

香港特別行政區政府
The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region

政府總部
運輸及房屋局
運輸科
香港添馬添美道 2 號
政府總部東翼



Transport and
Housing Bureau
Government Secretariat
Transport Branch
East Wing, Central Government Offices,
2 Tim Mei Avenue,
Tamar, Hong Kong
電話 Tel. No.: 3509 8192
傳真 Fax No.: 3904 1774

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By Fax: 2840 0716

24 December 2018

Ms Sophie LAU
Clerk to Panel on Transport
Legislative Council Secretariat
Legislative Council Complex
1 Legislative Council Road
Central
Hong Kong

Dear Ms LAU,

Panel on Transport

**Motions on "Rationalisation of Traffic Distribution Among
Three Road Harbour Crossings and Three Land Tunnels between
Kowloon and Sha Tin and Other Tunnel-related Proposals"
Passed at the Meeting on 16 November 2018**

Thank you for your letter dated 19 November 2018. Our response to the two motions passed at the special meeting on 16 November 2018 is set out below.

Traffic congestion at the road harbour crossings ("RHCs") needs to be tackled immediately. The weekday morning peak-hour traffic demands for Cross-Harbour Tunnel ("CHT") and Eastern Harbour

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Crossing ("EHC") have already significantly exceeded their respective design capacities by 77% and 38% respectively, causing long traffic queues on their connecting roads and affecting non-cross-harbour traffic.

Currently, the week-day morning (southbound) and evening (northbound) traffic of Western Harbour Crossing ("WHC") are respectively 10% and 14% below its design capacity of 118,000 vehicles per day. However, the use of spare capacity of WHC is constrained by congestion on its connecting roads in Central and Sheung Wan. With the imminent commissioning of Central - Wan Chai Bypass and Island Eastern Corridor Link in early 2019, the traffic conditions on these connecting roads of WHC will improve, allowing WHC to absorb traffic diverted from CHT and EHC.

The Government proposed the toll adjustment proposal for the three RHCs according to the findings of the consultancy study commissioned by the Transport Department ("TD"). The proposed prescribed toll levels are based on a transport numerical model with sound scientific basis and large amount of data analysed. The consultant has projected traffic volumes under various toll scenarios for different tunnels to study their interactions, before proposing the optimum toll adjustments for rationalising traffic distribution among the three RHCs.

The toll adjustment proposal is expected to bring about the following four benefits –

- (i) Effectively alleviating cross-harbour traffic congestion: The proposal is expected to shorten the aggregated peak-hour traffic queues on the connecting roads of CHT and EHC by 10% to over 40%, and reduce the tunnel travelling time by as much as 13 minutes.
- (ii) Reducing the impact on non-cross-harbour vehicles and passengers: The proposal would shorten the traffic queues on the connecting roads of CHT and EHC, releasing many

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traffic junctions which are currently obstructed by cross-harbour traffic queues. This would reduce the impact on non-cross-harbour traffic, including a large number of daily passengers of public transport.

- (iii) Freezing the toll levels of WHC: Under the proposed WHC Toll Compensation Scheme, from 2020 until the expiry of the WHC franchise, drivers of private cars and motorcycles as well as taxi passengers would only be required to pay prescribed tolls, thereby relieving them from the pressure of WHC toll increase.
- (iv) Overall benefit to society: Currently, there are about 600,000 passenger trips per day crossing the harbour by franchised buses. The proposal will make road traffic flow smoother, not only bringing convenience to motorists, but also reducing the commuting time of many citizens who use public transport. The proposal is expected to generate about \$800 million of social cost savings per year, and reduce carbon dioxide emission from vehicles by about 3,800 tonnes per year, which is equivalent to the effects of air quality improvement by planting 160,000 trees.

We understand that there are views that the proposal should be amended by, for example, lowering the magnitudes of the proposed toll increases for CHT and EHC, or adjusting the tolls of CHT and EHC with an incremental approach. According to the results of the detailed analyses of various toll scenarios carried out by the consultant, these suggestions would not be practicable because they could result in traffic congestion at EHC being worse than not making any toll adjustments, or lengthen traffic queues at WHC to such extents that could obstruct non-cross-harbour traffic.

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The Government will continue to explain the toll adjustment proposal to the public through various channels. TD has also uploaded the consultancy report and analyses of other toll scenarios onto its dedicated website (https://www.td.gov.hk/en/benefit_traffic_dist_3hc/index.html) for public reference.

Yours sincerely,



(Adrian LAM)
for Secretary for Transport and Housing

c.c.

Hon CHAN Han-pan, SBS, JP
Transport Department

(Chairman of the Panel)
(Attn: Mr Samson LAM)