

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

本局檔號 OUR REF.: THB(T)CR 1/4781/2014  
來函檔號 YOUR REF.: CB4/PL/TP

電話 Tel. No.: 3509 8181  
傳真 Fax No.: 2136 8017

17 March 2021

Clerk to the Legislative Council Panel on Transport  
Legislative Council Complex  
1 Legislative Council Road  
Central, Hong Kong  
(Attn: Ms Sophie LAU)

**By Email & Fax**  
(Fax No.: 2840 0716)

Dear Ms LAU,

**Legislative Council Panel on Transport  
Meeting on 20 November 2020**

**Staffing Proposal for the Walkability Project Management Office  
and the Regional Offices of the Highways Department**

**Supplementary Information**

Regarding the information requested by Members at the meeting on 20 November 2020, our reply is as follows-

**(a) Benefits of Creating Directorate Posts in the Walkability Project Management Office and Estimated Expenditure of Relevant Works in the Coming Five Years**

Currently, there are over 500 “walkable-city” projects, of which about 250 are under preliminary assessment, about 250 are under planning and design, while about 65 are under construction. The Highways Department (HyD) is facing many challenges during the course of taking forward these projects. For instance, the lift retrofitting works under the Special Scheme of the Universal Accessibility (UA) Programme have to be carried out within housing estates which involve private ownership, which involve complicated land ownership and

legal issues. HyD is required to resolve relevant land issues in accordance with the terms of the land lease / Deed of Mutual Covenant of individual estates, in order to take forward the lift retrofitting works within the estate area and demarcate the management and maintenance responsibilities for the facilities to be constructed between the Government and owners. The process involves complicated land ownership and legal issues. Besides, in taking forward hillside escalator links and elevator system (HEL) projects, walkway cover projects, and other pedestrian connection and walking environment improvement works, the members of the public who are affected by such projects often hold diverging views on the alignment and design of the projects, it is therefore necessary for HyD to continuously liaise with various stakeholders and put forward viable solutions. Furthermore, for retrofitting of covers to public hospital walkways and the pedestrian connection and walking environment improvement works relating to the four hospital redevelopment projects, HyD has to maintain high-level liaison with the Food and Health Bureau, the Hospital Authority and MTR Corporation Limited, etc. and attend inter-departmental steering committee meetings, with a view to coordinating as early as possible and ensuring the projects could be properly connected to relevant facilities.

Therefore, senior directorate officers, who possess the necessary experience, foresight and leadership, are needed to lead the project teams to overcome the above challenges, and to widely promote innovative design, engineering and management techniques, including encouraging the adoption of Building Information Modelling, Modular Integrated Construction and Early Contractor Involvement, etc. at policy level with a view to expediting the project implementation.

The proposed directorate posts will provide the necessary directorate support to speed up the implementation of these “walkable-city” projects. We anticipate that the number of “walkable-city” projects under construction will increase substantially from about 65 in financial year 2020/21 to about 200 in financial year 2025/26, and expect that these small-to-medium sized projects could create more job opportunities for the construction industry. The estimated expenditure of these projects will also increase progressively over the coming five years from about \$700 million in financial year 2020/21, to over \$2,000 million<sup>1</sup> in financial year 2025/26.

---

<sup>1</sup> Most of the projects are still in preliminary assessment and planning stages. As the project estimates will be affected by the subsequent design, implementation programme and changes in construction price level, therefore only a preliminary estimate can be provided at this stage.

**(b) Benefits of Creating Directorate Posts in the Two Regional Offices**

Since the establishment of HyD in 1986, the assets maintained by HyD have increased substantially. For instance, the total lane length of carriageway in the territory, including expressway, has increased from about 3 400 kilometres (km) in 1986 to about 6 000 km in end-2020 (i.e. an increase of around 76%), while the total number of public highway structures under HyD's maintenance has increased from about 1 020 in 1986 to about 4 770 in end-2020 (i.e. an increase of around 368%). However, only one additional permanent Chief Engineer (D1) post was created in the Regional Offices of HyD in 1996.

