

Legislative Council Meeting of 18 November 2020

Motion on “Alleviating Road Traffic Congestion”

Progress Report

Purpose

At the Legislative Council (“LegCo”) meeting of 18 November 2020, the motion “Alleviating Road Traffic Congestion” moved by Hon LUK Chung-hung, as amended by Hon CHAN Han-pan, was passed. Full text of the motion passed is at **Annex**. In consultation with relevant bureaux and departments, we report to Members on the progress of the work concerned.

Progress

Relocating important business development areas to other districts

2. Hong Kong 2030+: Towards a Planning Vision and Strategy Transcending 2030" conducted by the Development Bureau and the Planning Department puts forward a conceptual spatial framework, with a view to addressing in the long run the imbalance in home-job spatial distribution with a metropolitan business core, two strategic growth areas and three primary development axes. This includes planning and developing economic land (including commercial land) of certain scale in different areas of the New Territories. Such proposed economic land mainly includes Tung Chung New Town Extension, Kwu Tung North/Fanling North New Development Area, Hung Shui Kiu/Ha Tsuen New Development Area, artificial islands in the Central Waters, New Territories North development, etc. These developments will enable more residents of the New Territories to work in the same region, thereby alleviating congestion at major transport corridors, as well as attract those living in the metropolitan areas to work in the New Territories.

Relocating government departments from central business districts

3. It is the Government's policy to accommodate its offices in government-owned properties as far as circumstances permit and re-provision those with no location requirements out of high value areas, including the central business districts. The Government will continue to review from time to time the operational needs and location requirements of its offices located in high value areas, the availability of suitable government-owned premises, cost effectiveness etc., and re-provision those offices out of high value areas as appropriate.

Commissioning a comprehensive transport study

4. As announced in the Chief Executive's 2020 Policy Address, the Government will carry out a comprehensive traffic and transport strategy study ("TTSS") which includes surveying the latest travel patterns of the public, making reference to and introducing innovative transport modes and technologies as appropriate with a view to enhancing our public transport services to meet the demand of the public, as well as deploying different transport resources more effectively to support sustainable development and facilitate the flow of people and goods in the Greater Bay Area. At present, the Transport Department ("TD") is formulating the scope and detailed arrangements for TTSS, and is planning to conduct a travel characteristics survey in order to enhance the comprehensive transport study model in 2024 based on the data collected from the survey; and will make use of the new information and models to complete the remaining sections of TTSS, so as to formulate the blueprint on future traffic and transport policies.

Implementation of the "Strategic Studies on Railways and Major Roads beyond 2030"

5. Meanwhile, the Highways Department ("HyD") and TD commenced the "Strategic Studies on Railways and Major Roads beyond 2030" in December 2020. It is anticipated that the study on railways will take about 38 months whereas the study on major roads will take about 27 months to complete. The two studies are being conducted

concurrently. Based on the final development strategy of the “Hong Kong 2030+: Towards a Planning Vision and Strategy Transcending 2030” planning study, HyD and TD would explore the layout of railway and major road infrastructure and conduct preliminary engineering and technical assessments for their 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.

Implementation of recommended projects of Railway Development Strategy 2014

6. The Transport and Housing Bureau had invited the MTR Corporation Limited (“MTRCL”) to submit proposals for the implementation of the seven new railway projects under the Railway Development Strategy 2014, namely the Tuen Mun South Extension, Northern Link, East Kowloon Line, Tung Chung Line Extension, North Island Line, Hung Shui Kiu Station and South Island Line (West). MTRCL had submitted proposals for all the seven railway projects to the Government successively.

7. We invited MTRCL to proceed with the detailed planning and design of the Tung Chung Line Extension, Tuen Mun South Extension and Northern Link in 2020. Regarding the East Kowloon Line and North Island Line, the Government has offered comments on the proposals submitted by MTRCL and asked MTRCL to improve the technical designs as set out in the proposals. MTRCL is considering our comments and exploring feasible options for improving the designs of these two projects. We will continue to follow up with the MTRCL and announce the way forward of the projects in due course. For the planning of Hung Shui Kiu Station and South Island Line (West), relevant bureaux and departments are examining the proposals submitted by MTRCL in end May 2020 and end December 2020 respectively.

