

For Information

Legislative Council Panel on Transport

**Highways Department's
Directorate Staffing Proposals**

INTRODUCTION

At the meeting of the Legislative Council Panel on Transport held on 17 December 2004, Members discussed LC Paper No. CB(1)/466/04-05(04), which sets out the Administration's proposal to –

- (a) create one permanent Chief Engineer (CE) (D1) post in the Railway Development Office (RDO);
- (b) retain one supernumerary CE (D1) post in the RDO for a period of 27 months up to 11 June 2007; and
- (c) retain three supernumerary posts of one Government Engineer (GE) (D2) and two CE (D1) in the Major Works Project Management Office (MWPMO) for a period of 18 months up to 11 September 2006,

in the Highways Department (HyD) with effect from 12 March 2005.

2. Members requested the Administration to provide supplementary information on the following –

- (a) the need for the extension of the four supernumerary directorate posts substantiated by a summary of the on-going projects and new projects implemented since the creation of the supernumerary posts in March 1999; and

- (b) the need for the creation of the permanent post of Chief Engineer/Technical Services (CE/TS) in the RDO with further elaboration on his work on railway modelling.

THE ADMINISTRATION'S RESPONSE

Need for Extension of the Four Supernumerary Directorate Posts

Three Supernumerary Posts in the Major Works Project Management Office

3. We announced in the 1997 Policy Address our commitment to implementing transport infrastructure projects to support and enhance the economic development, and land use and housing developments in Hong Kong. To take forward the series of planned highway infrastructure projects, three supernumerary posts in the MWPMO, viz. the Government Engineer/Major Works (3) (GE) (D2), Chief Engineer/Major Works 2-3 (CE) (D1) and Chief Engineer/Major Works 3-3 (CE) (D1)¹, were created in 1999 for a period of six years to strengthen the directorate support in the MWPMO in planning and implementing a number of strategic highway projects, including the Route 8 (known as Route 9 then) project, the Widening of the Yuen Long Highway, the Tsing Yi North Coastal Road, the Widening of Tolo/Fanling Highway, Improvement to Fan Kam Road and the Kam Tin Bypass, etc.

4. When seeking the approval of the Legislative Council for the creation of the three supernumerary posts in 1999, we were conscious of the need for adequate manpower support, including that at the directorate level, to take forward the implementation of the aforementioned mega highway projects. We therefore made an undertaking in our submission to the Legislative Council that we would review the continued need of the above posts before the end of the six-year period. Over the past years, we have made diligent efforts in taking forward the projects and a number of them (e.g. Tsing Yi North Coastal Road and Kam Tin Bypass) have been completed. However, since then, new

¹ The three posts were subsequently re-designated as Deputy Project Manager/Major Works (1) (DPM/MW(1)), Chief Engineer/Major Works 1-1 (CE/MW1-1) and Chief Engineer/Major Works 3-1 (CE/MW3-1) respectively.

projects have been taken on board and there have been changes in the implementation programmes of certain projects, which together have contributed to the need for extending the three supernumerary posts.

5. In the light of the anticipated increase in cross-boundary traffic demand, various cross-boundary highway infrastructure projects have been identified in recent years for fast-track implementation. These include the Hong Kong-Shenzhen Western Corridor (HK-SWC) (and the related Deep Bay Link (DBL)) and the New Boundary Bridge between Lok Ma Chau and Huanggang. The HK-SWC and the DBL, estimated to cost \$7.8 billion, commenced construction in mid-2003 with a target completion date of end-2005. The New Boundary Bridge, which commenced construction in November 2003, is targeted for commissioning in January 2005. In taking forward these new cross-boundary projects, we have absorbed the additional workload within the existing manpower resources and did not ask for additional manpower resources.

6. Apart from the above major projects, the HyD has to regularly review the list of potential highway projects in the light of changing planning parameters and circumstances. We have adjusted the implementation programmes of a number of projects in the past years. A list of projects managed by the MWPMO in 1999 and a list of projects included since 1999 are at **Annex**.

