

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(1)669/13-14
(These minutes have been seen
by the Administration)

Ref : CB1/PL/TP/1

Panel on Transport

Minutes of meeting held on
Friday, 15 November 2013, at 10:45 am
in Conference Room 3 of the Legislative Council Complex

Members present : Hon CHAN Kam-lam, SBS, JP (Chairman)
Hon Gary FAN Kwok-wai (Deputy Chairman)
Hon LEE Cheuk-yan
Hon James TO Kun-sun
Hon WONG Kwok-hing, BBS, MH
Hon Ronny TONG Ka-wah, SC
Hon CHAN Hak-kan, JP
Hon Mrs Regina IP LAU Suk-ye, GBS, JP
Hon Paul TSE Wai-chun, JP
Hon LEUNG Kwok-hung
Hon Albert CHAN Wai-yip
Hon Michael TIEN Puk-sun, BBS, JP
Hon Frankie YICK Chi-ming
Hon WU Chi-wai, MH
Hon CHAN Han-pan
Dr Hon KWOK Ka-ki
Dr Hon Elizabeth QUAT, JP
Hon POON Siu-ping, BBS, MH
Hon TANG Ka-piu
Ir Dr Hon LO Wai-kwok, BBS, MH, JP
Hon Christopher CHUNG Shu-kun, BBS, MH, JP
Hon Tony TSE Wai-chuen

Members attending : Dr Hon Kenneth CHAN Ka-lok
Hon KWOK Wai-keung

Member absent : Hon Jeffrey LAM Kin-fung, GBS, JP

Public Officers attending : **Agenda item IV**

Mr YAU Shing-mu
Under Secretary for Transport and Housing

Ms Rebecca PUN Ting-ting, JP
Deputy Secretary for Transport and Housing
(Transport)1

Ms Judy CHUNG Sui-kei
Principal Assistant Secretary for Transport and
Housing (Transport) 5

Mr Peter LAU Ka-keung, JP
Director of Highways

Mr CHOW Chun-wah
Project Manager/Hong Kong-Zhuhai- Macao
Bridge
Highways Department

Agenda item V

Mr YAU Shing-mu
Under Secretary for Transport and Housing

Ms Rebecca PUN Ting-ting, JP
Deputy Secretary for Transport and Housing
(Transport)1

Ms Judy CHUNG Sui-kei
Principal Assistant Secretary for Transport and
Housing (Transport) 5

Mrs Joanna KWOK
Project Manager/Major Works
Highways Department

Mr Lawrence HO
Chief Engineer 3/Major Works
Highways Department

Agenda item VI

Mr YAU Shing-mu
Under Secretary for Transport and Housing

Ms Rebecca PUN Ting-ting, JP
Deputy Secretary for Transport and Housing
(Transport)1

Ms Judy CHUNG Sui-kei
Principal Assistant Secretary for Transport and
Housing (Transport) 5

Mrs Joanna KWOK
Project Manager/Major Works
Highways Department

Mr Raymond KONG
Chief Engineer 1/Major Works
Highways Department

Clerk in attendance : Ms Sophie LAU
Chief Council Secretary (1)2

Staff in attendance : Ms Macy NG
Senior Council Secretary (1)2

Ms Emily LIU
Legislative Assistant (1)2

Action

I Confirmation of minutes of meeting

(LC Paper No. CB(1)207/13-14 - Minutes of meeting on 10 October 2013)

The minutes of the meeting held on 10 October 2013 were confirmed.

II Information papers issued since the last regular meeting on 19 July 2013

(LC Paper No. CB(1)1632/12-13(01) - Administration's response to the letter from Hon TANG Ka-piu on erroneous deduction of Octopus Card value

LC Paper No. CB(1)1661/12-13(01) - Administration's letter dated 26 July 2013 on financial information of the Western Harbour Crossing

LC Paper No. CB(1)1805/12-13(01) - Letter from Hon TANG Ka-piu requesting the Panel to discuss the transport arrangements for cross-boundary students

LC Paper No. CB(1)1810/12-13(01) - Memorandum referring to the Panel the views and concerns raised by Yuen Long District Council members on the improvement of bus route development in Yuen Long District

LC Paper No. CB(1)1851/12-13(01) - Memorandum referring to the Panel the views and concerns raised by Islands District Council members on the fares and services of outlying island ferry routes

