

Legislative Council Panel on Transport

2021 Policy Address

**Transport-related Policy Initiatives of
the Transport and Housing Bureau**

Introduction

The 2021 Policy Address and Policy Address Supplement set out the Government's initiatives in the coming year. This paper elaborates on policy initiatives relevant to land and waterborne transport.

(a) Cross-boundary Transport

2. In order to further promote the connectivity of infrastructure in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area ("GBA"), the governments of Hong Kong and Shenzhen have established the "Task Force for Hong Kong-Shenzhen Co-operation on Cross-Boundary Railway Infrastructure" ("Task Force") to jointly develop the "GBA on the Rail". The HKSAR Government is actively considering a railway connection to the new Huanggang Port in Shenzhen via the Hong Kong-Shenzhen Innovation and Technology Park in the Lok Ma Chau Loop through the Northern Link ("NOL") Spur Line, with a view to enhancing the land boundary control points between Hong Kong and Shenzhen, and has requested the MTR Corporation Limited ("MTRCL") to investigate the feasibility and benefits of constructing the NOL Spur Line, so that the Government can consider the way forward of the project in due course.

The Government will also explore with Shenzhen suggestions on enhancing the transport connections to the Luohu Port through the Task Force. At the same time, the Task Force has embarked on the study on the Hong Kong-Shenzhen Western Rail Link connecting Hung Shui Kiu and Qianhai, so as to improve connectivity between the western parts of Hong Kong and Shenzhen, thereby facilitating the flow of personnel between both places.

(b) Local Infrastructure

Road and Railway Projects under Construction

(i) Route 6 and Cross Bay Link, Tseung Kwan O

3. As for roads, the Civil Engineering and Development Department is taking forward at full steam the construction of Tseung Kwan O-Lam Tin Tunnel and the Cross Bay Link, Tseung Kwan O which connects to the eastern end of the former, with a view to commissioning the two projects in tandem in 2022, so as to facilitate traffic in the Tseung Kwan O district and drivers' adaption to the new roads. The two projects will provide a more convenient access between Tseung Kwan O and Kwun Tong as well as Eastern Harbour Crossing. Upon their commissioning, the journey time between Tseung Kwan O and Kowloon East will be reduced by about 20 minutes. We are also pressing ahead with the remaining projects of Route 6, including the Central Kowloon Route and Trunk Road T2 and Cha Kwo Ling Tunnel, and the target to commission the entire Route 6 in 2026 remains unchanged.

(ii) Shatin to Central Link

4. For railway infrastructure, the 56km-long Tuen Ma Line, which is the longest railway line in Hong Kong, was fully commissioned in June this year. Not only does it connect the East and West of New Territories with Kowloon, but it also provides efficient and convenient railway services in the vicinity of To Kwa Wan and Kowloon City, enhancing the coverage of the railway network and the convenience of travelling by the public. MTRCL endeavours to implement progress recovery measures for the “Hung Hom to Admiralty Section”, and has commenced the testing and upgrading of the signalling system. The new 9-car trains are delivered to Hong Kong in batches and put into service progressively. The Government has urged MTRCL to review the effectiveness of the progress recovery measures and the overall works progress holistically, and to announce the anticipated commissioning date as soon as possible.

Road and Railway Projects under Planning

(i) Improving Road Network in Northwest New Territories

5. The Government has been conducting regular reviews on the planning of road infrastructure and implementing various works projects in a timely manner. To meet the expected traffic demand arising from the progressive development in the Northwest New Territories, the Government plans to complete a series of road infrastructure projects in stages from 2031 to 2036, so as to enhance the internal and external connectivity of the area. Moreover, by upgrading road infrastructure, it will further strengthen the connectivity of major roads and the capacity of the local road network,

