

For Discussion

Legislative Council Panel on Transport

Improving Pedestrian Environment

PURPOSE

This paper reports on the progress of the improvement projects taken forward by the Transport Department in respect of the pedestrian environment in Causeway Bay and Mong Kok.

BACKGROUND

2. Improvements to the pedestrian environment in busy business districts and shopping and leisure areas with heavy pedestrian flow are one of the initiatives set out in the 2008/09 and 2009/10 Policy Addresses. To this end, Transport Department commissioned two consultancy studies in March 2009 to develop proposals and explore the feasibility of implementing new pedestrian walkway systems in Causeway Bay and Mong Kok.

3. In Causeway Bay, we are studying the provision of pedestrian subways linking the MTR station with Victoria Park as well as the busy streets in the heart of Causeway Bay and its junction with Happy Valley. In Mong Kok, we are investigating the proposal of pedestrian footbridges linking the two MTR stations (Mong Kok and Mong Kok East) to the vicinity of Tai Kok Tsui through central Mong Kok. These proposed pedestrian walkway systems aim at reducing pedestrian flow at ground level, thus minimising vehicle-pedestrian conflict and providing a better walking environment for pedestrians.

PROGRESS TO DATE

Causeway Bay

4. We have developed a number of conceptual alignment options for the proposed pedestrian subway in Causeway Bay after gauging local views through the two concerned Area Committees in May 2009 and considering various engineering parameters. A briefing on the preliminary

findings for the Wan Chai District Council and the two Area Committees was held in August 2009 to seek their initial feedback. In addition, we had meetings with the Mass Transit Railway Corporation Limited (MTRCL) and the developers / owners of some large shopping malls and major buildings in the area to discuss the potential connections of their developments to the subway system. After further study, we have drawn up our recommendations on the proposed subway system and presented the findings to the Development, Planning and Transport Committee of the Wan Chai District Council on 15 December 2009. The details are set out in paragraphs 6 to 12 below.

Mong Kok

5. We have developed various conceptual alignment options for the pedestrian footbridge in Mong Kok after collecting the views of the Area Committees concerned in May and June 2009. A briefing on the preliminary findings for the Yau Tsim Mong District Council, its Traffic and Transport Committee and members of the Area Committees concerned was held in August 2009 to seek their initial views. A meeting was also held in August 2009 with the developers with properties / properties under development within the area covered by the study to hear their views. Taking into account the views collected and after refining the proposals, we further consulted the Traffic and Transport Committee of the Yau Tsim Mong District Council on 5 November 2009. The details are set out in paragraphs 13 to 17 below.

PROPOSALS

Causeway Bay

The alignment

6. The Study has identified that pedestrian flow in Causeway Bay is heaviest between Victoria Park and Causeway Bay MTR Station as well as between Sogo and Times Square. To cope with the pedestrian demand, it is recommended that a 6m¹ wide pedestrian subway be constructed from Victoria Park via Great George Street, with connections to the MTR Station, and then crossing Yee Wo Street to Jardine's Crescent, Kai Chiu Road and Russell Street.

¹ Having regard to the usable underground area along the alignment and the limitations in construction, 6m is the maximum width that could be allowed for the subway.

7. From Kai Chiu Road, there are four alignment options leading to the vicinity of Happy Valley, via either (i) Lee Garden Road; (ii) Percival Street; (iii) Matheson Street; or (iv) Canal Road East. After comparing the pedestrian flow, attractiveness to pedestrians, construction / engineering constraints, traffic impact and possible public nuisance during construction under the four options, and taking into account views collected in the sounding out exercise outlined in paragraph 4 above, the alignment option via Matheson Street is recommended. However, as there are buildings along both sides of Matheson Street and also because of the narrowness of the road, the site can only accommodate a subway of a width of 3m, which is only half of the width of the rest of the proposed subway. We consider such a width inadequate as there could be danger arising from possible serious crowdedness and confusion. Therefore, we recommend that the construction of this section be held in abeyance pending redevelopment of the old buildings along the road to provide the necessary setback for construction of a 6m-wide subway.

8. The above recommended proposals are shown on the plan at **Annex A**.

9. As regards further extension of the subway system further south where the forecast pedestrian flow is relatively low, it is recommended that the need, alignment and extent of the extension be reviewed when there is a more definite programme for construction of the Matheson Street section.

