

立法會
Legislative Council

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Panel on Transport

**Minutes of meeting held on
Monday, 26 May 2014 , at 8:30 am
in Conference Room 1 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 Jeffrey LAM Kin-fung, GBS, JP
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-kiwok, BBS, MH, JP
Hon Christopher CHUNG Shu-kun, BBS, MH, JP
Hon Tony TSE Wai-chuen

Members attending : Hon TAM Yiu-chung, GBS, JP
Hon LEUNG Che-cheung, BBS, MH, JP

Public Officers attending : **Agenda item III**

Ms Cordelia LAM
Principal Assistant Secretary for Transport and
Housing (Transport)2

Mr LEUNG Tak-fai
Assistant Commissioner/Technical Service
Transport Department

Mr LI Chi-chiu
Chief Engineer/Traffic Control
Transport Department

Agenda item IV

Mr YAU Shing-mu, JP
Under Secretary for Transport and Housing

Mr José YAM
Principal Assistant Secretary
for Transport and Housing (Transport)4

Mr Albert SU
Assistant Commissioner/Management and
Paratransit
Transport Department

Mr Ken WONG
Chief Transport Officer/Planning/Ferry Review
Transport Department

Agenda item V

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

Mrs Joanna KWOK TAM Yuk-ying
Deputy Director of Highways
Highways Department

Mr Alfred YAU Kwan-wai
Regional Highway Engineer/New Territories
Highways Department

Mr NIP Chi-kwong
Chief Highway Engineer/Research and
Development
Highways Department

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

Staff in attendance : Miss Katherine CHAN
Council Secretary (1)2

Ms Emily LIU
Legislative Assistant (1)2

Action

I Information papers issued since the last meeting

(LC Paper No. CB(1)1266/13-14(01) - Letter from Hon WONG Kwok-hing on fare increase application from The Kowloon Motor Bus Company (1933) Limited and improvement in bus patronage

LC Paper No. CB(1)1289/13-14(01) - Administration's response to the 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

LC Paper No. CB(1)1307/13-14(01) - Administration's response

to the letter from Hon Gary FAN Kwok-wai on nanny van services and student service vehicle safety)

Members noted the above papers issued since the last meeting.

II Items for discussion at the next meeting on 20 June 2014

(LC Paper No. CB(1)1461/13-14(01) - List of outstanding items for discussion

LC Paper No. CB(1)1461/13-14(02) - List of follow-up actions)

2. Members agreed to discuss the following items at the next regular meeting to be held in June 2014 –

(a) MTR fare adjustment for 2014; and

(b) Franchises of Citybus Limited (franchise for Hong Kong Island and Cross Harbour Routes) and New Lantao Bus Company (1973) Limited.

3. Mr WONG Kwok-hing requested that the Administration should provide its response at the next regular meeting concerning members' previous suggestion of reducing the remuneration of MTR Corporation Limited's senior management in the event of serious service disruptions.

4. The Chairman said that the taxi and public light bus trades had recently reflected to him that their business was affected by the problem of illegal carriage of passengers for hire or reward by light goods vehicles. He proposed to add this item for discussion at the next meeting. Members agreed.

5. The Chairman further said that due to other urgent commitments, he proposed to reschedule the next regular meeting from 20 June 2014 to 23 June 2014 at 8:30 am. Members agreed.

III Replacement of Area Traffic Control system for Tai Po and North Districts

(LC Paper No. CB(1)1461/13-14(03) - Administration's paper on replacement of Area Traffic Control system for Tai Po

LC Paper No. CB(1)1461/13-14(04) - Paper on Area Traffic Control and Closed Circuit Television systems for Tai Po and North Districts prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat (background brief)

6. Upon invitation, Principal Assistant Secretary for Transport and Housing (Transport)² briefed members on the Administration's funding proposal to replace the existing Area Traffic Control ("ATC") system in Tai Po and North ("TP&N") Districts at an estimated cost of \$32,200,000.

7. Mr POON Siu-ping expressed that he would support the Administration's funding proposal. He asked about the life span of the new ATC system, the annual maintenance cost of the system, and whether the system could cope with the future development of the North District.

8. Assistant Commissioner/Technical Service ("AC/TS") of Transport Department ("TD") advised that the typical serviceable life of an ATC system was about 10 to 15 years, though it would be affected by a number of factors, including the availability of spare parts, etc. He confirmed that the ATC system could be expanded, by increasing the number of servers, to cater for the increase of signalized junctions due to new developments. AC/TS further advised that the estimated annual maintenance cost of the new ATC system would be about \$5 million, which would be less than that of the existing system, i.e. about \$6 million.