thereby enhancing the connectivity of developments in the vicinity and effectively unleashing the development potential of the relevant areas. As for the connection to the urban areas, the Government has been implementing Route 11 (section between Yuen Long and North Lantau), Tsing Yi - Lantau Link and Widening of Yuen Long Highway (section between Lam Tei and Tong Yan San Tsuen). The investigation study for Route 11 (section between Yuen Long and North Lantau) commenced in September this year, and the engineering studies for Tsing Yi - Lantau Link and Widening of Yuen Long Highway (section between Lam Tei and Tong Yan San Tsuen) are being conducted in parallel. As regards road connection to the Airport and Lantau, the Government has been implementing the Tuen Mun Bypass which links up Lam Tei and Tuen Mun Area 40 as well as Tuen-Mun Chek Lap Kok Tunnel. Works to widen and add additional lane to major roads in Tuen Mun will also be implemented in parallel to enhance the capacity of the district road network. The investigation study for the road projects at Lung Fu Road, Wong Chu Road and Hoi Wing Road commenced in September this year, whereas that for Tuen Mun Bypass will commence in the first quarter of 2022.

(ii) Railway Projects

6. To continue the development of railways as the backbone of our passenger transport system, the Transport and Housing Bureau invited the MTRCL to progressively embark on the detailed planning and design of Tung Chung Line Extension, Tuen Mun South Extension, NOL and Hung Shui Kiu Station in 2020-2021. At the same time, having taken into account our comments on the other two new railway projects (i.e. East Kowloon Line and North Island Line), MTRCL is conducting further study

on feasible options for the design improvement of these two projects. On the other hand, the Government received the project proposal for South Island Line (West) submitted by MTRCL in December 2020. Relevant departments are considering the proposal and will duly consider the way forward taking into account the redevelopment timetable of Wah Fu Estate and the Invigorating Island South initiative. We will announce the way forward of these projects in due course. In addition, the Government has commenced the preparation for the establishment of the Railways Department to strengthen the supervision of railway planning and project delivery, enhance the regulation of railway safety, as well as oversee the implementation of new cross-boundary and local railway projects.

“Strategic Studies on Railways and Major Roads beyond 2030”

7. Based on the final development strategy of the "Hong Kong 2030+: Towards a Planning Vision and Strategy Transcending 2030" planning study, we would continue to proceed with the "Strategic Studies on Railways and Major Roads beyond 2030" to explore the layout of railway and major road infrastructure and conduct preliminary engineering and technical assessments for the alignments and supporting facilities, so as to ensure that the planning of large-scale transport infrastructure will complement or even reserve capacity to meet the overall long-term development needs of Hong Kong. We plan to commence consultation on the strategic studies next year.

(c) Quota-free Scheme for Hong Kong Private Cars Travelling to Guangdong via the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge

8. The HKSAR Government is pressing ahead with the “Quota-free Scheme for Hong Kong Private Cars Travelling to Guangdong via the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge (“HZMB”)” (“the Scheme”) at full speed, which will allow eligible Hong Kong private cars to travel between Hong Kong and Guangdong via HZMB without the need to obtain a regular quota, thereby facilitating Hong Kong residents to drive to Guangdong for business, visiting families or sight-seeing on a short-term basis. The HKSAR Government is finalising with the Guangdong Government and relevant Mainland authorities the specific arrangements and details for implementing the Scheme, and aims to streamline the application procedures and lower the related fee as far as possible, with a view to striving for early implementation and announcement of the details of the Scheme. In addition, the governments of Guangdong and Hong Kong will draw on the experience in implementing the Scheme at HZMB and proactively study the extension of the Scheme to a Hong Kong/Shenzhen land boundary control point, such that Hong Kong private cars can travel to both the eastern and western parts of Guangdong without a quota.

(d) Smart Mobility

9. One of the major initiatives under Smart Mobility is the implementation of Free-Flow Tolling System (“FFTS”). With FFTS, motorists can pay tolls of government tolled tunnels and Tsing Sha Control Area (“TSCA”) remotely using toll tags, which facilitates more efficient

and convenient payment and minimises disruption to traffic flow at toll plazas arising from the need to stop for toll payment. The relevant legislative amendments have been passed by the Legislative Council. We are actively making preparations for gradually rolling out FFTS at each of the government tolled tunnels and TSCA from end 2022. The tasks involved include developing and constructing a unified backend toll collection system, modifying the design of toll plazas and roads, installing boothless tolling facilities (including the equipment of the Radio Frequency Identification (“RFID”) system complemented by the Automatic Number Plate Recognition (“ANPR”) equipment), as well as a smart system which enables charging toll-varying tolls. The most crucial task, among others, is to prepare for the issue of toll tags to the owners of some 800 000 vehicles in mid-2022.