8. When the details of a proposed railway scheme, such as the alignment, location of station(s) and implementation timetable, etc, are

available, the Government will consult the public, including LegCo and relevant district organisations, in line with established procedures.

Increasing supply of car parking spaces

9. From the parking perspective, we understand that motorists are concerned with the provision of car parking spaces and expect the Government to increase car parking provision. However, the hard fact is that land resources are limited in Hong Kong. Coupled with the need to cater to competing demands for land for community and economic development, the Government's current policy on the provision of car parking spaces is therefore to accord priority to considering and meeting the parking demand of commercial vehicles ("CVs"), and to provide an appropriate number of private car ("PC") parking spaces if the overall development permits, but at the same time not to encourage passengers to opt for PCs in lieu of public transport so as to avoid aggravating the road traffic. As such, the Government in recent years has formulated and is actively pursuing a host of short- and medium- to long-term measures to increase car parking spaces as appropriate.

10. TD has substantially completed the review of the standards for parking facilities specified in the Hong Kong Planning Standards and Guidelines ("HKPSG"). After consulting relevant stakeholders, the new revised parking standards will be promulgated. The revised parking standards will increase the number of ancillary PC parking spaces in private and public/subsidised housing developments and the number of ancillary CV parking spaces in public/subsidised housing in future. Prior to the promulgation of the revised parking standards, TD will require developers to provide parking spaces at the higher end of the current parking standards for new developments. TD will review the relevant standards under HKPSG regularly so that necessary adjustments to the parking standards could be made in a timely manner to cater for the changing social and economic circumstances.

11. At the same time, TD is proactively exploring the incorporation of new public car parks in suitable "Government, Institution or Community" facilities and public open space projects in accordance with the "single

site, multiple uses” principle. Subject to technical feasibility, it is expected that about 20 works projects currently planned will provide a total of around 5 100 parking spaces by batches. The Government consulted the LegCo Panel on Transport in early January 2021 on the funding proposal for two of the works projects, namely Public Vehicle Park at Areas 4 and 30 (Site 2), Sheung Shui and Public Vehicle Park at Area 99, Tung Chung. We plan to commence construction for the projects after obtaining funding approval from the LegCo Finance Committee, with the target of completing the projects in three years to provide around 410 parking spaces.

12. In order to provide more parking spaces by increasing spatial efficiency, TD is actively taking forward six automated parking system (“APS”) pilot projects and has identified four sites, including a short-term tenancy (“STT”) site in Tsuen Wan, a public open space site at the junction of Yen Chow Street and Tung Chau Street in Sham Shui Po, and the proposed government building sites at Chung Kong Road in Sheung Wan and Sheung Mau Street in Chai Wan. For the pilot project in Tsuen Wan, the successful tenderer received the relevant STT site in mid-December 2020 and has begun the preliminary works for APS. It is expected that APS thereat will be put into service by end-2021.

Providing additional public transport fare reductions and concessions

13. The Government all along encourages public transport operators to lower fares or introduce fare concessions as far as possible to help reduce passengers’ travel expenses. Currently, the MTRCL offers various fare concessions, including Mass Transit Railway (“MTR”) City Saver, Monthly Pass Extras, Day Pass, Early Bird Discount Promotion, and Fare Concessions for the Elderly and Children, etc. Taking into account all concession schemes, the total concession amount provided by MTRCL to its passengers exceeded \$3.5 billion in Year 2019/20. In view of the COVID-19 pandemic, the MTRCL has also provided concessions such as time-limited “20% Rebate for Every Octopus Trip” since 1 July 2020.