LC Papers Nos. CB(1)1857/12-13(01) - Letter from Hon Gary

- & (02)
- FAN Kwok-wai on the bus route rationalization plan in the North District of the New Territories and the Administration's response
- LC Paper No. CB(1)18/13-14(01) - Memorandum from the Public Complaints Office of the Legislative Council Secretariat relating to the operation and fares of bus services
- LC Paper No. CB(1)52/13-14(01) - Administration's response to the joint letter from Dr Hon Kenneth CHAN Ka-lok and Dr Hon KWOK Ka-ki on the recent accident arising from the construction of Central-Wanchai Bypass
- LC Paper No. CB(1)196/13-14(01) - Net revenue statement for 2012-2013 submitted by the Western Harbour Tunnel Company Limited
- LC Paper No. CB(1)196/13-14(02) - Net revenue statement for 2012-2013 submitted by the Route 3 (Country Park Section) Company Limited
- LC Paper No. CB(1)310/13-14(01) - Referral of a complaint case from the Public Complaints Office of the Legislative Council Secretariat relating to the road transportation network of the Central and Western District)

2. Members noted the above papers issued since the last meeting.

- III Items for discussion at the next meeting on 20 December 2013**
(LC Paper No. CB(1)288/13-14(01) - List of outstanding items
for discussion
LC Paper No. CB(1)288/13-14(02) - List of follow-up actions)

3. Members agreed to discuss the following items at the next regular meeting to be held on 20 December 2013 –

- (a) Vehicles and Drivers Licensing Integrated Data System IV Infrastructure Enhancement Project; and
- (b) Replacement of mechanical ventilation fans and associated equipment at the Diamond Hill Station public transport interchange.

(Post-meeting note: The item on "Replacement of mechanical ventilation fans and associated equipment at the Diamond Hill Station public transport interchange" was subsequently replaced by "Proposal to raise the mandatory requirement of using child restraint device in private cars" vide LC Paper No. CB(1)510/13-14 issued to members on 10 December 2013.)

IV Proposed retention of three supernumerary posts; and extension of internal redeployment of one permanent post in the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge Hong Kong Project Management Office of the Highways Department

- (LC Paper No. CB(1)268/13-14(01) - Administration's paper on proposed retention of three supernumerary posts and extension of one permanent post in the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge Hong Kong Project Management Office of Highways Department
LC Paper No. CB(1)268/13-14(02) - Paper on Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat (background brief))

4. At the invitation of the Chairman, Under Secretary for Transport and Housing ("USTH") briefed members on the Administration's proposal to retain three supernumerary posts (one Principal Government Engineer (D3) and two Chief Engineers ("CE") (D1)) and to extend the redeployment of one permanent CE post in the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge ("HZMB") Hong Kong Project Management Office ("HKPMO") of the Highways Department ("HyD") for a period of three years and six to nine months with effect from 1 April/1 July 2014 to 31 December 2017 to continue taking forward the HZMB and its related highway infrastructure projects.

5. Project Manager/HZMB of HyD ("PM/HZMB") then made a powerpoint presentation on the works progress of the HZMB and its related local infrastructure projects, as well as the organizational structure of the HZMB HKPMO (LC Paper No. CB(1)345/13-14(01)).

The staffing proposal

6. Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung noted that the Governments of Hong Kong, the Mainland and Macao were jointly responsible for the construction of the HZMB Main Bridge. He asked about the staffing arrangements of the Mainland and Macao for comparison purpose.

7. USTH said that the three Governments had jointly set up the HZMB Authority to co-ordinate the construction, operation, maintenance and management of the HZMB Main Bridge whereas they were responsible for their own boundary crossing facilities in their respective territories. Depending on the scope and needs of those local works, the three Governments would deploy internal manpower and resources to closely monitor the relevant works progress. He said that since the three Governments had different staff establishments, it would be difficult to make a comparison. At the request of Mr LEUNG, USTH agreed to provide supplementary information on the staffing arrangements of the HZMB Authority after the meeting.

Admin

(Post-meeting note: the Administration's supplementary information paper was issued to all Members on 3 December 2013 vide LC Paper No. CB(1)435/13-14(01))

8. Mr WU Chi-wai enquired about the time generally required to complete the finalization work of an infrastructure project with similar scale. Noting that the construction works of the HZMB Main Bridge and its related local infrastructural projects would complete in 2016, Mr WU asked whether

the Administration had ever considered retaining only one CE post to 2017 and the others posts up to 2016 only.

9. Director of Highways ("DHy") advised members that the time required for the finalization work depended on the complexity of the project and the number of contractual claims. He said that given the complexity of the local projects, much coordination and maintenance work had to be carried out particularly in the first year after the commissioning of HZMB in 2016. As such, the Administration considered it appropriate to retain/extend the relevant CE posts up to one year after the commissioning of HZMB.

