



South Lantau Liaison Group – muiwo.org

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As a continuation to our document of August 29, 2007 ([CB(1)2272/06-07(07)] (29 August 2007)), SLLG would briefly summarize the recommendations that were made in that paper: SLLG suggested:

1. maintain exclusive Mui Wo and Peng Chau routes
2. comprehensive review of the 10 years by ferry operator NFFF
3. abolition holiday fare
4. HKTA, HAD, LCSD and Rural Committees to join hands in the promotion of events
5. cross-subsidy for the new ferry operator. MTR/KCRC but not ferry companies can compensate with other revenue unbalanced transport policies.
6. consider the Outlying Ferry Routes as residents' transportation not as tourist routes.

We are now in the situation that the Transport Department (TD) has come to realize that there is no public support for a merger of the ferries to Peng Chau and Mui Wo. But this is not good enough. Any primary school student could have come to the same conclusion.

What is more important is that the TD is still left us with the structural problems that were discussed in the Transport Panel's meeting on August 29, 2007, when various members of the Legco from all political parties (!) urged the TD to solve the problems rather than putting a bandage on the wound.

Anyone from the South Lantau area would agree with the fact that there needs to be a wider scale approach to the whole situation.

Therefore the SLLG would like to made further suggestions:

1. That the government immediately sets up an **inter-departmental workgroup** specially dedicated to the South Lantau area. At least the AFCD, Planning Department, BD/HA (Housing), ASD, HD, TD and HAD should be involved. Furthermore, the meetings should be public to South Lantau residents, so that no behind door meetings take place. Also, the civil servants have repeatedly shown not have enough knowledge and insight about the area, so they should be advised. The ladies and gentlemen civil servants don't even want to read the statistics provided by their own Census and Statistics department.
- Structural problems affecting the area are population decline, poverty, unemployment of 70%, high transportation costs, etc. If Tin Shui Wai was called the 'city of sadness', the South

Lantau area could be called the 'area of economical death'.

2. The TD is **discriminating their own citizens** by measuring by two standards in their transport policy. It is providing unfair competition to local transport companies by means of its involvement in the MTR and SLLG would like call up the Legco members to investigate this abuse of the power position of the government. This even though it claims that the capitalist principles reign. Far from that: rather a government monopoly.

The examples are clear:

- 1 bln HKD investment in the cable car without compensating the New Lantao Bus and New World First Ferry with profitable franchises.
 - establishment of MTR lines on Lantau without compensation of existing transportation lines
 - opening the Tung Chung Road to 30 or more coaches per day, without compensating NLB/NWFF and taxi services for reduction of services
- and last but not least (most recently):
- the construction of the Western MTR line with 'capital grants' (read 'subsidies') to lower the MTR fares for that line.
 - the self-denial of the TD that a capital grant is a subsidy and the escapist replies when citizens question the TD policy.

3. The TD is letting the local residents of South Lantau **pay double tax**. On one hand, if they are tax payers (at all), they pay. But then there is a second, **more hidden tax**, as a result of the cable car and the MTR, that local residents need to finance (or subsidize???) the local transport companies as well.

4. The result of the TD policy is unacceptable as well, because it is **discriminatory** to the local population. The rise of all transportation fees to the area makes it more socially and economically isolated than it already is. It also suggests that those with higher incomes should move to this area, but their way of living is not adjusted to life on South Lantau, with pushing around trolleys to move house and riding a bicycle in their office suits/skirts. As a result the area will see an even higher degree of vacancy of houses and flats, and a loss of the traditional Chinese way of living. There will be strong loss of the local couleur. The other development we can see, is that people move in – mainly Westerners – on a short-term employment contract who are not involved in the local community. They have not become integrated into the area and only focused on their own life.

5. The TD is **showing poor and incompetent leadership by not taking a pro-active and holistic approach** to the region. This is illustrated by simple examples such as the lack of a comprehensive review of the NWFF marketing & operation, the refusal to abolish the holiday

fare, etc.

Moreover, the TD is trying to hide or lie about research that has been commissioned a few years ago that recommended that it was unavoidable to change the TD ferry policy and that subsidies will have to be given to ferry operators. The study also compared with ferry services in European countries, Japan and the US, all subsidized. The SLLG has laid hand on one part of the research, but the information department denies the other (second) study, while the researchers were commissioned and gave the exact title to SLLG. It is time that the Chief Executive is interfering in this continuously blundering and inconsistent policy that has no rationale and is not transparent.

And, again, let's not forget the following factors that have made an impact on the current situation that we could call the area 'area of death':

- the move of housing estate residents in Mui Wo to Tung Chung
- the difficult accessibility to the villages in the Mui Wo Valley by lack of a road
- the closure of the secondary school in Mui Wo
- the threatening closure of the Bui O school
- the lack of enough tourist promotion of the area (for your information: Ngong Ping is not in South Lantau)
- the lack of businesses and offices (even though 30 minutes from Central)
- the lack of development projects (the Mui Wo facelift is even now after 4 years in the talk stage)
- the lack of autonomy of local residents to develop the area
- lack of political recognition of the problems of Lantau by the government: f.e. 1 district councilor covering an area as big as Hong Kong Island!!!!