14. Since 17 February 2019, the Government has implemented the toll exemption arrangement for franchised bus operators using government tolled tunnels and control areas. Franchised bus operators have to keep the toll saved into its own dedicated fund account, known as the “Franchised Bus Toll Exemption Fund” (“the Fund”). The balance in the Fund is reserved for relieving fare increase pressure of the corresponding franchised bus operator. Hence, the magnitude of the fare increase shouldered by the passengers will be lowered, and the public can enjoy a more affordable yet efficient franchised bus service.

15. In addition, the Government enhanced the non-means tested Public Transport Fare Subsidy Scheme last year by suitably raising the subsidy rate and cap, with a view to further alleviating commuters’ fare burden. To allow more commuters to benefit from the Scheme during the pandemic, the Government has temporarily relaxed the monthly threshold of the Scheme from \$400 to \$200 in the second half of 2020. In the light of the ongoing impact of the pandemic on the local economy, the Government announced in the 2020 Policy Address the extension of such measure for six months till 30 June 2021, during which the Government will continue to provide a subsidy amounting to one-third of the monthly public transport expenses in excess of \$200, subject to a maximum of \$400 per month. It is estimated that around 3.8 million people will benefit each month.

Reviewing MTR Fare Adjustment Mechanism

16. The existing MTR Fare Adjustment Mechanism (“FAM”) is part of the rail merger agreement in 2007 to replace the fare autonomy of the then Mass Transit Railway Corporation enjoyed. FAM is a transparent mechanism based on open and objective data and a direct-drive formula. It maintains the financial prudence of MTRCL, ensures continuous resources investment to maintain a high level of services and addresses public concerns on fares, passengers’ affordability and other issues.

17. After the review of FAM in 2013 and 2017, penalty arrangement on severe service disruption incidents, profit-sharing mechanism and arrangement to cater for affordability of the public were included in the

mechanism. In particular, MTRCL will set aside funding for fare concessions based on its business performance to share its operational success with passengers. The Government will continue to require MTRCL to respond to public concerns and offer more fare concessions, in addition to adjusting its fares according to FAM.

Reviewing tolling policy of government tunnels and bridges

18. Hong Kong is densely populated with a large vehicle fleet. Given the limited road space, it is necessary to put in place traffic management measures as appropriate, including setting tolls for tunnels, with a view to managing the number of vehicles running on roads. Meanwhile, where traffic conditions permit, we will seek to reduce the cost of using government tolled tunnels and control areas incurred by the public, public transport operators and transport trades.

19. The Chief Executive announced in the 2019 Policy Address that the successive commissioning of the Tuen Mun-Chek Lap Kok Tunnel (“TM-CLKT”) and Tseung Kwan O-Lam Tin Tunnel (“TKO-LTT”) will enable the diversion of traffic to and from Lantau Island and Tseung Kwan O respectively, thus creating an opportunity for waiving the relevant tunnel tolls. TM-CLKT is a toll-free tunnel upon its commissioning on 27 December 2020, while the tolls of Lantau Link have been waived on the same day. The tolls of TKO-LTT and Tseung Kwan O Tunnel will also be waived when the former is open to traffic.

20. On the toll levels of other government tunnels and Tsing Sha Control Area, as stated in the 2018 Policy Address, the Government proposes comprehensively reviewing and determining the toll levels of government tolled tunnels based on the concept of “Congestion Charge”. The concept of “Congestion Charging” refers to adjusting tolls as appropriate based on traffic management needs, with a view to regulating traffic flows and rationalising traffic at tunnels in order to alleviate traffic congestion and facilitate commuting. TD commenced the “Congestion Charging” study in July 2019, and will, taking into account different factors, consult stakeholders on the recommended toll plans and toll adjustment mechanism in a timely manner.

Increasing Park and Ride (“PnR”) concessions

21. The Government’s transport policy is underpinned by public transport, with railways as the backbone. On this basis, the Government supports the provision of PnR facilities at or near suitable railway stations to encourage drivers to take the train after parking their vehicles, hence reducing road traffic in the congested areas. The Government will continue to encourage different organisations (including MTRCL) to promote their existing PnR facilities, and look into the feasibility of providing PnR concessions for more carparks near MTR stations.

