

立法會
Legislative Council

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by the Administration)

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Panel on Transport

**Minutes of special meeting held on
Monday, 22 October 2007, at 9:30 am
in the Chamber of the Legislative Council Building**

Members present : Hon CHEUNG Hok-ming, SBS, JP
(Deputy Chairman and Chair of the meeting)
Hon Albert HO Chun-yan
Ir Dr Hon Raymond HO Chung-tai, SBS, S.B.St.J., JP
Hon Mrs Selina CHOW LIANG Shuk-ye, GBS, JP
Hon LAU Kong-wah, JP
Hon Miriam LAU Kin-ye, GBS, JP
Hon LI Fung-ying, BBS, JP
Hon Tommy CHEUNG Yu-yan, SBS, JP
Hon Albert CHAN Wai-yip
Hon WONG Kwok-hing, MH
Hon LEE Wing-tat
Hon Jeffrey LAM Kin-fung, SBS, JP
Hon Ronny TONG Ka-wah, SC
Hon TAM Heung-man

Members attending : Hon CHAN Yuen-han, SBS, JP
Hon CHAN Kam-lam, SBS, JP
Hon Abraham SHEK Lai-him, SBS, JP

Members absent : Hon Andrew CHENG Kar-foo (Chairman)
Hon LEUNG Kwok-hung

- Public officers attending** :
- Ms Eva CHENG
Secretary for Transport and Housing

 - Mr Francis HO
Permanent Secretary for Transport and Housing (Transport)

 - Mr Philip YUNG
Deputy Secretary for Transport and Housing (Transport) 1

 - Miss Cathy CHU
Deputy Secretary for Transport and Housing (Transport) 2

 - Ms Annette LEE
Deputy Secretary for Transport and Housing (Transport) 3

 - Mr Patrick HO
Deputy Secretary for Transport and Housing (Transport)
Special Duties

 - Mr Alan WONG
Commissioner for Transport

 - Mr WAI Chi-sing
Director of Highways
- Clerk in attendance** :
- Mr Andy LAU
Chief Council Secretary (1)2
- Staff in attendance** :
- Ms Pauline NG
Assistant Secretary General 1

 - Ms Sarah YUEN
Senior Council Secretary (1)6

 - Miss Winnie CHENG
Legislative Assistant (1)5
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I Briefing by the Secretary for Transport and Housing on the relevant transport policy initiatives featuring in the Chief Executive's 2007-2008 Policy Address

(LC Paper No. CB(1)22/07-08(01) - Administration's paper on transport-related policy initiatives under the 2007-2008 Policy Agenda)

- Address by the Chief Executive at the Legislative Council meeting on 10 October 2007 - "A New Direction for Hong Kong"; and
- The 2007-2008 Policy Address - "Policy Agenda"

As the Chairman was engaged in another appointment, the Deputy Chairman took over the chair of the meeting.

Rail service

Impact of railway development on other public transport trades

2. Noting that the South Island Line (SIL) had been highlighted as a major infrastructure project for economic growth in the Chief Executive (CE)'s 2007-2008 Policy Address (the Policy Address), Mr Jeffrey LAM referred to opposition to SIL from the bus and public light bus (PLB) operators that would be affected by this railway project, and enquired about the Administration's plans to strike a balance among the various public transport services concerned. In reply, the Secretary for Transport and Housing (STH) reported that according to MTR Corporation Limited (MTRCL)'s proposal for SIL, SIL would start from Admiralty and terminate at Ap Lei Chau, passing through Ocean Park, Wong Chuk Hang and Lei Tung Estate. As such, there would still be room for other public transport operators (PTOs) to play a role in Southern District, in particular in providing feeder service. Moreover, to ensure that the public transport network of Southern District could provide convenient services to residents and tourists alike, once SIL's alignment was finalized, the Transport Department (TD) would closely co-ordinate with the bus and PLB operators concerned on service rationalization.

