

**For Discussion**  
**28 January 2011**

## **Legislative Council Panel on Transport**

### **Cycling Safety and Use of Safety Equipment for Cyclists**

#### **Purpose**

This paper briefs members on Government's policies on promoting cycling safety and cyclists' use of safety equipment in Hong Kong.

#### **Transport Policy on Cycling**

2. Hong Kong is a densely populated city. General road traffic is heavy, and road space is limited. The Government's policy is to encourage the public to use the mass public transport system and other public transport services as the main transport mode. We do not encourage the use of bicycles as a transport mode in urban areas, due to road safety considerations. We recognize, however, that cycling is a healthy recreational activity that has gained increased popularity in recent years.

#### **Measures to Promote Cycling Safety**

3. We attach great importance to cycling safety and have been closely monitoring cycling activities by the public and the related accident statistics. The annual number of bicycle accidents which includes accidents that occur in all places including carriageways, cycle tracks, open space and playgrounds remained within the range from about 1 500 to 1 900 in the past decade. Most of the bicycle accidents involved slight injuries (about 80% – 90%) and the major factors causing accidents include losing control of bicycles during leisure cycling. During 2006 – 2010, the most common cyclist contributory factors are “lost control of vehicle”, “careless cycling” and “swerving / stopping suddenly in order to avoid collision or otherwise”, accounting for about 31%, 21% and 6% of cyclists involved in bicycle accidents respectively. The numbers and percentages of killed and seriously injured cyclist casualties are lower in the 2006 – 2010 five-year period as compared with the preceding five-year period of 2001 – 2005. Yearly breakdowns on the numbers of bicycle accidents by severity and the casualty figures are set out in **Annex A**.

4. There are laws and regulations controlling cycling activities to ensure cycling safety, such as the prohibition of reckless cycling and careless cycling. In addition, various measures have been taken, and will continue to be explored to enhance cycling safety, notably through the continuous efforts in improving design of cycle tracks and the stepping up of education and publicity to promote cycling safety.

### **Cycle Tracks**

5. Where circumstances permit, cycle tracks and ancillary facilities are provided in new towns and new development areas of the New Territories, so that the public may ride safely for leisure or recreational purposes and short-distance travel. To enhance safety of cycling on cycle tracks, the Transport Department (TD) and Highways Department (HyD) have reviewed the design of bollards, which are widely used on cycle tracks to cause cyclists to slow down at pedestrian crossings or near the end of cycle tracks. Currently, the bollards are made of steel. The two departments have implemented field trials on the use of plastic collapsible bollards with distinctive lane markings, which are safer to cyclists when they accidentally hit the bollards. The new bollard systems are well received by the cycling public and have been adopted as standard provision on the existing and new cycle tracks. Except for those at locations where the steel bollards are considered useful to cause cyclists to stop and dismount (such as at terminating points of cycle tracks and at approaches to carriageway), all of the existing steel bollards will be gradually replaced by plastic collapsible bollards. The steel bollards that are to be retained have been painted with reflective white colour such that they would be more conspicuous to cyclists especially during night time. Separately, the TD has developed a new design guideline for cycle tracks, cycling ramps and subways. The new guideline requires the provision of footway alongside new cycle tracks, more user-friendly geometrical configurations including more gentle gradients, smoother curvatures, and better signage and road marking systems on approaches to long steep ramps and pedestrian crossings.

### **Education and Publicity on Use of Safety Equipment**

6. We consider that education and publicity should be the most effective means to promote cycling safety, especially amongst young leisure cyclists and their parents. In recent years, the Road Safety Council, the Police, the TD and other relevant Departments have been joining hands to promote cycling safety. A main focus was on the promotion of use of safety equipment, such as protective helmets and pads which are designed to protect cyclists in the event of accidents. We have dedicated our publicity efforts to the following areas:

- (a) instilling road safety messages to schoolchildren through visit to schools and on-site publicity campaigns;
- (b) including safe cycling rules and practices in the Guidelines on Outdoor Activities for schools (which encourage use of helmets during cycling);
- (c) organizing safe cycling campaigns jointly with district councils;
- (d) producing publicity leaflets for leisure cyclists and delivery workers, with special focus on the lighting requirements during nighttime, and the advantages of wearing helmets and reflective clothings;
- (e) launching Announcements of Public Interest on ‘Safe Cycling’; and
- (f) advising motorists to pay attention to cyclists on the road.

