

The Legislative Council Meeting on 7 January 2015
Motion on “Expediently launching the Fourth Comprehensive Transport Study”

Progress Report

Purpose

At the Legislative Council meeting on 7 January 2015, the motion “Expediently launching the Fourth Comprehensive Transport Study” moved by Hon Frankie YICK Chi-ming, as amended by Hon TANG Ka-piu and Ir Dr Hon Lo Wai-kwok, was carried. The wording of the motion is at **Annex**. This paper briefs members on the follow-up actions taken by the Government on the motion.

Using railways as the backbone of the passenger transport system

2. At present, over 12 million passenger trips are using public transport in Hong Kong every day, accounting for over 90% of the total passenger trips. This percentage can be regarded as the highest in the world. We may look at the percentage in other major cities. In Singapore, the percentage of using public transport is around 65% during peak hours; in Shanghai, it is around 50%, in London and Tokyo, it is around 45% and in New York, it is around 30%. It is evident that the public transport system of Hong Kong is very well developed with high efficiency. One of the reasons is the accessibility and large carrying capacity of the railway system.

3. Rail transport can significantly speed up passenger flow, alleviate road traffic congestion and reduce road vehicle emissions, and is therefore a highly efficient and environment-friendly mode of transport. A railway network with comprehensive coverage will not only facilitate the daily commute and movement of the public and address their practical livelihood needs, but will also promote the development of the community and new development areas, bring economic opportunities and benefits, and strengthen the ties and integration among communities. For these reasons, the Government affirms the necessity and importance of continuing the role of railway as the backbone of the passenger transport system.

4. Five new railway projects are currently being implemented in full swing. They include the West Island Line, the Kwun Tong Line Extension, the South Island Line (East), the Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link (Hong Kong Section) (“XRL”), and the Shatin to Central Link. Among these, the West Island Line already opened in December 2014, with the terminus of the Island Line extended from Sheung Wan Station to Kennedy

Town Station via the HKU Station. Sai Ying Pun Station, the remaining station of the extension line, will be commissioned by end-March this year. As for the other four of the above projects, they are expected to be completed and commissioned one after the other from 2016 to around 2021. By then, the total length of the railways in Hong Kong will reach 270 km and the number of stations will increase to 99, covering areas inhabited by over 70% of the population.

5. Last September, the Government announced the Railway Development Strategy 2014, providing a framework for planning the next stage of expansion of Hong Kong's railway. Having regard to three premises, that is, the transport demand, cost-effectiveness and the development needs of new development areas and other new development projects, we recommend that seven new railway projects will be completed in the planning horizon up to 2031. These projects are the Northern Link and Kwu Tung Station, Tuen Mun South Extension, East Kowloon Line, Hung Shui Kiu Station, South Island Line (West), Tung Chung West Extension and North Island Line. Upon the completion of all the proposed new projects, the total length of the railways in Hong Kong will be increased to more than 300 km in 2031. By then, the railway network will cover areas inhabited by 75% of the local population and 85% of job opportunities.

6. Although railways form the backbone of the public transport system, other modes of public transport enjoy an edge by offering the flexibility of “point-to-point” service. Therefore, the other modes of public transport will continue to play different roles despite the further development of railways.

Public Transport Strategy Study

7. To this end, the Government will commence the Public Transport Strategy Study (“PTSS”) to enhance the respective roles and positioning of various public transport services other than railway and to ensure these services can complement each other in their functions. The objectives are to maintain quality and diversified services and to draw up strategies conducive to the healthy and sustainable development of the trades. In November 2014, the LegCo Panel on Transport (the Panel) was briefed on the work plan. The proposed creation of a supernumerary post of Principal Assistant Secretary for the implementation of the first part of work, namely the Role and Positioning Review under the PTSS was endorsed by the Establishment Subcommittee on 11 March 2015. Funding approval from the Finance Committee will be sought at a later time. Regarding the second part, namely the Topical Study, we will report to the Panel on individual topical issues progressively. We had already reported the findings of the Topical Study on franchised bus services at the Panel meeting in March 2015.

