

**灣仔區議員黎大偉辦事處**

Office of David Lai, Wan Chai District Councillor

灣仔軒尼詩道 226 號寶華商業中心 25 樓 B 室

Room B 25/F Po Wah Commercial Center 226 Hennessy Road Wan Chai Hong Kong

電話 TEL : 6893 0346 傳真 FAX : 3011 9576

電郵 EMAIL : [davidlai.dc@gmail.com](mailto:davidlai.dc@gmail.com)

2013/3/27

## **Redistribute the traffic of the 3 Cross Harbour Tunnels**

In order to reduce traffic congestion along the northern corridor of Hong Kong Island, namely Gloucester Road in Wan Chai, Harcourt Road in Queensway, and Connaught Road in the Central area, we must redistribute the traffic flow of the vehicles using the three different cross harbour tunnels. To be successful, we must use a combination of solutions. First by equalizing the charges of the three cross harbour tunnels. Second by using electronic road toll to discourage vehicles entering heavy traffic areas, and thirdly start a 'Park N Ride' feature to enable people living away from public transportation to park their vehicle and ride on the public system.

### **Equalizing charges of the 3 Cross Harbour Tunnels**

The different toll charges for the three cross harbour tunnels, namely the Cross Harbour Tunnel, the Eastern Cross Harbour Tunnel and the Western Cross Harbour Tunnel, is a problem. The Cross Harbour Tunnel, now government owned, has been charging the lowest toll for easiest connection to almost everywhere, attracting vehicles from everywhere towards Causeway Bay, where the tunnel starts on the Hong Kong side, thus creating serious traffic congestion on Gloucester Road in Wan Chai and back up to Connaught Road in Central. Although consultation on increasing the fare of the Tunnel and decreasing Eastern Tunnel is in the works, nevertheless the lack of participation of the Western Tunnel, will not make the traffic flow work systematically, and if and when minor adjustment are in effect in another year's time without a complementary method such as an electronic road toll system, the simple adjustments between the toll of Cross Harbour Tunnel and the East Cross Harbour Tunnel will only resolve some traffic issue between Causeway Bay and the Eastern Corridor.

### **Electronic Road Toll**

Charging a road toll in congested areas of Hong Kong is not new. The government has left it as a discussion topic for almost 30 years either because of objections by the transportation industries or the government's indecisiveness to implement the plan, stopping it when there is any objection.

An Electronic Road Toll System, if implemented correctly, should ease traffic in heavily congested areas like Central, Wan Chai and Mong Kok. In the past, the District Councils of the affected areas opposed the toll for reason that the toll itself is a tax for residents living in the affected areas,

making the residents paying a 'location tax' as they inevitably need to drive through the main road or toll area in their home area to go anywhere. Under a single-toll system, unless vehicles registered in the affected areas are exempted, the residents in the affected areas will be bearing the extra and unfair burden.

A complete Electronic Road Toll Plan should discourage driving into the congested areas unnecessarily. Plenty of logistics vehicles going from Sheng Wan to West Kowloon, or going into China; instead of using the shorter and more direct route, many truck drivers drive through Central, Wan Chai and Causeway Bay on Gloucester Road to use the Cross Harbour Tunnel which cost less from the drivers' pockets but economically actually cost more in petrol used, time lost in congestion while polluting more from the exhaust of the vehicles.

### **'Park N Ride' to complement MTR**

With the government traffic policy of using rail as the main focus, the MTR's ridership should be part of the equation. The Wan Chai District Council has been pressing for a 'park and ride' system with the MTR for the new Hong Kong routes, providing residents not living close to public transportation able to park at the station and ride with a tied-in fare for parking. This will eliminate a lot of vehicles on the street, but MTR has not been receptive to the system which has been successfully proven in many international cities such as Washington DC, London and Singapore.

### **Conclusion**

Our government should take a lead and look at the whole picture and integrate both the public transportation routes with a 'Park and Ride' system to reduce the use of private vehicles. A complete Electronic Road Toll Plan should create disincentive system for driving into congested areas while providing an incentive to use alternative roads, environmentally friendly vehicles, and complimentary transportation modes.

David Lai

Vice Chairman, Planning, Environment and Traffic Committee

Wan Chai District Council