

Economic benefits of a free flow of people, goods and services and the integration of our transport network with the mainland have been well established, among others by The 2022 Foundation (see: www.2022foundation.com). These studies left implementation with Government but highlighted critical issues including whether the bridge should have rail, and whether private cars should be discouraged. Many commented on the lack of rail when the designs for the Hong Kong Zhuhai Macau Bridge became clear. But to no avail.

Road Crossing	Average daily traffic 2008	Daily capacity
Lok Ma Chau	27,883	32,000
Man Kam To	5,823	10,000
Sha Tau Kok	2,402	2,500
Shenzhen Bay Port	5,899	60,000
HK Zhuhai Macau Bridge	0	84,000
TOTAL	42,007	188,500

The average daily cross border traffic has been steady around 42,000 crossings for last five years, but the composition has changed. The number of trucks has dropped from over 60% to under 50%, and the number of private cars has increased from 28% to over 40%. As no expansion of the port is planned and manufacturing is unlikely to return, the entire spare capacity of 146,000 crossings a day can only be filled by increasing the flow of private cars from the current 17,000. With our small fleet of 433,202 (2011) private cars, the majority of future crossings will be taken up by mainland vehicles.

In 2009 the Government decided that mandatory Park-and-Ride would discourage the use of the border crossings. Government suggested that drivers could use parking at rail stations voluntarily. On 16 February 2012 Eva Cheng, Secretary for Transport, reconfirmed that she did not reserve any land nor design Park-and-Ride facilities at border crossings. Nor has she made any progress towards a territorial road pricing system which could be used to incentivize visitors to keep their vehicles away from congested districts.

Take the Southern District as an example. The Aberdeen Tunnel is closed due to congestion an average of 10 times every work day. What will happen if the entire border crossing capacity decides to visit Ocean Park on Friday afternoon?

Transport Department

Monthly Intermittent Closure of Aberdeen Tunnel

2011	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
No.	341	201	373	315	431	364	289	422	546	340	500	462

運輸署

香港仔隧道每月間歇性封閉次數

2011	一月	二月	三月	四月	五月	六月	七月	八月	九月	十月	十一月	十二月
次數	341	201	373	315	431	364	289	422	546	340	500	462

Clearly, until Hong Kong has the capability to manage traffic flows, we can't allow more vehicles into the city. The planned trial scheme only tests the closed road permits, insurance, temporary license plates, temporary importation and quarantine of the vehicle. These are minor issues compared to what the trial scheme should be testing: Our ability to manage traffic with convenient park-and-ride facilities and effective road pricing to keep our city free from congestion and roadside air pollution.

Paul Zimmerman, Southern District Councilor, 29 February 2011