

# OFFICIAL RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS

Thursday, 13 January 1994

The Council met at half-past Two o'clock

## PRESENT

THE PRESIDENT

THE HONOURABLE JOHN JOSEPH SWAINE, C.B.E., LL.D., Q.C., J.P.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY

THE HONOURABLE MRS ANSON CHAN, C.B.E., J.P.

THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY

THE HONOURABLE SIR NATHANIEL WILLIAM HAMISH MACLEOD, K.B.E., J.P.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

THE HONOURABLE JEREMY FELL MATHEWS, C.M.G., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE ALLEN LEE PENG-FEI, C.B.E., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE MRS SELINA CHOW LIANG SHUK-YEE, O.B.E., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE HUI YIN-FAT, O.B.E., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE MARTIN LEE CHU-MING, Q.C., J.P.

DR THE HONOURABLE DAVID LI KWOK-PO, O.B.E., LL.D., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE PANG CHUN-HOI, M.B.E.

THE HONOURABLE SZETO WAH

THE HONOURABLE TAM YIU-CHUNG

THE HONOURABLE ANDREW WONG WANG-FAT, O.B.E., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE LAU WONG-FAT, O.B.E., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE EDWARD HO SING-TIN, O.B.E., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE MARTIN GILBERT BARROW, O.B.E., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE MRS PEGGY LAM, O.B.E., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE MRS MIRIAM LAU KIN-YEE, O.B.E., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE LAU WAH-SUM, O.B.E., J.P.

DR THE HONOURABLE LEONG CHE-HUNG, O.B.E., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE JAMES DAVID MCGREGOR, O.B.E., I.S.O., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE MRS ELSIE TU, C.B.E.

THE HONOURABLE PETER WONG HONG-YUEN, O.B.E., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE ALBERT CHAN WAI-YIP

THE HONOURABLE VINCENT CHENG HOI-CHUEN, O.B.E., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE MOSES CHENG MO-CHI

THE HONOURABLE MARVIN CHEUNG KIN-TUNG, O.B.E., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE CHEUNG MAN-KWONG

THE HONOURABLE CHIM PUI-CHUNG

REV THE HONOURABLE FUNG CHI-WOOD

THE HONOURABLE FREDERICK FUNG KIN-KEE

THE HONOURABLE TIMOTHY HA WING-HO, M.B.E., J.P.

DR THE HONOURABLE HUANG CHEN-YA

THE HONOURABLE SIMON IP SIK-ON, O.B.E., J.P.

DR THE HONOURABLE LAM KUI-CHUN

DR THE HONOURABLE CONRAD LAM KUI-SHING, J.P.

THE HONOURABLE LAU CHIN-SHEK

THE HONOURABLE EMILY LAU WAI-HING

THE HONOURABLE LEE WING-TAT

THE HONOURABLE ERIC LI KA-CHEUNG, J.P.

THE HONOURABLE FRED LI WAH-MING

THE HONOURABLE MAN SAI-CHEONG

THE HONOURABLE STEVEN POON KWOK-LIM

THE HONOURABLE HENRY TANG YING-YEN, J.P.

THE HONOURABLE TIK CHI-YUEN

THE HONOURABLE JAMES TO KUN-SUN

DR THE HONOURABLE SAMUEL WONG PING-WAI, M.B.E., J.P.

DR THE HONOURABLE PHILIP WONG YU-HONG

THE HONOURABLE HOWARD YOUNG, J.P.

THE HONOURABLE ZACHARY WONG WAI-YIN

DR THE HONOURABLE TANG SIU-TONG, J.P.

THE HONOURABLE CHRISTINE LOH KUNG-WAI

THE HONOURABLE ROGER LUK KOON-HOO

THE HONOURABLE ANNA WU HUNG-YUK

THE HONOURABLE JAMES TIEN PEI-CHUN, O.B.E., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE ALFRED TSO SHIU-WAI

**ABSENT**

THE HONOURABLE NGAI SHIU-KIT, O.B.E., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE RONALD JOSEPH ARCULLI, O.B.E., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE MICHAEL HO MUN-KA

DR THE HONOURABLE YEUNG SUM

**IN ATTENDANCE**

THE CLERK TO THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL  
MR CLETUS LAU KWOK-HONG

PURSUANT TO STANDING ORDER 4AA, HIS EXCELLENCY THE GOVERNOR,  
THE RIGHT HONOURABLE CHRISTOPHER FRANCIS PATTEN, ATTENDED TO  
ADDRESS THE COUNCIL AND TO RECEIVE QUESTIONS.

PRESIDENT: Would Members please remain standing for the Governor?

CLERK: His Excellency the Governor.

PRESIDENT: The Governor will address this Council on the subject of transport.

GOVERNOR: Mr President, in my policy address, I said that one of our main priorities must be to keep Hong Kong's traffic moving. This is, of course, vital to our economy and to people's livelihood. Paradoxically, it is economic growth and increasing personal wealth that are placing our transport infrastructure under so much pressure. We are the victims of our own success.

