

**For discussion
on 21 June 2024**

Legislative Council Panel on Transport

**Rationalising the Directorate Support for the Urban Regional Offices and
Technical Services Branch in the
Transport Department**

PURPOSE

This paper seeks Members' views on the proposal to rationalise the directorate support for the Urban Regional Offices (URO) and Technical Services Branch (TSB) in the Transport Department (TD). The proposal involves the creation of two permanent Government Engineer (D2) posts, to be offset by the deletion of two permanent Assistant Commissioner for Transport¹ (D2) posts.

BACKGROUND

2. TD is headed by the Commissioner for Transport (C for T), who is underpinned by two Deputy Commissioners for Transport (DCs for T) at D3 level and eight Assistant Commissioners for Transport (ACs for T) at D2 level. Amongst these eight ACs for T (including two permanent posts proposed to be deleted) in the department, six posts are pitched at the AC for T rank of the Transport Officer (TO) grade while the remaining two are pitched at the Government Engineer (GE) rank of the Engineer grade. The organisation chart is at **Enclosure 1**.

3. Given the professional requirements for the post-holders due to the nature of the posts, two permanent AC for T posts of the TO grade have been temporarily filled by two supernumerary GE posts (D2) since 1980s (designated as Assistant Commissioner /Urban (AC/U) and Assistant Commissioner

¹ Assistant Commissioner for Transport (D2) is a promotion rank of the TO grade which is a departmental grade of TD.

/Technical Services (AC/TS)). Over the years, the work of TD has become increasingly diversified and complex. In anticipation of further development of TD's duties in future, the department conducted a review in 2017 to 2018 on the directorate support for the department in the medium to long term, with a view to meeting the development of and challenges facing the department. The review recommended that TD should re-grade the two permanent AC for T posts to two permanent GE posts.

JUSTIFICATIONS

4. The TO grade and the Engineer grade are TD's lynchpin grades with their own unique areas of professional knowledge and expertise; and both grades have worked in concerted manner and in seamless collaboration, combining their knowledge and skills in different areas, and providing quality and efficient services to the public. For Engineers, their professional qualifications and experiences enable them to apply their professional knowledge and experiences, provide professional services, facilitate the development of transport-related infrastructure and enhance traffic safety in areas such as traffic and civil engineering, information technology and innovative transport technologies, and at the planning, design, review and implementation levels. For Transport Officers, they apply their extensive transport management experiences in providing key services in the areas of managing, monitoring and reviewing public transport facilities, assessing public transport operations and determining transport fares, planning transport services for persons with disabilities, operating the Emergency Transport Co-ordination Centre and handling traffic and transport emergencies. In deciding the suitable grade to head a specific branch, TD will take into account the functions of the branch, the required expertise of the branch head and the overall management requirements of the department. In line with the above principles and having regard to the responsibilities of the two posts of AC/U and AC/TS, we propose to regularise the arrangement of filling the above two AC for T posts by GEs and re-grade the two permanent AC for T posts to two permanent GE posts. Detailed considerations are set out in paragraphs 5 to 14.

Roles of AC/U

5. In TD, there are two Regional Offices responsible for handling district traffic and transport matters, namely Urban Regional Offices (URO) and New Territories Regional Offices (NTRO). The URO takes charge of traffic and

transport related matters in urban areas including Hong Kong Island and Kowloon, whilst the NTRO takes charge of traffic and transport related matters in the New Territories, and the two Regional Offices are headed by AC/U and Assistant Commissioner /New Territories (AC/NT) respectively. At present, the AC/U post is filled by an Engineer grade officer while the AC/NT post is filled by a TO grade officer.

6. The URO performs the following functions –
 - (a) overseeing the traffic and transport matters in urban areas, including arrangements for facilitating mega events in districts;
 - (b) provision of traffic engineering and transport management services;
 - (c) planning and implementation of road infrastructure and pedestrian facilities;
 - (d) monitoring and management of district traffic conditions and implementation of traffic management measures to cope with the latest traffic situations; and
 - (e) planning and implementation of public transport services and related public transport facilities.