Besides, around 32% (i.e. over 1 500 in number) of the public highway structures were constructed more than 30 years ago. In order to ensure structural safety and enhance the durability of these public highway structures, there is an urgent need for enhancing the directorate support in the two Regional Offices of HyD to formulate the inspection and assessment strategies for aged highway structures under their purview as well as to take forward the overall maintenance works to address at an early juncture the potential problems associated with structural ageing. Taking the Island East Corridor, which was constructed 36 years ago, as an example, problems such as concrete spalling and cracking identified at the pile caps, piers and bridge decks of its vehicle bridge requires urgent maintenance. On the other hand, the franchise of the Western Harbour Crossing and Tai Lam Tunnel will expire by 2023 and 2025 respectively. Before HyD takes over the maintenance of the above-mentioned tunnels, guidance and leadership from the proposed directorate officers is required to steer and lead comprehensive investigation and inspection to ensure that the current tunnel franchise operators have properly fulfilled their maintenance responsibilities before handing over the tunnels to safeguard the Government's interests.

Apart from the above duties, the proposed directorate officers will be responsible for steering and formulating strategies relating to maintenance of cross-boundary highway infrastructure facilities and supervising the subsequent management and maintenance works; setting up and leading an emergency control centre for the cross-boundary highway infrastructure facilities and formulating contingency plans in case of emergencies as well as recovery and clearance works. Moreover, HyD needs to maintain close communication with the Mainland and the Macao Special Administrative Region Government or relevant authorities regarding the maintenance of cross-boundary highway facilities, and to conduct technical exchange from time to time. The proposed directorate officers will lead relevant liaison works and establish regular and effective channels to facilitate coordination with the government authorities with respect to the routine maintenance of cross-boundary highway facilities.

Upon creation of the proposed directorate posts, the aforesaid additional maintenance works will be provided with appropriate support and can be implemented more effectively, which is expected to create more job opportunities for the construction industry. With ageing of public roads and highway structures, the associated maintenance works have increased in tandem. The maintenance expenditure has increased by around 56% in the past 5 years, increasing from about \$940 million in financial year 2015/16 to about \$1,470 million in financial year 2020/21. We expect the relevant maintenance expenditure will continue to rise over the coming years.

**(c) Feasibility of Creating Supernumerary Posts**

Currently, there are over 500 “walkable-city” projects, most of which are in critical strategic assessment or planning stages with tasks such as detailed design, tendering and supervision of construction to follow. With the gradual implementation of the “Walk in HK” policy and relevant projects progressively getting on track, we have been receiving from the public continual requests related to the “walkable-city” initiative. For instance, the scope of the UA Programme originally included only about 140 items when it was launched in 2012. As its ambit continues to expand, it has covered about 400 items and there are still new requests coming in from the public for retrofitting lifts at other public walkways. For HEL projects, while we are following up on the 114 proposals received as of mid-2017, there were some 90 new proposals submitted by the public in the past few years. These figures show that there will be continual demand for these livelihood-related works projects to improve the walking environment. As the Government needs to take forward these projects on a continual basis, we suggest that the proposed posts in the Walkability Project Management Office should be permanent.

As for the Regional Offices, the proposed directorate officers will handle the maintenance works of cross-boundary highway infrastructures and public highway structures in the territory, formulate the inspection and assessment strategies for the ageing public highway structures, coordinate and provide professional advice on road development and improvement relating to land supply under their purview, as well as to coordinate with other departments to facilitate the implementation of relevant land policy. These duties are continual in nature and the workload will increase with time, we therefore propose that the directorate posts to be created in the Regional Offices should be permanent.

In view of the current public finance situation in Hong Kong, we note Members’ concern over the creation of permanent directorate posts. Having listened to the views of the Panel, we will reduce the number of permanent

directorates posts originally proposed to be created from six to five, which are converted into supernumerary posts, to cope with the immediate needs. We will consult the Establishment Subcommittee on the proposal in due course.

Yours sincerely,



( Miss Angela JONG )

for Secretary for Transport and Housing

cc.:

Director of Highways

(Attn: Mr Chris Wong)

Fax: 3188 6614