8. The Government has no plan to commence the Fourth Comprehensive Transport Study at this stage. After completion of the future planning of railways in Hong Kong, we consider it necessary to direct resources and give priority to the PTSS with a view to enhancing the positioning and roles of various public transport modes. There are a wide range of issues in relation to policy of public transport services. We will focus on issues with long-standing concerns or urgency for according priority as raised by the Legislative Council (“LegCo”) Members, the public transport trades and the public. The PTSS will not cover policies that have been working well or issues that can be effectively handled under the existing mechanisms. If an individual topic, whilst not being covered by the PTSS but is considered worth being studied further, we will suitably follow up separately and report to the LegCo as appropriate.

Planning of Highway Infrastructure

9. The Government has been conducting transport infrastructure planning and cross-boundary transport planning. The Transport Department (TD) and the Highways Department conduct regular reviews of the development of transport infrastructure in Hong Kong and strategic assessments on major highway developments. They will also use transport models and the latest planning data on a regular basis to forecast the traffic demand in the territory in order to update the need, scope and implementation timetable of various proposed major highway projects. The major highway infrastructure projects implemented by the Government in the past under this mechanism include Route 8 and the Hong Kong-Shenzhen Western Corridor which have already been completed, the Central-Wanchai Bypass and the Island Eastern Corridor Link, and the Tuen Mun-Chek Lap Kok Link which are under construction, as well as the Central Kowloon Route and the Tsueng Kwan O-Lam Tin Tunnel which are under planning.

10. Some time ago, the TD had completed two territory-wide transport surveys based on the latest population data and announced the findings of the Travel Characteristics Survey in last February. The TD is now updating the transport model according to the survey findings, which is expected to be completed within this year, to ensure that the planning parameters up to 2036 will be included in the transport forecast. This will enable the TD to make accurate projections on the territory-wide and regional transport needs, so that transport infrastructure strategies can be formulated promptly for planning and implementation of suitable highway infrastructure projects.

11. Major infrastructural projects necessitate the investment of substantial public funds by the Government. Thus, in the case of tunnels and bridges, the Government has been striving for recovery of operating and maintenance costs as well as reasonable rates of return from users of tunnels and bridges under the “user pays” principle. When reviewing tolls at

tunnels and bridges, the Government takes into account an array of factors, including the capacities of tunnels and bridges, the impact of toll rates on traffic throughput of nearby road networks and economic conditions, and public affordability and acceptability. We will continue to review tolls at tunnels and bridges in accordance with the existing mechanism.

Cross-boundary Transport

12. As for cross-boundary transport, we are now taking forward various construction projects on major land transport infrastructure and at border control points in full steam. The projects include, inter alia, the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge (“HZMB”), the XRL and the Liantang/Heung Yuen Wai Cross-boundary Control Point. Upon the completion of these projects, residents commuting to and from the Pearl River Delta Region will have more choices when travelling. In particular, the HZMB, the only direct land access connecting Hong Kong, Macao and Pearl River West, is expected to vigorously boost the flows of visitors and goods among the three places and promote economic growth. The Governments of Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao have started working together to examine cross-boundary transport policies and discuss specific cross-boundary transport arrangements with a view to formulating a set of arrangements catering to the needs of residents, visitors and the trades of the three places.

13. Upon completion, the XRL will provide high speed railway services between Hong Kong and Guangzhou and connect Hong Kong to the express rail link of the Mainland. It will enhance Hong Kong's connection with destinations in the whole of Mainland, which will have significant strategic meanings and transportation benefits.

14. Regarding the development of the Hong Kong International Airport, the Government announced on 17 March that there was a need for the three-runway system (3RS) for maintaining Hong Kong's competitiveness as a global and regional aviation hub, and for catering to our long-term economic and development needs. The Airport Authority Hong Kong (AAHK) will actively explore, in consultation with the Government, ways to facilitate the early implementation of the 3RS.

