

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(1) 811/03-04
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**Panel on Environmental Affairs and
Panel on Planning, Lands and Works**

**Minutes of joint meeting held on
Monday, 8 December 2003, at 4:30 pm
in the Chamber of the Legislative Council Building**

Members present : Members of the Panel on Environmental Affairs

Hon CHOY So-yuk (Chairman)
*Dr Hon David CHU Yu-lin, JP
Hon Martin LEE Chu-ming, SC, JP
*Hon WONG Yung-kan
Hon Miriam LAU Kin-yee, JP
Hon Henry WU King-cheong, BBS, JP
Dr Hon LO Wing-lok, JP
Hon Audrey EU Yuet-mee, SC, JP

Members of the Panel on Planning, Lands and Works

Dr Hon TANG Siu-tong, JP (Chairman)
Hon James TIEN Pei-chun, GBS, JP
Ir Dr Hon Raymond HO Chung-tai, JP
Hon James TO Kun-sun
Hon TAM Yiu-chung, GBS, JP
Hon Abraham SHEK Lai-him, JP
Hon Albert CHAN Wai-yip
Hon WONG Sing-chi
Hon IP Kwok-him, JP

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Members absent : Members of the Panel on Environmental Affairs

Hon Cyd HO Sau-lan (Deputy Chairman)
Hon LAU Kong-wah, JP
Hon Emily LAU Wai-hing, JP
Dr Hon LAW Chi-kwong, JP

Members of the Panel on Planning, Lands and Works

#Hon LAU Ping-cheung (Deputy Chairman)
Hon LAU Wong-fat, GBS, JP
Hon Timothy FOK Tsun-ting, SBS, JP

(* Also members of the Panel on Planning, Lands and Works)
(# Also members of the Panel on Environmental Affairs)

Public officers attending : Housing, Planning and Lands Bureau

Mr Michael SUEN
Secretary for Housing, Planning and Lands

Mrs Carrie LAM
Permanent Secretary for Housing, Planning and Lands
(Planning and Lands)

Environment, Transport and Works Bureau

Dr Sarah LIAO
Secretary for the Environment, Transport and Works

Miss Margaret FONG
Deputy Secretary for the Environment, Transport & Works
(Environment & Transport) T1

Territory Development Department

Mr CHEUNG Tai-yan
Project Manager (Hong Kong Island and Islands)

Planning Department

Mr K K LING
District Planning Officer/Hong Kong

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Transport Department

Mr K K LAU
Deputy Commissioner/Planning & Technical Services

Environmental Protection Department

Mr Benny WONG
Assistant Director (Waste & Water)

Department of Justice

Mr Simon LEE
Deputy Law Officer (Civil Law)

Attendance by invitation : The Hong Kong Urban Design Alliance

Mr Vincent NG
Chairman of Planning & Lands Committee, HKIA

Society for Protection of the Harbour Limited

Mr Winston CHU
Adviser

Mr Ian BROWNLEE
Consultant

Save Our Shorelines

Mr John BOWDEN
Chairman

Ms Annelise CONNELL
Council Member

Town Planning Board

Dr CHAN Wai-kwan
Vice-Chairman, Metro Planning Committee

Mr Christopher CHENG Wai-chee
Vice-Chairman, Rural and New Town Planning Committee

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The Hong Kong Institution of Engineers

Ir Dr Greg C Y WONG
Vice President

The Conservancy Association

Mr HUNG Wing-tat
Director

Hong Kong Automobile Association

Mr Ringo LEE Yiu-pui
Vice-president

Hong Kong and Kowloon Taxi Merchants' Joint Committee

Mr AU-YEUNG Kan
Chairman

Citizen Envisioning @ Harbour

Prof Bernard LIM
Steering Committee Member

Dr NG Mee-kam
Steering Committee Member

Urban Watch

Mr WONG Wah-sang
Chairman

Mr CHIANG Hong-man
Member

中重型貨車關注組

Mr LAI Kim-tak
Chairman

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Public Omnibus Operators Association

Mr YIP Wing-ching
Treasurer

Mr TSANG Kwok-keung
Committee Member

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

Staff in attendance : Ms Pauline NG
Assistant Secretary General 1

Ms Bernice WONG
Assistant Legal Adviser 1

Mrs Mary TANG
Senior Assistant Secretary (1)2

Ms Rosalind MA
Senior Assistant Secretary (1)8

Miss Mandy POON
Legislative Assistant 4

I. Election of Chairman

Dr TANG Siu-tong was elected Chairman of the joint meeting.