The job description of the AC/U post is at **Enclosure 2**.

7. In addition, AC/U oversees traffic and transport matters in urban areas, and coordinates inputs from various branches of the department to facilitate housing and land supply as well as major project developments. Over the years, AC/U has led the URO in participating in planning and implementing various significant road infrastructure projects, including the Eastern Harbour Crossing, Western Harbour Crossing, Island Eastern Corridor Link, Hung Hom Bypass, Central-Wan Chai Bypass, and Cross Bay Link in Tseung Kwan O, etc.. To create a pedestrian-friendly environment and enhance pedestrian safety, AC/U has implemented various pedestrian environment improvement schemes in recent years. Furthermore, AC/U attends the Metro Planning Committee Meetings of the Town Planning Board on behalf of TD to review the Traffic Impact Assessments of various development projects, provides traffic and transport inputs on development proposals and urban planning matters, and formulates appropriate traffic management measures in accordance with the latest traffic conditions in urban districts in order to facilitate urban planning and development.

8. The government policy of increasing land and housing supply in recent years has also brought an increase in the related work. AC/U actively provides

transport planning inputs on land supply initiatives, oversees the related Traffic Impact Assessment studies and implements appropriate transport facilities and road improvement works, such as the various urban renewal projects in recent years. Looking ahead, AC/U will continue to lead the URO in overseeing traffic and transport matters in urban areas, implementing traffic management measures, providing traffic and transport inputs on various major development projects (including the Kai Tak Sports Park, redevelopment of Choi Hung Estate and Wah Fu Estate, the development of the Northern Metropolis), and reviewing Traffic Impact Assessments to ensure the smooth implementation and delivery of development projects.

Need for Re-grading the AC/U post to a GE Post

9. Given the similarity of the work nature and functions of the two Regional Offices, both, in principle, can be headed by either a TO or Engineer grade officer. Regardless of the grade, the two ACs of the Regional Offices will lead officers from both TO and Engineer grades which possess their own areas of professional knowledge and expertise as mentioned in paragraph 4 above. Both ACs are required to establish and coordinate co-operation among officers from the two grades in their respective offices for serving the public concertedly.

10. To sum up, the existing arrangement of filling the AC/NT post by a TO grade officer and the AC/U post by a GE has worked well. In addition, the arrangement has facilitated the senior management in assigning tasks among the two ACs effectively and flexibly, taking into consideration of the different experiences and expertise of the two ACs. For instance, AC/U would take care of cross-district tasks that require more traffic engineering knowledge (including reviewing Traffic Impact Assessments and providing inputs for traffic works, e.g. the transport development of the Northern Metropolis), while AC/NT would take up tasks that require more knowledge in transport management services (including planning/delivering new territory-wide transport facilities/services, e.g. providing inputs on the planning of services and routes for public light buses). In view of the above, we consider that by filling the AC/NT post with a TO grade officer and the AC/U post with a GE, the structures of the two Regional Offices will be well balanced, and complementary to each other. We thus propose to rationalise the arrangement by re-grading TD's permanent AC/U post to a permanent GE post.

Roles of AC/TS

11. The TSB is currently headed by AC/TS, who is an Engineer grade officer. The TSB performs the following functions –

- (a) operation and maintenance of Area Traffic Control (ATC) system, Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) system, development of real-time adaptive traffic signal system and implementation of traffic enforcement cameras;
- (b) formulation and implementation of smart mobility initiatives and continuous enhancement of Transport Information System (TIS) and TD's mobile application;
- (c) formulation and review of road safety policies and standards;
- (d) implementation of road safety initiatives and road safety audit; and
- (e) implementation of Smart Traffic Fund.

The job description of the AC/TS post is at **Enclosure 3**.

