

立法會

Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(4)280/19-20
(These minutes have been
seen by the Administration)

Ref : CB4/PL/TP/1

Panel on Transport

**Minutes of policy briefing cum meeting
held on Friday, 25 October 2019, at 10:45 am
in Conference Room 1 of the Legislative Council Complex**

Members present : Hon Frankie YICK Chi-ming, SBS, JP (Chairman)
Hon CHAN Han-pan, BBS, JP (Deputy Chairman)
Hon Tommy CHEUNG Yu-yan, GBS, JP
Hon Jeffrey LAM Kin-fung, GBS, JP
Hon CHAN Hak-kan, BBS, JP
Hon WONG Kwok-kin, SBS, JP
Hon Paul TSE Wai-chun, JP
Hon Claudia MO
Hon Michael TIEN Puk-sun, BBS, JP
Hon YIU Si-wing, BBS
Hon MA Fung-kwok, SBS, JP
Hon Charles Peter MOK, JP
Hon CHAN Chi-chuen
Hon LEUNG Che-cheung, SBS, MH, JP
Dr Hon Helena WONG Pik-wan
Hon Elizabeth QUAT, BBS, JP
Hon POON Siu-ping, BBS, MH
Dr Hon CHIANG Lai-wan, SBS, JP
Ir Dr Hon LO Wai-kwok, SBS, MH, JP
Hon Alvin YEUNG
Hon Andrew WAN Siu-kin
Hon CHU Hoi-dick
Dr Hon Junius HO Kwan-yiu, JP
Hon HO Kai-ming

Hon LAM Cheuk-ting
Hon SHIU Ka-fai, JP
Hon Wilson OR Chong-shing, MH
Hon Tanya CHAN
Hon LUK Chung-hung, JP
Hon LAU Kwok-fan, MH
Hon Kenneth LAU Ip-keung, BBS, MH, JP
Hon Jeremy TAM Man-ho
Hon Gary FAN Kwok-wai
Hon AU Nok-hin
Hon Vincent CHENG Wing-shun, MH, JP
Hon Tony TSE Wai-chuen, BBS
Hon CHAN Hoi-yan

Members attending : Hon WU Chi-wai, MH
Hon KWONG Chun-yu

Members absent : Hon Abraham SHEK Lai-him, GBS, JP
Dr Hon Priscilla LEUNG Mei-fun, SBS, JP
Hon Mrs Regina IP LAU Suk-ye, GBS, JP
Dr Hon CHENG Chung-tai

Public officers attending : **Agenda item IV**

Mr Frank CHAN Fan, JP
Secretary for Transport and Housing

Mr Joseph LAI Yee-tak, JP
Permanent Secretary for Transport and Housing
(Transport)

Dr SO Wai-man, BBS, JP
Under Secretary for Transport and Housing

Ms Sharon YIP LEE Hang-ye, JP
Deputy Secretary for Transport and Housing
(Transport)¹

Mr Kevin CHOI, JP
Deputy Secretary for Transport and Housing
(Transport) 2

Ms Ivy LAW Chui-mei, JP
Deputy Secretary for Transport and Housing
(Transport)3

Ms Mable CHAN, JP
Commissioner for Transport

Mr Jimmy CHAN Pai-ming, JP
Director of Highways

Clerk in attendance : Ms Sophie LAU
Chief Council Secretary (4)2

Staff in attendance : Ms Angela CHU
Senior Council Secretary (4)2

Ms Jacqueline LAW
Council Secretary (4)2

Miss Mandy LAM
Legislative Assistant (4)2

Action

I. Election of the Deputy Chairman

The Chairman invited nominations for the deputy chairmanship of the Panel on Transport ("the Panel") for the 2019-2020 legislative session. Ms Claudia MO nominated Mr LAM Cheuk-ting and the nomination was seconded by Mr Jeremy TAM Man-ho. Mr LAM accepted the nomination. Mr HO Kai-ming nominated Mr CHAN Han-pan and the nomination was seconded by Dr CHIANG Lai-wan. Mr CHAN accepted the nomination.