10. Mr POON Siu-ping, Mr WONG Kwok-hing, Dr LO Wai-kwok and Mr Frankie YICK indicated support for the Administration's staffing proposal. Mr CHAN Han-pan also said that the Democratic Alliance for the Betterment and Progress of Hong Kong was supportive of the staffing proposal because the continuous support of those experienced staff was necessary to take forward the HZMB and its related projects. Noting that the Tuen Mun-Chek Lap Kok Link ("TM-CLKL") would be completed in two phases until end 2018, Mr POON Siu-ping enquired why the Administration did not propose to extend the four posts to end of 2018.

11. DHy said that although TM-CLKL was expected to be fully commissioned by end of 2018, the Administration was of the view that it would be more appropriate to review the continued need of the four posts in the second half of 2016 because by then, the Administration could make a more realistic forecast on the staffing requirement, taking into account the works progress of the projects and number of claims made.

Concerns relating to HZMB's related local infrastructure projects

12. Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung asked how the HZMB related local infrastructure projects would interface with the HZMB Main Bridge, and the expected vehicular flow of TM-CLKL.

13. USTH replied that the construction works of HZMB related local infrastructure projects were carried out in tandem with the Main Bridge. Those local projects including the southern section of TM-CLKL were scheduled for completion in 2016 to tie in with the opening of the Main Bridge. He added that the northern section of TM-CLKL connecting the Hong Kong Boundary Crossing Facilities ("HKBCF") and Tuen Mun would be completed by 2018 and would not affect the commissioning of the HZMB. The Administration expected that the full commissioning of TM-CLKL would be able to relief the traffic burden between Tuen Mun and the Airport.

14. Mr POON Siu-ping expressed concern over the progress of public consultation on the alignment of the Tuen Mun Western Bypass ("TMWB"). DHy said that in view of public concerns over the proposed alignment of TMWB, the Administration had reviewed the implementation schedule of the project. It would further investigate the possible scope of changes to the currently proposed road scheme and consult local residents again.

15. Mr WONG Kwok-hing hoped that the HZMB Main Bridge and its related local infrastructure projects would be completed on schedule. He suggested that a site visit should be arranged at an appropriate time to enable Members understand more about the works progress of the HZMB. Pointing out that a serious fatal accident happened at HKBCF in 2012, Mr WONG asked about the Administration's follow up actions to ensure construction safety. Mr TANG Ka-piu added that some local workers had reflected to him that the accident was possibly caused by the communication problem and different working cultures between local workers and mainland workers employed through the Supplementary Labour Scheme. He asked about the Administration's view in this regard.

16. USTH said that the Administration had a plan to arrange a site visit to HZMB for Members at an appropriate time. He undertook to liaise with the Chairman on the detailed arrangements.

17. Regarding the industrial accident occurred at the construction site of HKBCF in October 2012, DHy said that after the accident, the relevant works were suspended immediately. To ensure that the plant on the site and works processes were safe to workers, the Administration had urged the contractors to formulate a safety improvement plan in accordance with risk assessments on works on the cellular structures at the site. The plan covered the design, construction, installation, ascending/descending and suspension systems of working platforms and the provision of necessary safety instructions and training for workers, as well as a monitoring system to ensure the implementation of the above measures. The Labour Department was satisfied that the improvement measures could eliminate the risks associated with the works on the cellular structures and subsequently revoked the suspension notices served on the contractors. DHy said that the Administration had been closely monitoring the safety performance of the site and urged the contractors to maintain the above safety measures to protect the safety of workers at the construction site.

18. Noting that the HZMB project included a section of deep sub-sea tunnel, Mr TANG Ka-piu asked whether the relevant works were the first of its kind in the Mainland and how the works quality would be guaranteed.

Besides, he and Mr CHAN Han-pan also called on the Administration to consider not collecting tolls at TM-CLKL.

19. DHy said that the sub-sea tunnel of the HZMB project would be constructed by the traditional immersed tube method, which had been adopted for the construction of the three road harbour crossings in Hong Kong. However, it was the first time to adopt such method in constructing a sub-sea tunnel with a length of 7 km in the Mainland territory. As such, the HZMB Authority had been closely monitoring the relevant works to ensure that proper procedures were followed. It had also hired an expatriate consultant to provide professional advice for the relevant construction.

20. Regarding the toll charges for using TM-CLKL, USTH explained that in accordance with the "user pays" principle, the Administration planned to recover the full operating cost of TM-CLKL through toll charges. He further said that the impact of charging tolls at TM-CLKL to public transport users would be minimal. It was because there were established mechanisms by which the Government considered the fare increase applications submitted by public transport operators, such as franchised buses. He said that the Administration would take into account Members' views while determining the future toll level of TM-CLKL.