II. Central Reclamation Phase III and Wanchai Development Phase II

- (LC Paper No. CB(1) 511/03-04(01) — List of follow-up actions arising from discussion at the joint meeting on 27 November 2003
- LC Paper No. CB(1) 511/03-04(02) — Information paper provided by the Administration
- LC Paper No. CB(1) 532/03-04(01) — Administration's response to items (b) to (d) of the list of follow-up actions at LC Paper No. CB(1) 511/03-04(01))

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2. The Chairman said that the purpose of the meeting was to continue discussion on Central Reclamation Phase III (CRIII) and Wanchai Development Phase II (WDII). As there were pending court proceedings relating to the two projects, he drew members' attention to Rule 41(2) of the Rules of Procedure applicable to the current meeting, which stated that reference should not be made to a case in a court of law in such a way as, in the opinion of the President or Chairman, might prejudice the case. He also requested members and deputations to refrain from making any references which -

- (a) might hinder the court in reaching the right conclusion or lead it to reach other than the right conclusion; and
- (b) might amount to an effective usurpation of the court's judicial functions, whether the court was affected in its conclusion or not.

Deputations were again reminded that they were not covered by the protection and immunity provided under the Legislative Council (Powers and Privileges) Ordinance (Cap.382).

3. The Secretary for Housing, Planning and Lands (SHPL) then drew members' attention to the Administration's response (LC Paper No. CB(1) 511/03-04(02)) to views expressed by deputations at the meeting on 27 November 2003 and the traffic and transport justifications for the Central and Wanchai Bypass (CWB) (LC Paper No. CB(1) 532/03-04(01)).

Alternative harbour front plan

4. Referring to the alternative harbour front plan put forward by the Society for Protection of the Harbour (SPH) which was said to be able to reduce the extent of reclamation by 51.7%, Ir Dr Raymond HO said that he could not see how the plan could meet the needs of the community with its proposed scale of reclamation. He also enquired if the plan had included the design and construction of the seawall and whether SPH had engaged professional engineers in the preparation of the plan. Mr Winston CHU/SPH advised that while the plan was a conceptual one, it was prepared by five experts and was meant to satisfy the needs of the community. SPH could not complete the detailed design for the plan because it was not able to obtain from the Administration information on site investigation and detailed design work of the original plan of CRIII pertaining to the report of the \$35.7 million worth of consultancy study which was submitted to LegCo in March 2002. He took the opportunity to request the Administration to provide the consultancy report on CRIII for examination by SPH.

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5. Noting that the proposed plan was only at a conceptual stage, Ir Dr Raymond HO queried how SPH could have arrived at the conclusion that the extent of reclamation for CRIII could be reduced by 51.7%. He further asked if SPH was able to prepare a more detailed plan now that more technical details had been made available by the Administration. Mr Winston CHU/SPH however pointed out that the information made available at the meeting were those provided by the Territory Development Department (TDD). The plans contained therein had all been revised in October/November 2003 after the delivery of judgment on the judicial review of WDII on 8 July 2003. They were different from the original CRIII plans and were prepared in an attempt to provide self-serving evidence of compliance to meet the “Three Tests” for reclamation. In view of the inconsistency in some of the information provided, and the fact that not all available options had been taken into consideration, he reiterated the need for the Administration to make available the initial consultancy report which was prepared well before the judicial review and would provide the needed evidence on Government’s plan for CRIII. He added that it was the Administration’s responsibility to justify the extent of reclamation and members of the public had no obligation nor the necessary resources and manpower to design plans for such a complex project. Through the Chair, SHPL confirmed that the plans submitted by TDD at the current meeting were basically the same as those submitted for the joint meeting on 13 October 2003 with virtually no deviation. He added that if SPH was to put forward an alternative proposal, it should provide a comprehensive one to enable necessary assessment on its feasibility.