3. Mr Jeffrey LAM was unassured, and expressed concern that there might be difficulty in balancing the interests of bus operators against SIL because, like rail service, buses mainly served external routes and not internal and hence feeder routes. In response, the Commissioner for Transport (C for T) elaborated that a consultancy study on the implications of using rail as the backbone of the transportation system in Southern District had been conducted. The Administration would, on the basis of the relevant findings, actively liaise with the PTOs concerned, the Southern District Council (DC) and other local groups to rationalize public transport services for the district.

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4. While recognizing the many benefits of using rail as the backbone of the transport system, Ms LI Fung-ying was concerned that the Administration's plan to develop a number of railway projects in a small place like Hong Kong might result in leaving very little market share for other public transport services. She therefore asked if the Administration had made any assessment of the implications so arising on the job security of the employees of other PTOs. In reply, STH pointed out that there was already consensus on using rail as the backbone of Hong Kong's transport system in recognition of the need for mass transportation in Hong Kong, whose small size meant that road resources were limited. It was also the CE's intention to undertake such major infrastructure projects as railway projects to boost economic activities. Notwithstanding, bus service would continue to play an important role, with one-third of the population travelling to work and study by bus every day. Moreover, every time a railway project was planned, the Administration would make efforts to carefully rationalize existing bus and PLB services so as to minimize the impact of the project on these public transport services and their staff. In so doing, views of the DCs and the trade concerned would be taken into due consideration. In reply to Ms LI on whether the employee associations and trade unions of PTOs would also be consulted, STH confirmed that the Administration would give regard to the views of all parties.

5. Ms Miriam LAU reaffirmed her long support for rail development and hence those railway projects included in the ten major infrastructure projects highlighted in the Policy Agenda. She, however, also expressed concern that notwithstanding rail development's positive impact on the environment, it might affect the sustainability of other public transport services. The problem might not be so significant where SIL was concerned because there would be new commercial and tourism developments in Southern District to generate additional transport needs. However, when planning other railway projects, the Government might need to maintain a balance by ensuring that other minor modes could have a room to provide feeder services to railway stations. In reply, STH reiterated that this was already the direction the Administration was following when planning railway projects because, not only were the interests of other PTOs and their staff important but the public also preferred a wider choice of public transport services.

The Shatin to Central Link

6. Noting that public consultation would be conducted on the detailed scheme of the Shatin to Central Link (SCL) in early 2008 and construction would start in 2010, Miss CHAN Yuen-han pointed out that SCL had already been discussed for a long time before it was withheld during the rail merger exercise, and questioned why there was a need to conduct consultation on SCL again, and why the process would take so long that construction could not start until 2010. In reply, STH explained that notwithstanding the need to complete the legislative process for the rail merger before SCL could be taken forward, the Administration understood the need to expedite this important project. However, being a complex project, the amount of design work involved was substantial. There was also a need to discuss with MTRCL on the mode of delivery and financing arrangements for the project. The Deputy Secretary for Transport and

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Housing (Transport) 1 (DS(T)1) supplemented that during the public consultation process, MTRCL would in parallel carry out detailed design of SCL, so that any views collected from the consultation exercise could be incorporated in the design as appropriate before the final project proposal was submitted to the Executive Council. Such an approach should be able to expedite delivery of the project.

7. Miss CHAN Yuen-han was not convinced that so much time should be spent on consulting the public on SCL again, pointing out that the subject had already spanned two legislative terms. According to her, as a result of past consultation efforts, public views on the project were clear. As such, strong public views such as the need for a station in Tsz Wan Shan should be given due consideration when taking SCL forward instead of restarting public consultation all over again. In response, DS(T)1 said that when the public was consulted again in 2008, the pros and cons of the above station proposed would be set out for comments to facilitate design of the SCL project as explained above.