10. Implementing FFTS will provide the essential infrastructure for Congestion Charging, the objective of which is to charge different tolls at different time periods based on the prevailing traffic condition of the tolled tunnels and TSCA with a view to regulating traffic flows and alleviating traffic congestion during peak hours. We commenced a traffic survey in September this year to collect the latest data, in order to devise a preliminary proposal for Congestion Charging and consult the public and the Legislative Council on the proposal in 2022. With due regard to the traffic conditions of the tunnels and their adjoining roads upon implementation of Congestion Charging as well as Hong Kong’s latest social and economic circumstances, the Transport Department (“TD”) will determine how the Electronic Road Pricing Pilot Scheme in Central (“Pilot Scheme”) should be taken forward. Indeed, Congestion Charging will apply relevant toll-charging concepts and same technologies (i.e. the RFID

technology together with the ANPR technology), the experience of which will facilitate TD's enhancement of the Pilot Scheme, including installation of different roadside facilities and toll-charging modes.

11. Another major initiative under Smart Mobility is to allow wider and more flexible trial and use of autonomous vehicles ("AVs") by the industry. We have commenced a study on legislative amendments with a view to developing a new and flexible regulatory framework to keep pace with the evolving and advanced technological development while ensuring public safety, paving the way for the long-term development of AVs in Hong Kong. To this end, we will introduce an amendment bill into the Legislative Council.

12. In order to further promote Smart Mobility, we have set up the \$1 billion Smart Traffic Fund, which has been accepting applications since 31 March 2021, to provide funding support to enterprises and organisations for conducting research and application of vehicle-related innovation and technology with the objectives of enhancing commuting convenience, enhancing transport efficiency and improving driving safety, etc. We have considered the first batch of applications in September this year, and will continue to encourage more organisations (including private companies and research institutes) to submit applications.

13. To further increase the number of parking spaces¹ and spatial efficiency in the parking facilities, we are actively implementing Automated Parking System (“APS”) projects including seven APS projects in short-term tenancy (“STT”) car parks and public works projects. The APS projects located at a STT site on Hoi Shing Road in Tsuen Wan is expected to be commissioned in November this year. As for the STT car park site at Pak Shek Kok in Tai Po, the system is expected to be commissioned in the second half of 2022 subject to the outcome of tendering. Furthermore, with regard to the APS in public works projects, the construction works in the joint-user government office building in Area 67 in Tseung Kwan O have commenced, and are expected to be completed in 2025. Meanwhile, the project at the junction of Yen Chow Street and Tung Chau Street in Sham Shui Po, as well as the district open space, sports centre cum public vehicle park project at Sze Mei Street in San Po Kong, etc are also being actively pursued. In addition, the Airport Authority also plans to build automated car parks on the Hong Kong Port of HZMB in phases, with a view to providing around 6,000 parking spaces in the long term. The car parks will cater for air transfer passengers or visitors via HZMB. Tendering process of the first engineering contract of the automated car parks was completed in end September. Automated mechanical parking system will be deployed, and the car parks are expected to complete in 2024 for commissioning in the same year.

¹ Apart from APS, the current-term Government has also been actively pursuing a host of short-term and medium- to long-term measures to increase parking provision. It is worth mentioning that TD has completed the review of the standards for the provision of ancillary parking spaces for commercial vehicles (“CVs”) and private cars (“PCs”) under the Hong Kong Planning Standards and Guidelines (“HKPSG”). The Planning Department has uploaded the revised parking standards to its website in August 2021. The revision, which was based on the findings of TD’s latest parking demand survey, has raised the number of parking spaces for PCs in private and subsidised housing developments as well as the type and number of parking spaces for CVs in subsidised housing projects.

14. In addition, TD has commenced the phased installation of the new generation of parking meters in Hong Kong since January 2021. About 6 400 new meters have been installed so far, with the full installation of 12 000 new meters expected by the first half of next year. The new generation of on-street parking meters can support payment of parking fees through multiple means, support on-site and remote payment of parking fees through the new “HKeMeter” mobile application and are equipped with sensors to provide real-time information on vacant parking spaces.