12. The above functions are long-term ongoing tasks based heavily on relevant experiences, including professional traffic engineering knowledge, in-depth IT-related knowledge and experiences in innovative transport technologies. Under the leadership of AC/TS, the TSB has endeavoured to apply appropriate technologies and techniques in implementing transport infrastructure facilities, improving passengers' travelling experience and enhancing road safety. Its work has included the expansion and improvement of the ATC system in 1980s and 1990s, and installation, maintenance and renewal of CCTV systems at strategic locations to monitor traffic conditions, so that the signalised junctions are continuously coordinated, and TD operators can monitor the real-time traffic conditions and make timely responses as necessary to reduce congestion and delay. On enhancing road safety, apart from regularly analysing traffic accident statistics for formulating road safety strategy, publicity and education directions and traffic improvement measures, AC/TS has also led the team in delivering various road safety related initiatives, e.g. introduction of relevant legislative amendments, updates on strategic route and exit numbers as well as standards of traffic facilities and introduction of a road safety audit system, etc.. In addition, AC/TS set up the Smart Mobility Division in 2018 as the driving force for deploying innovative technologies to improve traffic efficiency and road safety in Hong Kong. AC/TS assisted in formulating the "Smart Mobility Roadmap for Hong Kong" in 2019, and followed up on its implementation, including the successful implementation of HKEToll (i.e. the free-flow tolling system), the trial

and pilot use of autonomous vehicles, Traffic Data Analytics System, “HKeMobility” mobile application, Smart Traffic Fund, etc. to promote and enhance smart mobility in Hong Kong.

13. Looking ahead, AC/TS will continue to lead the TSB in launching more initiatives to facilitate commuting of the public, including the timely enhancement of traffic control equipment, and the testing and implementation of real-time adaptive traffic signal system. On promoting smart mobility development, AC/TS will lead the construction of a traffic management platform to centralise data and streamline the data analytics processes, thereby achieving intelligent traffic management in Hong Kong, and promoting a paradigm shift “from detection to prediction” and “from responding to preventing”. On enhancing road safety, AC/TS will continue to lead the team in taking forward legislative amendments relating to road safety, as well as replacement of belisha beacons at zebra crossings on public roads.

Need for Re-grading the AC/TS post to a GE Post

14. Given the highly technical functions of the TSB, and taking into account the fact that the majority of the staff in the branch are from the Engineer grade and Technical Officer grade, it is operationally advantageous for AC/TS to possess highly professional knowledge and expertise in engineering, information technology and advanced intelligent transport infrastructure technologies in order to lead the TSB effectively. The proposal to have the AC/TS post taken up by an Engineer grade officer is therefore considered reasonable.

NON-DIRECTORATE SUPPORT

15. As at 1 April 2024, there are 169 non-directorate posts in the URO headed by AC/U, and 163 non-directorate posts in the TSB headed by AC/TS. The total number of non-directorate civil service posts in the URO and TSB will remain unchanged and these non-directorate posts will continue to support the daily operation of the URO and TSB.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

16. We have critically examined the possibility of filling the AC/U and AC/TS posts with TO grade officers. In view of the continuous and increasing need for the post-holder to possess professional knowledge in traffic engineering and technology to cope with the present and future challenges, and given the continued and proven smooth operation of the arrangement of filling the above post with an Engineer grade officer over the years, we consider the proposal to rationalise the directorate support for the URO and TSB appropriate.

17. We have also critically examined whether the duties of the proposed GE posts could be absorbed by the other existing GEs in TD. It is considered operationally unviable as the other GEs in TD are already fully occupied with their respective duties and would not be able to absorb additional duties without compromising the delivery of their existing duties or quality of services. The main duties and responsibilities of other GE posts (D2) in TD are at **Enclosure 4**.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

18. The proposed creation of two permanent GE posts to be offset by the deletion of two permanent AC for T posts is cost-neutral.

ESTABLISHMENT CHANGES

19. As the two permanent AC for T posts have been included in the establishment, re-grading the posts to two permanent GE posts will not additionally increase the overall establishment of the civil service.

COMMENTS FROM THE CIVIL SERVICE BUREAU

20. The Civil Service Bureau supports the creation of two permanent GE posts to be offset by deleting two permanent AC for T posts in TD. The grading and ranking of the proposed posts are considered appropriate having regard to the level and scope of responsibilities.