8. Ir Dr Raymond HO was glad to note that SCL would reach Central instead of first terminating at Hung Hom as earlier planned. Miss TAM Heung-man, however, expressed concern that many details of SCL had yet to be examined. For example, whether its depot should be built on the land at the former Tai Hom Village at Diamond Hill, with property development projects above the depot which would create wall effect. She was also dissatisfied that there was no plan to provide a station in Tsz Wan Shan despite strong requests from Wong Tai Sin DC and many local residents. She therefore enquired how the Administration would conduct consultation on SCL, and whether the scope of consultation would cover the site selection of the SCL depot and possible property development thereupon, and provision of a station in Tsz Wan Shan.

9. Addressing Miss TAM Heung-man's concern about the SCL depot, STH highlighted the importance of identifying a suitable site for the depot in recognition that the site would affect both the alignment and technical viability of SCL, the construction of which had gained wide support. Hence the proposal to locate the depot in the Tai Hom Village site. As to whether there would be property development above the depot, public views would be sought. She however pointed out that even if there would be property development, wall effect might not necessarily occur because air ventilation assessment might need to be conducted. The Planning Department and the Town Planning Board would also give due regard to likely wall effect when vetting the relevant development applications.

10. As to Miss TAM Heung-man's call to provide a SCL station in Tsz Wan Shan, STH and DS(T)1 explained that according to KCRC's studies, the geological condition of Tsz Wan Shan would require any station to be built there to be situated as deep as about 80 metres underground. Owing to the difficulty in ensuring efficient emergency evacuation should need arise and hence safety concern, provision of a station in Tsz Wan Shan was considered technically infeasible, and views on alternative options would be solicited.

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Other railway projects

11. Anticipating that SIL would pass through the Ocean Park, and the Fisherman's Wharf to be developed in Aberdeen, Mr Jeffrey LAM stressed the need for effective communication among all bureaux and departments concerned to ensure the relevant stations of SIL would be conveniently situated close to the above two tourist attractions. In reply, STH said that it was understood from relevant parties that in planning for Fisherman's Wharf, they had already taken into consideration the need to cater to the transport needs so arising because the relevant Concept Plan for the Aberdeen Tourism Project aimed at attracting tourists to take a whole day trip of the Southern District visiting not only Fisherman's Wharf but also the Ocean Park and other tourist attractions in the district. As such, the Administration would place great emphasis on ensuring smooth local traffic, and would closely liaise with relevant PTOs and the Tourism Commission in relation to the Concept Plan.

12. Ir Dr Raymond HO considered it desirable that in taking forward the Hong Kong section of Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link (ERL), Government had decided to adopt the Dedicated Corridor Option of building a dedicated rail track running from ERL's West Kowloon Terminus to the boundary, instead of using the existing WR rail track from the West Kowloon Terminus up to the existing WR Kam Sheung Road Station, the rail track of the Northern Link and a new rail track to make connection with the Mainland section of ERL. This was because under the Dedicated Corridor Option, a state-of-the-art rail track could be built to enable ERL to form part of the national high-speed rail network. Ir Dr HO also reckoned that after completion of all railway projects highlighted in the Policy Agenda, the Government might be able to achieve its target of boosting the rail share in the public transport system to 40%.

13. Mrs Selina CHOW pointed out that the Light Rail (LR) no longer only served the local community but also provided feeder service for West Rail (WR). She further recalled that in recognition of LR's changed role, the Administration had agreed to conduct an overall review of the public transport services in Northern New Territories. In reply to her on the progress of the review, STH confirmed that the review had already been completed. In fact, it was on the basis of the review that the need to strengthen the services of LR was recognized, and permission was granted for Kowloon-Canton Railway Corporation (KCRC) to purchase 22 train cars for LR to enable it to better serve the local community as well as expand feeder service for WR in preparation for the completion of the Kowloon Southern Link, which would bring WR additional patronage.

