

Extract from the minutes of the Public Works Subcommittee meeting on 20.2.2008Action

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PWSC(2007-08)88 746TH Reconstruction and improvement of Tuen Mun Road

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Noise mitigation measures

46. Mr CHEUNG Hok-ming stated support for the project. He opined that the proposed works to improve TMR scheduled for completion in 2014 would enhance the capacity of TMR timely to cope with the increased traffic from the Shenzhen Bay Port. Referring to residents' complaints about the effectiveness of the existing noise barriers along TMR in reducing traffic noise, Mr CHEUNG enquired about the design criteria for noise barriers under the project and whether the residents had been informed of such criteria. In reply, D of Hy (Acting) said that different designs of the noise barriers would be considered having regard to a number of relevant factors, such as the noise levels, the heights of the noise sensitive buildings and their distances from the road. The neighbouring residents had been consulted on the proposed noise mitigation measures under the project.

47. Mrs Selina CHOW noted with concern that of the 5 200 dwellings adjacent to TMR which were exposed to excessive traffic noise of up to 84 dB(A), only 4 100 dwellings would benefit from the noise barriers and semi-enclosures. She enquired about other measures to mitigate the exposure to excessive traffic noise for the remaining 1 100 dwellings.

48. In response, D of Hy (Acting) said that the noise barriers and semi-enclosures under the proposed works would lower the existing traffic noise levels on the affected sensitive receivers by 1 to 21 dB(A) and benefit the majority of the dwellings adjacent to TMR, i.e. about 4 100 out of the 5 200 dwellings. The traffic noise levels would be lowered by around 6 dB(A) on average for these 4 100 dwellings. The noise level of the remaining 1 100 dwellings which were presently exposed to a relatively lower level of traffic noise would also be reduced by less than 1 dB(A).

49. Mrs Selina CHOW remained concerned about the 1 100 dwellings which could hardly benefit from the proposed noise mitigation measures and called on the Administration to explore other measures to alleviate the noise pollution problem. Mrs CHOW was also concerned about the visual impact of the noise barriers on the surrounding environment and their effectiveness in noise mitigation. She urged the Administration to explore alternative noise mitigation in this regard,

such as the planting of trees.

50. The Assistant Director (Environmental Assessment), Environmental Protection Department AD(EA), EPD said that it was the Government's policy that direct engineering solutions by way of retrofitting of barriers and enclosures, and resurfacing with low noise material, would be implemented where practicable on existing roads where the noise level exceeded the limit of 70dB(A). In line with the above policy and in response to concerns of neighbouring residents, the Administration had worked out the proposed retrofitting works at six locations along TMR. As to the planting of trees for noise mitigation, AD(EA), EPD advised that trees could not effectively reduce traffic noise. By way of illustration, planting of trees to form a barrier measuring 10 metres in depth could only lower the traffic noise by about 1dB(A). He assured members that the Administration attached importance to the aesthetic design of the proposed noise barriers and had engaged a group of experts to give advice on the design to ensure that the final design would be compatible with the surrounding environment. D of Hy (Acting) added that the Administration had taken on board the majority of the public views on the retrofitting of noise barriers, except for safety reason at one location where the installation of noise barrier would obstruct the sightline of motorists. Responding to Mrs Selina CHOW's further enquiry on the use of low noise materials on TMR, D of Hy (Acting) advised that low noise materials had been used for surfacing all expressways with speed limit over 70 km/hour, including TMR.

51. Mrs Selina CHOW queried why the Administration had all along refused to provide double glazed windows and air-conditioning for residential developments exposed to excessive traffic noise while providing resource for implementing such noise mitigation measures for school projects. She suggested that the subject of mitigation of traffic noise on existing roads should be referred to the Panel on Environmental Affairs.

Clerk

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PWSC(2007-08)88 746TH Reconstruction and improvement of Tuen Mun Road (continued)

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Noise mitigation measures

62. Ms Emily LAU was of the view that noise barriers were undesirable noise mitigation measures given their unsightly appearance and the high costs for installation, which amounted to over \$500 million for the current project. She called on the Administration to improve the physical appearance of noise barriers. Ms LAU also expressed concern about the effectiveness of the proposed noise barriers and semi-enclosures in lowering the existing traffic noise levels on the

5 200 dwellings adjacent to TMR and considered that the Administration should provide double-glazed windows and air-conditioning for the remaining dwellings which would still be exposed to excessive traffic noise after completion of the proposed works.

Admin

63. PS(W), DEVB recapped that the Administration promulgated a policy in 2000 to address the noise impact of existing roads on neighbouring residents. Under this policy, direct engineering solutions by way of retrofitting of barriers and enclosures, and resurfacing with low noise material, would be implemented where practicable on existing roads where the noise level exceeded the limit of 70 dB(A). In line with the above policy, noise barriers and enclosures would be installed under the project, where technically feasible, to lower the traffic noise levels affecting neighbouring residents of TMR. At Ms LAU's request, the Administration agreed to provide the number of dwellings benefiting from the proposed works with traffic noise levels lowered to within 70dB(A) and the number of dwellings which would still be exposed to traffic noise exceeding 70dB(A) after the completion of the proposed retrofitting works, with breakdown by the number of dwellings exposed to different levels of traffic noise.

64. Ms CHOY So-yuk was also concerned about the high cost for installation of the proposed noise barriers and enquired whether this was attributable to the costs of construction materials or construction works. In response, PS(W), DEVB advised that higher total cost for installation of the proposed noise barriers was incurred as a result of the large size of the barriers, some of which measured up to 9 m in height. Moreover, there was an upward trend of the costs for construction materials in recent months, including steel.

65. Mr Albert CHAN pointed out that the scope of the current project was far from satisfactory as improvements and widening works would only be carried out at selected sections of TMR but not along the whole length of the expressway. Nevertheless, Mr CHAN said that he would still give his support to the project in principle bearing in mind that the improvement works had been long overdue and residents of Tuen Mun had been suffering from the inconvenience caused by the substandard trunk road. On the proposed noise barriers under the project, Mr CHAN appreciated the Administration's effort in modifying the project design to take forward residents' request for installing more noise barriers but considered that the aesthetic design of the noise barriers should be improved. He urged the Administration to improve the physical appearance of noise barriers, such as identifying suitable and lighter materials available in the market so that the noise barriers would no longer be retrofitted in the form of colossal concrete structures.

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