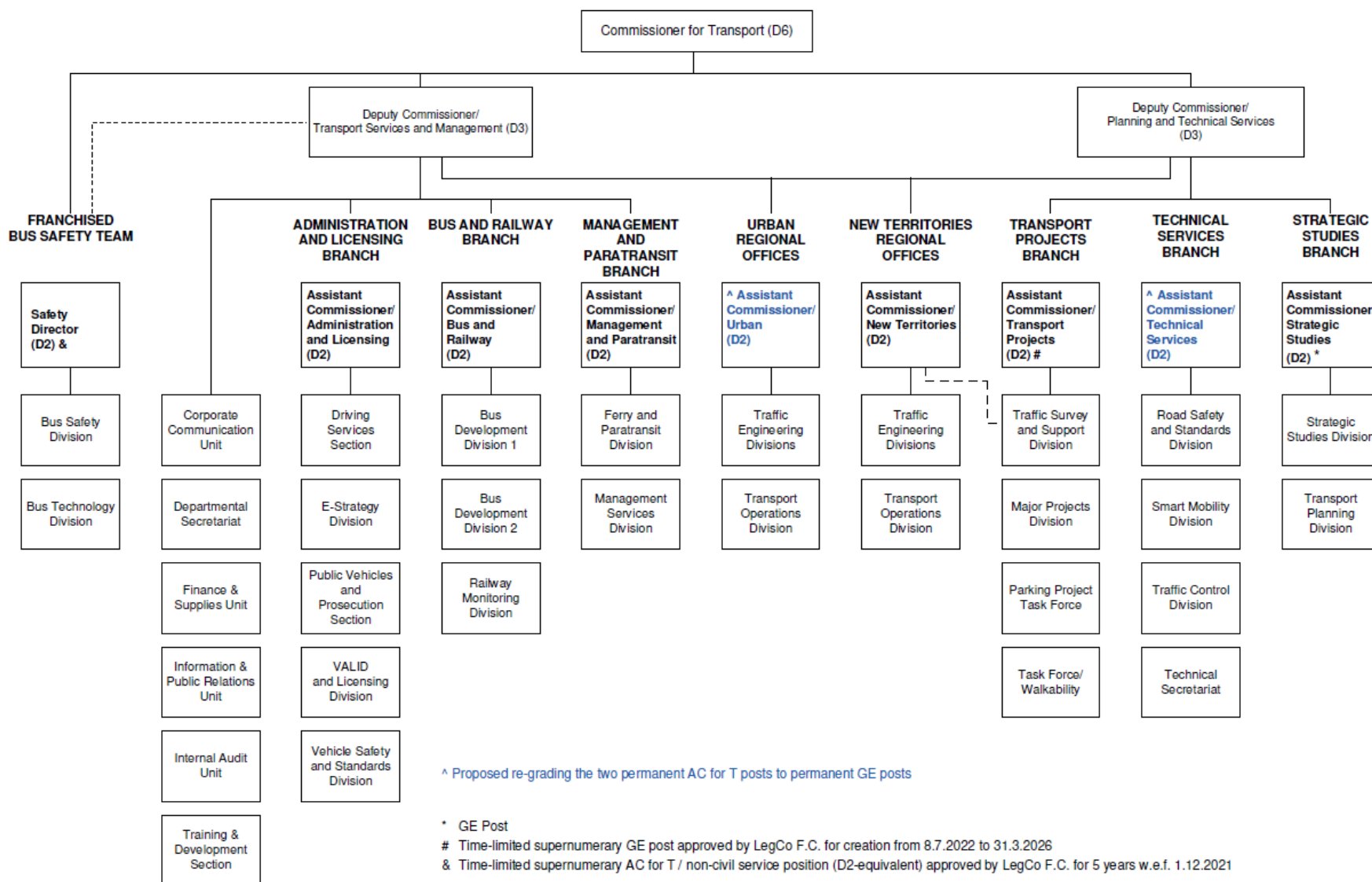
ADVICE SOUGHT

21. Members are invited to comment on the above proposal. Subject to Members' views, we will seek comments from the Establishment Subcommittee and approval from the Finance Committee.