We are fortunate in that 90% of the 10 million passenger trips made in the territory each day are by public transport. Levels of private car ownership are low compared with other places. We are also fortunate that, taken overall, our public transport system functions efficiently, offers a wide choice to travellers at reasonable fares, and requires no direct public subsidy. This is not to say that we can afford to be complacent. But we can justifiably be proud of transport facilities which are the envy of other countries in Asia and throughout the world.

Against a background of increasing economic activity, we will be keeping the traffic moving in three ways:

First, we will continue to invest in road infrastructure — \$9 billion is to be spent next year compared with \$7 billion this year and \$4 billion last;

Second, we will promote the expansion and upgrading of public transport services to meet rising public aspirations. And here I have high hopes for the future extension of the rail system which has such obvious advantages in Hong Kong's crowded environment as an efficient, non-polluting mover of people; and

Third, we will improve road management so as to derive the maximum return from our infrastructure investment programme, for example, through continuing to implement and upgrade computerized area traffic control systems. These have improved the traffic flow in some areas by up to 30%.

In Hong Kong, as in the past, we must face up to our traffic problems and find solutions. Work has already begun on the dual three-lane Western Harbour Crossing which will bring lasting benefits to cross-harbour travellers. We have recently committed ourselves to building the \$3 billion Ting Kau Bridge as quickly as we can so as to ease travel between the northwest New Territories and the urban area. And we have invited bids from the private sector to build

the remainder of the Route 3 (Country Park Section) under a franchise arrangement. This will relieve the Tuen Mun Road and greatly improve transport links between the border and the container port.

Traffic congestion is not unique to Hong Kong. It is a disease that plagues most major cities. So far we have coped better than most. But keeping Hong Kong traffic moving into the 21st century will be a major challenge. It must be addressed boldly and imaginatively if we are to maintain our economic success and our ease of movement. We will continue to invest substantially in road infrastructure while recognizing that there are natural limits on what can be achieved, particularly in the older urban areas. We must ensure that the vehicle fleet is not allowed to grow at such a pace that it leads to an unacceptable deterioration in air quality. In particular, the number of private cars, while starting from a relatively low base, has increased very significantly in recent years. Growth of this magnitude cannot be sustained indefinitely.

In dealing with these and other transport problems, we will be faced with difficult choices, balancing the interests of vehicle owners and the transport industry with the requirements of the community as a whole. In the period ahead, the Government will be looking to Members of this Council for their support and understanding in reaching decisions which will best serve the future transport needs of Hong Kong.

Thank you, Mr President.

PRESIDENT: Members may now put questions to the Governor. A Member who has asked a question may, for the purpose of elucidation only, ask a short follow-up question. Show of hands please. Mr Vincent CHENG.

MR VINCENT CHENG: *Thank you, Mr President. Governor, I have a question about an area which you have not covered in your address. It is about transportation for the underprivileged, I mean the severely disabled and the severely mentally retarded. I am not sure whether I will be ruled out of order but I would like to raise a question about that. At the moment, we adopt a welfare approach, which is to have a voluntary agency running rehab bus service and the rehab buses are donated by corporations. This sort of, if I may call it, "beg and bow" approach has not been able to provide the resources we need and we have to constantly turn away requests for such service. I am just wondering whether you, Governor, would reconsider this approach and provide more resources to this type of people who cannot make use of public transport. Thank you.*

GOVERNOR: I think the honourable gentleman will know that this is a subject in which I have taken a close personal interest, not least because it has been raised with me at public meetings that I have held both in 1992 and in 1993,

following my policy address to this Council. After the expressions of concern at meetings in 1992, I held a meeting in December 1992, with both representatives of disabled groups and with the public transport operators and with others who are concerned in this area. I think it was generally regarded as being a helpful meeting on both sides. I thought the intelligence and moderation of the requests made by those representing the disabled were very impressive. I also thought that the transport operators themselves were obviously keen to respond as constructively as possible.

We are having a further meeting in, I think, February of this year, certainly in the next couple of months, at which we are going to review the progress made since the last meeting in December. And there is some progress to report. Progress in the commitments made by the Kowloon Canton Railway Corporation (KCRC), progress in the commitments made by the Mass Transit Railway Corporation (MTRC), not least in looking at the design for the new airport railway, progress in the efforts made by some of the bus companies to provide better services for the disabled, though we know the particular problems which bus companies have in this respect.

As for rehab bus services, two types of services — schedule and "dial a ride" — are now available. I am told that the schedule service will be expanded with the addition of four routes a year between 1993-94 and 1997-98. And the "dial a ride" service will also be improved with the purchase of additional vehicles. I can assure the Honourable Member that this is a subject that the Administration will continue to take very seriously. And I hope that we will be able to announce further progress after the next meeting between the groups that I mentioned. One very positive, practical improvement that has been made is that we were able to secure the publication of a comprehensive public transport users' guide to help the disabled plan their trips and that came out at the end of last year, on 30 December. I think copies have since been distributed to all disabled groups and I think they found them very helpful.