Annex

7. In the light of the above and taking into account the workload after the second quarter of 2006, we are of the view that the three supernumerary posts of DPM/MW(1), CE/MW1-1 and CE/MW3-1 would be required for another 18 months from 12 March 2005. There would not be a continued need for them after the extended period.

Supernumerary Post for Chief Engineer/Railway(2)

8. As regards the Chief Engineer/Railway (2) (CE/R(2)) post in the RDO, we would require it for another 27 months to enable CE/R(2) to see through the implementation of the \$10-billion Sheung Shui to Lok Ma Chau Spur Line (Spur Line) project, the associated Essential Public Infrastructure

Works (EPIW) (estimated to cost \$600 million) and the Public Transport Interchange at the Lok Ma Chau Terminus (estimated to cost \$93 million). All these works are now at their peaks of construction with a target completion date of mid-2007. If not because of the major change in scope of the Spur Line from the original viaduct option to the tunnel option, which consequentially deferred commencement of the construction works by about two years and prolonged the construction period by about one year, the proposed extension of the post would not be required. Having reviewed the workload in the RDO as well as progress of the Spur Line and the associated work, we consider that the extension of the post of CE/R(2) is required for a period of 27 months from 12 March 2005. We have also explained in LC Paper No. CB(1)/466/04-05(04) that we would not be able to redeploy the duties of CE/R(2) to other officers within the RDO in view of the workload in the years to come. A list of projects handled by the RDO in 1999 and a list of projects included since 1999 are at **Annex**.

Annex

Need for the Permanent Post of Chief Engineer/Technical Services

9. The post of CE/TS was created in March 1999 on a supernumerary basis for a period of six years. The post was needed for establishing and maintaining a computerised railway planning tool and the necessary data for the continuous planning and updating of the territory's railway developments, and handling all district administration matters on railway development for the whole of Hong Kong, including advising on strategic and regional transport planning studies.

10. The main duty of CE/TS is to establish and maintain a railway development model (the RDS Model) in the RDO. Before the establishment of this supernumerary post in 1999, we had to employ consultants to vet submissions of new railway projects from the two railway corporations. Those submissions included forecasts on patronage and revenue together with financial and economic evaluations of the projects. Since the creation of the post and establishment of the fully computerised railway development model, vetting of consultants' proposals submitted by the two railway corporations, including the station to station travelling pattern and the associated

infrastructure requirements are all carried out in-house within the RDO. In addition, CE/TS also updates comprehensive railway planning for the whole territory and provides support to the Environment, Transport and Works Bureau (ETWB) on railway policies. The establishment of the CE/TS post reduces our reliance and expenditure on employing consultants for railway studies.

11. We have reviewed the need for a permanent post as requested by Members. We maintain the view that there is a long term need for a permanent CE/TS post. As explained in LC Paper No. CB(1)/466/04-05(04), when we put forward our submission on the creation of the existing supernumerary post to the Establishment Subcommittee (ESC) of the Finance Committee (FC) in March 1999, we proposed to create the post on a supernumerary basis for a period of six years in the first instance. The reason for the arrangement was that while we saw a long term need for the post then, we were mindful that we ought to take into account the experience to be gained in the six-year period and also explore other options, including redeployment of duties upon completion of some of the railway projects.

12. Apart from the benefits of maintaining an in-house computerised railway development model as explained in paragraph 10 above, our policy statement in “Hong Kong Moving Ahead – A Transport Strategy for the Future” published in October 1999 and the Railway Development Strategy 2000 (RDS 2000) published in May 2000 reaffirmed Government’s transport policy to use railways as the backbone of Hong Kong’s passenger transport. In particular, the RDS 2000 mapped out Hong Kong’s \$100-billion railway expansion plan. To facilitate proper planning and implementation of this policy, the professional support from CE/TS is essential.