21. Dr LO Wai-kwok related an enquiry from Mrs Regina IP about the capability of HZMB in withstanding the impacts of natural disasters. Dr LO also expressed concern over the arrangements of cross boundary control of HZMB.

22. DHy said that the construction of HZMB had adopted the highest structural standard in the Mainland and Hong Kong and the Bridge would have an expected a life span of 120 years. The design of which had already taken into account the likelihood of any serious natural disasters during its life span.

23. As regards the cross boundary arrangements, USTH said that "separate location of boundary crossing facilities" mode would be adopted for HZMB. Meanwhile, the Administration was negotiating with the relevant authorities in Guangdong and Macao on the cross-boundary transport arrangements. He assured members that the Administration would report the progress of the relevant arrangements to the Panel on Transport ("the Panel") once a concrete proposal had been formulated.

24. Mr CHAN Han-pan enquired if the Administration had any plan to develop "bridgehead economy" at HKBCF. USTH explained that due to

environmental protection considerations and the Airport height restrictions, the Administration had not recommended large-scale commercial developments on the current HKBCF construction project. However, the Administration agreed that where feasible, it should make good use of the space available to develop commercial facilities so as to promote the economic activities on HKBCF and at the same time bring convenience to the travellers. There would be some commercial facilities of appropriate scale to serve the needs of the travellers. He further said that to give full play to the benefit of the HZMB and HKBCF in facilitating the bridgehead economy in the nearby areas, it was necessary to provide convenient transport services between HKBCF and the Hong Kong International Airport, Tung Chung, other parts of the Lantau Island and Tuen Mun. These services would attract travellers to visit the proposed commercial facilities in these locations via HZMB.

25. Mr Frankie YICK asked about the public transport arrangements in HKBCF and whether the Administration would consult the transport trade in this regard. Highlighting the importance of TM-CLKL in improving the transport network on the Airport Island, Mr YICK was concerned over whether the commissioning of TM-CLKL would be affected by the works schedule of TMWB the alignment of which had still not been finalized.

26. USTH said that the three Governments had set up the Co-ordination Group on Cross-boundary Matters to study the policy on the cross-boundary transport arrangements for the project. The relevant discussion was still in progress. He reiterated that the Administration would consult the trade once a proposal had been formulated. USTH added that once TM-CLKL was commissioned, vehicles could make use of the existing road network in Tuen Mun to travel to other areas in Hong Kong. The works progress of TMWB would not affect the commissioning of TM-CLKL.

27. Mr LEE Cheuk-yan noted that HZMB would greatly enhance the connectivity among Hong Kong, Zhuhai and Macao. He expressed concern that HZMB might increase the patron of Shenzhen Airport or Macao Airport and would affect the development of Hong Kong as a regional aviation centre. Mr LEE said that since the northern section of TM-CLKL would greatly shorten the journey time between Tuen Mun and the Airport, he enquired whether the completion date of the relevant construction works could be advanced for the benefits of all.

28. USTH said that HZMB would contribute to the development of tourism, logistics, finance and trade in Hong Kong, and promote the economic integration between Hong Kong and the Pearl River West. Nevertheless, he

considered that travellers would unlikely travel a longer distance from Hong Kong International Airport to Shenzhen Airport or Macao Airport for flight transfer.

29. Regarding the works schedule of TM-CLKL, USTH said that the Administration originally planned to commission TM-CLKL together with HZMB in 2016. However, the works schedule of TM-CLKL had been affected by a judicial review case. As a result, the Administration would implement the project by phases. The Administration believed that the existing transport network in Tuen Mun would be able to cope with the traffic demand before the commissioning of the northern section of TM-CLKL in 2018.

30. Members noted that the Administration's staffing proposal would be submitted to the Establishment Subcommittee for consideration at its meeting on 4 December 2013 and, if endorsed, to the Finance Committee ("FC") on 10 January 2014 for approval.

V Central-Wan Chai Bypass and Island Eastern Corridor Link

(LC Paper No. CB(1)268/13-14(03) - Administration's paper on Central-Wan Chai Bypass and Island Eastern Corridor Link

LC Paper No. CB(1)268/13-14(04) - Paper on Central-Wan Chai Bypass and Island Eastern Corridor Link prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat (background brief))

31. At the invitation of the Chairman, USTH briefed members on the Administration's proposal to increase the approved project estimate ("APE") for 579TH (i.e. "Central-Wan Chai Bypass ("CWB") and Island Eastern Corridor ("IEC") Link ("the Trunk Road")") by \$7,934.3 million from \$28,104.6 million to \$36,038.9 million in money-of-the-day prices to cover the additional costs mainly arising from the increase in cost for the tunnel construction works; and increase in provision for price adjustment. CE3/Major Works of HyD ("CE3/MW") then made a powerpoint presentation on the work progress of the Trunk Road (LC Paper No. CB(1)345/13-14(02)).