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6. Miss CHOY So-yuk agreed that the Administration should make available the initial consultancy report prepared by Atkins China Limited (ACL) as a cross reference to the information provided by TDD. The Permanent Secretary for Housing, Planning and Lands (Planning and Lands) (PS/HPL) said that SPH’s allegation on TDD’s plans was not founded. She said that these plans concerning CRIII were based on the outline zoning plans for the Central District (Extension) which were approved by the Chief Executive in Council (CE in C) on 22 February 2000. The project had undergone statutory planning, funding and tendering, and the construction works had proceeded in accordance with the terms of contract. She pointed out that as with all public projects, consultants were engaged by the Administration in the preparation of feasibility studies and detailed design for CRIII. There should not be any misconception that the consultancy report prepared by ACL was independent while those prepared by the Administration were not.

7. PS/HPL added that in the light of the judgement by Madam Justice CHU in connection with the Draft Wan Chai North District Outline Zoning Plan, the Administration had conducted a review of CRIII and the essential infrastructure thereon by applying the Three Tests laid down in the judgement. The review had been completed and circulated to members vide Annex C to LC Paper No.

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CB(1) 511/03-04(02) and uploaded onto the Internet. Volume I of the review provided a textual review of CRIII and compared the feasibility of the various options, including those for cooling water pumping stations, while Volume II provided cross-sectional plans for CRIII. The findings of the review had been endorsed by Professor Y S LI, Head of Department of Civil and Structural Engineering and Chair Professor of Coastal and Environmental Engineering at the Hong Kong Polytechnic University. Professor LI confirmed that in his view, the analysis as presented in the review had convincingly demonstrated that the CRIII reclamation could comply with the “Three Tests” laid down in Madam Justice CHU’s Judgment. The independent advice by Professor LI would be submitted as evidence in court in legal proceedings concerning CRIII.

8. To ensure transparency, PS/HPL said that the Administration was pleased to share its information with members of the public. Commenting on SPH’s proposed alternative, she said that as a standard practice, major public projects required Preliminary Project Feasibility Study before resources are earmarked in annual resources allocation exercise and these projects then had to undergo part upgrading in order to seek funding for detailed feasibility studies. However, the alternative plan proposed by SPH was far from the required level of Government plans and more details had to be provided in order to qualify for feasibility studies. Through the Chair, Mr Winston CHU/SPH said that the engineers engaged by SPH were still awaiting for the consultancy report for CRIII and he hoped that the Administration would be able to provide it for their reference.

9. Ir Dr Raymond HO sought the Hong Kong Institution of Engineer (HKIE)’s views on SPH’s plan. Ir Dr Greg WONG/HKIE said that since the layout plan was two-dimensional rather than cross-sectional, he could not be able to comment on the stability and safety of the seawall design. However, based on his own experience, the height of the seawall at the harbour front should be around 25 metres or about 10 storeys high in order to prevent overturning and sliding. Mr Winston CHU/SPH noted that the international standard for the height of a seawall was 15 metres (m). Given that the depth of the water at the harbour front was 12m, the seawall to be constructed under SPH’s plan should be able to meet the needed requirements.

10. Professor Bernard LIM/Citizen Envisioning @ Harbour expressed appreciation for the provision of detailed information on CRIII and WDII by the Administration although some of the drawings were rather complicated and not easily comprehensible. He said that the Citizen Envisioning @ Harbour would urge the Administration to do the same for its future development plans but in a more timely manner to facilitate public understanding and participation. This was also the objective of the recent public hearings and design workshops on harbour reclamation held by the Citizen Envisioning @ Harbour. He then drew members’ attention to the information on these activities tabled at the meeting.

