

**For discussion
On 16 November 2012**

**Legislative Council Panel on Transport
“Universal Accessibility” Programme**

PURPOSE

This paper reports on the new policy on “universal accessibility” (UA) announced by the Administration in August this year and its latest progress. The new policy aims at expanding the scope of the Administration’s programme to retrofit barrier-free access facilities to existing public walkways (i.e. footbridges, elevated walkways and subways) so as to facilitate access of the public. To support the new policy, we propose to seek approval from the Finance Committee (FC) to create a new block allocation **Subhead 6101TX** under **Head 706 – “Highways”**, together with an allocation of \$2.449 million and \$187.272 million in 2012-13 and 2013-14 respectively, to facilitate the implementation of the works projects under the new policy.

BACKGROUND

2. The Administration has been installing barrier-free access facilities at public walkways (for instance, installing ramps in footbridges constructed in earlier years that only have staircases) for years. During the visits of the Chief Executive and his political team to the 18 districts earlier on, many elderly asked the Administration to install more barrier-free access facilities. With the aging population, we have to speed up our progress, as well as to expand the existing programme to retrofit barrier-free access facilities at public walkways, to bring further convenience to the public.

3. The Administration announced in August 2012 that the policy in operation would be enhanced, and a new lift installation programme would be launched to respond to public requests, thereby creating a “universally accessible” environment in the community to improve the accessibility of the public walkways –

- (i) from now on, when considering about retrofitting

barrier-free access facilities to existing or newly constructed public walkways, the Administration would treat lifts and ramps equally (unless the site conditions dictate one form over another). This is a change from the current practice which gives priority to ramps; and

- (ii) as long as site conditions permit, we will still consider installing lifts at walkways where there is already a standard ramp installed. After a lift has been installed, we will evaluate whether to keep the ramp or demolish it for more spacious pavement or to make way for roadside greening.

PROGRESS

4. When the Administration announced the new policy in August this year, a list of more than 230 proposals was publicised. Such list was compiled based on the original programme for barrier-free access facilities retrofitting works and public suggestions from various districts. Out of the some 230 projects, constructions works of 10 have already been commenced. For the remaining 160 plus projects, technical feasibility studies and funding application are pending before commencement of construction works. The remaining some 60 projects are preliminary suggestions raised by the District Councils and members of various districts in the past. We were at the same time inviting members of the public to propose lift locations where they consider necessary on or before 31 October 2012.

5. The new policy has received overwhelming response from the public. We have received so far over 2 600 proposals within the ambit of the new policy. After sorting and consolidation, we found that these proposals contain about 250 public walkways involved (some proposals may fall within the some 160 items, mentioned in paragraph 4 above). The **Enclosure** shows the distribution of the proposals according to the 18 districts in Hong Kong in preliminary findings.

6. We have also received about 2 750 proposals falling outside the ambit of the new policy, involving about 260 public walkways or locations, including those involving the jurisdiction of the Mass Transit Railway Corporation Limited, the Link Real Estate Investment Trust and private developments, as well as proposals of hillside escalator/lift systems. We will, after consolidating the relevant information, refer to the relevant organisations for following up. Regarding the proposals of hillside

escalator/lift systems, we will follow the existing public works system to consider and handle.

7. We are currently analyzing the information provided by the public. After consolidating the lists of lift retrofitting works on existing walkways and upon obtaining funding approval from the FC, we will immediately start consulting the relevant District Councils to determine the priorities for the projects. Once a project is supported by the district and confirmed to be technically feasible, we will commence the design and construction works as soon as possible according to its priority.

DEDICATED FUNDING SOURCE

8. We wish to implement the new policy as soon as possible to start the works projects in various districts in Hong Kong. The proposed projects are located in various districts in Hong Kong and a large number of retrofitting works have to be carried out every year. As a result, we have to establish a mechanism to ensure efficient and flexible works arrangement and resource allocation. The works departments will then be able to commence and complete the works as soon as possible according to the actual circumstances and progress of works, thus benefitting the public.

Circumstances of works and funding utilisation

9. Retrofitting works for barrier-free access facilities are located in various districts in Hong Kong, with most of them carried out on public walkways in densely populated urban areas. As retrofitting works may impact underground facilities, residents or traffic nearby, uncertainties are anticipated. Same as other public works, each item has to go through different stages including consultation with stakeholders, technical feasibility study, design, ground investigation, advance works, temporary traffic arrangement and construction works etc. If problems arise at any of the stages mentioned above, for example receiving objections during the consultation period, other stages of the works and the subsequent timetable will be duly revised.

10. The Administration has been undertaking programmes to retrofit ramps and lifts for existing public walkways without standard

barrier-free access facilities. As an individual item of retrofitting works is of a smaller scale, according to the current funding application arrangement for barrier-free access facilities, the Administration will apply to the FC for block allocation for a certain number of designated works items en bloc at one time. Under such arrangement, even if a works item is ready and there is public request for early implementation, an en bloc application for funding will only be made until other items in the next round of funding application are ready.