9. The Deputy Chairman said that the replacement of TP&N ATC system was necessitated by normal wear and tear. He asked the Administration whether the replaced system would make better use of information technology to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the system in terms of handling and processing of malfunctioned and adjustments of traffic light signals. He also asked whether the Administration would consider reorganizing the distribution of traffic signals more evenly among the four ATC systems with a view to enhancing efficiency.

10. AC/TS said that while replacing the TP&N ATC system, the new central computer would be installed first, and the existing system would still be operating. The existing traffic signals would then be switched to the new ATC central computer in sequence. Sufficient tests would be carried out before the new ATC system came into operation. Since TD had ample

experience in similar replacement work, he was confident that the replacement process would be smooth. He added that due to phased adoption of ATC system in different areas of Hong Kong in the past, the current coverage of the four ATC systems was set as it was. In replacing the ATC systems in the future, the Administration would be mindful of the need to ensure compatibility among different ATC systems while maintaining sufficient competition during the procurement process.

11. Mr WU Chi-wai enquired whether the replacement of the TP&N ATC system would involve replacement of traffic signals, and whether the whole ATC system would be replaced. Expressing concern on the compatibility among the ATC systems due to different replacement schedules and models, he asked whether the four ATC systems were inter-connected or not. He also asked whether the Administration would make use of the ATC system to strengthen the road information provided to motorists, including faulty traffic signals.

12. AC/TS advised that the project involved replacement of both hardware and software of the whole ATC system with the latest model, and the latest technology would be acquired. For example, the new system would be designed to be fully compatible with the Light Emitting Diode ("LED") traffic signals which were introduced in recent years, thus facilitating more accurate reporting of LED signal failures. The new system would be more reliable, and breakdowns and faults would be reduced. The project would not involve replacement of traffic signals.

13. AC/TS further said that since the ATC system was a specialised system, there were only few suppliers in the market. Major upgrading of ATC system was less frequent than that of personal computers. The suppliers might make some minor changes and upgrading from time to time. TD would adjust the system accordingly to ensure proper functioning of the system and to meet the prevailing needs. He further advised that the four ATC systems were operating independently and were provided by two major traffic control system suppliers. Due to their different installation dates and different suppliers, their models were not identical but their functions were similar. There was a standby system for each ATC system to ensure smooth operation. AC/TS added that TD was continuously exploring ways to provide more road information to motorists, and how the information on vehicular speed collected by the ATC systems could be used for such purpose.

14. Dr Elizabeth QUAT asked about the areas of enhancement of the new ATC system in terms of operation and functions, how the ATC system adopted in Hong Kong compared to that of overseas countries, and whether

the traffic signals would be adjusted automatically in response to traffic data collected by road sensors.

15. AC/TS advised that the operation of the new ATC system would be more user-friendly and would improve the operational efficiency as it enabled operators to respond quickly to faults. He added that comparing with other places in the world, the ATC system in Hong Kong should be one of the forefront jurisdictions, particularly in aspects like the system coverage and reliability. Nevertheless, the ratio of sensors installed in Hong Kong was relatively low compared to other cities. He explained that vehicle detectors in the form of induction loops needed to be embedded under the road surface and connected to the ATC system so as to adjust signal timings automatically in response to traffic conditions in real time. Due to the busy road traffic environment in Hong Kong, installation of induction loops on busy road sections was difficult. It remained TD's target to install more detectors on roads so that the ATC system could automatically respond to and adjust the traffic signal timings.

16. In response to Mr POON Siu-ping and Dr Elizabeth QUAT's enquiries about the Administration's timetable of replacing the remaining three ATC systems (i.e., the Hong Kong ATC system; the Kowloon, Tsuen Wan, Sha Tin and Tseung Kwan O ATC system; and the Tuen Mun and Yuen Long ATC system), AC/TS said that since the original equipment manufacturers of the existing system had ceased producing some maintenance spare parts, timely replacement of the TP&N ATC system was necessary. However, the remaining three ATC systems did not have such a problem at present. TD would closely monitor the conditions and would schedule for replacement where necessary. He also agreed to provide the tentative replacement schedule of other ATC systems after the meeting.

