

To :
Legislative Council of Hong Kong
Panel on Transport
(Attn. Miss Doris Lo)

CAN's response to car park policy

1) The demand for parking: How much is enough? Each car owner would theoretically need three parking spaces per car:

1. Parking at home
2. Parking at workplace
3. Parking at leisure areas (e.g. shopping malls)

In 2016, the ratio of parking space to a vehicle is 1.13, according to the demands above; we question whether there a need to increase the mentioned ratio from 1.13 to 3 in order to satisfy the current demand.

2) Unlimited increase in parking spaces: lose-lose for all

In 2016 there are 662,000 individual car parking spaces for private cars, by adhering to the standard car parking space of 5 m x 2.5 m, this means that 8,725,000 m² of land are used for this purpose.

If the ratio of parking space to vehicle increases from 1.13 to 2, given that the number of private vehicles remains the same, the land space used will increase to 14,646,000 m², this means that an additional 592 Ha of land will be used for parking, which is equivalent to the size of more than two Kwai Chung container terminals.



(photo credit: Chiajungjoey Lee)

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Even though the construction of multistory car parks by the government could potentially decrease the land area used for parking, some of these car parks have low levels of usage (less than 50%). For example, the public car park at the Hong Kong City Hall has a low-level usage of 37%, hence we would challenge whether or not this is a form of efficient land-use planning.

At the same time, the location of new car parking spaces is crucial. If they are placed in remote areas, there will be low levels of usage, but when they are placed in the city center, this would not only use up large amounts of valuable land but also bring higher volumes of traffic, causing congestion and poorer air quality.

3) Addressing the root problem: the need for a fourth Comprehensive Transport Study

The issue of insufficient car parking spaces is caused by the uncontrolled increase in the number of vehicles on road, which led to the failures in urban planning to meet the continuous demand in car parking spaces. The discourse on the lack of parking spaces has led to a focus in other transport management practices, such as putting more manpower by the police to deal with double-parking plague as solutions to contemporary traffic concerns. However, these only offer short-term relief to the existing traffic problems as the root cause of the problem has not been addressed.

In order to face population increase and demands, as well as the future development of the city, the Government should provide a clear blueprint for the long-term sustainable management of the city. By controlling the growth of vehicle numbers and traffic mileages as well as actively encouraging forms of 'Active Travel' such as walking and cycling, promoting the idea of healthy transportation. These will not only help reduce the demands of land (such as road space and parking space), the damaging effects of poor air quality as well as address the increasing medical demands due to population aging and lack of long-term exercise.

It has been 18 years since the introduction of the last Comprehensive Transport Study (1999) and we have already passed its projection period of 2016, hence current policies lack specifics due to the lack of an up-to-date transport development framework. Thus as we enter 2018, we urge the government to begin the Fourth Comprehensive Transport Study as soon as possible.

4) Suggestions for policy:

- We should address the root problems and set up the target of lowering car mileage through strategies such as low emission zones and electronic road pricing to reduce the desire to drive, and evaluate whether the city can support a 4% growth per annum in the number of cars and the resulting demand for more parking spaces;
- Adjust the current parking ratio with a continual decrease in private car parking spaces and a temporary increase in commercial vehicle parking at suitable locations;

Chapter 11 (Urban Design Guidelines) of the "Hong Kong Planning Standards and Guidelines" shows that the overall intention of standards of current parking standards for residential developments is "to ensure that subject to road capacity considerations, future residential developments should have sufficient parking provision to match the car ownership of residents".

However, roads in Hong Kong can no longer support any further vehicle growth or pressure, we should consider amending current parking provision guidelines for residential developments to decrease the space used for parking, which could be utilized as residential/ green spaces.

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- The introduction of Park and Ride schemes: A questionnaire conducted on drivers by Clean Air Network finds that 40% of respondents are willing to adopt 'Active Travel', namely walk or cycle 1-3 kilometers to substitute for mechanized travel. Therefore, the government should actively promote 'Active Travel' as this would not only decrease congestion and parking in the Central district but also improve the health of the citizens and reduce air pollution.

Clean Air Network
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