Providing traffic information by making use of big data as well as innovation and technology

22. TD launched in July 2018 the all-in-one “HKeMobility” mobile application to provide real-time public transportation and driving information (including routes of different transportation modes, journey time, transport fares, etc.) for the public’s planning of the most suitable travel arrangements. As at end December 2020, “HKeMobility” recorded cumulative downloads of about 2.25 million, with an average daily hit rate of about 40 000.

23. TD has all along encouraged public transport operators to open up data. Since August 2019, real-time arrival information and data of the New World First Bus Services Limited, Citybus Limited, New Lantao Bus Company (1973) Limited and MTR Airport Express, Tung Chung Line, Tseung Kwan O Line and West Rail Line have been disseminated to the public for free via “HKeMobility” and the Public Sector Information Portal (“data.gov.hk”). Currently, MTRCL is exploring to extend the opening up of real-time arrival information on more MTR Lines, and is formulating details of implementation. The Kowloon Motor Bus Company (1933) Limited and the Long Win Bus Company Limited have also responded positively, and are ready to make available the raw data of real-time arrival information to the Government. TD is carrying out the

preparatory work for disseminating the said data via “HKeMobility” and “data.gov.hk” tentatively by mid-2021.

24. With regard to minibuses, to facilitate passengers’ trip planning, TD has conducted a test-launch of the real-time arrival information system for green minibus (“GMB”) since late 2020 to disseminate the real-time arrival information of three Hong Kong Island GMB routes through “HKeMobility”. The relevant data will also be released in machine-readable format via “data.gov.hk” for public use free of charge. Subject to the system performance, TD plans to disseminate the real-time arrival information of about 70 GMB routes in March 2021, followed by that of the remaining 500 or so GMB routes by phases, with a view to achieving full implementation in 2022.

25. Further, TD has been encouraging car park operators to release real-time parking vacancy information to the public via “HKeMobility” and “data.gov.hk”, so as to assist motorists in finding parking spaces and reduce traffic congestion caused by vehicles circulating on roads in search of such. As of end December 2020, 416 car parks have disseminated parking vacancy information via “HKeMobility”. Amongst them, data of 298 car parks have also been uploaded onto “data.gov.hk”.

26. Regarding non-government car parks, the Government has since mid-2018 required fee-paying public car park operators under new short-term tenancy agreements to provide TD with relevant real-time parking vacancy information. As for the public car parks under private developments, the Government will also incorporate provisions into new land leases as appropriate, requiring developers to provide TD with real-time parking vacancy information after completion of relevant new development projects.

27. Ever since “HKeMobility” was launched, TD has been enhancing its functions, including the extension of walking route search function to all 18 districts in Hong Kong in December 2020. The search function also offers a barrier-free route option for people with visual and mobility disabilities. With the increasing public demand and the growth of traffic

data volume in the future, TD will continue to enhance the functions and user interface of “HKeMobility” with the view to enriching users’ experience.

28. In addition, TD plans to install around 12 000 new generation parking meters which accept multiple payment means. The new meters will replace around 9 800 existing parking meters with their serviceable life expiring soon. The new meters will be equipped with space sensors and will provide real-time information via “HKeMeter” mobile application, “HKeMobility” and “data.gov.hk” to assist motorists in finding vacant parking spaces and thereby reduce the vehicles circulating on roads in search of such. The installation works of the new meters commenced in late 2020, where some have already been put into operation in phases starting from January 2021. The installation works of the new meters is expected to be fully completed in the first half of 2022.

Enhancing traffic enforcement

29. The Hong Kong Police Force (“the Police”) all along pays much attention to the problem of illegal parking and takes violations that cause traffic congestion as one of the selected traffic enforcement priorities. On enforcement against illegal parking in accordance with the Fixed Penalty (Traffic Contraventions) Ordinance (Cap. 237), the Police issued a total of almost 2.7 million fixed penalty notices (“FPNs”) against illegal parking in 2020 (provisional figure), representing an increase of 33% and 89% as compared with the numbers of FPNs issued in 2018 and 2019 respectively.