2. As there was no other nomination, the Chairman announced that voting be conducted by secret ballot. After all members had cast their votes, the Chairman invited Ms Claudia MO and Mr HO Kai-ming who had nominated the respective two candidates to monitor the counting of votes.

The Chairman announced that 11 members had voted for Mr LAM Cheuk-ting and 16 members had voted for Mr. CHAN Han-pan, and declared that Mr CHAN was elected as the Deputy Chairman of the Panel for the 2019-2020 session.

II. Information paper(s) issued since the meeting on 17 May 2019

- | | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| LC Paper No. CB(4)233/18-19(01) | - Administration's response to item 1 of the Panel's List of follow-up actions regarding "Trunk Road T2 and Cha Kwo Ling Tunnel - construction" raised at the meeting on 15 June 2018 |
| LC Paper No. CB(4)406/18-19(01) | - Administration's response to item 2 of the Panel's List of follow-up actions regarding "6101TX - "Universal Accessibility" raised at the meeting on 16 November 2018 |
| LC Paper No. CB(4)759/18-19(01) | - Administration's response to the letter from Hon Jeremy TAM Man-ho requesting to improve the working hours of bus drivers |
| LC Paper No. CB(4)818/18-19(01) | - Administration's response to the letter from Dr Hon Elizabeth QUAT requesting to improve the traffic light design on Tai Chung Kiu Road |
| LC Paper No. CB(4)857/18-19(01) | - Administration's response to item 7 of the Panel's List of follow-up actions regarding "Fare increase application by New Lantao Bus Co. (1973) Limited" discussed at the |

meeting on 15 March 2019

- LC Paper No. CB(4)878/18-19(01) - Administration's response to item 8 of the Panel's List of follow-up actions regarding "Fare increase application for taxi" raised at the meeting on 15 March 2019
- LC Paper No. CB(4)879/18-19(01) - Administration's response to two motions passed under the agenda item "Fare increase application for taxi" at the meeting on 26 April 2019
- LC Paper No. CB(4)887/18-19(01) - Administration's response to the submission from a member of public on providing barrier-free access facilities connecting Wah Sing Street and Kwai Hing MTR Station
- LC Paper No. CB(4)899/18-19(01) - Administration's response to the letter from Dr Hon Elizabeth QUAT requesting to increase parking space in Ma On Shan
- LC Paper No. CB(4)924/18-19(01) - Administration's response to the letter from Hon Au Nok-hin requesting information on recent tram accidents
- LC Paper No. CB(4)938/18-19(01) - Administration's response to the joint letter from Hon Jeremy TAM Man-ho, Dr Hon KWOK Ka-ki, Hon Tanya CHAN and Hon Alvin YEUNG on the work shift allocation system of

Kowloon Motor Bus
Company (1933) Limited

- LC Paper No. CB(4)960/18-19(01) - Administration's response to item 11 of the Panel's List of follow-up actions regarding "Reconstruction of Pak Kok Pier on Lamma Island" raised at the meeting on 17 May 2019
- LC Paper No. CB(4)973/18-19(01) - Administration's response to the letter from Hon CHU Hoi-dick requesting information on fare increase application by New Lantao Bus Co. (1973) Limited
- LC Paper No. CB(4)980/18-19(01) - Administration's response to item 4 of the Panel's List of follow-up actions regarding "Free-flow Tolling System for Tseung-Kwan-O – Lam Tin Tunnel and other Government Tolled-Tunnels and Roads" raised at the meeting on 18 January 2019
- LC Paper No. CB(4)1103/18-19(01) - Administration's response to item 9 of the Panel's List of follow-up actions regarding "Road Safety Audit and Road Safety Check" raised at the meeting on 26 April 2019
- LC Paper No. CB(4)1105/18-19(01) - Administration's response to the letter from Hon Jeremy TAM Man-ho requesting information on waiting time of driving test of non-commercial vehicles