32. Members noted that the Administration's proposal would be submitted to the Public Works Subcommittee ("PWSC") in December 2013 and, if endorsed, to the FC in January 2014.

General views

33. Dr LO Wai-kwok considered the proposed increase in APE of the project justifiable. Stressing the importance of CWB in relieving the traffic burden of Central and Wan Chai, he indicated support for the Administration's funding proposal. He expressed concern on whether the shortage problem of construction manpower would affect the commissioning of the Trunk Road.

34. Project Manager/Major Works of HyD ("PM/MW") advised that up to the present, about 40% of the tunnel structure of CWB in the permanent reclamation formed under Wan Chai Development Phase II had been completed and about 35% of the tunnel structure employing temporary reclamation method at the Causeway Bay Typhoon Shelter ("CBTS") and the ex-Public Cargo Working Area sections had also been completed. She added that the Trunk Road project was implemented under 13 works contracts. So far, the 12 works contracts which had been awarded by the Administration were progressing smoothly. The works under the remaining contract was expected to commence in the first quarter of 2014. In view of the current work progress, the Administration expected that the Trunk Road would be commissioned in 2017 as scheduled.

35. Mr POON Siu-ping noted that one of the major reasons for the additional cost of the project was the higher-than-expected cost for the tunnel construction works arising from the deeper-than-expected bedrock levels. He enquired whether the same problem might arise in the future construction of the Trunk Road, leading to further cost increase. Mr WONG Kwok-hing shared a similar view on whether the project cost would increase again.

36. In response, USTH and PM/MW said that as substantial part of the tunnel construction works with high risks on cost variation had been completed and the revised project estimate had already taken into account the Government's latest assumptions on the trend rate of change in the prices of public sector building and construction output, there would not be further increase in the project estimate unless there was a significant change in the global economic environment in future..

37. In light of the Administration's response, Mr WONG Kwok-hing said that he would support the Administration's funding proposal.

38. Pointing out that the Trunk Road project was not the first large infrastructural project which had cost overrun, the Deputy Chairman indicated that he had much reservation on the Administration's funding proposal and doubted whether the Administration had been too conservative in preparing the original estimate. He requested the Administration to explain in detail the reasons for the increase in cost by \$975.3 million for the tunnel construction works. Mr Paul TSE also queried whether the Administration was hasty when it conducted the site investigation work for the tunnel construction, leading to the discrepancy between the original and current estimate.

39. PM/MW said that considerable amount of site investigation works had already been carried out at the design stage based on sampling approach as would have been done for similar projects. However, there would still be some uncertainties in ground conditions between sampling points. Moreover, as the route of part of the main tunnel and its slip roads would lie across main roads, navigation channels and CBTS, etc, these had restricted the extent of the site investigation works that could be conducted at the design stage.

40. Mr Tony TSE considered that given the lengthy construction period, it was understandable that there would be cost variation of the project. Sharing with other members, he expressed concern on whether the project cost would further increase in the future and asked whether the Administration would consider reviewing the methodology for estimating the project cost for public works projects so that more accurate cost estimates could be projected.

41. USTH explained that the original project estimate was prepared in 2009 when Hong Kong was suffering from economic recession after the global financial tsunami. Due to the rapid recovery of the local economy in subsequent years, there was notable increase in the prices of construction materials as well as labour cost. He further said that the price adjustment factors varied from time to time and would be updated by the Financial Services and the Treasury Bureau on a half-yearly basis. He drew members' attention that the revised cost estimate was only the financial ceiling of the project cost. In case of a slower economy, the provision for cost adjustment might be adjusted downward accordingly. As for the suggestion of reviewing the methodology for estimating the project cost for public works projects, he undertook to refer the relevant suggestion to the Development Bureau.

42. Concerning whether project cost overrun would come one after the other, Mr TANG Ka-piu requested the Administration to provide a list of

large infrastructural projects the funding of which was approved based on the price adjustment factors projected within one year after the global financial tsunami. Mr TANG also asked whether the Administration would adopt "user pays" principle to recover the operating cost of CWB.

Admin 43. USTH agreed to provide supplementary information regarding the cost estimates of other large infrastructural projects under the purview of the Transport and Housing Bureau as requested by Mr TANG. He added that the Administration had no plan to charge any tolls for using CWB in view of the economic benefits CWB would bring.