PRESIDENT: Dr David LI.

DR DAVID LI: *Sir, will you please advise this Council how the recent increase in taxi fares can be justified when no measures appear to have been taken which ensure better quality of service for taxi users?*

GOVERNOR: As I am sure the Honourable Member will know, the question of taxi fares was referred to the Transport Advisory Committee and it was only after their advice had been taken that the increase in fares was agreed. While the discussion about taxi fares was taking place, I think everybody was aware of increased concern being expressed, both about the quality of service and about the way that provision is currently organized, the way that taxis are licensed. Now this Council has begun to address that issue with its agreement to

regulations which ensure that from now on, or from about a month's time, taxis will carry a plate and a licence which will enable unsatisfied customers to identify more clearly who has been responsible for a bad service. We have also seen increased activity by the police in enforcing existing regulations. And I hope that that too will improve levels of service. But the Honourable Member is entirely right in saying that the public will look to improved services as the principal justification for any future increase in fares, particularly when so many of our citizens depend on taxis, not just for an occasional return-home trip but for a regular movement around the territory.

PRESIDENT: Mr LAU Wong-fat.

MR LAU WONG-FAT (in Cantonese): *Mr Governor, with the upsurge in passenger and freight traffic between Hong Kong and Shenzhen in recent years, the roads linking the two places have reached capacity. Will the Governor inform this Council whether consideration has been given by the Government to liaise with the Shenzhen authorities with a view to studying jointly the feasibility of opening the fourth border checkpoint so as to cope with the future demand of Hong Kong?*

GOVERNOR: I think there are two issues that arise from that question. The first is the hours at which existing crossing points are open and the second is whether we should improve links — and transport links — between the mainland and Hong Kong, and perhaps I can deal with those in that order.

First of all, as I am sure the Honourable Member will know, we have proposed to the Chinese authorities a 24-hour opening at one of the crossings — a 24-hour opening with at least a couple of kiosks open right through the night. We think that would be extremely helpful and would help to smooth out some of the peaks in demand at the moment and deal with some of the real transport blockages that exist. The Chinese have not accepted the proposal for 24-hour opening at Lok Ma Chau. They have said that there are resource problems on their side but they have offered to reconsider the issue at the end of this year. I think the Council should recognize that the resource problems are more considerable for them because of the particular significance of Shenzhen and because of the number of customs points they have around their border. But I do hope that we can make progress on that issue — an issue which has been raised on a number of occasions with the PRC authorities by groups representing Hong Kong business and industry, like, I think, the Hong Kong Federation of Industries. So, first of all, we are prepared and wish to see longer opening hours at our border crossings and I hope that we can make progress on that sooner rather than later.

Secondly, perhaps I can deal with the question of additional routes, north-south, across the border. It seems to me that it is imperative both for our own

economic development and for the development of southern China, to secure better rail links, north-south, between Hong Kong, indeed our container port, and the PRC. I think that the arguments put forward in the Railway Development Study, on which at present we are of course consulting, are particularly persuasive in this regard. I think, in particular, that to see more freight travelling north-south on railways rather than on busy roads is very important. We know that the PRC themselves have made efforts to improve the rail system on the mainland and I hope very much therefore that they will welcome our attempts to do the same in Hong Kong.

Once the consultation period on the Railway Development Study has been completed, we will want to come to this Council and to go to our Chinese colleagues, with thoughts on the way forward. And I very much hope that we can get a move on with the Railway Development Study, not only because of its importance to our economic convergency with China but also because of its importance to, for example, those who live in the northwest New Territories who have very strong views about the provision of better railway facilities in that part of the territory.

PRESIDENT: Mr Marvin CHEUNG.

MR MARVIN CHEUNG: *Sir, in the light of the severe congestion in the existing MTR system, particularly along the Nathan Road section, when, in the opinion of the Government, is the final date beyond which the construction of a new MTR route along the western section of Kowloon peninsular cannot be deferred without jeopardizing the safety of the passengers using the Nathan Road section of the MTR line?*

GOVERNOR: I want to see that we are able to move ahead with the railway system associated with the building of the new airport as quickly as possible. The Honourable Member is quite right in saying that the development of the railway will not only secure the sort of access which any modern city should want to a new airport, but will also relieve congestion and traffic problems elsewhere. And I think that the impact on the Nathan Road corridor of the loosely described "airport railway" is one of the important side effects, beneficial side effects, of that investment.

Obviously, we have looked, as an Administration, at whether there is a case for having a number of bites at the railway and for investing in smaller parts of the overall scheme because of their local beneficial effects rather than waiting until we can get on with the whole scheme. I have to say that I think our judgment is that to take one part of the scheme at a time would not make very good sense. I do not think, for example, that we could justify Nathan Road relief in economic or in other terms and use that as a reason for just going



ahead with that part of the railway regardless of our ability to link up with the airport. But we will obviously keep this under review.