Reversibility of CRIII works

11. Mr Martin LEE recalled that at the joint meeting on 13 October 2003, members requested transcripts of the hearing relating to the interim injunction on CRIII works to clarify the discrepancy between the information provided to Panel members and that contained in the judgment. According to the transcripts, the Administration's legal representatives indicated to the Judge at the hearing that CRIII works were reversible and no irreparable harm would be done. As a result, the Judge had allowed Government to continue with CRIII works. However, the Administration appeared to have changed its stance in claiming that the works would improve the environment and therefore need not be undone. He queried whether, in doing so, the Administration had misled the Judge on the reversibility of the works. The Deputy Law Officer (Civil Law) affirmed that the Administration's legal representatives had made clear to the Judge that the works being carried out were reversible, and that there had been no change of stance since. He said that the Administration would be pleased to make further clarification on any misunderstanding if necessary. SHPL requested the Chairman to adjudicate on whether the points raised by Mr LEE should be further pursued at the meeting which was convened for the purpose of exchanging views on the works associated with CRIII and WDII and their implications. Given the limited time available, it might be more appropriate to discuss the points being raised at another forum. Mr LEE said that the points he raised concerned the credibility of the Government and was a serious matter which should be looked into. The Chairman said that since the purpose of the current meeting was to discuss the Administration's response to the views put forward by deputations, it would be more appropriate for the matter to be followed up at a regular Panel meeting.

Cooling water pumping station (CWPS)

12. Responding to Ir Dr Raymond HO, the Project Manager (Hong Kong Island and Islands), Territory Development Department (PM/TDD) reiterated that the 52m to 60m wide strip between Central-Wanchai Bypass (CWB) and the seawall was required for the re-provisioning of CWPS, cooling water mains, sewage and stormwater drainage along the waterfront. The current size of the five-metre wide base heel at the base of CWPS was required to attain sufficient soil dead load to achieve adequate factors of safety against sliding and overturning. To ensure stability, the rubble mound foundation of CWPS had to be set at a distance of two metres from CWB. Miss CHOY So-yuk was not convinced that such a large reclaimed area of 60m in CRIII was required for CWPS when the same in WDII occupied much less land. Through the Chair, Ir Dr Greg WONG/HKIE pointed out that the width of CWPS in CRIII was in fact 25.5m rather than 60m. Miss CHOY did not agree with Ir Dr Greg WONG/HKIE as the plans did indicate

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that the width of CWPS in CRIII would be around 52m to 60m.

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13. Regarding the difference in size between CWPS in CRIII and WDII, PM/TDD said that the Administration had yet to consult the affected building owners on the provision of CWPS in WDII. Besides, the size of buildings using CWPS in Wanchai was different from those in Central. Miss CHOY questioned why building owners were not consulted on the reprovisioning of CWPS in WDII when funding for the detailed design of WDII had been sought from the Finance Committee (FC). She also asked whether the reprovisioning of CWPS at CRIII had undergone public consultation and if so, the buildings to be affected and the space requirements for the new CWPS as compared with that for the existing one.

14. PM/TDD explained that since the Draft Wan Chai North District Outline Zoning Plan for WDII was still under review and had yet to be submitted to CE in C for approval, the Administration could not proceed to formally consult the building owners on the reprovisioning of CWPS. He further clarified that the funds sought from FC was meant for the detailed design and not the construction of WDII. On the space requirement for CWPS in CRIII, PM/TDD explained that this was worked out taking into account experience gained in Central Reclamation Phase I (CRI). He said that building owners had complained about the shortcomings of CWPS in CRI which had resulted in operational difficulties and maintenance drawbacks inside the pumphouse compartment, while the public had complained about the obstruction and nuisance resulting from frequent cleaning and maintenance of pumping equipment on the promenade which was a place for enjoyment. As such, the present design of CWPS in CRIII was aimed at overcoming the shortcomings experienced in CRI and was based on practical and safety requirements necessary for routine maintenance and cleaning to be carried out inside the pumphouse compartment.

15. As regards the possibility of relocating CWPS in CRIII, PM/TDD explained that the location was dictated by the sequence of reclamation works. To ensure the habitability of the buildings, all the existing CWPS had to be maintained operational prior to the completion of the reprovisioned facilities. Any disruptions in the sequence of reclamation resulting in reprovisioning CWPS twice would not be acceptable to the building owners as they would have to eventually bear the cost. As to whether the new CWPS in CRIII could be further south of CWB, PM/TDD pointed out that this was not possible as reserve had to be made for the proposed North Hong Kong Island Line. Besides, two small reclamation areas Initial Reclamation Area West (IRAW) and Initial Reclamation Area East (IRAE) must be adequately separated to ensure the safe operation of existing ferry services, and that the water quality of the harbour was maintained for the effective operation of CWPS.

