

ISSUES DISCUSSED

Transport Planning and Major Infrastructure Projects

Transport Planning

On 6 July 2007, the TAC discussed the four possible options identified under the Northwest New Territories Traffic and Infrastructure Review to provide a new strategic north-south corridor to meet the anticipated traffic demands of the region up to 2022. Members noted that the recommended option of Tuen Mun Western Bypass and Tuen Mun-Chek Lap Kok Link would provide the most direct route between the Northwest New Territories and Lantau and an alternative access to the airport and other proposed major logistics developments at Lantau, and hence be able to reinforce Hong Kong's position as a regional logistics centre as well as to cope with the development of the Northwest New Territories.

The TAC was consulted on the draft Preliminary Outline Development Plan for Kai Tak Development at its meeting on 19 July 2006. Members provided valuable comments and asked the Government to carefully examine all the opinions and suggestions collected during public consultation programme before taking the matter forward.



The TAC was briefed on the major findings and recommendations of the Study on Hong Kong 2030: Planning Vision and Strategy at its meeting on 28 November 2007. The TAC noted that the Study, with sustainable development as its over-arching goal, had focused its recommended strategy on three broad directions, namely, providing a quality living environment, enhancing economic competitiveness, and strengthening links with the Mainland, and that a spatial development pattern had been formulated on this basis. Members considered such broad directions agreeable and were pleased that the Government had made an effort to address possible traffic impact arising from future population growth envisaged in the Study.

Road Projects

The TAC discussed at its meeting on 17 May 2006 the proposed alignment options and construction forms of the Central-Wan Chai Bypass proposed by the Government's consultant. The TAC reiterated its full support for the construction of the Central-Wan Chai Bypass. The TAC stressed that due regard should be paid to the need to minimise traffic disruption and nuisance caused to the public during the construction stage.

Public Transport Services and Facilities

Franchised Bus Operation

The TAC considered the performance of the franchised bus operators in 2005 and 2006 at its meetings on 19 July 2006 and 25 September 2007 respectively. Members were pleased to note that the performance of the franchised bus operators for the two years was generally satisfactory and improvements had been made in a number of service areas, such as fleet upgrading and passenger information enhancement.

Members also appreciated that operators would face keener competition arising from other transport modes and rising oil price and noted that they had committed to enhancing their services. To meet future challenges, the TAC also urged operators to further enhance their operational efficiency, quality and competitiveness.



Photo provided by Information Services Department

Railway Operation

At its meeting on 13 April 2006, the TAC offered its views on the Administration's proposed way forward for the merger of MTR and KCR systems. The TAC supported the proposal for a rail merger as it would enhance the efficiency of the rail network and bring immediate benefits to the travelling public. The TAC also welcomed the introduction of a fare adjustment mechanism and fare reduction package. Members stressed that staff matters arising from the merger exercise should be handled carefully to ensure the safe and efficient operation of the railway services at all times.

Taxi Operation

The TAC discussed at its meeting on 21 November 2006 the roles and operation of light goods vehicles (LGVs) and taxis. Considering that the roles of LGVs and taxis had been specified under the existing legislation and the relevant specifications had been made clear in the respective licences issued to the operators, the TAC believed that illegal carriage of passengers for hire and reward by some LGVs should be combated by enforcement action. Members also supported the arrangement to designate a new loading and unloading area for LGVs at the airport and continued publicity and education to help the public better understand that passengers may lose the necessary third party insurance protection for use of illegal carriage of passengers for reward by LGVs.

At the invitation by the Government, the TAC commenced a review on the mode of operation and quality of taxi services in Hong Kong in April 2007 to identify improvement measures to broaden the taxi trade's business opportunities, and at the same time benefit the public through the provision of competitive taxi services. In conducting the review, the TAC invited opinions from the public and the taxi trade, including the urban, New Territories and Lantau taxis.

The TAC also conducted visits to overseas cities, including London, New York and Singapore, to study their regulatory mechanisms for taxi services and the mode of their taxi operation. The Review Report was launched in June 2008.



Ferry Operation

The TAC considered Star Ferry's application for a franchise extension at its meeting on 8 November 2007. Members were satisfied that Star Ferry had been providing proper and efficient ferry service and noted that the company had agreed to additional commitments to further improve its service standards if granted a new franchise. The TAC supported the Administration's recommendation in granting a ten-year new franchise and set out its detailed advice in a letter to the Secretary for Transport and Housing at **Annex A**.



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Road Safety and Transport Management

Road Safety Related Proposals

The TAC was briefed by the Highways Department on the methodology for and the findings of the studies on enhancement of bridge parapets and roadside barriers at its meeting on 20 February 2006. Members were delighted to see that using full-scale impact tests and the calibrated computer models, the enhanced designs of bridge parapets and roadside barriers were proven to be adequate in preventing heavy vehicles at a certain speed from penetrating through or passing over. The TAC was appreciative of the Government's efforts in strengthening bridge parapets and roadside barriers. As bridge parapets and roadside barriers could only provide a passive line of defence to reduce the severity of accidents rather than preventing traffic accidents, the TAC cautioned that driving behaviour was the most important factor in enhancing road safety and called for the public's cooperation in adopting proper driving behaviour.

Also at the meeting on 20 February 2006, Members were briefed on measures to combat drink driving and use of hand-held mobile phone while driving. The TAC considered that driving attitudes and behaviour had the greatest bearing on road safety and asked the Government to monitor accident statistics, review the effectiveness of legislation, carry out continuous enforcement action, and launch further education and publicity initiatives to combat inappropriate driving practices.