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The rail merger

14. While glad to see railway fare reduction to be brought about by the rail merger which should take effect in December 2007, Ms LI Fung-ying was also keen to ensure that Government, as MTRCL's majority shareholder, would fulfil its undertaking of ensuring smooth transition of KCRC's staff to MTRCL. Highlighting recent protest actions by KCRC staff over certain unresolved transition matters, she enquired whether Government would follow up and ensure such matters would be reasonably resolved. In reply, STH assured members that the employment terms of the staff of the two railway corporations in terms of salary levels as well as their seniority in terms of years of service would not be affected by the merger exercise. This was why the trade unions concerned were, as she greatly appreciated, very co-operative. The two corporations would maintain close communication to ensure the building of a good team after the merger to provide even better rail service to the community. She also anticipated that many new posts would emerge as a result of further rail development. As a shareholder of MTRCL, Government would actively perform its monitoring role to guard against any problem that might arise from the rail merger, so that the merger would bring overall benefits to the community.

15. Ir Dr Raymond HO pointed out that the engineers of the two railway corporations did not have trade unions, and that KCRC's engineers would be downgraded to assistant engineers after the rail merger. He was concerned that although KCRC engineers' salaries and fringe benefits would not be affected, the downgrade in post title might affect their prospects if they wanted to apply for outside jobs. The Administration noted his concerns.

Bus operation

16. Mr WONG Kwok-hing sought to ascertain the Government's stance regarding the existing bus fare adjustment arrangement which allowed bus fares to go upward and downward. In response, STH said that the five factors originally included in the previous Modified Basket of Factors (MBOF) for assessing bus fare adjustment applications in the past, and the subsequently introduced new fare adjustment formula for working out the supportable fare adjustment rate in a transparent manner (the new MBOF approach) were equally important, and would all be given serious consideration. As such, the need to provide bus operators with a reasonable rate of return would not outweigh other factors.

17. Mr WONG Kwok-hing referred to media reports on the motion debate on franchised bus fares at the Council meeting on 17 October 2007, which according to him all claimed that STH had made a retrograde step from the new MBOF approach introduced by her predecessor. He opined that Government should comply with the new formulaic approach in assessing bus fare applications. STH clarified that only one newspaper had made the above claim. She then emphasized that the recent reshuffling of responsibilities among policy bureaux had not affected the Government's stance regarding the new MBOF approach. Government would continue to carefully examine

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all factors in the new MBOF approach when vetting every fare adjustment application, and would initiate a downward fare adjustment where appropriate. However, it should be noted that the last fare adjustment introduced by The Kowloon Motor Bus Company (1933) Limited was made ten years before. As such, when vetting its recent fare adjustment application, there was a need to examine the changes in its operating costs and revenue over ten years.

18. Mr Albert HO opined that the deployment of cleaner buses along busy corridors would not significantly help improve air quality unless bus operators would speed up replacement of old buses with more environment-friendly buses. In reply to him on the availability of incentive measures in this regard, the Deputy Secretary for Transport and Housing (Transport) 2 (DS(T)2) advised that bus operators were already required to adopt the latest commercially available and proven environment-friendly technologies for acquiring new buses when they replaced buses. Old diesel vehicles were required to be equipped with devices that reduced emissions such as particulate traps or catalytic converters. According to the current bus replacement programme, all old buses would be replaced by around 2014.

Bus route rationalization plans

19. Miss CHAN Yuen-han expressed concern about the great number of bus trips on busy corridors due to keen market competition, and enquired about the timetable of bus service rationalization to reduce roadside air pollution and traffic congestion. In response, STH highlighted the need to consult the community when rationalizing bus routes, especially as DCs normally had very strong views on route cancellation, amalgamation, truncation and frequency adjustment.

20. Ms Miriam LAU asked whether the Administration had any plan to enhance the cost-effectiveness of bus operation, thereby reducing the number of buses running on the roads to help improve traffic and the environment. In recognition of the difficulty in seeking the approval of individual DCs to bus service rationalization plans, she further suggested that such plans should be mapped out on a territory-wide basis with Legislative Council (LegCo) Members' assistance. STH was glad to note Ms LAU's suggestion, and looked forward to co-operation with Members in this regard.