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16. Referring to the reclamation sequence, Miss CHOY So-yuk said that she failed to see why CWPS could not be reprovisioned in the space reserved for Final Reclamation Area East (FRAE) or the IRAW. She doubted whether the Administration had tried its best to reduce the extent of reclamation to a minimum. PM/TDD explained that relocating the existing CWPS from IRAE to IRAW was not practicable as they were quite some distance apart. Besides, there was no room on existing land to accommodate the network of cooling pipes, the biggest of which measuring 1.2 metres in diameter, or the large concrete thrust blocks required to maintain stability of the pipes. Neither could CWPS be reprovisioned to FRAE as this would mean that CWPS would have to be relocated twice.

People Liberation Army (PLA) berth

17. Mr Albert CHAN said that the Administration would need to assure members that the extent of reclamation was necessary and minimal. He noted that the then Bills Committee set up to scrutinize the Protection of the Harbour Bill was of the view that reclamation works for the provision of transport infrastructure was necessary. He however questioned the need for the PLA berth in CRIII from a planning point of view. He asked whether the need was a political or a military one, and whether any prior agreement had been made. PS/HPL advised that the 1994 Sino-British Defence Land Agreement (the Agreement) provided, inter alia, that “the Hong Kong Government will leave free 150m of the eventual permanent waterfront in the plans for the Central and Wan Chai Reclamation at a place close to the Prince of Wales Barracks for the construction of a military dock after 1997.” The Administration intended to construct the committed berthing facilities for Chinese PLA Forces Hong Kong under the CRIII contract. Discussion with PLA indicated that the PLA berth must be located in front of the Central Barracks. The agreed PLA berth layout was based on a planning intention to visually integrate the proposed military dock with the promenade along the waterfront of Central and Wan Chai Reclamation. The dock area would be open to public access when it was not in military use.

18. Mr CHAN said that members were not made aware of the Agreement during the course of scrutiny of the Protection of the Harbour Bill in 1997. He enquired whether the terms of the Agreement could be subject to change and whether the berth could be dispensed with if PLA subsequently decided that this was no longer necessary. He also asked if the Agreement had to be strictly adhered to, and if so, whether objection against harbour reclamation would be tantamount to sedition. SHPL pointed out that the Protection of the Harbour Bill was a Member’s Bill and not a Government Bill, and that the leaving free of 150m of the eventual permanent waterfront was merely to provide berthing spaces for military vessels. PS/HPL added that in the light of the recent controversy over CRIII, the Security Bureau had reconfirmed with PLA on the need for the berth.

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Provision of CWB

19. Ms Miriam LAU said that she was pleased to learn that most of the deputations did not object to the construction of CWB on condition that the extent of reclamation would be minimized. She recalled that when funding approval for CRIII was sought from FC, the need for CWB had been deliberated at length and the Administration was able to convince members that the extent of reclamation would be kept to a minimum. In view of the recent controversy over harbour reclamation, there was a need for the Administration to review its existing plans to see if there was room for further reduction in the extent of reclamation. From what it appeared, the width of area to be reclaimed was necessitated in order to accommodate a CWPS with a large base heel. To reduce the extent of reclamation, consideration could be given to raising the level of the submerged CWB so that its top was flushed with the reclaimed level. This would leave room underneath CWB for the construction of CWPS. PM/TDD explained that it would not be technically feasible to raise the level of CWB due to the presence of large box culverts (Culverts F, J and K), measuring three to four metres high and 20m to 30m wide, which were installed at about sea level crossing over CWB to enable storm water from the hinterland areas, including the mid-level area, to be effectively conveyed and discharged to the harbour. The proposed CWB had been designed at a level to allow the box culverts to pass over them.

20. Referring to SPH's alternative harbour front plan which illustrated a much reduced reclamation plan with the alignment of CWB close to the shoreline, Ms Miriam LAU asked if such an alignment was technically feasible. PM/TDD said that the first conceptual waterfront plan presented by SPH provided only space for constructing CWB. No seawall was shown. Furthermore, only a two-lane carriageway was provided to connect CRI area with Tamar. This would not be able to meet the local traffic demand in the area. Meanwhile, the second conceptual plan had made no provision for CWB and had only recommended transport management measures to ease traffic congestion.

