

Index Page

**Replies to supplementary questions raised by Finance Committee Members in examining the
Estimates of Expenditure 2014-15**

Director of Bureau : Secretary for Transport and Housing

Session No. : 15

File Name : THB(T)-2S-e1.docx

| Reply Serial No. | Question Serial No. | Name of Member | Head | Programme |
|----------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------|--|
| S-THB(T)01 | S0178 | TSE Wai-chuen, Tony | 60 | (2) District and Maintenance Works |
| S-THB(T)02 | S0179 | MOK, Charles Peter | 158 | (3) Air and Sea Communications and Logistics Development |
| S-THB(T)03 | S0177 | TSE Wai-chuen, Tony | 158 | (2) Land and Waterborne Transport |
| S-THB(T)04 | S0126 | LEUNG Mei-fun, Priscilla | 186 | (1) Planning and Development |
| S-THB(T)05 | S0127 | LEUNG Mei-fun, Priscilla | 186 | (1) Planning and Development |
| S-THB(T)06 | S0128 | LEUNG Mei-fun, Priscilla | 186 | (1) Planning and Development |
| S-THB(T)07 | S0180 | MOK, Charles Peter | 186 | (4) Management of Transport Services |

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

S-THB(T)01

(Question Serial No. S0178)

Head: (60) Highways Department
Subhead (No. & title): (-) Not Specified
Programme: (2) District and Maintenance Works
Controlling Officer: Director of Highways (K K LAU)
Director of Bureau: Secretary for Transport and Housing

Question (Member Question No.):

Following up on the questions raised in Reply Serial No. THB(T)56:

- (1) The Highways Department (HyD) states that regular inspections of all public roads will be conducted, including safety inspections on expressways by vehicle once every day and safety inspections on trunk roads once every seven days. What are the details of the mechanism for these road inspections and repairs? Regarding the two types of regular inspections conducted in 2013-14, how many cases of road repairs were recorded? What was the average time required for the repairs for each case? What were the subsequent follow-up actions?
- (2) As regards the customer satisfaction surveys conducted biannually, what are the survey content, purpose, target respondents, sampling method and follow-up mechanism? Has any comprehensive review been conducted on the content, effectiveness etc. of the survey? If yes, what are the results, related recommendations and counter measures? If no, what are the reasons and will there be any review in the future?
- (3) On staffing, what are the details on the posts involved and the implementation schedule regarding the eight time-limited posts to be deleted in 2014-15? Are the six new posts to be created on the civil service establishment or non-civil service contract terms? Will the Bureau restart relevant recruitment exercise, undertake internal deployment or allow non-civil service contract posts to be converted to civil service posts? Of the five professional posts concerned, what are the professions involved?

Asked by: Hon. TSE Wai-chuen, Tony

Reply:

- (1) Safety inspections of high speed roads and other trunk roads are conducted once every day and once every seven days respectively. The inspection aims to identify all defects that are likely to create danger or serious inconvenience to road users. Such defects, when identified, would be made safe or repaired as soon as reasonably practicable and usually within 24 hours. For other defects identified, the HyD will plan and carry out

medium- and long-term maintenance works as necessary, having regard to the need to minimise any impact to the public. As the number of minor maintenance items is numerous, the figures are not readily available.

- (2) The HyD engages independent consultants to carry out bi-annual customer satisfaction surveys to assess the satisfaction level of the general public on the service performance of the HyD, examine the acceptability of standards laid down in the HyD's performance pledges and collect suggestions on areas for improvement. The outcome of the surveys serves as useful reference for the HyD to consider appropriate follow-up actions and to review its performance pledges so as to enhance its overall performance and public acceptability.

The surveys include telephone interviews with about 800 members of randomly selected households in Hong Kong and meetings with about six focus groups (each with six to eight respondents). The results of the past five customer satisfaction surveys indicated that the public are generally very/ quite satisfied.

As part of the survey exercise, the consultant engaged by the HyD for the survey exercise is also required to carry out a methodology review to evaluate the effectiveness of the current mode of customer satisfaction survey and to suggest improvement for future survey methods. At the last survey exercise, the consultant has advised that the current mode of survey, which consists of both telephone interviews and focus group meetings, remains to be appropriate and cost-effective to collect public opinions. The HyD will continue to take into consideration views and recommendations put forward by the consultant and adopt as appropriate in preparing for the next survey.

- (3) The eight time-limited posts were deleted on 1 April 2014. The deleted posts include two Assistant Inspectors of Works, two Works Supervisors I and four Works Supervisors II. All the six new posts are civil service posts, which have been/will be filled by civil servants through internal deployment and new civil service recruits through open recruitment. The five professional posts are in the Engineer Grade.