44. While acknowledging the Administration's explanation on the reasons for increasing the provision for price adjustment, Mr Michael TIEN was concerned over the considerable rate of cost increase and wondered whether the Administration had taken up effective measures to minimize cost increase. He asked about the proportion of the total cost increase which was related to labour cost and whether the increase rate in labour cost in the construction sector was in parallel with that in other sectors. He also asked whether the Administration would consider importing workers to meet the target completion date of the project if there were indeed labour shortage and significant increase in labour cost in the future.

45. USTH said that the Government's policy was to ensure priority of employment for local workers. If contractors who had genuine need but encountered difficulties in recruiting suitable workers locally, they might consider making application for importation of workers under the Supplementary Labour Scheme to fill vacancies.

46. PM/MW supplemented that the provision for price adjustment was calculated having regard to a set of price adjustment factors reviewed by the Government Economist. She further said that the remuneration of construction workers and cost of construction materials had increased significantly over the period from mid-2009 to mid-2013. At the request of the Chairman, she agreed to provide written information after the meeting regarding the amount of the proposed additional funding which was related to increase in labour cost, if such a breakdown was available.

47. Mr Paul TSE noted that the increase in provision for price adjustment for 2013 and future years was at present assessed to be 6% per annum over the period from 2013 to 2017 while that from 2018 to 2023 was 5% per annum. He enquired why the Administration estimated that the increase in provision for price adjustment would become lower from 2018 onwards.

48. USTH explained that price adjustment factor was estimated by the Government Economist according to factors such as economic environment and relevant construction-related data, etc. The relevant percentage would be reviewed every six months.

Admin

49. Mr Albert CHAN criticized the serious cost overrun of the Trunk Road project, and the Administration's serious fault on cost control and estimates. He requested the Administration to provide written information on a list of other large infrastructural projects under construction which had cost overrun, and the reasons for the cost overrun for each project. He pointed out that the examination of the causes of cost overrun could shed light on how the current mechanism of projecting cost estimate could be improved.

50. Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung expressed that labour cost constituted only a small proportion of the project sum. He attributed the cost overrun to inaccurate site investigation result, leading to contract variation. Pointing out that many China-affiliated enterprises operated their construction business in Hong Kong, he wondered whether the Administration was too timid to negotiate with those China-affiliated contractors on contract variation. He also criticized that the Administration had not grasped the opportunity to implement infrastructure projects during the economic downturn to minimize construction cost and create job opportunities.

(To allow sufficient time for discussion, the Chairman extended the meeting by 15 minutes.)

51. Dr KWOK Ka-ki considered the significant increase in project cost estimates unacceptable and wondered whether it was due to the large amount of claims by contractors. He concurred with Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung that the Administration might be weak while negotiating with mainland contractors. As such, he asked about the number of mainland contractors which were engaged in the construction of the Trunk Road. Dr KWOK also asked about the reasons for the significant increase in the provision for price adjustment from \$3,532.4 million to \$10,491.4 million, given that market fluctuation in labour and material costs had already been taken into account in the original estimate. He also asked whether the Administration would consider punishing the relevant staff for the discrepancy.

52. USTH clarified that it was the increase in provision for price adjustment which constituted the major proportion (about 80%) of project cost increase. PM/MW supplemented that a number of contractors were engaged in the construction of the Trunk Road, some were mainland companies, some were local companies and some joint venture companies.

Admin

At the request of Dr KWOK, PM/MW agreed to provide supplementary information in this regard before the matter was discussed at the PWSC meeting.

53. The Chairman said that since there was in place established Government tender procedures, he believed that the cost estimate was not made on the judgement of a single government officer. He further said that the Administration had recently briefed PWSC members on the Administration's current approach and methodology for the estimation of project cost for public works projects and he considered that the matter on estimation of project cost should better be discussed by PWSC. Members agreed.

Noise mitigation and air purification facilities

54. Mr Christopher CHUNG asked whether the Administration would take the opportunity of increasing the APE of the project to accede to the district's request for extending the vertical noise barriers under the Trunk Road project to a point near the Provident Centre in the east, and Victoria Centre in the west.

55. PM/MW said that the Trunk Road project had entailed the need to demolish and modify a road section leading to the IEC eastbound and noise barriers would be provided at the relevant road section ending at a point close to City Garden. However, further extension of the noise barriers to Provident Centre would be technically not feasible given the structural capacity of the existing road structure concerned and other reasons.

56. Mr KWOK Wai-keung requested the Administration to provide the Panel the feasibility study report mentioned in paragraph 55. Noting that the Administration proposed to increase the cost estimate by \$700 million for an additional installation in the air purification system ("APS"), he asked about the reasons for the installation and the expected outcome. Mr KWOK also noted that the Administration proposed to reduce the estimated project cost by \$84.7 million for noise mitigation facilities, traffic control and surveillance system due to slight differences between the prices in the awarded tenders and the sums allowed in the APE for these items. He cautioned that the reduced cost estimate should not lead to increased noise nuisance to nearby residents after the commissioning of the Trunk Road.