Admin

(Post-meeting notes: the Administration's supplementary information paper was issued to members on 6 June 2014 (LC Paper No. CB(1)1571/13-14(01).)

IV Outlying island ferry services and fare adjustments

(LC Paper No. CB(1)1208/13-14(07) - Administration's paper on outlying island ferry services and fare adjustments

LC Paper No. CB(1)1461/13-14(05) - Paper on outlying island ferry services and fare adjustments prepared by the Legislative Council

	Secretariat (updated background brief)
LC Paper No. CB(1)1239/13-14(01)	- Submission from a member of the public
LC Paper No. CB(1)1239/13-14(02)	- Submission from Peng Chau Ferry Concern Group 2.0)

17. Upon invitation, USTH briefed members on the extension of licences, fare adjustments and service level of the six major outlying island ferry routes.

General views on the fare adjustments

18. The Deputy Chairman, Mr POON Siu-ping, Mr TANG Ka-piu, Mr LEE Cheuk-yan, Dr KWOK Ka-ki and Mr LEUNG Che-cheung expressed dissatisfaction and considered it unreasonable that although the Administration had been providing special helping measures ("SHMs") to ferry operators, the operators sought to increase fares for ferry service. Considering the approved fare increase of about 5% to 6%, Mr POON Siu-ping queried whether the fare increase was due to the ineffectiveness of SHMs. Noting that high labour remuneration expense was one of the major causes of increasing operating costs, Mr POON asked about the proportion of labour remunerations to the total operating costs of ferry operators.

19. USTH explained that the two ferry operators of the six major outlying island ferry routes applied for a fare increase of about 10% in their applications for licence extension, but TD only approved fare increase of about 5% to 6%, which was lower than the accumulated increase in the Composite Consumer Price Index ("CCPI") in the past two and a half years (i.e. 11.1%) since the last fare increase and the increase in Median Monthly Household Income of Domestic Households in the past two years (i.e. 12.5%). This reflected that TD had duly performed its gate-keeping role while assessing the fare increase applications by ferry operators. When considering the fare increase applications, the Administration had taken into account a number of factors, including SHMs to be provided to ferry operators, the need to maintain long-term financial viability of ferry operators, and appropriate fare responsibilities to be borne by passengers.

20. Assistant Commissioner/Management and Paratransit of TD ("AC/M&P") supplemented that as there were a number of marine works carried out in recent years, the wage of relevant practitioners had increased by more than 10% in the past year. The staff cost made up of about 30% to

40% of the total operating cost of ferry operators, depending on their operating scale.

21. Mr TANG Ka-piu was unconvinced that high labour remuneration expense was one of the reasons for increasing fares as he noted that the wage level of launch master was disproportionate to the professional knowledge and the heavy responsibility of the post. He asked whether the two ferry operators had promised not to increase fares again during the extended three-year licence period.

22. USTH considered that the ferry operators had taken into account the market situation in the coming three years before applying for the fare increase. He said that unless there was a sharp change in the market situation, such as fuel cost, there might not be a need for ferry operators to seek for fare increase in the coming three years again. However, this was not a guarantee. If ferry operators applied for fare increases again during the three-year licence period, he assured members that the Administration would duly perform its gate-keeping role while assessing the applications.

23. The Deputy Chairman considered that the Administration should assess the fare increase application of individual ferry routes having regard to their patronage. He noted that the patronage of "Central – Cheung Chau" was the highest among all the six ferry routes but the approved increase rate for adult single journey fare was the same as that of "Central – Mui Wo" route. Pointing out that the rate of fare increase was not affordable by the public, he urged the Administration to review its policy of providing SHMs to the relevant ferry operators.

24. USTH said that it was the Administration's transport policy that ferry services should be operated by the private sector in accordance with prudent commercial principles to achieve operating efficiency. Given the slow increase rate or even a downward trend on the growth of patronage, the Administration had been providing SHMs to ferry operators by means of reimbursement to maintain their financial viability.

25. Mr LEE Cheuk-yan considered that SHMs provided to ferry operators might dampen their incentives to generate more revenue by improving service. He asked about the additional revenue to be generated by the fare increase and the percentage of SHMs as compared to the respective income of the six ferry routes.

Admin

26. AC/M&P undertook to provide the relevant information after the meeting. USTH drew members' attention that the two ferry operators did not

increase fares during the last licence period from 2011 to 2014 although they suffered from increasing operational cost. This reflected that SHMs had already served the purpose of relieving the pressure of fare increase.