- LC Paper No. CB(4)1072/18-19(01) - Administration's response to item 3 of the Panel's List of follow-up actions regarding "The Review of Assessment Mechanism for Hillside Escalator Links and Elevator Systems Proposals" raised at the meeting on 14 December 2018
- LC Paper No. CB(4)1075/18-19(01) - Administration's response to the joint letter from Hon CHAN Han-pan and Hon Frankie YICK Chi-ming on requesting the Government to regulate the installation of camera systems in taxi compartments
- LC Paper No. CB(4)1110/18-19(01) - Administration's Information paper on "Smart Mobility Initiatives Relating to Road Transport"
- LC Paper No. CB(4)1122/18-19(01) - Administration's response to item 5 of the Panel's List of follow-up actions regarding "Delayed submission of the Request for Inspection and Survey Checking Forms by the contractor of the Hong Kong Link Road of the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge" raised at the meeting on 15 February 2019
- LC Paper No. CB(4)1192/18-19(01) - Administration's response to a motion passed on agenda item "Fare increase applications by Kowloon Motor Bus Company (1933) Limited and Long Win Bus Company Limited" at the

meeting on 15 February 2019

LC Paper No. CB(4)1197/18-19(01) - Administration's response to item 12 of the Panel's List of follow-up actions regarding "Latest situation on increasing the provision of car parking spaces" raised at the meeting on 17 May 2019

LC Paper No. CB(4)1216/18-19(01) - Administration's response to item 6 of the List of follow-up actions regarding "Replacement of traffic control and surveillance systems and other systems in government tunnels" raised at the meeting on 15 March 2019

3. Members noted the above papers issued since the meeting on 17 May 2019.

III. Items for discussion at the next meeting

Appendix V to LC Paper No. CB(4)4/19-20 - List of outstanding items for discussion

Appendix VI to LC Paper No. CB(4)4/19-20 - List of follow-up actions

4. Members agreed to discuss the following items at the next regular meeting to be held on 15 November 2019:

- (a) 6101TX – "Universal Accessibility" Programme; and
- (b) Outlying island ferry services.

5. Having noted that some MTR stations had been closed and railway services suspended in the vicinity of the staging of public order events recently, Ms Claudia MO requested discussing the provision of railway services and operations as early as practicable.

6. Mr LAM Cheuk-ting suggested discussing the utilization and operation of the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge ("HZMB"). He said that there was a great discrepancy in the actual usage of HZMB since its commissioning in October 2018 vis-à-vis the earlier traffic forecast provided by the Administration. He also expressed concern over the imbalance of revenue and expenditure during the operational stage of HZMB given its low utilization, and invited the Administration to brief the Panel in this regard.

7. The Chairman indicated that he and the Deputy Chairman would meet with the Secretary for Transport and Housing ("STH") in early November 2019 to discuss the work plan of the Panel for the current session. Members' suggestions would be brought up at the meeting.

8. At the juncture of 11:01 am, a dispute arose between Mr AU Nok-hin and Dr CHIANG Lai-wan over the election of Deputy Chairman of the Panel. Mr Gary FAN raised a point of order and requested the Chairman to rule that the expression used by Dr CHIANG towards Mr AU was offensive and insulting. The Chairman decided that both Mr AU and Dr CHIANG had used the same expression, and called for members' cooperation to maintain order at the meeting to ensure that the business on the agenda could be transacted in an efficient manner.

IV. Briefing by the Secretary for Transport and Housing on the Chief Executive's 2019 Policy Address

LC Paper No. CB(4)13/19-20(01) - Administration's paper on Transport-related Policy Initiatives in 2019 Policy Address

Other relevant documents

The Chief Executive's 2019 Policy Address

The Chief Executive's 2019 Policy Address Supplement

Briefing by the Administration

9. At the invitation of the Chairman, STH briefed members on the policy initiatives relevant to land and waterborne transport for the coming year as set out in the 2019 Policy Address and Policy Address Supplement. Details of STH's briefing were set out in the Administration's paper (LC Paper No. CB(4)13/19-20(01)).

Discussion

10. The Chairman reminded members that in accordance with Rule 83A of the Rules of Procedure, a member should not speak on any matters in which he/she had a direct or indirect pecuniary interest in any committee, except where he/she disclosed the nature of that interest.