(e) Technology Adoption in the Public Sector

15. In order to apply new technology to assist in traffic enforcement, the Hong Kong Police Force is developing a new Traffic e-Enforcement System with a view to commissioning the system by phases from 2023. To provide the legal basis for implementing the new functions and features of the new System, we will make relevant legislative amendments to allow the serving of fixed penalty notices for traffic contraventions by electronic means, which will enhance the overall traffic enforcement efficiency and encourage vehicle owners and drivers to stay vigilant and comply with the traffic regulations at all times. This will in turn help ensure the safety of road users and improve traffic conditions.

16. TD has been striving for innovation in licence management and is preparing to amend the Road Traffic Ordinance (Cap. 374) with a view to embarking on introducing electronic licence, which includes the acceptance of electronic driving licence presented by mobile application as having the same legal status as the physical driving licence. This will provide greater convenience to members of the public when they travel and drive.

Innovation in licence management is also conducive to reducing operating cost of the Department in the long run. Meanwhile, to align with the launch of “iAM Smart” by the Government, TD has upgraded its existing 11 types of online licensing services by phases since December 2020. TD plans to extend related online service to over 20 licensing services such as application for learner’s driving licence and various permits, etc. by phases in the next few years. Members of the public may fill in and submit applications with mobile phones at any time without the need to wait at counters.

(f) Traffic and Transport Strategy Study

17. TD has commenced the preparatory work for the Traffic and Transport Strategy Study (“TTSS”), with a view to formulating a Transport Strategy Blueprint which lays down the visions, strategies, initiatives and action plans for Hong Kong’s future traffic and transport policies. The TTSS will cover a broad spectrum of traffic and transport issues, which can be categorised into the following four key Directions: (1) to optimise the use of limited road space; (2) to provide people-centric and efficient public transport services; (3) to advocate green and active transport as healthy lifestyles; and (4) to embrace opportunities to enhance transport connectivity with the GBA.

18. At present, TD is formulating the detailed arrangements for the TTSS and planning to conduct a territory-wide Travel Characteristics Survey in 2022, with the objective of completing the survey in 2023, and commencing the updating of the Comprehensive Transport Study Model based on the survey findings for the purposes of traffic forecasting. The

TTSS, with an extensive and thorough scope, is expected to be completed by 2025.. In the process of conducting the TTSS, TD will conduct topical studies on certain relatively new traffic and transport issues in order to explore and formulate relevant policies and measures. TD will conduct public consultation based on the preliminary study findings in due course.

(g) Improvement of Public Transport Services

Ongoing Initiatives for Enhancing Public Transport Services and Ancillary Facilities

19. The Government has been pursuing a public transport-oriented policy. At present, about 90% of commuters use public transport services with about 8.8 million passenger trips per day in 2020. We will continue to keep in view the operation of various public transport services and the latest technological development and strive to enhance the level of public transport services. We will also provide more comprehensive and state-of-the-art public transport ancillary facilities.

20. In respect of franchised bus services, TD has set up a new franchised bus safety team to formulate a forward-looking, proactive and holistic strategy with a view to further enhancing safety of franchised buses. In addition, the Government has set aside \$500 million to subsidise franchised bus operators for retrofitting electronic stability control, speed limiting retarder and seat belts on seats in the upper deck of suitable existing buses. The relevant retrofitting works have commenced progressively since the third quarter of 2020 for completion within three to four years. The retrofitted buses have been deployed with priority to long-haul routes

running on expressways starting from early 2021. Besides, installation of the above safety devices are required on all new buses procured from July 2018 onwards. So far a total of about 1 300 buses have been fitted with seat belts on the upper deck, and more than 1 500 buses have been fitted with electronic stability control and speed limited retarder.