I just repeat what I said at the outset. The sooner we can have an overall agreement on the airport railway, as on the airport itself, the better — the better for Hong Kong today and the better for Hong Kong tomorrow; the better, if I may say so without being guilty of *laesae majestatis* for the SAR Government in due course.

PRESIDENT: Mr Moses CHENG.

MR MOSES CHENG (in Cantonese): *Mr Governor, the number of vehicles in Hong Kong has kept on increasing in recent years. In the past the Government had adopted some fiscal mechanisms in an attempt to contain the surge in the number of vehicles. However, the effectiveness of such measures proved short-lived. Now the Government is again trying to consider using some other fiscal mechanisms, such as tax increase, to deal with the growth in the number of vehicles. Mr Governor, why does the Government still consider employing this kind of fiscal mechanisms to handle such an important issue when it knows very well that this is a mere short-term solution?*

GOVERNOR: The Honourable Member has raised a question which I guess will provoke increasingly lively — I would use the adjective acrimonious had I not had as much respect as I do for Members of this Council — debate in the years ahead because Hong Kong for a number of reasons is going to face bigger and bigger problems in relation to car ownership.

The last major study we did, which showed some of the hazards involved in predicting the consequences of economic growth in Hong Kong, suggested that car ownership would be growing in the territory by about 5% a year. Well, the truth is that it has been growing at about 10% a year. The last figures we had suggested growth of nearly 12% in 1992. We have already exceeded the number of private vehicles that we had originally forecast for 1996 and we have exceeded them by a margin of over 40 000. We passed that figure in November 1993. All those facts are a consequence of economic growth, the same economic growth which is making us change our telephone numbering once again, only a few years after changing it for the last time.

Hong Kong nevertheless still has low car ownership in relation to the size of our population, but the figures are pretty devastating in relation to the number of roads we have. per kilometre of road, the number of cars and of all vehicles ranks amongst the highest in the world. One hundred and sixty for cars, and 270 for all vehicles per kilometre. Those are very large figures and figures which are growing exponentially with environmental and social consequences. We cannot shrug off that problem and I do not think there is

anybody who seriously thinks that we will be able to address it simply by building more roads. If one turns the whole of Hong Kong into a roundabout, I suppose that one might be able to reduce the figures in an acceptable way. But I do not think Hong Kong would in those circumstances be an acceptable place for people to live in. So, what do we do if we want to deal with the problem? Those who have cars are of course always pretty vigorous in their belief in the use of economic or other mechanisms to deter other people from getting cars as well. But we do have to face up to the issue.

The options are clear. We can introduce pricing mechanisms which will make it more difficult for people to purchase cars or more difficult for people to use them without paying for it. So we can introduce higher taxes on car ownership or — dare I mention the words in this Chamber — we can go back to the question of road pricing which I know caused so much interest and excitement a few years ago. There is at least one retired senior official of the Hong Kong Administration who, I think, would be able to give us very crisp advice on that issue. If we do not use the price mechanism which would be Hong Kong's customary way of tackling these problems, what else is available? Well, we could introduce the sort of physical controls that exist in other places. We could ban cars from parts of our urban area, or we could introduce a different sort of control system, such as other people have flirted with, and ban certain sorts of vehicles from parts of our urban area at given times. That is pretty well the range of possibilities short of disinventing the internal combustion engine, which is not actually an available option. Unless we face up to one of those options we really will find that Hong Kong moves — perhaps "moves" is the wrong word and "goes" is a better word — Hong Kong goes inevitably towards complete gridlock in the next few years.

There is a certain amount more we can do to build new roads and tunnels. We are committed to building close to 100 km more road between now and 1997. But there comes a point where even the most active and imaginative traffic management, where even building more roads, where even building more infrastructure in general, will not deal with a serious social and environmental problem. And at that point politicians will have to provide the sort of leadership which, I am afraid, does not always guarantee popularity.

PRESIDENT: Mr Steven POON.

MR STEVEN POON (in Cantonese): *Mr Governor, public transport companies always demand fare increases. Public transport operators, such as the railway corporations, often increase their fares in the light of the prevalent inflation rate while private transport operators usually cite unsatisfactory profits as the reason for their fare increases. The combined effect is a growing burden on commuters. And this, in turn, leads to high inflation. Mr Governor, has the Government taken any concrete action to carry out another review on the existing system and considered using some new methods to monitor and examine*

*the fare increase applications by these transport operators and to see whether the public could shoulder the fare increases every year?*

GOVERNOR: We are aware — not least because of yesterday's debate but as a result of other debates as well — of the interest of this Council and of the interest of district boards and municipal councils in the question of the fares charged by the MTRC and the KCRC. Of course we are aware of that. But we are also aware of the philosophy on which our railway companies were established, a philosophy which has enabled them — I think it has generally been recognized to be a fact — to operate just about the best public railway system anywhere in the region and one of the best in the world. They are different from private transport operators, they are not under pressure to maximize profits, they are under pressure to give a quality service and to invest heavily in its improvement. And the ability to set fares — which are required to enable them to borrow money to invest in the service — without the sort of political controls that the Honourable Member mentioned is, I think, at the heart of their operating strategy.