Railway projects proposed in the Railway Development Strategy 2014 ("RDS 2014")

11. Members noted that amongst the seven railway lines proposed in RDS 2014, the Administration would only commence detailed planning and design for the Tung Chung Line Extension, Tuen Mun South Extension and the Northern Link in the coming year. Mr Wilson OR and Mr WU Chi-wai asked when the proposed Kowloon East Line would be taken forward. Mr OR opined that the East Kowloon Line could help relieve the road traffic congestion in Kwun Tong District.

12. STH replied that the seven railway projects proposed in the RDS 2014, including the proposed East Kowloon Line, had different degrees of complexities. The proposed East Kowloon Line would have to run through hilly terrains between Kwun Tong and Tseung Kwan O areas, the railway stations would have to be located at deeper underground strata and connected by longer adits. The design and planning of the East Kowloon Line were thus more complicated and protracted. At the request of Mr Wilson OR, STH would provide a written response in respect of its plan and timetable to take forward the East Kowloon Line.

Admin

13. Mr WU Chi-wai suggested the construction of monorail system running through the Kai Tak Development area and Kowloon Bay, Ngau Tau Kok, Kwun Tong and Yau Tong regions to alleviate the pressure on MTR Kwun Tong line. STH said that in taking forward any railway project, the Administration would need to consider the project's technical feasibility, financial sustainability and also its impact on the environment.

14. The Deputy Chairman said that the Democratic Alliance for the Betterment and Progress of Hong Kong had proposed the construction of Tuen Mun to Tsuen Wan Link to alleviate the congestion problem of the New Territories West region, but the proposal was not adopted by the Administration. He enquired whether the Administration would reconsider this option given the projected increase in population arising from housing development projects in the New Territory West regions, and that the West Rail Line had already reached its full capacity. STH replied that the Tuen Mun to Tseun Wan Link proposal required thorough review and consultation, and the Administration might revisit the proposal again when exploring the feasibility of the Artificial Islands in the Central Waters under the East Lantau Metropolis development initiative.

15. Ms Elizabeth QUAT enquired about measures to alleviate the congestion problem in the New Territories East region. STH replied that with the commissioning of the Tuen Ma Line Phase 1 in the first quarter of 2020, passenger traffic from the East Rail Line and Ma On Shan Line would be effectively diverted. In addition, franchised bus operators had committed to enhance bus service frequency during peak hours.

16. Having regard to the delay problem and quality issues of some railway projects implemented by the MTR Corporation Limited ("MTRCL"), Mr LEUNG Che-cheung asked whether MTRCL would undertake the construction of the three railway extension projects concurrently, and the Administration's monitoring role in this regard. Mr LEUNG also asked whether the Administration would adopt the rail-plus-property development model for providing the necessary funding for these projects.

17. STH replied that the Administration was going to request MTRCL to commence detailed planning and design for the three railway lines in the coming year with a view to advancing the projects as early as practicable. As to what approach was to be used for providing financial support to the projects, STH said that the issue was yet to be determined. The Administration would explore the feasibility of setting up a new department specifically tasked to handle and supervise railway planning and delivery matters for enhancing efficiency and coordination.

18. In this connection, Mr Michael TIEN and Mr POON Siu-ping enquired whether staff from relevant works departments which were responsible for implementing railway projects, such as the Highways Department ("HyD"), the Electrical and Mechanical Services Department and the Buildings Department and so forth, be seconded to the new

department. Both members also asked when the new department would be set up and whether its ambit be extended to oversee also railway operations after the railway projects were fully commissioned.

19. STH replied that the aim of setting up the new department was to enhance the Government's capability in the supervision and monitoring of railway projects. Relevant staff responsible for implementing railway projects would be deployed in discharging their supervisory duties on the projects. The Administration targeted to implement the recommendations of the study in setting up the new department in tandem with the implementation of the railway projects proposed in RDS 2014.