A list of measures promoting cycling safety is provided in **Annex B**.

### **Overseas Practices**

7. We have examined overseas practices on use of safety equipment for cyclists. There are two major approaches, namely to mandate the wearing of helmets or to promote the voluntary use of safety equipment through education and publicity. Our study reveals that the majority of the overseas jurisdictions including many European and Asian countries such as the UK, France, Germany, the Netherlands, and Singapore do not require the mandatory wearing of helmets. A few jurisdictions have laws requiring all cyclists to wear helmets, while some others require only young cyclists to wear helmets. Mandatory use of cycle helmets is not a commonly adopted international practice. A summary of our findings is shown in **Annex C**.

8. For the few jurisdictions that have helmet laws, the impact of implementation seems to vary. An Australian study reveals that in Australia, New Zealand and Canada, helmet laws discourage cycling activities and produce no obvious reduction in the number of head injuries in cycling accidents. There are other surveys showing that the helmet laws resulted in a reduction in cycling activities, with some reduction in head injuries of cyclist casualties. Some studies also reveal that in most places, there is a substantial amount of non-compliance with helmet laws. For instance, the

Bicycle Helmet Safety Institute in the US carried out a comprehensive comparison of cycle helmet laws in the US and other jurisdictions. They commented that *“Helmet laws can be useful, but given the problems with enforcing them they will probably not work well in most places until more riders have accepted the need for wearing a helmet”*.

9. In the majority of the jurisdictions which do not have cycle helmet laws, their approach, similar to ours, is to encourage cyclists to wear helmets voluntarily through education and publicity campaigns. In the UK, the Government conducted a comprehensive study in 2004 on the effectiveness of helmets laws, and concluded that such a legal requirement might reduce cycling activities and there would be problems with public acceptability and enforcement.

10. We have also looked into overseas practices on the mandatory wearing of protective pads by cyclists. So far, we cannot find any overseas jurisdictions that have introduced such a requirement. We are also not aware of any commonly accepted standard on protective pads.

## **Conclusion**

11. Whether it should be a mandatory requirement for cyclists to wear cycle helmets in Hong Kong should be considered in the light of the effectiveness of such mandatory requirement in the context of the actual situation in Hong Kong. As set out above, the mainstream overseas practice is to promote use of cycling safety equipment through education and publicity. In Hong Kong, cycling is mainly a recreational and leisure activity and it is common for people to rent a bicycle to engage in leisurely outdoor activities. Also, many cyclists are children, and they mostly cycle within housing developments or recreational grounds (such as parks, playgrounds and waterfront promenades). The impact of any legislative control on the public and public acceptance, in particular regarding enforcement and prosecution, are important factors for consideration. Indeed, the above considerations are some of the main reasons why overseas jurisdictions decided not to implement mandatory measure. On balance, it would seem that in Hong Kong, a more practical and practicable approach is to promote cycling safety including use of safety equipment through education and publicity, coupled with the continual improvement of cycling facilities. That said, we will keep in view the situation and review the matter as appropriate. The Road Safety Council, TD and Police will continue and step up their efforts in promoting cycling safety through education and publicity campaigns.