Transport and Logistics Bureau
Transport Department
June 2024

Organisation Chart of Transport Department

Enclosure 1



**Job Description for the Post of
Assistant Commissioner/Urban**

Rank : Government Engineer (D2)

Responsible to : Deputy Commissioner / Planning and Technical Services (D3)
and Deputy Commissioner / Transport Services and
Management (D3)

Major Duties and Responsibilities

1. To supervise the day-to-day operation of the Traffic Engineering (Hong Kong) Division, Traffic Engineering (Kowloon) Division and Transport Operations (Urban) Division;
2. To direct and supervise traffic and transport matters in urban areas;
3. To direct and supervise traffic engineering and transport operational services;
4. To oversee the planning and implementation of road infrastructure, pedestrian facilities, public transport services and related public transport facilities;
5. To oversee the monitoring and management of district traffic conditions and implementation of traffic management measures to cope with the latest traffic situations; and
6. To coordinate TD's inputs on land supply initiatives and oversee Traffic Impact Assessment studies to facilitate housing and land supply and implementation of various major developments.

**Job Description for the Post of
Assistant Commissioner/Technical Services**

Rank : Government Engineer (D2)

Responsible to : Deputy Commissioner / Planning and Technical Services
(DC/PTS) (D3)

Major Duties and Responsibilities

1. To supervise the day-to-day operation of the Traffic Control Division, Smart Mobility Division, Road Safety and Standards Division and Technical Secretariat;
2. To direct and supervise activities in relation to the formulation and implementation of smart mobility development strategy, formulation and implementation of smart mobility initiatives, and the continuous enhancement of Transport Information System and TD's mobile application;
3. To direct and supervise activities in relation to the operation and maintenance of ATC and CCTV systems, the development of real-time adaptive traffic signal system and installation of traffic enforcement cameras;
4. To oversee the formulation and review of road safety policies and standards, conducting road safety researches, implementing road safety initiatives and road safety audit, as well as planning and formulating the incident management strategy and system; and
5. To supervise the implementation of the Smart Traffic Fund to promote research and application of vehicle-related innovation and technology, and develop a traffic data analytics system in collaboration with the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer (OGCIO).

**Main Duties and Responsibilities of the Government Engineer Posts (D2)
in Transport Department**

Assistant Commissioner/ Strategic Studies (AC/SS) heads the Strategic Studies Branch. With the directorate support of two Chief Engineers (D1), AC/SS is responsible for –

- directing the conduct of the Traffic and Transport Strategy Study, including formulation of the four key directions, namely, to optimise the use of limited road space, provide people-centric and efficient public transport services, advocate green and active transport as healthy lifestyles, and enhance the transport connectivity with other cities in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA) by the development of various transport strategies and initiatives;
- planning the conduct of a territory-wide Travel Characteristics Survey and enhancing the Comprehensive Transport Study Model;
- providing inputs and support for formulating macro transport management policies and strategies; and
- providing traffic engineering inputs and support throughout the design, construction and commissioning process of implementation of large-scale development projects.

Assistant Commissioner/ Transport Projects (AC/TP) heads the Transport Projects Branch. With the directorate support of two Chief Engineers (D1), AC/TP is responsible for –

- conducting traffic and transport surveys;
- planning and formulating the Incident Management Strategy and System;
- planning and designing road layouts;
- overseeing the planning and implementation of new highway projects;
- implementing major transport infrastructure (including new strategic roads and new rail links);
- providing traffic engineering and traffic management inputs for the planning, design and implementation of new railway schemes and major road projects;

- vetting and monitoring traffic diversion schemes and other traffic issues arising from the implementation of railway and road schemes as well as handling of complaints;
- implementing the new initiatives of fostering the concept of “Walk in HK” and assisting in formulating and developing the walkability policy; and
- formulating cycling policy, including the improvement and upgrading of cycling infrastructure.