27. Mr Michael TIEN opined that when renewing the licences for the six ferry routes, the Administration should include a condition in the licence that ferry operators could only adjust fares at the time of the licence renewal and should not adjust fares during the 3-year licence period. He considered that it was reasonable for a public body to increase fares comparable to the inflation rate. Noting that there was a gap between the approved average fare increase rate (i.e. about 5.5%) and the accumulated increase in CCPI (i.e. 11.1%), he considered it appropriate to meet the shortage by provision of SHMs to ferry operators. In order to examine whether the provision of \$190 million as SHMs was adequate, Mr TIEN asked about the amount of fare and non-fare box revenue of the six ferry routes.

Admin

28. USTH advised that the Administration would carry out a mid-term review on the provision of SHMs to the six major outlying island ferry routes and there would be opportunities that the fares would be adjusted by the time. AC/M&P supplemented that the total revenue of the six ferry routes was about \$370 million in 2012-2013. At the request of Mr Michael TIEN, AC/M&P agreed to provide written information on the amount of fare and non-fare box revenue of the six ferry routes after the meeting.

29. Dr KWOK Ka-ki observed that ferry services had not been improved with SHMs, as reflected by the poor hygiene at the piers and the inadequate safety facilities on vessels. He considered the fares of outlying ferry routes too high and had discouraged patronage. Given the current situation that ferry operators had to be heavily subsidized by the Government, he opined that the Administration should consider running the ferry service on its own or opening up the service to other operators so that ferry service could be improved through competition.

30. In response, USTH said that the business development of ferry operation hinged on the growth of patronage. Given its decreasing trend, SHMs had been provided to ferry operators to maintain their financial viability. Regarding the views on fares, USTH advised that to relieve the burden of outlying island residents on transport expenses, monthly tickets were offered to them such that they could enjoy discounted fares.

31. Mr CHAN Han-pan considered that the Government did not have bargaining power while discussing with ferry operators on fare increase as no other ferry operators were eager to run the relevant ferry routes. As such, he

urged the Administration to consider purchasing vessels for operation by ferry operators. He also suggested the Administration to set up a fuel stabilization fund such that ferry operators would not ask for a fare increase for the reason of rising oil price. He asked whether MTR Fare Savers would be installed for outlying island residents for a longer period or permanent use.

32. USTH advised that the Administration had studied the suggestion of purchasing vessels by the Government. However, as a huge capital expenditure at around \$1.7 billion would be incurred, and that the option would not reduce pressure on fare increases because the fare level would still be affected by the increases in fuel, maintenance and staff costs, the Administration considered the option inappropriate.

33. USTH added that the suggestion of setting up a fuel stabilization fund would transfer the fluctuation of fuel cost directly to passengers and could have read-across implications for other public transport modes. Regarding the suggestion of installing MTR Fare Savers on the islands, USTH undertook to convey it to the MTR Corporation Limited.

34. Mr Frankie YICK expressed concern that the patronage of the busiest "Central – Cheung Chau" route was less than half during peak hours. He considered that smaller vessels should be deployed for the route to reduce operating cost.

35. AC/M&P advised that TD had been monitoring the patronage of "Central – Cheung Chau" route. The average patronage from Cheung Chau to Central between 7 am to 9 am was 51%, while from Central to Cheung Chau between 6 pm to 8 pm amounted to 53%.

36. Mr LEUNG Che-cheung noted that the major expenditure items of ferry operation should be staff, fuel and maintenance costs. He considered it unreasonable that ferry operators applied for fare increases with SHMs subsidizing about one-third of their major costs. He called on the Administration to thoroughly assess the operating cost of ferry operators and the need to increase fares. He was also concerned about the provision of financial assistance to inter-islands service.

37. AC/M&P said that SHMs were provided to ferry operators on reimbursement basis. TD had been closely monitoring proper spending of public funds following stringent procedures. Apart from staff of TD, the Government's Treasury Accountant would also assess the operational figures, and the estimates of revenue and cost of ferry operators. In addition, ferry operators were also required to submit audited financial statements and

assurance reports to the Government to certify their actual expenditure on vessel maintenance and repair. In respect of the matter on inter-islands service, USTH advised that the Administration had been subsidizing one inter-islands service route through SHMs.

