

LCQ2: Commissioning of Tuen Mun-Chek Lap Kok Link and Tuen Mun Western Bypass and Tuen Mun Road Improvement Project

Following is a question by the Hon Cheung Hok-ming and a reply by the Acting Secretary for Transport and Housing, Mr Yau Shing-mu, at the Legislative Council meeting today (November 23):

Question:

The Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge ("HZMB") infrastructure projects in Hong Kong will commence soon, and the bridge is expected to be commissioned in 2016, but the commissioning of the northern connection of the Tuen Mun-Chek Lap Kok Link ("TM-CLKL") (i.e. the section connecting the Hong Kong Boundary Crossing Facilities to Tuen Mun), which was originally scheduled for 2016, will be deferred by one year to 2017 because of the impact of the judicial review regarding the Environmental Impact Assessment reports of the HZMB. On the other hand, the Tuen Mun Western Bypass ("TMWB") is still at the preliminary design stage, and its commissioning will also be delayed. Regarding the problems caused to the traffic of the Northwest New Territories because the completion of the three related projects cannot dovetail with one another, will the Government inform this Council:

(a) whether the authorities have conducted any traffic flow survey to assess the impact on the traffic load in Northwest New Territories due to the one-year delay in the commissioning of the northern connection of the TM-CLKL and the delayed commissioning of the TMWB; if they have, of the relevant figures; if not, the reasons for that;

(b) of the detailed progress of the Tuen Mun Road Improvement Project, and whether it will be completed in time to help ease the traffic congestion in Northwest New Territories brought about by the delay of the two aforesaid infrastructure projects; and

(c) of the increase in the design traffic capacity of Tuen Mun Road after completion of its various improvement works, and whether it is sufficient to cope with the traffic flow generated by the commissioning of the HZMB which is earlier than that of the two aforesaid infrastructure projects?

Reply:

President:

The Tuen Mun-Chek Lap Kok Link (TM-CLKL) is a strategic route connecting North Lantau, the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge (HZMB) Hong Kong Boundary Crossing Facilities (HKBCF) and Tuen Mun, further linking up North-west New Territories (NWNT) through the Tuen Mun Western Bypass (TMWB) under planning, to cope with future development.

Upon completion, the most important benefits that the TM-CLKL and TMWB will bring about are: firstly, the travel distance and journey time between NWNT and North Lantau will be significantly shortened and some traffic capacities of the existing routes (such as the Lantau Link and Tuen Mun Road) will be released. As a result, the traffic flow to urban areas will be relieved; secondly, the TM-CLKL will provide an alternative access connecting the Hong Kong International Airport in addition to the existing North Lantau Highway. This helps to strengthen the traffic network of the Airport and reinforce the Airport as an international and regional aviation hub; thirdly, the two projects can help improve cross-border traffic. The TM-CLKL project connects with Shenzhen via the TMWB, Kong Sham Western Highway and Shenzhen Bay Bridge in the north; and connects with the HZMB HKBCF and the North Lantau Highway in the south. This road network is important to the promotion of closer economic integration between Hong Kong and the Pearl River Delta region.

Regarding the three parts of the question, the reply is as follows:

(a) Regarding the judicial review (JR) case of the HZMB, although the applicant has excluded the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Report of the TM-CLKL in the application of the JR, the construction programme of the TM-CLKL has been delayed by about one year due to the JR. This is because the southern landfall of the TM-CLKL sub-sea tunnel and the reclamation of the HZMB HKBCF are taken forward under the same contract in the same location at the same time.

Our original plan was to open the TM-CLKL and the HZMB at the same time, but now we will implement these two projects by phases. As the 3-km viaduct, connecting the HZMB HKBCF and North Lantau Highway, of the TM-CLKL has to be commissioned at the same time as the HZMB, so as to provide access for vehicles entering and leaving the HKBCF, we will open this section of the TM-CLKL by 2016

through works arrangements. As regards the northern section of the TM-CLKL (i.e. the sub-sea tunnel connecting the HZMB HKBCF and Tuen Mun), as it is not related to the opening of the HZMB, works will be completed in 2017.