30. In order to further combat illegal parking, the Police has enhanced enforcement effectiveness of frontline enforcement officers with the aid of technology. Since April 2020, the Police has launched a pilot scheme on electronic FPNs in all police districts over the territory to assist frontline enforcement officers to process data on illegally parked vehicles via their mobile devices and instantly print out FPNs by portable printers in order to reduce human errors in issuing handwritten FPNs, thereby enhancing the overall enforcement accuracy. As of end December 2020,

there are about 1 million electronic FPNs issued for illegal parking. The Police is now exploring the expansion of the pilot scheme to cover also traffic offences under the Fixed Penalty (Criminal Proceedings) Ordinance (Cap. 240) such as illegal stopping of vehicles at bus stops and picking up/setting down passengers or loading/unloading goods in restricted zone, etc. Separately, under the Fixed Penalty (Traffic Contraventions) Ordinance, the Police should affix an FPN on the vehicle concerned or deliver the FPN personally to the person in charge of the vehicle concerned. To further enhance enforcement efficiency, we are studying in collaboration with the Police amendments to the relevant legislation so as to expand the means of serving FPNs, including by electronic means.

Implementing priority measures for public transport

31. TD has been considering measures for giving priority to public transport over road use with a view to optimising the use of limited road resources. At present, different bus priority measures are provided at major trunk roads in Hong Kong if road and traffic conditions allow, such as bus-only lanes¹ and designated bus gates². Bus priority measures enable buses to pass through busy road sections more quickly and hence reduce journey time. TD would designate bus-only lanes / designated bus gates for use by all buses or exclusively by franchised buses according to actual service demands and road conditions.

32. In setting up bus-only lane, TD would assess whether the road section concerned can absorb the traffic flow upon the introduction of bus-only lane, the impacts on other road users and the overall benefits (such as reduced journey time) to bus operations, etc. As of November 2020, there are 80 bus-only lanes and 14 designated bus gates in Hong Kong.

¹ Bus-only lane is a traffic lane designated for use by “franchised bus” or “franchised and non-franchised bus” only. Other vehicles have to make use of other traffic lanes next to the bus-only lane or other alternative routes.

² Designated bus gate normally refers to a short section of bus-only lane that facilitates buses to access their destinations or change to other travelling routes more directly without affecting the road capacity in general.

33. As regards other public transport modes, TD has also designated pick-up / drop-off points and termini for taxis as well as public light buses, and relaxed some no-stopping restrictions, where traffic situations permit, for taxis as well as green minibuses to facilitate their operations and enhancement of service quality.

34. Besides, TD has introduced a bus-friendly traffic measure since the end of 2019, which comprises the use of a newly designed “Give way to bus” traffic sign and “Slow” and “Give way to bus” road markings, as well as “Give way to bus” labels stuck at the rear end of some franchised buses, to remind motorists to slow down or stop where necessary to give way to buses exiting from the bus bay to join the adjacent traffic lane, thereby making bus service more smooth.

Formulating “bicycle-friendly” policy

35. It is the Government’s policy to, where road safety considerations and circumstances permit, foster a “bicycle-friendly environment” to promote the use of bicycles as green and short-distance commuting transport, thereby reducing the use of mechanised transport. TD will continue to promote a “bicycle-friendly environment” in new towns by improving existing cycle tracks and related facilities through a consultancy study, which include the provision of more bicycle parking spaces and additional safety facilities at sharp bends, steep ramps and pedestrian crossings to ensure safety of cyclists and pedestrians. The first phase of improvement works at about 100 sites was completed in mid-2018, providing about 1 000 additional public bicycle parking spaces. The second phase of improvement works at about 450 sites commenced in February 2020 and is expected to be completed by end-2021. TD is liaising with HyD on the design and construction for the third phase of improvement works at about 160 remaining sites.

