

Enclosure

Legislative Council
Panel on Economic Development
Views from the Hong Kong Institution of Engineers on the
Hong Kong International Airport Master Plan 2030

General

In response to the invitation from the captioned Panel, the Hong Kong Institution of Engineers (HKIE) is pleased to provide views below on the Hong Kong International Airport Master Plan 2030 (Master Plan).

Long Term and Sustainable Development

2. The HKIE welcomes the public initiatives for long-term and sustainable growth of Hong Kong, and supports infrastructure development plan that can bring the opportunity for growth and enhance the overall competitiveness of our city.

3. There is wide expectation from the public that the HK International Airport (HKIA) should continue its role as an international aviation hub operating with quality service and high efficiency. However, understanding the projected capacity saturation of the existing runways and considering the long term benefits such as revenue and employment opportunity that are forecast to be generated, the HKIE supports the proposed development of the HKIA. With reference to the Master Plan and the options, the HKIE supports Option 2 “Expanding into a Three-Runway System” of the Master Plan since it would allow for longer-term growth to the HKIA and to Hong Kong.

4. For any large-scale construction projects, human capital is an essential factor. The HKIE believes that the engineering profession in Hong Kong has the expertise and capabilities to facilitate effective and successful implementation of the project as proposed in the Master Plan.

Project Planning and Timing

5. It is well appreciated that an infrastructure of the scale as proposed in the Master Plan can take a long process to implement, starting from project definition, feasibility study, impact assessments and preliminary designs, project authorisation and construction.

6. Because of the long lead time for proper implementation of the project, the Master Plan must base on long-range forecast which by nature may have various uncertainties. To obtain wide support for the Master Plan from society and ensure effective and reasonable use of resources, the HKIE suggests the Airport Authority to provide interested members of the public with sufficient data to justify the project, including details for the impact assessment, space requirement, and technical feasibility etc., so as

to facilitate making the rational and informed decision of the public in supporting the Master Plan. This is particularly applicable to environmental concerns and changes to the Pearl River Delta (PRD) region air space for capturing the benefit of a third runway.

7. Given the trend of continuously rising passenger demand and cargo handling volume, and the rapidly developing capacity as well as the readiness of neighbouring airports to seize that part of demand that Hong Kong may in future not be able to meet, Hong Kong can hardly afford deferring the implementation process of the project. Meanwhile, the Airport Authority can refine its forecast models to support decisions at the project authorisation stage and capture the possible forecast of lost opportunity if no sufficient development would be implemented, and to plan and hedge against any risk of late action.

Air Space Constraints

8. It is noted that the Master Plan recognises the need for changes in the PRD region air space to realise the airport enhancement, and this applies to any options of the project. Meanwhile, negotiation among the aviation authorities of Mainland China, Hong Kong and Macau are continual and constructive to both the HKIA and to the region. The HKIE agrees to the initiative that the negotiation for the changes for the enhancement will have to take place in tandem with the project construction works proposed in the Master Plan.

9. The negotiation is a delicate process that depends in part on the tact and diligence of the Civil Aviation Department (CAD) of the HKSAR Government but also on the goodwill and disposition of the Mainland and Macau aviation authorities. It would be most suitable to rest the trust on the Administration and it is expected that more information should be communicated for public reference as far as practicable.

Environmental Impacts

11. The technical report on the Master Plan describes the scope of the reviews carried out on environmental impact and broad findings. Based on the preliminary information provided, the selected site for the third runway is considered acceptable. The HKIE is pleased to provide comments when further findings and recommendations of the environmental impact assessment (EIA) are available. Further details should be provided to address to the multiple concerns on the environmental impact. In light of this, it is suggested that the Airport Authority to further supplement sufficient information and background to assure that the benefits of the project would only be in the manageable and reasonable impact to the environment and ecology.

12. It is appreciated that this consultation process would serve to initiate dialogues among members of society and would in the end help ensure that the EIA process would better address the issues at heart and render general support for the EIA endorsement process.

13. Ultimately, whether the economical and social returns of the enhanced airport are worth the environmental impacts is for the people of Hong Kong to judge at the EIA endorsement and funding approval process. The Airport Authority should do its best to develop mutual understanding and respect in society to facilitate the processes of gaining acceptance and approval.

Cost

14. The supporting documents of the Master Plan show that the HKIA is bent on delivering the best for Hong Kong. While there may be room for optimising performance with cost, the HKIE could address this in the preliminary design stage of the enhancement proposal. However, it is expected that the Airport Authority would have to be well planned for securing funding for the project and communicate clearly to the public of the cost justification of the project.

Public Engagement

15. Leveraging the opportunity for the implementation of the project, the HKIE is of the view that state-of-the-art engineering technology should be explored and applied in this project, with a view to achieving optimal efficiency in carrying out the project and alleviating impacts that might bring to the environment. The HKIE would also be pleased to know that more knowledge on civil aviation could be disseminated to the public in light of the public discussion of the Master Plan. It is believed that with adequate and genuine data, as back up to all the reasons and benefits for the options in the Master Plan, it would facilitate public understanding and constructive discussion of the issues and achieving a wide consensus in society on the future development of the HKIA.