

**To: The Panel on Transport
Legislative Council of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region**

Re: LC Paper No. [CB\(4\)490/17-18](#)

Civic Exchange Response to the Progress of Implementation of Measures under the Public Transport Strategy Study

17 January 2018 – Civic Exchange welcomes the opportunity to comment as the Legislative Council holds a special meeting on 22 January 2018 to discuss the implementation of the Public Transport Strategy Study (PTSS).¹

The PTSS observes that the current public transport system has generally been working well. “Operating on a commercial basis, public transport operators are able to maintain efficient and quality service, while providing multimodal choices for the community.”²

However, the PTSS falls short in defining a larger vision or strategy for public transport, especially in light of recent advancements in China and around the world, in areas such as electric bus fleets. Hong Kong needs a systematic assessment of the changing transport operating environment, private car growth, increasing congestion, availability of new technology, impact on road emissions, and payment systems.

Civic Exchange encourages the Government to prioritise public health considerations as it looks towards implementing the PTSS. This may include discussions on roadside emissions, air quality, walkability, and accessibility for the aged and disabled. Civic Exchange also calls for more inter-bureaux cooperation. The implementation of transport policy could include ideas proposed in several studies, such as the “Smart Mobility” segment of the “Smart City Blueprint”³ and the “Clean Air Plan”.⁴

Complementarity / Inter-modal Coordination

Railway is an integral part of Hong Kong’s public transport system, with close to 50% market share, but has not been sufficiently studied in the PTSS, which purports to examine the roles and positioning of various public transport services and to explore service adjustments needed to ensure the long-term and healthy development of the public transport services. Generally missing are aspects of inter-modality between various transport modes, such that the land transport ecosystem may improve journey experience and network resilience.

¹ [“Public Transport Strategy Study,”](#) June 2017, Transport and Housing Bureau

² Ibid.

³ [“Smart City Blueprint,”](#) December 2017, Innovation and Technology Bureau

⁴ [“Clean Air Plan for Hong Kong, 2013-17,”](#) Environment Bureau

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Long-term Sustainability of Public Transport Modes

There is limited deliberation on long-term sustainability with the various public transport operators. With the commissioning of new railway lines, franchised bus companies have been losing passengers, but are not able to reorganise the network to same extent due to local objections. With the planned opening of the MTR's Shatin to Central Link in 2019, the entire cross-harbour bus market will be affected, which currently cross-subsidises the rest of the network for KMB and New World First Bus (NWFB)/Citybus. The PTSS should have addressed how bus companies can operate a commercially sustainable operation in light of such changes. For example, if they have to rely on fare increases, it may result in more people shifting to private transport.

Efficient Operation and Traffic Congestion

Policy should be used to address congestion and other detrimental impacts of increasing private car usage. Controlling these can lead to immense benefits for all road-based public transport (including light rail and tram). There is credible data available from all road-based operators on how their operating speeds have changed over past few years through urban corridors. Illegal parking and lax enforcement are other areas which severely affect the efficiency of public transport operations.

Conclusion

Transport is a complex issue, but an important aspect of Hong Kong residents' social and economic wellbeing. The Government should reconsider its decision to forego the long overdue Comprehensive Transport Study for Hong Kong. Hong Kong needs a comprehensive study that provides a holistic look for the entire transport landscape, especially in light of technological advancements. Civic Exchange recommends a policy vision for Hong Kong that will allow us to maintain the mantle of one of the most efficient transport systems in the world.

About Us

Civic Exchange is a non-partisan, public policy think-tank with a vision to shape a liveable and sustainable Hong Kong. We conduct research on the urban environment, including on issues like transport and mobility.

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