Regarding the TMWB, we have conducted extensive public consultation on various alignment options. After in-depth discussion with the stakeholders, we have selected the current proposal among the ten options. The environmental and traffic impact assessments are underway. The work has been delayed due to uncertainties caused by the "baseline assessment" requirement that was suggested in the HZMB JR case. After the allowance of the appeal lodged by the Government, we are working to commission the TMWB in roughly the same time frame as the northern section of the TM-CLKL.

According to traffic impact assessment carried out by the consultants engaged by the Highways Department, the main traffic network to NWNT via North Lantau Highway will become busier in 2016 (the early years after the opening of the HZMB), but there should be no congestion.

The vehicle/capacity (v/c) ratio is the professional indicator to measure traffic congestion. Generally speaking, a v/c ratio of 1.2 or smaller indicates that the situation of the concerned roads during peak hours is still acceptable. If the v/c ratio is above 1.25, it indicates that there will be traffic congestion. According to the data obtained from traffic impact assessment, under the scenario without the northern section of the TM-CLKL in 2017, the v/c ratio of the Tuen Mun Road (Sham Tseng section) will increase to 1.25 in 2017, indicating traffic congestion during peak hours. However, if the northern section of the TM-CLKL can be commissioned in 2017, the ratio is expected to drop to 1.18, indicating that congestion will not appear. This can timely avoid traffic congestion that may appear on Tuen Mun Road (Sham Tseng section) during peak hours.

The consultants have also carried out a similar traffic impact assessment for the TMWB. In the absence of the TMWB, the v/c ratio of the slip roads connecting Tuen Mun Road (Town Centre section) and Wong Chu Road will increase to 1.28 in 2019, indicating that congestion would appear during peak hours. If the TMWB is commissioned, the v/c ratio of Wong Chu Road will gradually decrease to about 0.7, indicating that congestion would not appear even during peak hours. It also helps relieve the traffic burden in other areas in Tuen Mun.

Therefore, we aim to complete the northern section of TM-CLKL in 2017 as planned and endeavour to commission the TMWB and the northern section of the TM-CLKL in roughly the same time frame.

(b) and (c) The Tuen Mun Road improvement project is underway. It includes two main parts, namely the reconstruction and improvement of Tuen Mun Road (between Tsuen Wan and Sam Shing Hui), and widening of Tuen Mun Road (Town Centre section).

The first part of the works is mainly to reconstruct the Tuen Mun Road to meet the current expressway standard and to add hard shoulders. The proposed hard shoulders can provide additional road surface to allow the concerned officers to arrive the locations to handle the traffic incidents more quickly. They also enable temporary traffic arrangement to minimise traffic congestion caused by traffic incidents.

The second part of the works is the widening of the Town Centre section from a dual two-lane carriageway to a dual three-lane carriageway. After the completion of the works, the designed capacity of the concerned section of Tuen Mun Road would be increased by 54% from 3,700 passenger car unit (pcu) per hour to 5,700 pcu per hour.

The Tuen Mun Road improvement project commenced in mid 2008, and was implemented through six works contracts by phases.

The first contract is for widening of the road section near Tsing Tin Interchange from a dual two-lane carriageway to a dual three-lane carriageway. The construction commenced in June 2008 and completed in January 2010. Four other contracts commenced between October 2008 and February 2010 by phases, including works for widening the approximately 1.5 km long of Tuen Mun Road (Town Centre section) from a dual two-lane carriageway to a dual three-lane carriageway, reconstruction of 15.5 km of Tuen Mun Road between Tsuen Wan and Sam Shing Hui, and hard shoulders construction. The construction works are progressing satisfactorily and are tentatively targeted for completion in end 2014.

Tender for the remaining contract, covering the construction of traffic control and surveillance system, was invited in October this year. It is anticipated that tender assessment will be completed early next year. The works are expected to

commence in April 2012 for completion in end 2014.

In conclusion, the various improvement works of the Tuen Mun Road will be completed in 2014 to meet the traffic demand for a number of years in future, including traffic to be brought about by the HZMB after its early years of opening in 2016. It is anticipated that traffic congestion will not appear at such time.

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