Admin

38. Mr Albert CHAN considered the outlying island ferry service fares amounting to about \$30 or \$40 per trip expensive, and the fare level was not comparable to the service standard. He, together with Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung, requested the Administration to provide information regarding the revenue and operating cost of the six ferry routes for the last two years. Mr James TO opined that if the relevant information was sensitive, it could be provided for members' review at a closed door meeting. USTH and AC/M&P agreed to provide the above information as appropriate.

Cost cutting and revenue generation measures

39. Mr WONG Kwok-hing considered that it was necessary for the Administration to provide SHMs to the six major outlying island ferry routes. It was because these routes were not financially viable and were basically the only means of transport for outlying islands. He asked whether the Administration would consider allowing ferry operators to develop properties above the piers to increase their profits, and whether the Administration would consider extending the licence period from the existing three years to five years or even longer to lower the operating cost of ferry services.

40. USTH responded that the suggestion of property development above the piers had been raised at the Public Works Subcommittee ("PWSC") meeting when Members discussed the matter on the construction of additional floors at Central Piers Nos. 4, 5 and 6 in 2013. The Administration was examining the views of PWSC members and was conducting some market research. The matter would be reported to PWSC in due course. He added that the Administration was aware of the view that the current licence period of three years might be too short and was studying the feasibility of lengthening the period.

41. The Deputy Chairman requested the Administration to consider reviewing its transport policy of having ferry services as the supplementary transport means. It should study the feasibility of reviving the operation of some inner harbour ferry services to relieve the road transport burden and provide an additional source of income to ferry operators, with a view to alleviating the burden of fare increase on passengers as far as possible.

42. USTH responded that it was not the Administration's policy to provide subsidies for ferry routes making a loss where there were alternative transport services. Interested ferry operators for operating inner harbour ferry services could submit proposals to TD, and TD would consider the feasibility of such proposals once received.

43. Mr Frankie YICK agreed that SHMs should be provided to ferry operators. He asked whether such assistance would also be provided to kaito operators as they also suffered from high operation cost. Considering the licence period of three years too short for investment, he also requested the Administration to review the current mode of granting licence with a view to improving ferry service.

44. In reply, USTH said that SHMs were provided to the six major outlying island ferry routes which were basically the only means of transport for outlying islands. For other sea transport like kaito, the Administration considered that these services should be run by the private sector in accordance with prudent commercial principles.

45. Mr Albert CHAN expressed disagreement to the current arrangement of providing a combination of ordinary and fast ferries, which, in his opinion, was not cost-effective and would increase the operating cost of ferry operators. He considered that only one type of ferry should be provided. Mr CHAN also requested for removing the holiday fares which were not conducive to attract tourists.

Introduction of licensed ferry service running between Cheung Chau and Aberdeen

46. Mr WONG Kwok-hing asked about the Administration's timetable of establishing the Cheung Chau-Aberdeen route.

47. USTH advised that the Administration was open-minded in principle to the introduction of licensed ferry service running between Cheung Chau and Aberdeen, and had already worked with related government departments to conduct initial study in respect of pier facilities, fairway, service demand and financial viability, etc. He said that whether the above licensed ferry service could be successfully introduced would depend on the interest of ferry operators in the market.

48. AC/M&P supplemented that the Administration had basically completed the assessment of the proposed Cheung Chau-Aberdeen route. It was of the view that the proposed route was technically feasible. He said

that the Administration had previously conducted a site visit with the concerned members of the Islands District Council to the waterfront of the Aberdeen Typhoon Shelter and had exchanged views on the ferry operation and services of the route. The concerned members of the Islands District Council were compiling the views of the district on the service requirements and fare levels and would submit the views to TD. TD would then conduct the tender exercise afterwards.

49. In response to Mr POON Siu-ping's enquiry on the exact schedule of introducing the above ferry route, AC/M&P advised that after receiving the views of Islands District Council members, the Administration aimed to complete the tendering exercise in four to six months. The exercise included drafting of tender documents, seeking legal clearance, tender invitation and tender assessment. In addition, some lead time was required for ferry operators to prepare for the operation, including the installation of payment facilities.

V Maintenance of road pavements in Hong Kong

(LC Paper No. CB(1)1461/13-14(06) - Administration's paper on maintenance of road pavements in Hong Kong

LC Paper No. CB(1)1461/13-14(07) - Paper on maintenance of road pavements in Hong Kong prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat (background brief))

(The Chairman indicated that he would extend the meeting by 15 minutes, if necessary, to allow sufficient time for discussion of this agenda item.)