Connectivity and facilities

10. The proposed pedestrian subway for the first stage construction is 6m wide in general. To enhance utilisation and boost commercial vibrancy, the subway will connect with the Causeway Bay MTR Station and possibly large shopping malls along the way as well. There will be five sets of street entrances / exits with escalators or staircases provided, namely at Victoria Park, Paterson Street near Hang Lung Centre, East Point Road / Yee Wo Street near Jardine's Crescent, Lee Garden Road and Russell Street. To serve the disabled, five lifts will also be provided at convenient locations along the route.

11. Other facilities of the subway system would include air conditioning for ventilation and surveillance system for security. Due to limited subway width, it is unlikely that underground shops can be accommodated, but it may be possible to provide vending machines that would not affect pedestrian movement at certain locations in the subway. Moreover, the provision of travelators is not recommended, taking into

account the limited width of the subway, the meandering subway alignment, and the need for provision of connections to developments along the route. To achieve cost effectiveness and in view of the anticipated low utilisation rate after midnight, the opening hours of the subway will possibly tie in with the operating hours of the MTR Station.

Views of the local community

12. In general, members of the Development, Planning and Transport Committee of the Wan Chai District Council supported the above recommendation and the staged-implementation of the proposed subway system with the first stage from Victoria Park to Russell Street. Members also agreed to the recommended alignment option to the vicinity of Happy Valley via Matheson Street, and that a 3m width for this subway section was too narrow. They requested Government to continue exploring the engineering feasibility of constructing a wider subway extension along Matheson Street and also to consider further extension to Happy Valley along Wong Nai Chung Road.

Mong Kok

The alignment

13. The Study has identified that a pedestrian link along Argyle Street, between the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) Depot and the Water Supplies Department (WSD) Office to be redeveloped and the existing footbridge at Tong Mi Road, can provide a direct connection and improve the walking environment between Mong Kok East MTR Station and the vicinity of Tai Kok Tsui through central Mong Kok. Different options have been worked out taking into account the views collected.

14. At the meeting on 5 November 2009, members of the Traffic and Transport Committee of the Yau Tsim Mong District Council generally supported the following key proposals :

(a) Short-term

The short-term scheme aims at providing a direct elevated link from Tong Mi Road footbridge in the vicinity of Tai Kok Tsui to the Mong Kok MTR Station with a connection to Langham Place. It will also include an alternative elevated access from Hak Po Street to the existing footbridge at Luen Wan Street, thereby relieving the congestion at the junction of Yim Po Fong Street with Argyle Street.

(b) Long-term

A long-term scheme will involve the building of an elevated walkway along Argyle Street between the redevelopment of the FEHD Depot and WSD Office and Langham Place.

15. Apart from the long-term proposal outlined in paragraph 14(b) above, we also consider it desirable to provide a pedestrian link between the existing Mong Kok Road footbridge and the proposed Argyle Street footbridge. For this, a possible passage through Argyle Centre and Trade and Industry Department Tower will be investigated. However, the practicality of pursuing such a link would depend on the possibility to delineate areas within private buildings for public use.

16. Moreover, we are exploring the possibility of constructing a passage within the redevelopment of the FEHD Depot and WSD Office. Our current thinking is that this proposed passage is to be provided by the proponent of the redevelopment to serve as a connection between Mong Kok East MTR station, the existing Mong Kok Road footbridge and the proposed footbridge along Argyle Street. We will also study the possibility of providing an extra elevated walkway along Tong Mi Road between Argyle Street and Mong Kok Road to cater for future development in the Tai Kok Tsui area. In the long term, the completed scheme will connect the two MTR stations in Mong Kok (Mong Kok and Mong Kok East) to the vicinity of Tai Kok Tsui, thus providing an improved walking environment in the area.

17. The above recommended proposals are shown on the plan at **Annex B.**

WAY FORWARD

18. After completion of the two Studies in the next few months, we will proceed with detailed technical feasibility studies in mid 2010. We will then seek the creation of necessary items under the Public Works Programme in accordance with the established procedures for implementation of the projects.

ADVICE SOUGHT

19. Members are invited to comment on the proposals presented in this paper.

**Transport and Housing Bureau
Transport Department
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