Special Helping Measures ("SHM") to outlying island ferry routes

20. Referring to the policy initiative of extending SHM to eight other outlying island ferry routes, Mr LEUNG Che-cheung questioned why SHM were not extended to "kaito" ferry services as residents living in outlying islands relied heavily on "kaito" for inter-islands travelling. Some "kaito" was the sole service provider for the routes. In response, Deputy Secretary for Transport and Housing (Transport)² said that the Administration maintained an open mind on the inclusion of "kaito" routes in SHM provided that these services were essential in nature, provided on a regular basis and that "kaito" service providers could submit periodic financial and operational reports of the services to the Administration.

21. Quoting from an information paper provided by the Administration in 2016 in respect of the measures in enhancing the financial viability of outlying island ferry services (LC Paper No. CB(4)108/16-17(05)), Mr CHU Hoi-dick asked whether the present Vessel Subsidy Scheme ("VSS") under which the Administration would replace the fleets of 11 ferry routes involving some 47 new vessels was intended to reduce the operating costs of ferry service providers by procuring new fleets on their behalf, or for the Government to procure their own new fleets and outsource the service to ferry service providers. Mr CHU also commented that it was crucial for the subsidies to be used to enhance ferry service quality, such as increasing service frequency, rather than subsidizing the ferry service operations. In addition, he suggested the Administration fully gauging the views of relevant stakeholders, including the Islands District Council ("DC") on the proposals.

22. STH replied that the Administration had consulted relevant stakeholders on different options. The present VSS was launched having regard to the views received, including views expressed by the Panel. The Administration had no intention to change the established policy that public

transport services should be run by the private sector in accordance with commercial principles to enhance efficiency and cost-effectiveness and that the fleets procured were not intended to be Government fleets. Besides, the new vessels to be procured would be greener vessels equipped with International Maritime Organization Tier III engines and made with light-weight material such as aluminium and carbon fibre. Under the VSS, hybrid vessels would also be procured for trial. More hybrid vessels would be procured in the second phase of the VSS if the trial was successful. The VSS would promote the development of a green city. STH added that the Administration would consult the Panel and stakeholders on details of SHM and VSS as soon as possible.

23. Mr Jeremy TAM urged the Administration to keep in view the change in fares of outlying island ferry services as well as their service quality after the SHM and VSS had been launched. STH took note of Mr TAM's suggestion.

24. In response to the Chairman's enquiry, STH clarified that the replacement of fleets for the 11 ferry routes under the VSS did not include the routes operated by the "Star" Ferry Company Limited, which was wrongly reported in local newspapers.

Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge ("HZMB") and Tuen-Mun-Chek Lap Kok Link ("TM-CLKL")

25. Ms Tanya CHAN and Mr LAM Cheuk-ting expressed serious concern about the low utilization of HZMB and criticized that the project was a white elephant project with little economic contributions to Hong Kong. They said that actual usage of HZMB since its commissioning in October 2018 was only about 4 100 vehicular flow per day, which was far below the earlier forecast of 9 200 – 14 000 vehicular flow daily provided by the Administration. Given the huge capital investment of HZMB and its related infrastructure, both members questioned how the Administration could recover the construction cost and pay the repair and maintenance expenses. In addition, they worried that the commissioning of the Shenzhen-Zhongshan Bridge ("SZB") in 2023 would further divert the traffic flow of HZMB.

26. STH said that HZMB was a major and long-term infrastructural development aiming at fostering a closer connection between Hong Kong, Macao and the western part of the Mainland. Its economic benefits to be brought about to Hong Kong would take time to realize. The coverages of HZMB and SZB were different and the SZB had its own planning

considerations. In respect of the low utilization of HZMB at the initial stage, STH explained that since the Tsing Ma Bridge was the only road network linking the airport island with other parts of Hong Kong, the Administration had been cautious in managing the traffic in the nearby areas including the Hong Kong Port of HZMB. In this connection, the Administration controlled the number of quotas issued for Hong Kong private cars accessing Macao or Zhuhai via HZMB. With the commissioning of TM-CLKL Northern Connection by end 2020, which would provide an alternative route to the airport island, the Administration would then assess the traffic flow in the vicinity of the airport island and gradually increase the number of quotas for private cars using HZMB. As regards matters relating to the financial arrangement for the construction of HZMB and its related operation and maintenance expenses, STH said that such matters were being managed by the HZMB Authority.