We could easily politicize the business of fare setting and then we could have a railway system as good or as bad as some of those that exist in western Europe or north America. I do not think that is a direction in which this Council would want us to go. What is interesting is to look at how "inflationary" the fare increases charged by the KCRC and the MTRC have been over the years. The KCRC has for the last six years asked for fare increases which were lower than the increase in the overall level of inflation. They have done that year after year. The MTRC has an even longer record of doing that. For 13 years they have asked for fare increases which were lower than the increase in the overall rate of inflation. I am bound to say that if every provider of services in Hong Kong, if every producer of goods in Hong Kong had been able to offer that, we would have a much better inflation record and would be even more competitive in the international community. None of that means that the railway corporations should not be in a position in which they have to justify to the public and to the Administration and to this Council what they are doing. We are encouraging them to develop their liaison with their passengers, we are encouraging them to be more open about their financial arrangements. And the Honourable Member will know about the obligation that we are placing on them in that regard. We have, as you know, decided that the Ombudsman should be able to look at their services as well as those provided elsewhere in the community. And I am prepared to go further than that; for example, it has been suggested that the Consumer Council should have a look at our railway corporations as well. I am prepared to look at that sort of proposal. But I do not think the Administration would be doing the community a service if we were to agree to arrangements which would turn the decision on fare increases every year into a political football. I do not think that would make sense. I think it would threaten a service which, while not perfect — who is perfect — is certainly one of the best public transport systems in the world.

PRESIDENT: Mr LAU Wah-sum.

MR LAU WAH-SUM (in Cantonese): *Mr Governor, the number of parking spaces in Hong Kong cannot keep pace with the growth in vehicles, resulting in a serious shortage of parking spaces. Moreover, rents for parking spaces in public car parks or in private housing estates have been raised substantially for commercial reasons. Motorists have found their burden increasingly heavy. Has the Government addressed the problems of serious shortage of parking spaces and exorbitant charges of car parks? What controls and remedies will it adopt?*

GOVERNOR: Our existing planning guidelines, like those in other communities, do of course take account of parking demand when we are looking at approval for new developments, whether commercial developments or housing developments. In addition to that, perhaps to give those guidelines more sensible and up-to-date parameters within which to operate, we are undertaking a review of parking demand, and as soon as that is available — though I think it will be about a year before it is — we will share the results of that survey on parking demand with this Council, with district boards and with the whole community. I think that that survey of parking demand may well affect our view on parking guidelines and affect our view on the requirement to provide more and better for car ownership, though I think that if people have to choose between using up our scarce land for car-parking spaces or for providing more flats for those without them, they may well come to the conclusion that the latter is the priority.

I would be very reluctant to go further than that and very reluctant to intervene in market operations. I do not think that the Government should give itself the job of setting or determining the prices for car-parking spaces that are provided by the private sector. I think as slippery slopes go, that one is quite slippery and pretty steep. But nevertheless, I know — not least from letters presented to me as I entered the Legislative Council today — the amount of concern there is about this issue on a number of estates, and I am sure that where there is concern that market forces are being stretched beyond normal bounds of elasticity, Honourable Members will make it clear to private developers that that is the view of local residents.

PRESIDENT: Mr Roger LUK.

MR ROGER LUK (in Cantonese): *Mr Governor, during the initial development of a new town, external transportation is quite often a disturbing problem for the residents. What specific policies does the Government have to make sure that such things will not happen again in the future development of new towns on Lantau?*

GOVERNOR: I think that the problem on Lantau should be less than that which is faced by those living in new towns, in the northwest New Territories in particular, because the railway which serves the new airport will be going in at the same time or even before the development of new living accommodation and I would hope that that, coupled with feeder bus services, would deal with the major transport problems which are associated with new developments.

But the Honourable Member is quite right to say that the development of new towns has, to a degree, gone ahead of the development of the transport infrastructure to make the lives of those who live in the new towns less easy than it should be. I think there are particular problems faced by those who live in the northwest New Territories but work in Kowloon or on this Island and have difficult journeys to work everyday. It is certainly a point which is expressed to me fairly regularly by those who represent the geographical constituencies in the northwest New Territories and it is a point that is made to me when I visit the New Territories as well.

There are — and it may be, I guess, the subject of a later question — a number of things that we are trying to do in order to improve transport facilities for those who live in the New Territories. The development of Route 3 — the Country Park Section of Route 3 — is important. The improvement of the Tuen Mun Highway is relevant. The development of our railway system — not least, as advocated by many, with links round to Tuen Mun — is important as well. The development of faster direct ferry services between Central and Tuen Mun is another important factor. And the relationship between bus services and those ferry services, too, has to be taken account of. So those are all practical things we can do to alleviate a problem in the northwest New Territories which I know has both social effects and, I would judge, economic effects as well.

PRESIDENT: Mr Henry TANG.