21. Mr Albert HO was concerned about the progress in introducing bus-bus interchange (BBI) schemes, which in his opinion was too slow, and enquired about measures the Administration was taking to minimize the need for point-to-point bus service. In response, DS(T)2 reported that of the over 500 existing bus routes, nearly 400 routes had already been included in BBI schemes. A few scores of the schemes even involved two bus operators. The Administration would gladly follow up with bus operators any further requests from DCs or local residents for inclusion of additional bus routes in the schemes. Mr HO was keen to ensure that long-haul routes serving remote new towns, the fares of which were the least affordable, would all be included in BBI schemes. DS(T)2 advised that the inclusion of bus routes in the schemes would hinge on the circumstances of individual districts involved. Those presently included were

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medium to long haul routes. She however invited Mr HO to relay any requests for BBI concessions to her for follow-up.

Taxi operation

22. Highlighting the long-standing problem of "taxi discount gangs", Mr LEE Wing-tat opined that such blatant disregard of the relevant law would threaten the authority of the law enforcement agencies concerned if not tackled. Noting that the Administration would conduct consultation on ways to address the problem, he enquired whether consideration would be given to flexibly responding to market changes by lowering the taxi fares for long distance rides. In response, STH and DS(T)2 elaborated that the Transport Advisory Committee (TAC) was conducting a review on the mode of operation and quality of the taxi services in Hong Kong and would soon issue a public consultation document to gauge public views. The TAC review aimed at studying whether the taxi market had changed, and if different modes of operation could be introduced to expand taxi operations to enhance the competitiveness of the taxi trade as well as benefit the public, so that taxis could continue to play a useful role in providing public transport service.

23. Mrs Selina CHOW stated the Liberal Party's stance on the need to seriously address the problem of "taxi discount gangs" by lowering taxi fares as a whole, and on the importance of the continued existence of meter taxis to obviate confusion that might arise from fare negotiation. In response, STH said that TAC's review would cover the above aspects as well as other aspects to enhance the competitiveness of the taxi trade.

Public light bus operation

24. Highlighting the speeding problem of PLBs and recent traffic accidents so arising, Mr LEE Wing-tat expressed concern about possible tampering with PLBs' speed display devices (SDDs), and enquired about plans to gear up enforcement against such malpractices as well as to subsidize the retrofitting of safety seat belts on PLBs not so equipped to better protect PLB passengers against speeding accidents. In response, STH advised that the Police had already geared up enforcement in the wake of the recent accidents. As to seat belts, PLBs registered after 1 August 2004 were already equipped with seat belts. C for T supplemented that a multi-pronged approach was adopted to tackle the problem of speeding by PLBs. In this regard, new legislation requiring the proper functioning of SDDs would become effective in the first half of 2008. Speed enforcement cameras were installed at all major road junctions and along many highways to deter red light jumping and speeding respectively. The Administration had further asked PLB trade associations to remind drivers to drive carefully when renting out vehicles to them. The Transport Complaint Unit hotline was also displayed inside PLBs to facilitate the reporting of complaints when illegal driving behaviour was spotted. To increase the number of PLBs equipped with seat belts, the Administration had been encouraging the trade associations to retrofit seat belts on PLBs where technically feasible.

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25. Mr LAU Kong-wah highlighted the importance of seat belts on PLBs by referring to a recent traffic accident where certain PLB passengers were thrown out of the vehicle because they had not worn safety seat belts. He then enquired about enforcement actions to ensure the wearing of seat belts on PLBs if available, and the efforts made to expedite the replacement programme of PLBs to ensure more PLBs would be equipped with seat belts. He also urged the Administration to respond to PLB operators' call to increase the \$40,000 subsidy for replacement of PLBs with vehicles that ran on environment-friendly diesel to the level of \$60,000 presently offered for replacement of PLBs by liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) vehicles.