Growth in the Number of Vehicles

15. The Government has been closely monitoring the changes in the number of vehicles. In recent years, the number of private cars in Hong Kong has continued to grow, thereby making the limited roads in the territory even more congested and increasing the demand for parking spaces. To relieve traffic congestion and improve traffic flow, the TD enhances the effectiveness of traffic management through the intelligent transport system. For instances, the TD co-ordinates the operation of traffic signals through the Area Traffic Control to

minimise the number of vehicles stopping at signalised junctions so as to maintain the smooth traffic flow. We will continue to assess and study the introduction of new technologies so as to enhance the management and operation of the transportation system of Hong Kong with a view to enhancing traffic management and making use of the road surface more effectively. In addition, the Government is critically studying the Report on Study of Road Traffic Congestion in Hong Kong submitted by the Transport Advisory Committee last December and its recommendations and will respond at an appropriate juncture.

16. The policy of Government on parking provision is to provide an appropriate number of parking spaces to meet demand, but at a level which will not unduly encourage potential passengers to opt for private cars in lieu of public transport, thereby increasing the number of private cars and aggravating road traffic congestion. The Government will continue to monitor the demand and supply of parking spaces in Hong Kong, study and update the parking standard as appropriate and require developers to provide an appropriate number of parking spaces in development projects. The TD will, if necessary, add more on-street parking spaces at appropriate locations as long as road safety and other road users are not affected.

Environment-friendly Transport Measures

17. Not only have transport convenience and air quality become some of the crucial factors defining the quality and allure of living in a particular city, but they have also become issues of great concern to the public. Therefore, the Third Comprehensive Transport Study has affirmed that environmentally friendly transport is a key component of our transport policy. The railway is regarded as an important means of implementing environmentally friendly transport because it is driven by electricity and will not produce roadside emissions and pollution.

18. The Government strives to promote environmental improvement measures related to vehicular emissions. A \$300 million Pilot Green Transport Fund was set up in March 2011 to encourage the transport sector to use green and low-carbon innovative transport technologies on a trial basis, promote the use of electric vehicles in Hong Kong and expand the charging network. On 1 March last year, the current-term Government launched an \$11.4 billion ex-gratia payment scheme to phase out pre-Euro IV diesel commercial vehicles and limit the service life of diesel commercial vehicles registered on or after 1 February 2014 to 15 years. In April last year, a one-off subsidy scheme launched for the replacement of catalytic converters and oxygen sensors of petrol and liquefied petroleum gas (“LPG”) taxis and light buses by their owners was concluded. In addition, mobile remote sensing devices have been installed at the roadside since September last year to strengthen the regulation of emissions from LPG and petrol vehicles.

19. On franchised buses, the Government will continue to encourage the sector to use more environment-friendly vehicles where practicable. Since 2010, all the new buses procured by franchised bus companies have been of Euro V standard or above. Meanwhile, with subsidy from the Government, franchised bus companies have also retrofitted buses with equipment that can help enhance their emission performance and made use of hybrid and electric vehicles on a trial basis.

20. Furthermore, we will complement the efforts made by the Environment Bureau in promoting the use of electric vehicles, e.g. granting type approval for new types of electric vehicles, setting up chargers for electric vehicles at government car parks administered by the Transport Department, etc. However, the timing and vigour of such will hinge on the maturity of electric vehicle technology in the market. The premise is whether or not electric vehicles can provide stable and reliable public transport services. For the time being, we still need to conduct trial tests in a step-by-step manner and make the proper moves in a timely manner.

21. As the bicycle is an environment-friendly mode of transport suitable for short-distance commute, one of our policies is to develop a “bicycle-friendly city”. We will continue to vigorously take forward relevant initiatives in new towns and new development areas where implementation of the “bicycle-friendly” policy is deemed appropriate. For example, we are studying how to implement the new measures identified under the Tai Po pilot scheme in nine new towns, and reviewing the traffic conditions of bicycle prohibition zones across Hong Kong to identify any room for improvement. We will also make improvements to existing cycling tracks and parking facilities for bicycles, and step up publicity and educational activities to promote cycling safety.