27. Mr CHU Hoi-dick expressed worry that traffic burden to Hong Kong road networks would be further aggravated if the number of quotas for cross-boundary traffic were to be increased.

28. Mr SHIU Ka-fai and Mr YIU Si-wing did not agree that HZMB was a white elephant project. Both members said that HZMB was an important infrastructure which facilitated a closer communication and greater economic development amongst the three places. Mr SHIU added that during the initial stage of the commissioning of HZMB, daily passenger flow of HZMB was high at over 1.2 million passenger trips in December 2018, but the successive staging of large-scale public order events since June 2019 had adversely affected the usage of HZMB, resulting in a drastic drop of tourists in Hong Kong. Mr YIU opined that the Administration should consider facilitating measures to promote the use of HZMB, such as lowering the insurance premium and issuing more private vehicles one-off permits going to Macao via HZMB. He also suggested stepping up publicity to promote HZMB as a major tourist attraction, including opening-up the artificial islands of HZMB for tourists. STH took note of Mr YIU's suggestions and said that the HZMB Authority was exploring such an idea.

Enhancing taxi service quality

29. Referring to paragraphs 6 and 7 of the Administration's paper in respect of the proposal to increase the penalty level on taxi driver-related offences, the Chairman said that the taxi trade had strong views about it. The trade was of the view that the penalty level associated with the illegal carriage of passengers for hire or reward offered by "Bak Pai" should also be increased and enforcement actions be strengthened in tandem, so as to

safeguard the operating environment of the taxi trade. The Chairman added that the trade had submitted to TD earlier a commendation proposal to encourage the enhancement of taxi service quality, and enquired about the Administration's response to the proposal.

30. STH said that in formulating any proposed amendments to existing legislation, the Administration would consider views of the transport trades and examine the impact of the legislation to the trades in a holistic and balanced manner. As regards the commendation scheme put forth by the taxi trade, the Commissioner for Transport ("C for T") said that the Committee of Taxi Quality Service had discussed various measures to enhance taxi service quality and the operating environment of the taxi trade. The Committee would examine the commendation proposal in details and continue to listen to the views of the trade on ways to encourage the provision of quality service.

Smart Mobility Initiatives

31. Noting that the Administration proposed to set up a Smart Traffic Fund of \$1 billion for providing support to enterprises or organizations for conducting research and applying innovation and technology for the transport arena, Mr Charles Peter MOK expressed doubt on the effectiveness of the Fund. He argued that members of the proposed Task Force to advise on the administration of the Fund would consist mainly of members of the transport trades, and thus allocation of the Fund would benefit the trades instead of passengers. In addition, Mr MOK opined that the Administration should loosen up the legislative regime on the regulation of motor-driven devices such as electric skateboard and bicycle so that these devices could be considered as short-haul transport mode. These devices were commonly used overseas as smart traffic tools.

32. STH replied that the Administration would invite representatives from relevant professions and stakeholders to form the Task Force for advising and putting forward recommendations to the Administration on the scope and modus operandi of the Fund. The Task Force would comprise representatives from not only the transport trade, but also academia and road users. Regarding Mr MOK's suggestion on loosening the regulation over motor-driven devices, STH explained that given the topography of most of the regions in Hong Kong and insufficient road space, it was not feasible for allowing motor-driven devices to be used on roads while safeguarding road safety.

33. Ms Claudia MO enquired whether research on the application of facial and visual image recognition technology would fall within the scope of the Fund. She was worried that such individuals' identity and vehicles' registration marks, which might be identified by such technology, would be kept by relevant authorities, contravening personal privacy.