26. In response, C for T reported that publicity and education efforts had already been made in conjunction with the Police to impress upon the public the need to wear seat belts when available. The Police had also undertaken to conduct more random stop checks and prosecutions as far as resources permitted. He agreed to convey to the Police members' concern about the adequacy of such enforcement action. On the retrofitting of seat belts to PLBs not so equipped, he stressed the need to ascertain the technical viability as such would hinge on the structural designs of individual PLBs, and whether the anchor points and the body of the vehicles could withstand the impact arising from accidents. PLBs where retrofitting of seat belts was not feasible would need to be replaced in due course. In this regard, it was noted that recently probably as a result of improvement in business and revenue, more PLB owners were willing to replace their PLBs, so that the number of PLBs equipped with seat belts was increasing. As to the proposal to standardize the subsidy for purchase of PLBs using environment-friendly diesel and those using LPG, he undertook at Mr LAU Kong-wah's request to discuss the proposal with the Environment Bureau (ENB).

Ferry operation

27. Ms Miriam LAU referred to the problem facing ferry operation due to escalating fuel price during recent years, and expressed concern about plans to require ferries to switch to ultra low sulphur diesel (ULSD), the price of which doubled that of industrial diesel which ferries presently used. She then enquired how the Administration planned to prepare for the financial implications and likely fare increase so arising, and possible public outcry as a result. In reply, STH reported that the study of the use of ULSD by PTOs had only just commenced under the helm of ENB with assistance from the Transport and Housing Bureau. She acknowledged the need to pay a price for environmental protection but assured members that after completion of the above technical study, which involved trials and was complicated, the Administration would work out measures to satisfactorily mitigate the financial implications concerned to avoid adding to the financial burden of the public.

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Road infrastructure projects

28. Mr WONG Kwok-hing sought details on measures to mitigate the impact of the additional traffic load arising from the commissioning of the Shenzhen Bay Port on Northwest New Territories (NWNT) pending completion of the Tuen Mun Western Bypass (TMWB). In reply, STH explained that apart from TMWB and Tuen Mun-Chek Lap Kok Link (TM-CLKL), which were included in the ten major infrastructure projects highlighted in the Policy Address, other transport infrastructure projects would also be implemented to address the long-term needs for transport infrastructure in NWNT. For example, improvement of Tuen Mun Road, the environmental impact assessment (EIA) study and detailed design of which were already under way. Funding in the order of \$4 billion would be sought from LegCo in 2008 to implement the improvement works by phases. It was hoped that LegCo would support the relevant funding proposal.

29. While glad to note the plan to construct TMWB and TM-CLKL, Ir Dr Raymond HO enquired about the status of the some \$20-billion worth of connecting road links for the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge (HZMB) on the Hong Kong side, and stressed the need for early planning to construct and upgrade roads as appropriate to prepare for the traffic flow arising from HZMB. In reply, STH and DS(T)1 assured members that the Administration realized the need for early preparations and hence early decision on HZMB's landing point in Hong Kong to facilitate early preparation for the relevant connecting roads. As such, following the principle of "separate locations of boundary crossing facilities" agreed by the three parties concerned, the Highways Department and the relevant consultant had already commenced a site selection study for the Hong Kong boundary-crossing facilities and had started discussion with the Islands DC and environmental concern groups. The initial site under contemplation was a site northeast of the Airport Island, which was considered preferable from the perspective of macro planning because it could facilitate connection with TMWB and TM-CLKL and hence enhance operation of the Hong Kong International Airport and development of the logistics industries. Meanwhile, the Administration was conducting the relevant preliminary engineering and EIA studies while also exploring other sites on Lantau. The Administration would further develop the options and would consult all stakeholders including the DCs concerned and green groups again.

Public transport services for remote new towns

30. Mr Albert CHAN opined that notwithstanding the rosy picture painted in the Policy Agenda by highlighting the ten major infrastructure projects for economic growth, residents of remote new towns could not benefit from such grand projects because of high public transport fares and inadequate public transport services. For example, fare concessions for remote new town residents and persons with disabilities (PwDs) were still not available despite calls from him over the past seven years. Highlighting that some residents in Tin Shui Wai had to walk to Yuen Long because they could not afford the high transport fares, he was keen to ensure that there would be concessionary public transport fares for these residents to improve their quality of life.