11. Since a large number of works items will be implemented under the new policy, the swift launching and implementation of which will depend directly on the effectiveness of the works fund allocation and deployment. The current funding arrangement does not allow flexibility in the implementation of retrofitting items to deal with the actual situation and meet public demand.

Flexible implementation of lift retrofitting works projects

12. Currently, the FC has authorised the Administration to seek funding for the Capital Works Reserve Fund block allocations on a lump-sum basis once every year. Within the lump-sum approved for each block allocation, the FC has further delegated to the Administration the power to approve expenditure on individual projects subject to the respective financial ceiling.

13. In order to flexibly implement lift retrofitting works projects so as to implement and complete such works as soon as possible, following the practice mentioned in paragraph 11 above, we propose the creation of a new block allocation Subhead 6101TX – “Universal Accessibility Programme” under Head 706 – “Highways” in 2012-13, designated for the retrofitting works under the new policy. As such, we will follow the established practice of respective block allocation and apply to the FC every year a block allocation on a lump-sum basis according to the forecast on the nature, scale and number of the retrofitting works, so as to finance the Category D works to be carried out in the coming year.

14. Under such funding arrangement, greater flexibility on works implementation will be allowed for the works departments. Upon

approval of the funding, a lift retrofitting project will be able to proceed to the next stage, as long as with public support solicited and the preparatory works completed. Should any problem leads to the suspension or even shelving of an item, another lift retrofitting project can take its place immediately depending on the actual circumstances without having to wait for the next round of funding application.

Scope of application for the dedicated fund

15. We will continue with the proposed items under the original programme to retrofit facilities such as lifts for public walkways without standard barrier-free access facilities. We obtained approval from the FC in July 2011 for upgrading ten barrier-free access facilities retrofitting works and the design of barrier-free access facilities at about 180 existing public walkways under the current programme to Category A so as to proceed with respective construction and design works. Upon confirmation of technical feasibility by the consultants and public consultation for the abovementioned 180 works items, the construction cost and other related costs of the works items concerned will be funded by this new block allocation. All the costs of works involved in the expanded scope of new policy mentioned in paragraph 3 above will also be funded by the new block allocation.

16. All in all, the new block allocation Subhead will cover the costs incurred in the planning, design and construction stages of lift retrofitting projects for public walkways under the UA programme, including consultants' fees and charges for project management, feasibility studies, investigation, design and contract procurement and construction supervision, and the construction cost. The expenditure of each Category D item however, is not allowed to exceed the \$75 million ceiling.

Funding Ceiling for individual item

17. We propose to introduce a funding ceiling for each individual item of Category D works under the new block allocation Subhead 6101TX. The ceiling should be adequate to accommodate the cost of the items in the UA programme. In general, a project requiring the retrofitting of one to

two lifts will require \$20 to \$40 million. As certain more complex items may require the installation of a number of lifts with possible demolition of the associated ramps, we propose a ceiling of \$75 million be set for each individual Category D item so as to complete these items as quickly as possible.

Funding application

18. For 2012-13, we propose an allocation of \$2.449 million for the new dedicated capital works block vote Subhead 6101TX. The fund will be used for the barrier-free access retrofitting works of the year, including the construction costs of 24 projects. For 2013-14, we propose an allocation of \$187.272 million from the Subhead. The fund will be used for the barrier-free access facilities retrofitting works of the year, including the feasibility study and design for about 60 barrier-free access facilities retrofitting projects, plus the construction costs of about 60 barrier-free access facilities. We estimate the provision for the Subhead will gradually increase to over \$1,000 million coming few years, starting 2014-15.

ADVICE SOUGHT

19. The new UA policy, coupled with the dedicated funding, allows works departments to flexibly deploy resources to carry out works. This will enable us to implement the UA programme in various districts within Hong Kong, facilitating members of the public to get around.

20. Members are invited to comment on our proposal to create a new block vote. Subject to Members' support, we will submit the proposal to the Public Works Subcommittee for discussion on 19 December this year, and apply for funding approval from the FC on 11 January 2013, with a view to commencing the projects as early as possible.

“人人暢道通行”新政策計劃下
公眾建議加裝升降機的現有公共行人通道
Proposed Installation of Lifts at Existing Public Walkways
under the “Universal Accessibility” Programme

地區 District	總數 Total
香港 Hong Kong	
中西區 Central & Western	16
東區 Eastern	18
南區 Southern	10
灣仔區 Wanchai	13
小計 Sub-total	57
九龍 Kowloon	
九龍城 Kowloon City	12
觀塘區 Kwun Tong	14
深水埗區 Sham Shui Po	6
黃大仙區 Wong Tai Sin	11
油尖旺區 Yau Tsim Mong	8
小計 Sub-total	51
新界及離島 NT & Islands	
離島區 Islands	1
葵青區 Kwai Tsing	17
北區 North	20
西貢區 Sai Kung	4
沙田區 Sha Tin	23
大埔區 Tai Po	8
屯門區 Tuen Mun	33
荃灣區 Tusen Wan	21
元朗區 Yuen Long	19
小計 Sub-total	146
總數 TOTAL	254