The TAC discussed measures to enhance safety of reversing goods vehicles at the meeting on 20 October 2006. Members commented that the greatest potential to avoid accidents involving reversing goods vehicle lied in improving the attitude and behaviour of both drivers and pedestrians and appreciated that the Government had stepped up publicity and education efforts on different fronts. Members also noted that a mandatory requirement for all goods vehicles to be fitted with an audible warning device when reversing was already in place and welcomed the Government's initiatives to explore additional safety devices, such as parking sensors or video system on goods vehicles.

To follow up on safety of reversing goods vehicles, the TAC was briefed on further progress at its meeting on 18 May 2007. Members noted that the Transport Department had been working closely with District Councils to identify priority road sections for improvements and were pleased to see that local circumstances and views had been taken into account. However, noting that reversing video device might not be able to pick up reliable images at all times due to external factors such as weather condition or illumination level, Members had some doubts on the proposal for making it a mandatory requirement for some goods vehicle types to be installed with reversing video devices. The TAC reiterated the importance of drivers' attitude and behaviour in enhancing safety of reversing vehicles.



The TAC discussed the proposed measures on 12 December 2006, and the subsequent legislative proposals on 20 December 2007, to further combat drink driving and enhance road safety. Members welcomed the proposals to disqualify drink driving offenders from driving for not less than three months on first conviction and to require them to attend driving improvement courses to send a clear message that drink driving was not tolerated in Hong Kong. Members also welcomed the proposals to require repeat traffic offenders accumulating 10 driving-offence points and offenders of serious traffic offences to attend compulsory driving improvement courses. They believed that apart from punitive purposes, these courses could help instil in drivers the importance of good driving behaviour. The TAC also supported the proposal to raise the maximum imprisonment term of the offence of causing death by dangerous driving from five to ten years. On random breath tests, TAC considered that it would have a very strong deterrent effect and administrative procedures and guidelines should be put in place to reduce possible conflicts between the Police and the public, and to minimise the impact on traffic flow.

Traffic Management Initiatives

The public transport arrangements at Sheung Shui to Lok Ma Chau Spur Line were discussed at the TAC meeting on 22 January 2007. Members noted that with the railway as the backbone of the transport system and with most non-rail passenger demand to the Lok Ma Chau terminus from northwest New Territories, the Government had planned franchised bus and green minibus routes to/from Yuen Long East and Yuen Long town centre respectively, as well as the provision of urban and New Territories taxi services in the interchange. Members were of the view that the provision of public transport services at the new boundary crossing would provide more choices to cross-boundary passengers and would facilitate cross-boundary people flow.

The TAC discussed the traffic and transport arrangements for the commissioning of Hong Kong-Shenzhen Western Corridor (HK-SWC) at its meeting on 22 February 2007. Members noted that the Hong Kong section of the HK-SWC had been completed at the end of 2005 and the Government was working closely with the Shenzhen Government on the remaining works and other preparation with a view to commissioning the new crossing in mid-2007. Members were also pleased to note that a public transport interchange would be provided at the Shenzhen Bay Port, allowing the provision of public transport services to the control point and believed that this would provide more choices for cross-boundary passengers.

Members also noted that the Government had reached agreement with the Mainland authorities on quotas to be issued for cross-boundary private cars and coaches. The TAC hoped that the commissioning of HK-SWC would further facilitate cross-boundary people and vehicular flow between Hong Kong and the Mainland and ease the congestion at the existing crossings.



Photo provided by Information Services Department

Parking Policy

The TAC was briefed on the latest situation regarding the demand for, and supply of, parking spaces for different vehicle types in the territory. Members noted that the Government had been taking measures to address the problem caused by an imbalance in the demand and supply of parking spaces.

Fare / Toll Adjustment Proposals

Taxi Fares

The TAC considered the applications by the taxi trade for introducing a fuel surcharge on 8 November 2007. The TAC was aware of the impact of fuel price increases on the trade, but emphasised that it would be more appropriate for the trade to address the impact of fuel cost increases through the well established mechanism which takes into account not only the fuel price increase but also revenue and other cost components of the trade.

The TAC was consulted on the applications from urban and New Territories taxi trades for increasing the flagfall fare by \$1 at its meeting on 20 December 2007. Having assessed factors including the changes in the trades' revenues and operating costs, such as rental and fuel, as well as the impact of the proposed fare increase on passengers and public acceptability, Members supported the applications with a view to helping taxi drivers to improve their operating conditions. TAC's detailed advice as set out in a letter to the Secretary for Transport and Housing is at **Annex B**.

Railway Fares

The TAC was briefed by the management of the former Kowloon-Canton Railway Corporation on the fares of the Lok Ma Chau Spur Line on 18 May 2007. As the spur line was an extension of the East Rail system, Members noted that the existing East Rail fare structure would be followed and that the corporation had taken into consideration passenger acceptance, market competition and the project cost in the fare-setting exercise. Members were also briefed on the spur line's service features, including the design and operation of the terminal building and its connection with the Mainland side, which provided a second railway crossing in Hong Kong.

Tunnel/Road Tolls

The TAC discussed the Government's proposed toll regime and other charges for the Tsing Sha Control Area at its meeting on 6 July 2007. The TAC appreciated that the Government needed to balance a number of key factors when determining the toll levels, including meeting transport objectives, costs involved in providing the facility, strategic position of the route, tolls of alternative routes and public acceptability. Members generally agreed to the principles and considerations adopted by the Administration in setting the proposed toll level.