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He further pointed out that public transport services for remote new towns were inadequate. For example, he had been for the past three to four years urging the Administration to ensure three bus routes could pass through Yat Tung Estate of Tung Chung, where bus service was inadequate. However, his request had yet to be granted although the requested detour would only lengthen each of the relevant bus trips by about 1.5 minutes. At the same time, because of the inadequacy of LR train cars, the cars were always too fully packed to be able to adequately serve Tin Shui Wai.

31. In response, STH said that infrastructure projects could bring about huge economic benefits by increasing employment opportunities and wages during the construction stage although not all people could directly benefit. She assured Mr Albert CHAN that the Administration was equally keen to ensure viable operation of adequate public transport services while maintaining the fares at reasonable levels. For example, there was already a decision to purchase 22 additional LR train cars to improve LR service in general and to cater for increase in patronage arising from LR's connection with WR. CE had also undertaken that satisfactory options would be worked out within two months for subsidizing PwDs in using public transport from the welfare policy perspective. Moreover, fare adjustment mechanisms were already in place to ensure any transport fare adjustment would be made in a reasonable manner.

32. Mr Albert CHAN was unhappy with STH's response above, comparing the tax concessions readily committed in the Policy Agenda with the negative response to the efforts he had made to secure adequate and affordable public transport services for the above disadvantaged groups. In response to his call for more active efforts from the Administration in this regard, DS(T)2 explained that despite efforts made to accompany Mr CHAN to conduct site visits and talks with the bus operators concerned on extension of three bus routes to Tung Chung, the efforts had not yet borne fruit because the routes straddled two districts and some residents affected were concerned about the longer journey time. The bus operators involved also felt that the patronage that would increase as a result of the extension could not cover the cost so incurred and might have negative impacts on the fare level. The Administration was, however, still following up the matter and was willing to explore and examine further options.

Road safety

33. Mr LAU Kong-wah referred to a recent drink driving incident, and expressed concern that despite active efforts to reduce such incidents by imposing heavier penalties and conducting more random stop checks, drink driving incidents were still on the rise. Referring to news that the Government was planning to further raise the penalties against drink driving, he asked the Administration how the move could effectively deter drink driving. In response, STH pointed out that there was already consensus on the imposition of heavier penalties against drink driving. As such, the Administration planned to submit relevant legislative proposals to the Panel for discussion in late 2007, and for introduction into LegCo in early 2008. Enforcement actions against drink driving would continue.

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34. Mrs Selina CHOW stressed the seriousness of the red light jumping problem, and enquired about the progress of the installation of red light camera (RLC) systems. In her view, the problem should be tackled expeditiously to enhance road safety. In response, C for T said that a plan to increase the number of RLC systems progressively was already in place and making steady progress. The Administration would continue to follow through the plan.

Other views and concerns

35. Miss TAM Heung-man highlighted the imbalanced distribution of traffic among the three road harbour crossings, and stressed the need to map out measures to even out the imbalanced distribution. The Administration noted her view.

36. In response to Mrs Selina CHOW on the progress of the application of the global positioning system (GPS) in Hong Kong, C for T responded that bus and large logistics companies were already applying GPS to management of their vehicle fleets. Certain taxi operators were also conducting relevant feasibility studies. As to extension of the application of GPS to car navigation, the development of an Intelligent Road Network would be completed in 2008 to provide a platform for navigation by means of GPS, and to provide accurate and updated traffic information to the general public. TD would continue to explore means to maximize the use of GPS in Hong Kong. In this regard, it was liaising with the Hong Kong Wireless Technology Industry Association, the Hong Kong Productivity Council and various vehicle associations on new developments in GPS. It was believed that more reliable and affordable GPS systems would be available in the market within a short time.

II Any other business

37. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 10:35 am.