MR HENRY TANG: *Governor, my question concerns cross-harbour tunnels. Since the opening of the Eastern Harbour Crossing in 1989, the crossing is at or near its capacity today, four years later. Yesterday the Secretary for Transport, in answering one of the Legco questions, said that the long-term cross-harbour traffic solution lies in the Western Harbour Crossing due to open in 1997. Now, if we develop economically, in the way recommended in the Territorial Development Strategy that has come out, I envisage that the Western Harbour Crossing probably would reach its capacity by the year 2002, which is five years after its scheduled opening. In order not to become yet again a victim of our own success and to keep our traffic moving like you said, Sir, is there a fourth harbour crossing in your vision, and if not, why not? And now that I have asked you about it, would you think about it?*

GOVERNOR: After our experience of legislating for the Western Harbour Crossing I am certainly happy to think about it but I hope I do not have to legislate for it.

The Honourable Member is quite right, though I think he perhaps raises inadvertently the problems sometimes associated with linear projection or with assumptions about exponential growth. But he is right, first of all, in pointing out the extent to which our existing cross-harbour links are inadequate. The Cross Harbour Tunnel is used by about 180 000 vehicles each day. It is operating, I think I am right in saying, about 20% beyond its capacity. The Eastern Harbour Crossing is also being extensively used. It is used by about 87 000 vehicles a day. And those figures will increase slightly — though any increase, when you are already congested, is significant. Those figures will increase slightly because of the necessary phasing-out of the Central-Jordan Road vehicular ferry service. The immediate answer is to complete the Western Harbour Crossing as quickly as possible and I am sure that that will have a substantial effect on the pressure on the other two tunnels. If I may just say in parenthesis, I recall that there were those who vigorously opposed the construction of the Western Harbour Crossing, one or two of them are still among the ranks of those who criticize the building of the airport and the airport railway, which perhaps puts their criticism in current context. We have also, in addition to completing the Western Harbour Crossing as quickly as possible, got to take, as we are doing, measures to improve traffic management in relation to both the existing tunnels. We have taken a number of measures, such as the provision of more traffic lights which have made a bit of an impact though there is a limit to what one can do. We have now, I think, on the Eastern Harbour Crossing, got three files of traffic in the evening moving from the Island back to Kowloon which means that people are able to move more rapidly in that direction. Those are all limited measures that one can make though they are useful.

Whether, when we have got a third crossing, we will require a fourth is difficult, I think, at this moment to predict, though perhaps it is not too soon to try to consider future traffic demand across the harbour. I have an instinct myself that there does come a point where you do not need to go on easing the shoe, that there does come a point where we should have satisfied demand. If we need a fourth, fifth, sixth harbour crossing, then I suggest that we will have failed to answer the question which I raised earlier about car ownership and its impact on our overall environment. I do not think even Hong Kong can go on with more and more traffic-related infrastructure without people asking serious questions about whether Hong Kong was meant for people or for cars.

PRESIDENT: Mr Alfred TSO.

MR ALFRED TSO (in Cantonese): *Mr Governor, at present it takes a passenger about 50 minutes to get to North District or the border from Tsuen Wan via Tuen Mun Highway and Yuen Long Circular Road. Upon the completion of Route 3, it will only take about 15 minutes. This clearly shows that Route 3 will give real great value for money. Government officials concerned spent a total of 10 years before bringing the project to the existing tendering stage from its planning stage. For years, strong demands had been made especially in recent years when serious congestion has become a common sight in New Territories West. But government officials concerned are still not taking the matter seriously, resulting in delays and prolonged traffic woes to the residents. Mr Governor, just now you mentioned the importance of Route 3 a number of times. Would you admonish those officials for their wrong decisions or their negligence and ensure the expeditious construction of Route 3 and the New Territories Northwest Railway to end in an earlier date the traffic snarl-up plaguing people living in New Territories West and to gain public confidence?*

GOVERNOR: It was the habit of Tudor monarchs to punish officials in the way that the Honourable Member is suggesting. But I think given the remarkable success of Hong Kong over the years our civil servants and officials deserve praise rather than decapitation. I think that we have now got a sensible strategy for Route 3 and for the principal infrastructure projects which remain uncompleted and we are grateful to this Council for having voted funds for the Ting Kau Bridge which is one of the integral parts of that development. The Finance Committee, as the Council will recall, has voted \$3.3 billion for the bridge and we hope to have completed it by mid-1997.

The Council will know that we are hoping to develop the other projects, the tunnel and the Yuen Long Approach Road on the basis of a build-operate-transfer agreement with private franchisees. The cost of that part of the project is, I think, about \$6.4 billion. I think it is another example of an area where we can use private sector investment for a public gain. It will take slightly longer to complete the tunnel and the approach road. Our best estimate at the moment is that we will take until 1998, though maybe, as with other projects in Hong Kong, we will be able to finish it ahead of time. I think that that project is, as I mentioned earlier, a key to better transport in the New Territories and I am sure the Honourable Member will be watching us carefully to make sure that we get on with it as rapidly as possible. I am sure that when it comes to considering matters like the terms of the franchise, he will be one of the Honourable Members who will be urging his colleagues to get on with things as rapidly as possible rather than to hold things up unnecessarily for perhaps local political reasons. So, I hope that we can get on with that project with the encouragement of the Honourable Member and other Honourable Members, and with the punishment or decapitation of no officials.