22. In response to relevant demand and where actual circumstances and resources permit, the Government is actively taking forward the “Universal Accessibility” Programme to install barrier-free access facilities at public walkways (i.e. public footbridges, elevated walkways and subways maintained by the HyD). We are exerting all efforts to take forward more than 200 items, including lift retrofitting items for priority implementation at 54 public walkways selected by the 18 District Councils. As at end-February 2015, 10 items have been completed, and most of the remaining ones are expected to be completed by 2018 one after another.

Way Forward

23. All planning on transport infrastructure should be reviewed from time to time and kept abreast of the times. Take the Railway Development Strategy 2014 as an example, when it comes to the detailed planning of individual railway projects, we will adopt the latest

planning data and thoroughly examine the alignment and locations of stations, etc. of the projects, trying to fully utilise the development potential of the relevant sites. We will also respond to changes in the development parameters of different districts and promptly consider whether it is necessary to plan new transport infrastructure.

24. We understand that the expansion of the railway network will inevitably affect other public transport services. As such, we consider it necessary to conduct a systematic assessment on the strategic arrangement of other public transport services for the purpose of formulating long-term policies and planning. The views of the industries and other stakeholders will be fully taken account of in the process.

25. Development projects, housing or otherwise, will bring about changes to traffic conditions of districts. Instead of waiting for a Comprehensive Transport Study, we will keep track of the changes in transport demand in major districts and make assessment expeditiously. For example, in the light of prospective new development plans for Northwest and North New Territories as well as for Lantau, we will examine the feasibility and desirability of new transport infrastructure (including railways and roads) or upgrading or improvement works to the existing ones to meet the additional transport demand. In the process, we will make reference to the latest planning parameters, closely examine the actual traffic volume and condition and pay heed to the views of local residents and experts.

Transport and Housing Bureau
March 2015

(Translation)

**Motion on
“Expeditiously launching the Fourth Comprehensive Transport Study”
moved by Hon Frankie YICK
at the Council meeting of 7 January 2015**

Motion as amended by Hon TANG Ka-piu and Ir Dr Hon LO Wai-kwok

That, since the Government conducted the Third Comprehensive Transport Study, the rapid socio-economic development, the continuous growth in Hong Kong’s population and inbound visitors, the development and expansion of new towns, and the increasingly frequent cross-boundary activities, etc. have all led to changes in and continuous increase in the public demand for transport services, but on the premise of using railways as the backbone of the passenger transport system, other public transport services are considered to have retrogressed and are marginalized, resulting not only in an imbalance between the supply of and demand for such services but also the pressure to increase fares, and hence causing continuous increase in the transport expenses of the public; at the same time, with the Government encouraging the public to fully utilize railway services, the income of employees engaging in other public transport services is seriously affected; the Government used Hong Kong as the only base for the past three comprehensive transport studies, with no consideration given to the cross-boundary transportation needs in terms of passenger flow or vehicular flow brought about by the further integration between Hong Kong and China, and the development of transport infrastructure facilities (such as parking facilities) is also unable to resolve the problem of large growth in vehicle numbers; as for the promotion of the environmentally-friendly transport policy (including the pedestrian linkage systems and the policy on the use of bicycles, etc.) and the Intelligent Transport Systems, progress has been slow; in this connection, this Council urges the Government to expeditiously launch the Fourth Comprehensive Transport Study to comprehensively review the overall transport policy and the situation at present, and apart from formulating measures to enable various modes of public transport to develop in a sustainable and healthy manner in tandem with the continuous expansion of railways, to also formulate a forward-looking and long-term transport development blueprint, which includes conducting a review of the tolls of all tunnels and bridges, having regard to future town planning, development of industries and land use, etc., with a view to continuously perfecting the transport system as a whole, promoting Hong Kong’s economic development, ensuring a more stable income for employees engaging in other public transport services and providing the public with better and more efficient transport services; this Council also urges the Government to formulate

measures to perfect the mass transit network, and conduct a review of the distribution of and arrangement for road usage, with a view to ensuring proper and orderly implementation of the related transport infrastructure planning and projects according to their priorities.