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

S-THB(T)02

(Question Serial No. S0179)

Head: (158) Government Secretariat:
Transport and Housing Bureau
(Transport Branch)

Subhead (No. & title): (-) Not Specified

Programme: (3) Air and Sea Communications and Logistics
Development

Controlling Officer: Permanent Secretary for Transport and Housing (Transport)
(Joseph YT LAI)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Transport and Housing

Question (Member Question No. -)

Regarding the reply numbered THB(T)134, is the “inter-modal system” included in the Government’s plan for promoting e-logistics? When will the related study be completed? What are the timetable and details for the implementation of e-logistics?

As for the “SMe-Plug Jumpstart Programme” (Jumpstart Programme), it is proposed that the Administration should use the matching fund of \$3 million to develop and produce open-source software for free download instead so as to benefit more small and medium enterprises (SMEs). If this proposal is not accepted, what are the reasons for that?

Asked by: Hon. MOK, Charles Peter

Reply:

An inter-modal system refers to the use of different modes of transport to enhance efficiency in carriage of passengers and cargoes. The inter-modal system in Hong Kong comprises a combination of air, sea and land links to offer different transport choices to users. The movement of freight and their related information across different transport modes is supported by electronic services platforms set up and operated by the private sector to meet the commercial needs of business to business information flow.

With the support of the Hong Kong Logistics Development Council, the Government has been providing sponsorship for the implementation of industry initiatives to enhance the use of information technology by the logistics sector. Examples include the development of the On-board Trucker Information System (OBTIS), conduct of the “Feasibility Study on Cross Border Supply Chain Visibility across Guangdong, Hong Kong and Asia” (the SCV Study) and the proposed organisation of the Jumpstart Programme.

OBTIS is an information and communication technology platform which aims at enhancing efficiency in fleet management and connectivity between truckers and different stakeholders along the supply chain such as the container terminals. OBTIS is now being operated on a commercial basis. As for the SCV study, it aims to explore the feasibility and effectiveness of establishing a platform for tracing real-time movement of goods across different places. The SCV study is now in its final stage and is expected to be completed in the next few months.

In respect of the Jumpstart Programme which is planned to be launched in the fourth quarter of 2014, it aims to encourage the adoption of e-freight practices by logistics SMEs through promoting the use of the SMe-Plug. The SMe-Plug is an "Inter-operable data connector" that is being developed by the Hong Kong R&D Centre for Logistics and Supply Chain Management Enabling Technologies (LSCM) to reduce the costs and efforts required of logistics SMEs in making connections with e-services platforms. Development of the SMe-plug is expected to be completed in the fourth quarter of 2014. As advised by LSCM, it is not possible to develop an open-source connector software module in the SMe-plug project. This is because when connecting to an e-services platform, the connection data and software have to be programmed to fit the processes of the platform concerned, which are proprietary in nature.

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

S-THB(T)03

(Question Serial No. S0177)

Head: (158) Government Secretariat:
Transport and Housing Bureau
(Transport Branch)

Subhead (No. & title): (-) Not Specified

Programme: (2) Land and Waterborne Transport

Controlling Officer: Permanent Secretary for Transport and Housing (Transport)
(Joseph YT LAI)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Transport and Housing

Question (Member Question No. -):

Regarding the reply numbered THB(T)124, what are the findings and recommendations of the feasibility study commissioned by the Highways Department (HyD) in 2011 on a footbridge system along the Yuen Long Town Nullah under the Yuen Long Town Pedestrian Environment Improvement Scheme? Have any relevant professional bodies been consulted on the findings and recommendations of the study? If yes, what are the results and has the HyD adopted the views of the professional bodies? If yes, what are the specific details? If no, what are the reasons for that? If no professional bodies have been consulted, what are the reasons for that and will professional views be sought in future? As the HyD is planning to engage a consultant to carry out further investigation, what is the specific timetable for that?

Asked by: Hon. TSE Wai-chuen, Tony

Reply:

The HyD commissioned a study in September 2011 to investigate the feasibility of a footbridge system along the Yuen Long Town Nullah, among other major improvement schemes, with a view to resolving the congestion problem in Yuen Long town centre and to providing a better and safer walking environment for the local community. The result of the study indicated that the proposed footbridge system would be effective in improving the congested pedestrian environment at critical crossings and footpaths along Castle Peak Road (Yuen Long Section).