PRESIDENT: Mr TAM Yiu-chung.

MR TAM YIU-CHUNG (in Cantonese): *Mr Governor, today you address this Council on the subject of transport. It appears that your remarks do not incorporate any new ideas. However, I have a modest proposal to make and I wonder whether you, Mr Governor, would care to give some thought to it. Sino-Hong Kong transport is now developing at a fast pace and a lot of consequential problems call for urgent solution. But we have yet to establish a standing institution where officials of China and Hong Kong can hold discussions and make co-ordinated efforts. During my visit to Beijing in early December, I suggested to the Chinese officials the setting-up of a mechanism on that front to enhance communication between officials of both sides. Do you consider it as necessary? Will you support this proposal — or maybe obstacles may stand in the way if it is you who put forward the idea?*

GOVERNOR: I think that it is an extremely interesting idea. We have taken a number of initiatives to promote better co-operation between Hong Kong and China which have been followed up successfully. For example, the initiative which I proposed to Director LU Ping in October 1992 to start training courses for some of our senior officials in Peking has been followed up. We have had two very successful courses and I very much hope that all our senior civil servants will have had the opportunity of attending or seeing those courses before 1997.

This particular proposal, I think, is an extremely sensible one. The Honourable Member is entirely right to say that economic convergence requires us to look much more creatively at infrastructure convergence as well. I mentioned earlier the development in China of the railway network and the importance of making sure that our railway system in Hong Kong is improved and links up with the north-south railway routes in China. So I hope that the Honourable Member's baby can be brought to glorious adulthood as rapidly as possible. And if the Honourable Member has any particular suggestions about how we could carry that idea forward, I would be delighted to hear from him about it.

PRESIDENT: Mr Edward HO.

MR EDWARD HO: *Governor, you have mentioned quite a number of huge roadworks projects, like Route 3, and I think we welcome them. But the problem sometimes is in the built-up areas, for instance in Kowloon. As you know, the Town Planning Board has just issued 16 OZPs for Kowloon, which limit development to the potential permitted by the Building (Planning) Regulations and the whole constraint has been on the transport network. I think what has happened is that town planning and building development are being*



constrained by the Government's willingness to improve road networks within the built-up areas and consequently our people have to move away to new towns and then we have to catch up with building roads, linking them with the workplace and so forth. So my question is: Does the Government have any plans to try to improve, say, road networks within the built-up areas, especially in Kowloon?+J!

GOVERNOR: Yes. We are spending a large amount of money on improved traffic management, for example, computerized schemes which increase traffic flow without the provision of new roads. But there are obviously limits to the impact that one can make through traffic management on the problem of transportation.

There is one issue which is relevant to this which I think causes considerable concern to many ordinary residents as well as to Members of this Council, and that is the impact on an already difficult transport scene of endless road openings by public utilities. It is an issue which is raised fairly regularly in the newspapers by one or two correspondents, in relation not only to Kowloon but for the south of this Island as well. I know there is one correspondent who writes regularly about the problems in Deep Water Bay and the roads in that area. I think we have to look at the question of road openings, excavations that is, more imaginatively. We are asking the Secretary for Works to do that at the moment. We have got to talk to the public utilities to try to make sure that they behave a bit more sensibly. And I am not against looking at issues like the use of charging, in order to try to make sure that road excavations, road openings are as short as possible and dealt with as sensibly as possible by, for example, covering cuts in the road. That is the sort of simple issue which can make an impact on transport and traffic movement without great expense.

But overall, I think the Honourable Member has raised a matter which goes back to the early question of the extent of car ownership in a small community like this. Our cities were not built for the internal combustion engine, they were built for human beings.

PRESIDENT: Mrs Miriam LAU.

MRS MIRIAM LAU (in Cantonese): *Mr Governor, to solve the problem of traffic congestion in Hong Kong, it is indeed necessary to develop the mass transit system, including the railway. The Governor has also mentioned this point just now in his speech. The Railway Development Study published last year has proposed a number of railway projects, but even the fastest one cannot be completed until 2001 and some of them even do not have an estimated completion date. Will the Administration consider advancing the implementation of these railway projects? And in order to expedite these mass*

*transit developments, will the Administration consider the participation of the private sector?*

GOVERNOR: The Administration would like little more than to be able to advance the implementation of the Railway Development Strategy and I think it would be natural for this community to use private sector investment to secure some of the goals and objectives in the Railway Development Strategy. I think the honourable lady will know the sequence of events which must now take place. We have virtually completed consultations on the strategy. We must then consider the views of the community and those views have been presented very vigorously. We must then present our assessment to this Council and to the community and begin a dialogue with our Chinese colleagues, since most of these matters will involve implementation after 1997, and it would be crazy to try to implement a railway development strategy for Hong Kong in any event without taking account of what is happening on the other side of the border. If we can make rapid progress in those discussions, conceivably a little more rapid progress than we have been able to make in, for example, the case of the airport, then the Administration would welcome it and we could get on as rapidly as possible with the development of the sort of railway system which the whole of Hong Kong needs, not least the inhabitants of the northwest New Territories, Tseung Kwan O and other parts of the territory.