Admin

57. In response, PM/MW said that the feasibility report concerning the proposed extension of noise barriers had been passed to concerned parties. She agreed to provide the report to members for reference after the meeting.

PM/MW added that the additional installation in APS to remove nitrogen dioxide from the tunnel exhaust was proposed in response to public demand for better quality of exhaust air from tunnels. The APS could remove emitted nitrogen dioxide and respirable suspended particulates by 80%.

Slip Road 8

58. Dr Kenneth CHAN noted that Slip Road 8, which was one of the major parts of CWB, would encroach upon the northern part of Victoria Park, entailing the need for tree transplantation. He expressed concern on the Administration's measures on tree preservation. In his view, the affected trees should be transplanted within the same district as far as practicable.

59. PM/MW responded that the Administration had paid due regard to tree preservation when undertaking public works projects and would spend about \$21 million for tree transplantation under the Slip Road 8 contract. She remarked that all the tree transplanting works were carried out under close supervision of qualified arborists in compliance with the contract requirements. The proposed transplanting method had also been reviewed by an independent tree expert. Due to the limited area in Victoria Park, some affected trees had to be temporarily transplanted to a holding nursery before returning to Victoria Park after the works completion.

60. Mr Christopher CHUNG considered the construction of the Slip Road 8 unnecessary as the diversion of traffic by the Trunk Road could already relieve the traffic burden at Tin Hau and Fortress Hill.

61. PM/MW said that the need for CWB, including Slip Road 8, as well as their alignment had been discussed for years. She said that the construction of Slip Road 8 was indeed necessary because otherwise, traffic congestion might occur in Tin Hau/Causeway Bay areas.

Construction safety

62. Noting that an industrial accident had happened in May 2013 in the construction site of CWB arising from the prolapse of a rope sling from a crane, Mr POON Siu-ping expressed concern over the measures which had been taken by the Administration to strengthen the construction safety.

63. PM/MW said that after the accident, the concerned construction works had been suspended and a thorough check of the sling was carried out by the contractor. To avoid any further similar accident, the contractor would use shackle instead of sling to perform the relevant work procedure. The

Administration would continue to closely monitor the safety performance of the site and had urged the contractors and the resident site staff to strengthen the safety measures on the construction sites.

Concluding remarks

64. After discussion, the Chairman concluded that the Panel supported the Administration's planned submission of the funding proposal to PWSC and FC for consideration.

(Post-meeting note: the Administration's supplementary information paper was issued to all Members on 17 December 2013 vide LC Paper No. CB(1)544/13-14(01))

VI "Universal Accessibility" Programme

(LC Paper No. CB(1)268/13-14(05) - Administration's paper on "Universal Accessibility" Programme

LC Paper No. CB(1)268/13-14(06) - Paper on "Universal Accessibility" Programme prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat (background brief))

65. At the invitation of the Chairman, CE1/Major Works of HyD ("CE1/MW") briefed members with the aid of powerpoint on the latest progress of the new policy on "Universal Accessibility" ("UA") announced by the Government in August 2012 and the Administration's proposal to seek approval from FC for an allocation of \$567.696 million in 2014-2015 for the block allocation Subhead 6101TX – "UA Programme" under Capital Works Reserve Fund Head 706 – "Highways" (LC Paper No. CB(1)345/13-14(03)).

(With the consent of members, the Chairman further extended the meeting by 10 minutes.)

General views

66. Mr POON Siu-ping expressed support for the Administration's funding proposal. He enquired about the criteria for selecting the 30 items under the UA Programme which would commence in 2014-2015. Mr POON also raised concern over the work safety of lift installation works under the schedule.

67. USTH said that each District Council ("DC") had been invited to select three proposals from the list of public suggestions under the UA Programme for priority commencement. He added that the Administration attached great importance on work safety. As such, the proposals would be implemented in stages in a span of four years, having regard to the manpower supply.

68. Mr Paul TSE considered that the UA Programme would much benefit the public and urged the Administration to speed up the funding arrangements and works schedule. In his view, the priority implementation of only three public walkways in each district was far from sufficient.

69. USTH said that the Administration shared Mr TSE's view that the proposals under the UA Programme should be implemented as soon as possible to benefit the public. However, the Administration had to balance the need to avoid putting undue pressure on the overall manpower demand and the need to speed up the works schedule.