From March to May 2013, the HyD conducted a public engagement exercise to collect views on the proposed major improvement schemes, including a conceptual design of the footbridge system. During the public engagement exercise, various stakeholders including the professional institutes were invited to offer views and to attend a public forum in April 2013. The proposed major improvement schemes including the conceptual design of the proposed footbridge system were generally supported by the Yuen Long District Council

(YLDC) and the locals.

In late May 2013, some professional institutes expressed concerns on the design of the proposed footbridge system. The HyD has since been working closely with counterparts from these professional institutes through a Core Working Group (CWG) set up by the institutes. In December 2013, the CWG came up with an alternative scheme which involved widening of the footway alongside the Yuen Long Town Nullah, together with a stand-alone footbridge across Castle Peak Road (Yuen Long Section). The consultant of the HyD has subsequently conducted a pedestrian flow analysis to assess the capability of this alternative scheme in diverting pedestrian flow away from the problematic areas. The result, which was presented to the CWG at a meeting in January 2014, indicated that the alternative scheme could only bring very limited improvement to the critical crossings and footpaths. With this finding, the Transport Department (TD) and the consultant of the HyD advised that they did not consider the alternative scheme to be effective in relieving congestion at existing footpaths and pedestrian crossings in Yuen Long town centre, and in removing the potential safety problem due to the possible overspilling of pedestrians onto the carriageway. As such, it would be difficult for us to take forward the alternative scheme.

The Transport and Housing Bureau, together with the HyD and the TD, will soon be meeting with the professional institutes to see if there is any way to modify the alternative scheme such that the functional requirements of relieving the heavy pedestrian traffic situation could be satisfied.

Meanwhile, the YLDC has been urging for the early implementation of the proposed footbridge system. Hence, the HyD is planning to engage a consultant to carry out further investigation and detailed design for the footbridge system in the third quarter of 2014.

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

S-THB(T)04

(Question Serial No. S0126)

Head: (186) Transport Department
Subhead (No. & title): (-) Not Specified
Programme: (1) Planning and Development
Controlling Officer: Commissioner for Transport (Mrs. Ingrid YEUNG)
Director of Bureau: Secretary for Transport and Housing

Question (Member Question No.):

Owing to the lower than anticipated patronage, the New World First Ferry Services Limited plans to increase the fares of the ferry service operated at Hung Hom Pier resulting in pressure on the local residents relying on the service. In this regard, we wish to raise the following question:

Will the Government help stimulate the patronage of ferry service?

Asked by: Hon. LEUNG Mei-fun, Priscilla

Reply:

Inner harbour ferry services play a supplementary role in the public transport system. The Government has all along helped boost the patronage of these ferry services through planning and provision of public transport services to and from ferry piers; pedestrian walkway and footbridges to facilitate convenient access to ferry piers from adjacent areas; and public transport interchanges / bus stops / green minibus stops / taxi stands outside ferry piers as far as practicable to facilitate convenient interchange by ferry passengers. All major inner harbour ferry services are also covered under the Public Transport Fare Concession Scheme for the Elderly and Eligible Persons with Disabilities.

The Government has also been providing various helping measures to reduce the operating costs of these ferry services, which include taking over the responsibility of pier maintenance, waiving fuel duty and reimbursing pier rentals and exempting vessel licence fees for ferry services under the Elderly Concessionary Fares Scheme. In addition, ferry service operators are allowed to sublet shops at the piers to increase non-fare box revenue to cross-subsidise their operations.

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

S-THB(T)05

(Question Serial No. S0127)

Head: (186) Transport Department
Subhead (No. & title): (-) Not Specified
Programme: (1) Planning and Development
Controlling Officer: Commissioner for Transport (Mrs. Ingrid YEUNG)
Director of Bureau: Secretary for Transport and Housing

Question (Member Question No.):

Owing to the lower than anticipated patronage, the New World First Ferry Services Limited plans to increase the fares of the ferry service operated at the Hung Hom Pier, resulting in pressure on local residents who rely on the service. In this regard, we wish to raise the following question:

Since residents of outlying islands enjoy subsidy when using ferry services, will the Government consider providing such subsidy to urban residents relying on ferry services as well?

Asked by: Hon. LEUNG Mei-fun, Priscilla

Reply:

It is the Government's established policy that public transport services should be run by the private sector in accordance with prudent commercial principles to achieve operating efficiency. As there has long been a lack of growth in patronage and given the escalating operating costs of the ferry services, the Government has been implementing various helping measures to reduce the operating costs of the ferry services, which include taking over the responsibility of pier maintenance, waiving fuel duty and reimbursing pier rentals and exempting vessel licence fees for ferry services under the Elderly Concessionary Fares Scheme. In addition, ferry service operators are allowed to sublet shops at the piers to increase non-fare box revenue to cross-subsidise their operations. These measures are applicable to all ferry services.