PRESIDENT: Mr LEE Wing-tat.

MR LEE WING-TAT (in Cantonese): *Mr Governor, I do not know whether you have ever tried to take a bus and then change to the Mass Transit Railway in the morning in order to go to your office. Perhaps it is unnecessary for you to do so. So you can reply to questions about traffic congestion in a leisurely manner. But I hope you can bear in mind that there are a million odd commuters who have to go to their offices in this way daily. As regards the Airport Railway, there is still no agreement between China and Britain on its financial arrangement. But on the day before yesterday, Mr MATHERS of the Mass Transit Railway Corporation (MTRC) said that if the Administration could further inject a certain amount of capital into the Airport Railway, then the MTRC would be able to construct on its own a certain part of the Railway (I guess that he was referring to the part between the Central District and Tsing Yi). The construction of this part was also proposed in the Second Comprehensive Transport Study. Unfortunately, since it was given the name "Airport Railway", which displeased China, its construction was not approved. Mr Governor, can you say definitely whether the idea of constructing this part of the Railway can be considered such that our commuters do not have to endure the crush and spend a great deal of time in going to their offices?*

GOVERNOR: On the first point that the Honourable Member mentioned, it is true that those of us, including conceivably some Members of the Legislative Council, do not have to travel every day in the same way as most of the citizens of Hong Kong. I am perhaps guiltier than most since I walk downstairs in the morning, rather than catch a bus. I am also in a situation in which when I do catch a bus or catch a tram or catch a train, I am doing so in the company of about 18 television cameras and large numbers of journalists but such company is not entirely the same crush that most other people have to endure every day. But if it is any comfort to the Honourable Member, I used to commute regularly to the office on the train and it was a lot less good a service than people have in Hong Kong. But precisely because many of us do not have to face the same problems that ordinary people — other ordinary people, let me say — have to face every day in getting to work, we should be even more conscious of the importance of providing good public services at a reasonable cost. You do not have to live in a Housing Authority flat to know the importance of providing good Housing Authority flats for as many people as possible. You do not have to use a bus or a train every day to know the importance to the community of providing good bus and train services for everyone for every day of the year and not just occasionally off peak. So I just put that point straightaway because I realize that not everybody in the community has a flag on the front of the car.

The Honourable Member raised, in the shadow of that sermon, a question about part of the Airport Railway — and it is a very important question which I think was raised earlier as well and which I tried to respond to earlier — and it asks whether we can deal with what is perhaps wrongly called the Airport Railway in different bites doing parts of the system in order to relieve traffic problems in particular areas even if we cannot justify the whole system until there is an overall agreement. And I said in reply to the question earlier, which I say again to the Honourable Member, that we do not believe that there is a transport justification for doing small bits of the railway and we do not believe that we could justify just investing in the Tsing Yi central part of the Airport Railway on the grounds that that would have an impact on the Nathan Road Corridor. I do not think the Honourable Member has conveyed entirely accurately the position of the MTRC, though I can understand why he has perhaps added a bit of bounce to their step on this issue. But I am prepared to look at any evidence that he has or any new evidence the MTRC have, and if there is an economic justification for going ahead with the project then we would have to look at it more seriously. But at present I must say that has not been our calculation.

What we should all try to do, of course, is to get ahead with the whole project as quickly as possible. It is ridiculous that we are in this position and have been in this position for so long, since before I became Governor. The sooner we can resolve these matters the better. As I said yesterday, what would help us a great deal would be to be in a situation in which we did not feel as though we were playing darts blindfolded in the dark, casting darts in the direction of where we think the board may be, hoping that we hit the bull's eye. What would be a help would be if the Chinese side would say, for the

community, I stress for the community, precisely what they want, precisely what funding arrangements they would regard as acceptable to the future SAR Government and to the community here in Hong Kong for the railway and for the airport itself. We then conceivably have a rather better idea of the gap between what we have been proposing with three different sets of proposals so far and what the Chinese side presumably want. We could resolve all that, I would have hoped, in the Airport Committee very rapidly if the will was there. People talk about consultation. We have made an awful lot of information available, but if nothing comes back then consultation is a rather difficult process. So, I hope that constructive actions can follow some of the words that we have heard recently and that instead of offering one another advice across the airwaves, as has been happening for month after month after month, we will actually do what people in Hong Kong would like us to do, which is to resolve these questions around the table with the interests of Hong Kong and Hong Kong's position as a regional transport hub at heart rather than some perhaps more obscure political reason dictating the pace of events.

### **Adjournment and next sitting**

PRESIDENT: In accordance with Standing Orders I now adjourn the sitting until Wednesday, 19 January 1994.

*Adjourned accordingly at twenty-three minutes to Four o'clock*