

Bridge feasibility report to be submitted to Central Government

The Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge (HZMB) Advance Work Co-ordination Group had steered the bridge project significantly forward at its ninth meeting in Guangzhou today (November 27), with agreement reached on the dates for submission to the Central Government of the project's feasibility study report, invitation of tenders for the preliminary design and organisational framework and model for the Bridge.

The Group's convenor, the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Ms Eva Cheng described today's meeting as an historic moment for the HZMB project. The feasibility study had finally been completed after four years' examination study of about 40 topical issues, including the Bridge construction work, impact on navigation channels and the environment impact assessment.

"The Group has endorsed the study, which will be submitted by the Guangdong Province for Central Government's consideration within December. The submission of the feasibility study report to the Central Government meant the whole HZMB project entering design and construction stage," Ms Cheng said.

The meeting also decided that tenders for the preliminary design of the Bridge will be invited by the three governments on December 1. The preliminary design is expected to be launched in April, 2009 so as to strive for early construction of the project. Details of the tender arrangement will be announced respectively by the three sides.

The Group also reached consensus on the organizational framework and model for the HZMB. The meeting had considered forming a "Joint Work Committee of the Three Governments" to

steer the project, similar to the existing Co-Ordination Group, and under the command of the committee would be a "HZMB Authority" responsible for implementing the concrete organisation work, ranging from the bridge's financing, tendering, design to its operation and management.

"Looking ahead, in addition to commissioning preliminary design, the three governments will work out the financing for the rest of the construction cost for the Main Bridge in addition to the capital injection. We agreed that it should, in principle, be fully financed by bank loans. The Coordination Group Office will commission a financial consultant to assist the three governments in working out the financing arrangement."

"The three governments will continue to work hard to enable an early commencement of its construction," Ms Cheng said.

Ends/Thursday, November 27, 2008