In 2010, the Government applied for, and the Finance Committee (FC) of the Legislative Council (LegCo) approved funding of \$114.963 million to provide Special Helping

Measures (SHMs)¹ for the operators of the six major outlying island ferry routes² during the three-year licence period from mid-2011 to mid-2014. After the mid-term review on the SHMs conducted in early 2013, the FC of the LegCo approved funding of \$190.359 million in July 2013 to maintain these SHMs during the next three-year licence period from mid-2014 to mid-2017³.

The reason for the provision of the SHMs to the above six major routes is that ferry is basically the only external mode of transport for these outlying islands⁴. Its service is indispensable. Nor is there any suitable alternative transport service. The objective of the SHMs is to ensure the continuation of such essential ferry services through enhancing their long-term financial viability and maintaining fare stability.

As for the inner harbour ferry services (e.g. the ferry service operating at the Hung Hom Ferry Pier), alternative transport services such as cross-harbour MTR and franchised bus services are readily available. The Government has no plan to extend the SHMs to these services.

¹ The package of SHMs includes: (a) reimbursing the operators of the concerned ferry services for the vessel survey fee and private mooring charge; (b) reimbursing the pier electricity, water and cleansing charges; (c) reimbursing the balance of revenue foregone due to provision of elderly fare concessions after netting off the amount of pier rental reimbursement and vessel licence fee exemption under the established arrangement; (d) reimbursing the vessel maintenance cost; (e) reimbursing the revenue foregone due to provision of child fare concessions; (f) reimbursing the vessel insurance cost; and (g) launching “Visiting Scheme to Outlying Islands”.

² The six major outlying island ferry services are “Central – Cheung Chau”; “Inter-islands” serving Peng Chau, Mui Wo, Chi Ma Wan and Cheung Chau; “Central – Mui Wo”; “Central – Peng Chau”; “Central – Yung Shue Wan”; and “Central – Sok Kwu Wan”.

³ The licence periods of the six major outlying island ferry routes have been extended for three years. The extended licence period of “Central – Mui Wo” route is valid from 1 April 2014 to 31 March 2017. The extended licence periods of the remaining five routes will be valid from 1 July 2014 to 30 June 2017.

⁴ Only the Lantau Island is also linked by a road network, but its cross-district land-based public transport services are limited.

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

S-THB(T)06

(Question Serial No. S0128)

Head: (186) Transport Department
Subhead (No. & title): (-) Not Specified
Programme: (1) Planning and Development
Controlling Officer: Commissioner for Transport (Mrs. Ingrid YEUNG)
Director of Bureau: Secretary for Transport and Housing

Question (Member Question No.):

Ferry services are parts of the harbour and the collective memory of Hong Kong people. More importantly, developing ferry services will help relieve the land transport and enhance environmental protection. A comprehensive review is therefore expected to be carried out on the ferry policy. Will the Administration review the ferry policy again?

Asked by: Hon. LEUNG Mei-fun, Priscilla

Reply:

Upon the completion of the new railway development strategy beyond 2020 later this year, and having regard to the planning and progress of implementation of the major transport infrastructure, we will proceed to prepare for the conduct of a review of the Public Transport Strategy, in order to update our strategy for public transport services to meet the travelling needs of the community.

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

S-THB(T)07

(Question Serial No. S0180)

Head: (186) Transport Department
Subhead (No. & title): (-) Not Specified
Programme: (4) Management of Transport Services
Controlling Officer: Commissioner for Transport (Mrs. Ingrid YEUNG)
Director of Bureau: Secretary for Transport and Housing

Question (Member Question No.):

Will the Government follow overseas experience by releasing real-time utilisation of car parks via government websites and the existing mobile applications of the Transport Department (TD) for the convenience of the public and help boost the utilisation of car parks? To better utilise limited land resources, it is also suggested to convert some car parks with low utilisation rates into multi-purpose venues for public use. If there are such plans and other related measures, what are the details? If no, what are the reasons?

Asked by: Hon MOK, Charles Peter

Reply:

As the current utilisation of Government multi-storey car parks is not full even during the peak period of the day, motorists intending to use these car parks are usually able to find parking spaces without any difficulty. We will continue to closely monitor the utilisation of Government car parks, and will examine the feasibility of releasing information about these car parks via appropriate channels for the convenience of the public.

To better utilise land resources, the Government conducts land use reviews of different types of land from time to time, including the Government, Institution or Community sites currently used for multi-storey car parks. If necessary, the Government may consider converting them into other suitable uses.