## **Advice Sought**

12. Members are invited to note the contents of this paper.

**Transport and Housing Bureau  
January 2011**

**Table 1 – No. of Bicycle Accidents by Severity**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Fatal (a)</b>	<b>Serious (b)</b>	<b>Slight (c)</b>	<b>Total (a)+(b)+(c)</b>
2001	4	275	1 197	1 476
2002	16	298	1 214	1 528
2003	11	249	1 410	1 670
2004	10	260	1 644	1 914
2005	8	225	1 413	1 646
2006	9	216	1 334	1 559
2007	13	212	1 347	1 572
2008	11	207	1 372	1 590
2009	10	227	1 556	1 793
2010 <sup>@</sup>	11	233	1 649	1 893

**Table 2 – No. of Killed and Seriously Injured (KSI) Cyclist Casualties**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Killed (a)</b>	<b>Serious (b)</b>	<b>KSI (a)+(b)</b>
2001	4	244	248
2002	16	265	281
2003	10	210	220
2004	10	215	225
2005	8	194	202
2006	9	184	193
2007	12	195	207
2008	10	178	188
2009	10	202	212
2010 <sup>@</sup>	10	217	227

Note: <sup>@</sup> Provisional figures as at 5 January 2011.

**Measures Taken and Continue  
to be Explored to Enhance Cycling Safety**

1. The Transport Department (TD) and the Highways Department (HyD) have reviewed the design of cycle track and its ancillary facilities to enhance cycling safety on cycle tracks. TD has also developed a new design guideline for cycle tracks, cycling ramps and subways with more user-friendly geometrical configurations and better traffic management and signage systems.
  
2. In recent years, the Road Safety Council, the Police and the TD have been joining hands to promote cycling safety, focusing in particular on promoting the use of safety equipment (including cycle helmets, protective pads). The major educational activities and publicity events include:
  - (a) publishing and distributing “Cycling Safety” pamphlets, leaflets and Road Safety Bulletin on “Safety Tips for Cyclists”;
  - (b) launching territory-wide “Safe Cycling Campaign” during summer holidays and some long school holidays; and holding safety roadshows at cycling hotspots;
  - (c) delivering talks in schools and local communities on a regular basis;
  - (d) arranging the Road Safety Bus to visit kindergartens and primary, secondary, and special schools;
  - (e) giving talks to students and organisations visiting the four Road Safety Towns and providing practice sessions;
  - (f) producing Announcements for the Public Interest (APIs) on television and radio under the theme of “Cycling Safety Gear”;

- (g) mounting signages along cycle tracks to remind the public on the proper use of cycle tracks;
  - (h) posting messages on taxis to remind drivers to be aware of cyclists;
  - (i) organising safe cycling events jointly with District Councils;
  - (j) engaging youth organisations such as Junior Police Call, the Boy Scouts and the Boys' Brigade to promote awareness on safe cycling; and
  - (k) organising cycling courses jointly with the Hong Kong Cycling Association.
3. A consultancy study is commissioned to identify deficiencies of the existing cycle track networks, propose remedial measures for improvements with reference to overseas experience and local situation, and recommend an implementation programme for the proposed improvement works.
4. The TD is establishing an internet-based Cycling Information Centre (CIC) to provide a central point for the public to find information relating to cycling, including cycle track locations, cycle parking sites, major cycling projects, riding rules, safety tips and relevant laws governing cycling.



**Summary of Overseas Practices  
on Mandatory Wearing of Cycle Helmets**

	<b>Cycle Helmet Law for All Ages</b>	<b>Cycle Helmet Law for Minors</b>	<b>No Cycle Helmet Laws</b>
France			✓
Switzerland			✓
UK			✓
Denmark			✓
Netherlands			✓
Germany			✓
Singapore			✓
South Korea			✓
Mainland China			✓
Taiwan			✓
Canada	✓(4 Provinces)	✓(2 Provinces)	✓(4 Provinces)
US		✓(22 States)	✓(30 States)
Australia	✓		
New Zealand	✓		
Finland	✓		
Dubai	✓		
Iceland		✓	
Czech Republic		✓	
Sweden		✓	
Japan		✓	