13. We foresee that about six years from now, while we should have just completed the Kowloon Southern Link, we would still be handling the other projects recommended in the RDS 2000, such as the Sha Tin to Central Link, the West Hong Kong and South Hong Kong Island Line, the Northern Link and the Regional Express Line. There are also a number of long term railway proposals suggested in the RDS 2000, including the North Hong Kong Island Line, the Outer Western Corridor and the East-west Kowloon Link, some of which are still in the conceptual stage. All require careful planning and proper co-ordination. The RDS Model therefore needs to be updated continuously to

take into account changes in the transport and socio-economic environment in Hong Kong. The above long term planning work requires the professional input from the CE/TS. Coupled with the fact it is not possible to redeploy other staff within the RDO to take over the duties of the CE/TS post, we consider that the post is required on a permanent, rather than a supernumerary basis.

14. We are mindful of the need to contain and reduce the size of the directorate establishment. We have made conscious effort to identify the scope for streamlining our organisation structure with a view to achieving greater efficiency and enhancing effective implementation of policies and delivery of services to the public. The amalgamation of the former Civil Engineering Department and Territory Development Department to form the new Civil Engineering and Development Department on 1 July 2004, which made possible a net reduction of nine permanent directorate and 57 non-directorate posts, was our first major step. As approved by FC on 17 December 2004, the merger of the Environment Branch (EB) of the ETWB with the Environmental Protection Department (EPD) will soon be implemented on 1 April 2005. The EB/EPD merger will release four permanent directorate posts, involving a total saving of \$5,499,000 in terms of notional annual salary cost at mid-point or \$8,552,000 in terms of full annual average staff cost. The saving will be more than enough to cover the requirements of the permanent CE (D1) post in the present proposal and the two permanent posts proposed for EPD under the other ESC submission due for consideration at the same ESC sitting on 19 January 2005, involving \$3,868,800 in terms of notional annual salary cost at mid-point or \$5,683,000 in terms of full annual average staff cost.

ADVICE SOUGHT

15. Members are invited to note the contents of this paper.

Environment, Transport and Works Bureau
December 2004

Projects Managed by Highways Department

(I) Highway Projects managed by the MWPMO in 1999

(a) Under construction

1. Route 8 (known as Route 9 in 1999) between Tsing Yi and Cheung Sha Wan
2. Route 8 (known as Route 9 in 1999) between Cheung Sha Wan and Sha Tin
3. Widening of Yuen Long Highway
4. Improvements to Castle Peak Road

(b) Under planning

5. Improvements to Tuen Mun Road (under current project title of Reconstruction and Improvement of Tuen Mun Road)
6. Widening of Tolo Highway and Fanling Highway (remaining section between Island House and Fanling)
7. Central-Wan Chai Bypass and Island Eastern Corridor Link
8. Central Kowloon Route
9. Gascoigne Road Flyover Widening
10. Route 4 (known as Route 7 in 1999) section between Kennedy Town and Aberdeen

(II) Highway Projects included since 1999

(a) Under construction

1. Hong Kong – Shenzhen Western Corridor
2. Deep Bay Link
3. New Boundary Bridge between Lok Ma Chau and Huanggang
4. Retrofitting of Noise Barriers on Fanling Highway near Choi Yuen Estate and Fanling Centre
5. Reconstruction of Causeway Bay Flyover and Widening of Victoria Park Road
6. Improvements to Tung Chung Road between Lung Tseng Tau and Cheung Sha

(b) Under planning

7. Other Noise Mitigation Projects on Existing Roads
8. Improvements to Island Eastern Corridor section between Causeway Bay and North Point

(III) Railway Projects handled by the RDO in 1999

1. West Rail
2. Tseung Kwan O Extension
3. Ma On Shan to Tai Wai Rail Link
4. Tsim Sha Tsui Extension
5. Sheung Shui to Lok Ma Chau Spur Line

(IV) Railway Projects included since 1999

1. Disneyland Resort Line
2. Kowloon Southern Link
3. Sha Tin to Central Link
4. South Hong Kong Island Line
5. North Hong Kong Island Line
6. West Hong Kong Island Line
7. Northern Link
8. Regional Express Line
9. Port Rail Line