriers along the kerbside of the north-bound carriageway could be maintained. The sections involved were at Tai Po Area 39 opposite to the Science Park and in the southern end of Tolo Highway near the Ma Liu

Action

Shui Interchange. However, DHy said that he would not recommend this arrangement because the reduction in the height of the barriers at the median was only minimal while the full height of the barriers along the kerb side had to be maintained. He said that the arrangement presented to members during the site visit was the preferred arrangement and should be adopted.

- Admin 38. Taking note of members' grave concerns, DHy agreed that the Highways Department would further consult EPD as to whether the noise barriers provided for the Conservation Centre could be further improved.

Road safety

39. Mr LAU Kong-wah drew members' attention to the survey conducted by the Democratic Alliance for Betterment of Hong Kong on 250 drivers about the safety hazard posed by the coloured noise barriers for the Tolo Highway widening project (LC Paper No. CB(1)927/02-03(02)). He reiterated the view that for safety consideration, the Administration should replace the coloured panels with transparent ones.

40. While noting the member's view, DHy assured members that the design of the noise barriers met with the prevailing safety standard. The Chief Engineer/Road Safety & Standards also advised that there was no concrete evidence to suggest that the erected noise barriers would affect road safety by creating visual interest and diverting drivers' attention, and thus causing traffic accidents. DHy added that with the removal or trimming down of some noise barriers as proposed, the visual intrusion would be greatly softened. To facilitate members' understanding, both the Chairman and Mrs Selina CHOW suggested that the Administration could illustrate the visual impact of the modified noise barriers with computer-generated graphics.

Re-using the removed noise barriers

41. Mr CHENG Kar-foo cautioned the Administration to pay special attention to the visual impact when identifying suitable locations for re-using the 9 000 m² noise materials removed from the Tolo Highway widening project. Apart from considering factors such as technical feasibility, the number of people affected and the extent of noise nuisance, the Administration should also consult the views of local District Councils and community groups.

42. DHy said that the Administration would take heed to the member's view when evaluating the alternative use of the demolished noise barrier materials. Once a detailed plan was finalized, the Administration would report to the Panel and consult local views accordingly.

43. Mr Albert CHAN conveyed the request from local residents that the removed noise barriers could be relocated to protect the affected dwellings in Discovery Park.

Action

Financial implications of the proposed modifications

44. Mr Albert CHAN stated support for the provision of noise barriers required under the Environmental Impact Assessment Ordinance (Cap. 499) to relieve the affected residents from nuisance caused by excessive traffic noise. Notwithstanding the criticism on the noise barriers provided for the Tolo Highway widening project, the level of protection for the public should never be compromised simply because the aesthetic design of the noise barriers was in question. Referring to the financial implications of the proposed modifications, he was worried that any further delay in the project would give rise to additional contractual claims from the contractor. He thus called on the Administration to ensure that the original programme would be adhered to as far as possible.

45. In response, DHy said that the Administration's stance was that with members' support, the project should resume as early as possible to achieve overall completion. If the modification works could be carried out in parallel with the rest of the works, the delay to the overall completion of the contract would be limited to between one and two months. Apart from bringing about traffic improvements, the early resolution of the matter would mean that contractual claims from the contractor could be minimized.

VI Any other business

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

Council Business Division 1
Legislative Council Secretariat
15 April 2003