21. Mr Vincent NG/Hong Kong Urban Design Alliance (HKUDA) said that he believed that the deputations present at the meeting were not opposed to harbour reclamation, but were keen to identify an acceptable solution which would help reduce reclamation to a minimum. He said that while HKUDA did not object to the provision of CWB and waterfront promenade, it did have reservations on the construction of at-grade or elevated roads as this would prevent access to the waterfront. He questioned whether the extent of reclamation was pre-determined by the space requirement or vice versa. He also queried the justification for providing a reclaimed land of 60-metre width in CRIII for CWPS. He opined that the points raised by Miss CHOY So-yuk were very valid, and that the Administration needed to explain why more space was required for the new CWPS than the existing one. As a building professional, he held the view that the

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Administration could further reduce the extent of reclamation if it was committed to do so.

22. Mr LAU Kim-tak/中重型貨車關注組 remarked that he could not believe that the Administration should have difficulties in resolving the technical constraints arising from the provision of CWPS and CWB as well as their interfacing with the box culverts given its expertise in building infrastructure. He added that while he did not object to reclamation, he supported that reclamation should be kept to a minimum. As such, there was a need for the Administration to justify the extent of reclamation.

23. Mr HUNG Wing-tat/Conservation Association (CA) expressed appreciation for the Administration's efforts in providing the information on CRIII and WDII. Referring to the Administration's paper on "Traffic and transport justifications for CWB" (LC Paper No. CB(1) 523/03-04(01)) and the drawing no. HKI-Z608A at appendix 2.1 to Volume II of the review, he considered it not cost-effective if the purpose of the \$15 billion worth CWB and reclamation works was to merely relieve the traffic loading at the Connaught Road Central/Harcourt Road/Gloucester Road corridor (the Corridor). Besides, CWB could only help ease the through traffic along the Corridor and the traffic within Central would still rely on the provision of Road P2 network. However, the estimated cost of CWB of \$8,706 million had not included that of Road P2 nor the cost of reclamation. Given that the reclamation works for CRIII was mainly for the provision of CWB, the cost of reclamation should be included in calculating the cost of CWB. The Administration should also provide a comparison on the demand for through traffic which did not enter Central as opposed to that which did enter Central.

24. Mr HUNG/CA further queried the justification for CWB given that only 365 000 road users were expected to use CWB in the first year of operation which was not considered a high traffic load. Neither could he accept that the average time saved by each passenger could be as high as 20 minutes as this was only true for peak hours (the travelling time for non-peak hours was only about five minutes). Based on the aforementioned, the Economic Internal Rate of Return (EIRR) could not be as high as 28% if the cost of reclamation and the actual time saved were taken into account. The Administration would also need to justify its projected traffic growth of 32% at Central North when no major developments were being planned within the district. He suspected that the provision of CWB was not only aimed at relieving existing traffic but also meeting self-generating demand, i.e. those arising from private developments to be built when the problem of traffic congestion was resolved.

25. The Deputy Commissioner/Planning & Technical Services, Transport Department (DC/PTS) did not agree with Mr HUNG Wing-tat/CA that the sole purpose of CWB was to relieve traffic congestion at the Corridor. He said that

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CWB was part of the strategic trunk road network designed to segregate through-traffic from local traffic and to provide reliable and efficient routes for cross-region traffic. As a result of the strategic network, the travelling time from Central to Yuen Long had been reduced to less than 30 minutes. It was assessed that about 40% of the traffic on the existing corridor was through-traffic. This assessment and other traffic figures provided in the Administration's paper was based on a modelling study made in 2003 which was built on up-to-date population forecast and development proposals. CWB served to improve east-west connection in the northern shore of Hong Kong Island. As for EIRR, DC/PTS explained that the Administration had been using a very conservative estimate. Based on the traffic study, it was projected that by 2011, the average travelling time from Central to Causeway Bay during peak hours without the provision of CWB would be 45 minutes. With the provision of CWB, the traffic demand would be within road capacity such that the posted speed limit of 70 kilometres/hour could be maintained throughout. As a result, the travelling time would be expected to reduce to five minutes, with an estimated saving of 40 minutes. Notwithstanding, the Administration had only used the saving of 20 minutes, which was half of the actual time being saved, as the basis for calculating EIRR. On the cost of CWB, he agreed that this had not included the reclamation cost but neither had this included any economic gains arising from the project. DC/PTS added that the number of road users benefiting from the provision of CWB was assessed taking into account only the predicted number of road users travelling on this corridor during the peak hours.