Development Bureau
Financial Services and the Treasury Bureau
Transport and Housing Bureau
February 2021

**Hon LUK Chung-hung's motion on
"Alleviating road traffic congestion"
at the Council meeting of 18 November 2020**

Motion as amended by Hon CHAN Han-pan

That, given the persistent growth in Hong Kong's population and continuous increase in economic activities, the pressure on traffic demands has continued to increase; Hong Kong has all along adopted the public transport policy of 'according priority to railway' to alleviate the problem of traffic congestion; yet, in recent years, the problem of road traffic congestion has remained serious, affecting people's daily commuting; in fact, problems have existed in Hong Kong in terms of traffic network planning, transport infrastructure facilities, road design and public transport management, thus resulting in increasingly serious road traffic congestion; in this connection, this Council urges the Government to expeditiously and comprehensively review public transport planning and policies to alleviate the problem of road traffic congestion; specific measures include:

- (1) progressively relocating important business development areas to other districts when undertaking urban design and planning, and taking the lead to move government departments out of core business districts, so as to divert vehicular flows;
- (2) expeditiously launching the Fourth Comprehensive Transport Study to comprehensively examine the roles and positioning of various public transport services and make planning for the expansion of road infrastructure;
- (3) expeditiously implementing the various railway projects recommended in the Railway Development Strategy 2014 and making planning for future railway network as soon as possible, such as studying afresh the construction of the Tuen Mun to Tsuen Wan Link with the alignment extending to Sha Tin, and the East Kowloon Line, studying the development of a second North South Corridor (East Rail Line 2) and the Siu Sai Wan Extension, so as to alleviate traffic congestion in various districts;

- (4) increasing the supply of parking spaces for commercial vehicles and the public, including reviewing the ratio of the number of parking spaces to the number of vehicles in accordance with the Hong Kong Planning Standards and Guidelines, identifying more pilot sites for the provision of smart car parks in new development and redevelopment projects under the principle of ‘single site, multiple uses’, and encouraging private developers and government departments to make good use of underground spaces of buildings for the provision of car parks; and at the same time, formulating measures to control the growth of private cars;
- (5) proposing more measures to reduce or waive public transport fares and offer public transport fare concessions, such as reducing or waiving the tolls of government tunnels and bridges on various public transport modes, introducing a monthly pass scheme for inter-modal interchange by the Government, lowering the current threshold for the non-means tested Public Transport Fare Subsidy Scheme and setting up a fare stabilization fund, so as to encourage more people to take public transport;
- (6) reviewing the Fare Adjustment Mechanism of the MTR Corporation Limited, including introducing a profit factor to better reflect the profit situations of the company, so as to determine a more reasonable railway fare level;
- (7) expeditiously reviewing the toll policy of government tunnels and bridges, including studying the introduction of standard tolls or suitable toll adjustment for the current three land tunnels, putting forward a toll plan to, without substantially raising the tolls for the Cross-Harbour Tunnel and Eastern Harbour Crossing, rationalize the traffic of the three road harbour crossings, so as to divert vehicular flows, and abolishing the tolls for the Lantau Link to alleviate traffic congestion arising from vehicles queuing up to make payment;
- (8) providing park-and-ride concessions for public car parks in major public transport interchanges, and encouraging privately operated car parks to offer similar concessions;
- (9) stepping up the application of big data and innovative technology, including the improvement of service information systems of the Government and various transport operators, the enhancement of

the features of relevant application software and programmes to provide an integrated, real-time information on service schedules and operation conditions of public transport modes (including franchised buses and minibuses), the provision of real-time information on vacant government- or privately-operated parking spaces, full introduction of a system to monitor black spots of illegal parking, and a feasibility study on introducing driver aid technology and the relevant legal framework, so as to relieve road traffic congestion;

- (10) proactively implementing the measure to accord priority in the use of roads to public transport modes, and designating more bus-only lanes during peak hours, so as to encourage the public to take public transport ; and
- (11) formulating a comprehensive bicycle-friendly policy to encourage the public to commute by bicycles so as to reduce the use of vehicles.