34. STH replied that data collection for the purpose of traffic management and analysis had its defined scope and application. In doing so, the Administration was mindful of the need to comply with the relevant requirements stipulated in the Personal Data (Privacy) Ordinance (Cap. 486), and that information collected would only be kept for a definite period of time and would be deleted afterwards. C for T added that while the Smart Traffic Fund would support, amongst other things, the conduct of research on the latest technology which would be conducive to enhancing traffic management in Hong Kong, its scope was yet to be defined. It was too early at this stage to conclude which type of technology would benefit from the Fund.

Enhancing efficient use of road space

35. Mr HO Kai-ming opined that waiving the tolls of TM-CLKL Subsea Tunnel and the Lantau Link upon the commissioning of the TM-CLKL Subsea Tunnel in end 2020 as well as the new Tseung Kwan O-Lam Tin Tunnel ("TKO-LTT") and the Tseung Kwan O Tunnel upon the commissioning of TKO-LTT in end 2021 might divert more traffic to these tunnels and their adjacent districts. Mr HO, Mr POON Siu-ping and Ir Dr LO Wai-kwok suggested the Administration waiving tolls for all government tunnels except cross-harbour tunnels so as to minimize congestion arising from differential toll levels of different tunnels.

36. STH replied that to ensure efficient use of road space, the Administration would continue to pursue a multi-pronged strategy, including taking forward the study on "congestion charging", with a view to changing road users' commuting patterns.

37. Ms Claudia MO and Ir Dr LO Wai-kwok commented that waiving tolls for certain road sections, such as the Central Wanchai-Bypass and yet charging tolls for other road sections under the concept of "congestion charging" might cause confusion or even discontentment from road users. STH responded that toll-setting had been a traffic management tool used by the Government for ensuring a smooth flow of traffic and facilitating movement of commuters. TD was undertaking the study on "congestion charging" and would consult relevant stakeholders and the Panel on the

recommended toll plans and toll adjustment mechanism in due course.

38. The Deputy Chairman and Ir Dr LO enquired whether the waiving of tolls for the Lantau Link could be implemented earlier as the Tsing Ma Bridge was the only road network Tung Chung residents could use to travel to other parts of Hong Kong. STH reiterated that as the Lantau Link was the only road network connecting the airport island and the urban areas, it was necessary for the Administration to manage the traffic of the Lantau Link through the charging of tolls before the full commissioning of TM-CLKL. Having regard to the construction progress of TM-CLKL (Northern Connection) at present, its commissioning date might possibly be advanced to earlier than end 2020 and if so, the proposed toll waiver for the Lantau Link could be effected earlier.

Universal Accessibility Programme ("UAP")

39. Mr Wilson OR and Mr HO Kai-ming commended the Administration for having taken on board the Panel's suggestion to expand the ambit of UAP to cover estates under the Tenants Purchase Scheme and the Buy or Rent Option Scheme, and public rental estates with properties divested. Mr OR sought information from the Administration on ways to expedite the construction of barrier-free facilities to benefit users. Mr HO also enquired whether relevant government departments would coordinate with private owners and tenants on related matters as property rights of these estates were complicated and community views on the proposals were diverse.

40. Mr AU Nok-hin and Mr WU Chi-wai urged the Administration to consider invoking the Lands Resumption Ordinance (Cap. 124) to resume land on the presumption of public interests in order to resolve the issue of complicated and scattered property rights and expedite the implementation of lift retrofitting projects. Mr WU added that the Administration should also consider resuming private land if such pieces of land were connected to major public roads for building public walkways.

41. STH replied that HyD and other relevant government departments would draw up detailed arrangements for consultation with District Councils and relevant stakeholders. As the Administration would fully finance the retrofitting of barrier-free access facilities, local disputes on lift retrofitting proposals might be considerably reduced. Land resumption would not be envisaged under the UAP.

42. In reply to Mr WU's further enquiry, STH said that continuous efforts would be taken to provide covers for essential walkways to benefit users, such as those walkways connected to hospitals.