70. Mr KWOK Wai-keung expressed support for the implementation of the UA Programme. He asked whether the Administration would consider allowing those districts with more residents or DC seats to select more than three proposals for priority implementation.

71. USTH said that DCs were invited to prioritize the project items as they had better understanding of the district needs. He said that the number of proposals for installing lifts might not have a direct relationship with the population size. Nevertheless, the Administration was willing to listen to any new suggestions regarding how the project items could be prioritized.

72. Mr Christopher CHUNG requested the Administration to provide a list of projects under the "Original Programme" for retrofitting barrier-free access ("BFA") facilities for public walkways, and information on their works progress. Considering that BFA facilities should be provided at the footbridge connecting the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts and Wan Chai, he asked whether the footbridge concerned had been included in the list of proposals under the UA Programme.

Admin

73. USTH agreed to provide the list as requested by Mr CHUNG after the meeting. He said that lift would be installed at public walkways without either a ramp or a lift to comply with the BFA requirements. He added that under the UA Programme, as long as site conditions permitted, the Administration would still consider installing lifts at walkways where there was already a standard ramp installed.

(Post-meeting note: the Administration's supplementary information paper was issued to all Members on 4 December 2013 vide LC Paper No. CB(1)473/13-14(01))

74. Mr WONG Kwok-hing strongly requested the Administration to include in the UA Programme the footbridge across the King's Road at Tong Shui Road of North Point. He said that the relevant road section under the footbridge was a traffic black spot and there was a genuine need to encourage the usage of the footbridge by providing BFA. However, he noted that the footbridge was currently occupied by street sleepers.

75. USTH considered that the problem of street sleepers occupying the footbridge was a management matter and was not directly related to provision of BFA facilities. PM/MW supplemented that the footbridge concerned was connected to Everwin Building at one end. In view of the limited space and utility services underneath the public walkway outside the building, installation of a lift for the footbridge concerned was considered to be technically infeasible.

76. Mr Michael TIEN asked about the number of footbridges which were currently owned by the Government where the government bureau/department responsible for their management could not be identified, and the Administration's solution to the problem.

77. USTH said that the Administration did not have statistics on the number of footbridges with unidentified ownership. However, the Administration had been following up cases reported by Members or the public. He advised members that public walkways bearing serial numbers assigned by HyD would fall within the ambit of the UA Programme.

Proposals outside the ambit of the UA Programme

78. Mr Paul TSE asked whether the Administration would consider expanding the scope of the UA Programme to cover those footbridges which fell outside the ambit of the UA Programme.

79. USTH replied that the Administration was of the view that it should first process those proposals submitted under the UA Programme before considering expanding the scope of the Programme.

80. Mr TANG Ka-piu indicated support for the Administration's funding proposal. He asked how the Administration would deal with those proposals falling outside the ambit of the UA Programme, in particular the locations of

which were under the purview of the Hong Kong Housing Authority ("HA") or the Link Real Estate Investment Trust.

81. USTH said the UA Programme aimed at retrofitting BFA facilities at public walkways under the purview of HyD. As for other proposals which were outside the ambit of the UA Programme, the Administration had, after properly consolidating the relevant information, referred to the relevant organizations for consideration and following up. He pointed out that the implementation of those proposals might require the consent of the owners concerned. USTH further said that HA had indeed launched a programme for lift addition within public housing estates. It would further examine the technical feasibility of the proposals referred by the Administration.

82. Mr KWOK Wai-keung considered that HA should speed up its retrofitting programme at public housing estate. He then asked about the number of MTR stations without a lift. Mr CHAN Han-pan also expressed his dissatisfaction with MTR Corporation Limited ("MTRCL")'s progress in providing BFA facilities at stations.

83. USTH said that MTRCL had launched a programme namely the Listening • Responding Programme under which BFA facilities at MTR stations would be enhanced. At present, around 90% of MTR stations were barrier free and about 70% were installed with lifts at two entrances. As regards the remaining stations which were currently not provided with BFA facilities, USTH explained that difficulties were encountered in some stations due to constraints underground. In such cases, more time would be required to solve the technical problem.

Concluding remarks

84. Members noted that the Administration would follow the procedures of block allocation for other subheads and submit the proposal to the Panel on Development on 26 November 2013. It would then submit the proposal to the PWSC for discussion on 18 December 2013, and apply for funding approval for 2014-2015 from FC on 10 January 2014, with a view to continuing the implementation of the projects. The Chairman concluded that the Panel supported the Administration's submission of the funding proposal to PWSC and FC for consideration.

VII Any other business

85. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 1:10 pm.

Council Business Division 1
Legislative Council Secretariat
15 January 2014