21. TD will continue to pursue rationalisation of bus routes through established mechanism and adjust their services having regard to the changes in passenger demand, thereby reducing unnecessary bus trips, alleviating traffic congestion on busy corridors and reducing roadside air pollution. Franchised bus companies may redeploy the resources so saved to introduce routes or improve frequency of services to meet passenger demand, so as to enhance the efficiency of the franchised bus network. Besides, a franchised bus company introduced new long-haul bus services between Yuen Long and Causeway Bay and between Tuen Mun and Wai Chai on a trial basis in July 2021, providing more spacious seating and all-seater service with more comprehensive passenger amenities in the bus compartment and fewer stops. This would offer passengers with more diversified choices and meet various needs of the community.

22. The Government has earlier invited the public to offer views on the requirements of the new franchises of Citybus Limited (franchise for the Airport and North Lantau bus network), Long Win Bus Company Limited and New World First Bus Services Limited (“NWFB”). We are now preparing for commencing the negotiation with the three franchisees on matters relating to the new franchises, including exploring the feasibility of merging the two franchises of NWFB and Citybus Limited (franchise for Hong Kong Island and cross-harbour bus network). While we would

strive for franchise terms that can meet the demand and expectation of the public as far as possible, we would also take into account the actual operating environment and ensure the robustness and sustainability of the franchised bus networks both operationally and financially in order to maintain a proper, safe and efficient public bus service. We aim to conclude the negotiation by mid-2022.

23. The Government endeavours to improve in-harbour and outlying island ferry services. Further to the launch of the “Central – Hung Hom” route in June 2020, the “water taxi” service also commenced operation on a trial basis in July 2021. In addition, the Special Helping Measures have been gradually extended to all outlying island ferry routes to maintain their financial viability. We have also rolled out the Vessel Subsidy Scheme (“VSS”) to replace the existing fleet of outlying island routes with greener vessels.

24. For light buses, it is the Government’s policy objective to promote green and barrier-free transport and assist in introducing more choices of light bus model for the trade. Following the relaxation of the length and maximum gross vehicle weight restriction of light buses to 7.5 metres and 8.5 tonnes respectively in July 2020, the Government also introduced legislative amendments for allowing alternative means of emergency exits for light buses, with the new regulation taking effect on 15 October this year. In addition, the Government introduced the Low-floor Wheelchair Accessible Public Light Bus (“PLB”) Trial Scheme in January 2018, and would review the result of the scheme. Based on the review result, TD will work with the vehicle manufacturers to further identify appropriate vehicle models, and consult stakeholders on how to implement and

promote the “Transport for All” concept in PLBs, thereby formulating the future development and way forward for the relevant PLB services. With regard to the real-time arrival information system for green minibuses (“GMB”), TD has to date disseminated the real-time arrival information of 237 routes in total through TD’s mobile application “HKeMobility”. TD will continue to liaise with the trade closely, with a view to covering all GMB routes by next year.

25. As regards taxis, the Government has all along endorsed the general direction of centralising the management of taxi service quality through professional fleet management. TD will continue to work with the taxi trade to further enhance taxi service quality, and collaborate with the Committee on Taxi Service Quality to organise the Taxi Service Commendation Scheme to recognise outstanding taxi drivers and taxi service management teams, thereby continuously improving the professional image of the taxi industry. The Government is also carefully studying various options on how to provide better quality taxi service to passengers through fleet management. In formulating the proposal, we will take into account the views on the Franchised Taxi Services Bill expressed by the Bills Committee, the public and taxi trade previously.

26. In addition, to strengthen the deterrent effect against malpractices of taxi drivers such as overcharging, refusal to hire, not using the most direct practicable route, soliciting, etc., the Government is preparing legislative proposal to introduce a taxi-driver-offence points system to record points for repeat offenders and increase penalties for offences of a more serious nature. Meanwhile, the Government is also preparing legislative amendment to increase penalties for illegal carriage of passengers for hire

or reward by motor vehicles so as to better protect the interest of the passengers.

27. On “barrier-free transport” front, there are currently around 2 000 wheelchair-accessible taxis in the market. In view of the actual needs of different wheelchair-bound passengers (e.g. some larger electric wheelchairs may require more spacious compartments), the Government is actively discussing with the taxi trade and vehicle suppliers on the introduction of other taxi models that can carry wheelchair-bound passengers, so as to facilitate the introduction of new taxi models to provide wheelchair-bound passengers with more choices while ensuring vehicle safety.