50. Deputy Director of Highways ("DDHy") of Highways Department ("HyD") briefed members on the maintenance of road pavements in Hong Kong. Chief Highway Engineer/Research and Development of HyD ("CHE/R&D") then made a powerpoint presentation (LC Paper No. CB(1)1520/13-14(01)) for illustration purpose.

51. Mr WONG Kwok-hing expressed support for the Administration's adoption of thermal patcher to repair defects of bituminous road pavements and the use of precast concrete panel to rectify defects of concrete road pavements. Expressing concern on the traffic disruption likely to be caused

by road works, he asked about the proportion of road works conducted by public utilities companies as compared to that by HyD. He was also concerned over the safety of driving on flyovers with bends and asked about the progress of installing "M" or "W" shaped crash cushion on those flyovers.

52. DDHy advised that HyD coordinated the road works of public utilities operators. To minimize traffic disruption, HyD would assess the genuine need for the excavation works and require the company concerned to liaise and coordinate with other public utilities operators. However, she did not have information on the proportion of road works conducted by public utilities companies as compared to that by HyD in hand. She added that different kinds of crash cushion would be provided according to the circumstances of different road types.

53. Mr Frankie YICK expressed that to minimize traffic disruption caused by road works, the Administration should consider carrying out the works at night. However, he noted that there were constraints in carrying out such works at night, even for commercial districts. He also expressed concern that some pot holes appeared on road surface after heavy rain and asked about the Administration's improvement measures in this regard. He further requested the Administration to review the safety problem that Hong Kong drivers were not given sufficient notice of the road repair works ahead by road signs, thus giving rise to potential hazards to the drivers.

54. DDHy admitted that HyD had to face many challenges in carrying out road maintenance works as Hong Kong was one of the most densely populated cities in the world. To minimize impact to the public, the majority of such works in commercial districts were scheduled at night. Nevertheless, there were still some residential buildings in commercial districts and so the road works were still subject to the restrictions under the Noise Control Ordinance (Cap. 400). DDHy added that the frequent downpours in Hong Kong had created an impact and accelerated the deterioration of road surface. In respect of erection of signs for road works ahead, DDHy said that HyD would urge contractors to strictly follow the relevant safety guidelines while carrying out the works.

55. Mr Jeffrey LAM expressed concern over the coordination between the Administration and contractors of road works on temporary traffic arrangements. He observed that for a 3-lane road, two lanes were sometimes closed for road works. In addition, there were occasions that no workers were working on site. He also opined that the weekly safety inspections of trunk roads were insufficient and asked whether a hotline was set up for fault reports by the public. Noting that some white lines on roads were too

blurred to be seen, while some were too thick and caused strong vibration on vehicles, he asked if the Administration had any improvement measures in this regard.

56. DDHy said that before implementing closure of traffic lanes, contractors had to discuss with TD and Police on the traffic arrangements. In some cases, there were genuine needs for the closure of two of the three traffic lanes to facilitate relevant road works. She further explained that there were valid reasons for having no workers working on the closed traffic lanes like during the testing of temporary traffic arrangements. In respect of the frequency of carrying out road safety inspections, she advised that it hinged on the manpower available. As such, HyD also relied on the public to report any fault cases through the government hotline 1823. She stressed that HyD had pledged to complete the repair of roads within 48 hours upon receipt of a complaint.

57. Mr TANG Ka-piu asked whether HyD would request contractors to carry out road inspections after a traffic accident. He was aware that a driver was recently injured in a traffic accident caused by a protruding sheet iron on a road. However, his complaint on the road defect was not properly dealt with by the Administration.

58. DDHy explained that HyD attached great importance on maintenance of road pavements to keep the road network in a safe and serviceable condition. Apart from safety inspections, HyD would also arrange repair to road defects by contractors as soon as possible after receipt of complaints. To monitor the performance of contractors, it would carry out spot checks on the maintenance work. Depending on the specific situation of traffic accidents, HyD might arrange contractors to inspect the road condition concerned.

59. Mr POON Siu-ping expressed support for the Administration's adoption of thermal patcher to repair defects of bituminous road pavements and the use of precast concrete panel to rectify concrete road pavements. He asked about the differences between adopting the above new technologies and the traditional methods for road maintenance in terms of cost and durability. He also enquired about the application of thermal patchers for road maintenance.