Other issues

Provision of railway service during public order events

43. Mr Gary FAN, Dr Helena WONG, Mr CHAN Chi-chuen and Mr Jeremy TAM expressed grave concern about the suspension of railway services by MTRCL during the staging of public order events. These members said that on many occasions before the commencement of public events, MTRCL would close a number of stations and suspend service in the vicinity of the places where the events were held. The suspension of services had caused great inconvenience to a vast number of people and had affected the business of many retail shops. Mr FAN questioned whether the Transport and Housing Bureau had effectively discharged its oversight duties in ensuring that MTRCL had maintained a proper and efficient service during normal train service hours in accordance with the requirement of the Mass Transit Railway Ordinance (Cap. 556). Dr WONG also criticized the Administration of using MTRCL as a political tool to suppress the freedom of assembly and procession.

44. STH replied that MTRCL had all along been offering efficient, reliable and safe railway services to the public at large. During the recent public events, it was noted that many MTR stations facilities had repeatedly been vandalized by rioters, and MTR staff and passengers were being harassed and threatened. As a responsible public transport service provider, MTRCL had stepped up a number of precautionary measures to safeguard railway and passenger safety, including the decision to close down stations and to suspend railway services in light of actual circumstances and the development of the events. The Administration considered that the actions taken by MTRCL as sensible and responsible. STH also took the opportunity to call on the public to ban violent actions against MTR stations and facilities, so that railway services could be resumed normal as early as practicable.

45. In view of the suspension of railway services, Mr KWONG Chun-yu asked whether MTRCL would be made accountable and be subject to penalty under "Service Performance Arrangement". He also enquired about the compensation arrangement for monthly pass passengers who were unable to take MTR trains due to service suspension. In reply, STH said that as

agreed under the "Service Performance Arrangement", service disruption was defined as disruptions and suspensions caused by equipment failure or human factor which were within the control of MTRCL. In the present situation, service disruptions were caused by factors outside the control of MTRCL and hence they were excluded from the Arrangement. As regards compensation to monthly pass passengers, STH said that MTRCL had issued cash coupon to these passengers, and the validity of their monthly pass would be extended.

46. The Deputy Chairman, Mr SHIU Ka-fai and Ms Elizabeth QUAT commented that violent and vandalized acts should be seriously condemned and discouraged. These illegal acts had seriously undermined the rule of law, and adversely affected the livelihood of citizens and business of small and medium enterprises. These members supported MTRCL stepping up measures to ensure the safety of all passengers and staff and to safeguard station facilities and properties.

47. Mr CHAN Chi-chuen commented that the Administration's transport policy of using the railway as the backbone of public transport had caused significant imbalance amongst different transport modes in Hong Kong. Citizens' commuting was seriously affected by the closure of MTR stations recently. He enquired whether the Administration would conduct a review on how different transport modes could complement each other for a more balanced development.

48. STH replied that MTR as a mass carrier had so far offered efficient and reliable transport services to the public. MTR railway network carried about 5 million passenger trips daily, which accounted for over 40% of all public transport passenger trips. The development of railway transport could significantly speed up passenger flow, economize on the use of transport resources, alleviate road congestion and lessen vehicle-induced air pollution. As such, the Administration had no plan to modify its existing transport policy.

49. Quoting from the comments made by the Chairman of MTRCL, Mr Michael TIEN asked whether the Administration had plan to completely privatize MTRCL such that it could operate purely as a business entity without the need to take due regard of its role as a public transport service provider. STH replied that the Administration had no plan to change the equity structure of MTRCL.

Relief measures to support transport trades

50. Mr POON Siu-ping said that the Administration had announced a series of short-term relief measures to help transport operators amidst the economic downturn. He enquired what concrete actions would be taken to assist frontline drivers whose livelihood was also hard hit by the present economic situation. The Chairman opined that fuel subsidy provided to transport operators should be extended to cover the student service vehicle trade.

51. STH explained that the aim of offering fuel subsidy was to provide assistance to the transport trade including frontline drivers, and it was estimated that 59 000 frontline taxi drivers and 2 000 frontline minibus drivers would be benefited. He also took note of the Chairman's suggestion of including the student service vehicle trade in the subsidy scheme.

IV. Any other business

52. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 1:00 pm.