28. To improve the ancillary facilities, the Government will continue to provide subsidies to the franchised bus companies for installation of real-time bus arrival information display panels and chairs at suitable bus stops, implement pilot projects to upgrade covered public transport interchanges and ferry piers, and conduct a proof-of-concept trial on seat occupancy and seat belt fastening detection technology for GMB.

(h) Promoting Green Public Transport

29. TD and various public transport operators have all along been actively collaborating with the Environmental Protection Department (“EPD”) in pursuing the goals related to improvement of air quality as set out under the Clean Air Plan for Hong Kong 2035. For PLBs, TD will continue to assist EPD in implementing the trial scheme on electric PLBs, including providing operational advice regarding the PLB terminals and public

transport interchanges, and conducting site inspections with EPD and relevant departments to confirm whether the concerned venue is suitable for setting up quick charging facilities with a view to achieving the target of testing 40 electric PLBs serving different GMB routes in 2023. For franchised buses, TD has already imposed the requirement on franchised bus companies to switch to the most environment-friendly buses where possible when replacing its buses in order to reduce air pollution. The ultimate objective is to have zero emission buses running across the territory. Franchised bus companies are also actively cooperating with the Government to study the feasibility of operating electric or new energy buses in Hong Kong, such as participating in the trial of double-deck electric buses funded by EPD's New Energy Transport Fund and bringing in electric buses and associated charging facilities at their own costs to test and evaluate their operational efficiency and technical feasibility. As regards ferries, through the VSS mentioned in paragraph 23 above, the Government will replace the entire fleet of outlying island ferry routes by greener vessels with new facilities in two phases starting from 2021. Operators of the six major outlying island ferry routes invited open tender for 22 new vessels (including four hybrid vessels for trial) under Phase 1 of the VSS in end August 2021. They are expected to select suitable shipbuilders by the first quarter of 2022.

(i) Pedestrian-friendly Environment

30. TD continues to promote "Walk in HK" to foster a pedestrian-friendly environment through implementing various walkability enhancement initiatives. The implementation of pedestrian connectivity works will continue in phases. For example, the footpath widening works at Western

Fire Services Street near the promenade, as well as at the northern section of Jaffe Road between Canal Road West and Tonnochy Road, are planned to commence in end-2021 for completion by end-2022. Besides, for the provision of covers for walkways connecting to public hospitals, the relevant projects for nine hospitals are being implemented under the Public Works Programme, while TD has progressively completed the consultation on proposed covers for walkways connecting to another five public hospitals (i.e. Tuen Mun Hospital, Hong Kong Children's Hospital, Hong Kong Eye Hospital, Tseung Kwan O Hospital and Tang Shiu Kin Hospital) since the fourth quarter of 2020. The construction works for these five projects are expected to progressively commence from end-2022, and will be completed by batches starting from 2025. As regards the provision of cover for walkways, the first project in the North District was completed in February 2020, while the construction of another ten projects respectively located in Sai Kung, Southern District, Kowloon City, Kwai Tsing, Tuen Mun, Yuen Long, Sham Shui Po, Yau Tsim Mong, Islands and Sha Tin have commenced progressively. The seven remaining projects are in the planning and design stage. Besides, based on the revised assessment mechanism, the consultant engaged by TD has carried out initial screening, shortlisting and prioritisation of the 114 proposals on hillside escalator links and elevator systems received over the past few years. TD has commenced local consultations on the first batch of projects since December last year.

Universal Accessibility Programme

31. The Government has been striving to create a barrier-free and accessible environment. Since the launch of the Universal Accessibility

(UA) Programme in 2012, we have completed 172 items of retrofitting barrier-free access facilities at walkways, while 78 are under construction and 159 are under or will commence investigation or design works. Besides, the Government has expanded the scope of the UA Programme and introduced a Special Scheme to retrofit lifts at walkways of estates under the Tenants Purchase Scheme and the Buy or Rent Option Scheme, and public rental housing estates with non-residential properties divested under the Hong Kong Housing Authority. Under the Special Scheme, the relevant District Councils have selected 35 items, four of which will commence construction by end of this year. The investigation and design works of the remaining items are expected to commence by end of this year.

Transport and Housing Bureau

October 2021