60. DDHy advised that the durability of repaired road surface adopting "hot-in-place recycling" technology and the traditional pavement reconstruction method was similar, whereas the cost of adopting the former was about 1.5-fold higher than that of the latter as relatively high initial cost

was involved for purchasing new machinery. In the long run, the cost difference between the two technologies was expected to be narrowed. She explained that in spite of the higher cost involved, "hot-in-place recycling" technology was still adopted for road maintenance due to its advantages like less noise to be generated during the construction process.

61. As regards the application of thermal patchers and "hot-in-place recycling" technology for road maintenance, DDHy advised that due to the busy traffic in Hong Kong, only limited time would normally be available for road maintenance. In view of the time needed to soften the road pavement, the adoption of "hot-in-place recycling" technology was only suitable for small scale road maintenance works. For large scale works and roads with bends, traditional pavement resurfacing method would be adopted.

62. CHE/R&D supplemented that the cost difference between using precast concrete panels and traditional concrete pavement repairing method hinged on the practical situation such as the size of concrete. Roughly speaking, the cost of the former could be two to five times the cost of the latter, depending on the complexity of works.

63. Mr Paul TSE noted that about three-quarters of the existing roads were paved with bituminous material while the remaining roads were paved with concrete. He asked whether it would be more cost effective to adopt only one kind of materials for road paving.

64. DDHy explained that the adoption of different kinds of materials for road pavement depended on various factors like traffic volume, speed, and environment. Generally speaking, concrete was suitable for use in roads under frequent stop and go or sharp manoeuvring of heavy vehicles due to its inert property and high material strength. These roads would be subject to wear and tear easily if bituminous material was used. Bituminous material could bring enhanced comfort to passengers due to its certain extent of elasticity and high flexibility, and was suitable for expressways. Since both concrete and bituminous pavements had their own advantages, they would be adopted as appropriate for road pavement according to the function and road circumstances.

65. Noting that the Administration had been trying to use noise reducing materials for paving low speed road, Mr CHAN Han-pan asked about the relevant trial result. He was also concerned about the differences between roads paved with noise reducing materials and that without in terms of durability.

66. DDHy said that HyD adopted porous friction course as the standard surfacing material for all expressways. Though the primary consideration was on road safety, porous friction course could serve the function of reducing noise generated by vehicle tyres. It was suitable for roads under free flow traffic, but not local roads under frequent stop and go or sharp manoeuvring of heavy vehicles as the rate of deterioration would be fast. She advised that the Environmental Protection Department was conducting a trial on the use of porous friction course on local roads in collaboration with HyD. There was not a conclusion at present.

Admin

67. Due to time limitation, the Administration agreed to provide information about the durability of noise reducing surfacing after the meeting.

68. Mr Tony TSE noted that the budget on maintenance of road pavements for 2014-2015 was comparable to the total expenditure for 2013-2014. He asked whether it was due to enhanced cost-effectiveness of road maintenance as more new roads were seen to be built. Mr WU Chi-wai, however, wondered whether less road maintenance works would be carried out in 2014-2015, as higher cost should be incurred for adoption of new technologies.

69. DDHy explained that the budget for 2014-2015 for maintenance of road pavements was just an estimate. The actual expenditure would depend on the situation of road defects and weather conditions. She explained that at present, the total length of Hong Kong's road network was approximately 2 100 kilometres, with about 20 some kilometres to be added in 2014-2015.

70. Mr Tony TSE further expressed concern that some manhole covers were placed at undesirable locations on the carriageways. As a result, much noise was generated and wheels were easily damaged when vehicles ran over them. He also asked whether HyD or contractors would be responsible for the maintenance of the diverted roads entailed by implementation of infrastructural projects. In reply, DDHy advised that contractors were responsible for maintenance of roads within the boundary of construction site.

71. In response to Mr WU Chi-wai's enquiry on the disposal of bituminous waste, CHE/R&D advised that after making reference to overseas experience and findings of local trials, the Administration had increased the allowable amount of recycled materials incorporated in bituminous materials from 15% to 30% for pavement resurfacing. Since there were many road construction projects implemented in recent years, the majority amount of bituminous waste had been reused.

72. The Chairman expressed concern over the uneven road surface paved by bituminous materials close to the entrance of Cross Harbour Tunnel, especially the lane for heavy vehicles. He suggested that the relevant road section should be paved with concrete which was more durable. The Administration noted his view.

VI Any other business

73. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 10:45 am.

Council Business Division 1
Legislative Council Secretariat
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