26. Mr Abraham SHEK commended the Administration's efforts in providing a comprehensive set of plans to facilitate public understanding on CRIII and WDII. Though not supporting harbour reclamation, he agreed that CWB was needed for the benefit of Hong Kong. He also stressed the need for confidence in the Administration in ensuring that the extent of reclamation would be kept to a minimum. He opined that there was no point in further arguing about the need for reclamation, and that a consensus should be reached on the way forward so that the works could commence as soon as possible.

Equalization of toll charges

27. Mr HUNG Wing-tat/CA did not agree with the Administration that equal toll for Western Harbour Crossing (WHC) and Cross Harbour Tunnel (CHT) would have a minimal traffic relieving effect on Gloucester Road. He pointed out that the purpose of WHC was to divert traffic from CHT but such a purpose had been defeated as a result of high toll and low utilization rate. Expressing similar views, Mr LAU Kim-tak/中重型貨車關注組 supported the implementation of transport measures within the existing infrastructural network. These included, among others, reducing the toll charges of WHC to increase its utilization rate. He also supported the launching of a trial scheme on the equalization of toll

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charges of the three cross harbour tunnels in an attempt to balancing the traffic demand. The construction of a flyover in Wan Chai would also help to relieve traffic congestion in the area.

28. DC/PTS explained that according to findings of the traffic modelling study, it was predicted that the possible relieving effect of an equal toll on the traffic volume on Gloucester Road would be less than 2%. This was because the diversion of traffic from CHT to WHC would likely result in a corresponding increase in traffic volume along Connaught Road Central, adding to the traffic congestion thereat. Therefore, the overall traffic condition of the Corridor was not expected to improve under such a hypothetical toll regime. The fact that CHT had a much higher utilization rate than the Eastern Harbour Crossing despite a higher toll showed that users would not mind paying more for the sake of convenience. Besides, the toll-free arrangement implemented when WHC was newly opened had indicated that the existing Central road network was not able to meet the traffic demand arising from WHC.

Electronic Road Pricing (ERP)

29. Referring to the tremendous success of the Congestion Management Scheme implemented in London nine months ago, Ms Annelise CONNELL/Save Our Shorelines said that she could not accept the Administration's view that ERP would have no effect on the traffic in Central, and that such drastic restraint measures were not warranted in Hong Kong on traffic management grounds before 2006. She said that statistics in London showed that since the implementation of the Scheme, there were 50 000 fewer cars entering central London every day, representing 16% drop in traffic and 14% drop in car journeys. Buses had become more popular and the wait at bus stops had also reduced by 60%. The majority of the people were taking public transport to the central business district in London. She said that as Hong Kong had a good public transport system, it should learn from the London experience in ERP, which if implemented, would also save the harbour.

30. The Secretary for the Environment, Transport and Works said that repeated ERP studies had been carried out in Hong Kong. People in Hong Kong were wary about the system, particularly with regard to the privacy issue. According to the Feasibility Study on ERP (the Study) which was completed in April 2001 in parallel with other traffic management plans, it was concluded that drastic restraint measures such as ERP were not warranted on traffic management grounds before 2006 as the traffic could still be maintained at 20 kilometres/hour. The use of ERP would not be effective in the absence of CWB which was needed to divert the traffic load and reduce the traffic entering the central business district. She nevertheless assured members that the Administration would be looking at ERP again when the concern about privacy had been alleviated and having regard

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to the London experience.

31. As the purpose of ERP was to reduce unnecessary trips to central business district during peak hours rather than diverting the traffic, Mr HUNG Wing-tat/CA held the view that it should only be applicable to roads leading to Central during peak hours. He also opined that the decision on implementation of ERP should be independent from the provision of CWB which was intended to ease the through traffic not entering the central business district.

32. Before concluding the meeting, the Chairman thanked the Administration and deputations for attending the meeting and sharing their views.

III. Any other business

33. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 6:45 pm.

Council Business Division 1
Legislative Council Secretariat
21 January 2004