

LCQ11: Cycling facilities and safety

Following is a question by the Hon Frederick Fung and a written reply by the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Ms Eva Cheng, at the Legislative Council meeting today (November 3):

Question:

It has been reported that major cities of the world have for years been committed to promoting the use of bicycle as a form of green transport, and among such cities, the number of cyclists on the roads in New York has increased to approximately 130,000 per day, while London has introduced a self-service bicycle hire scheme with more than 300 docking stations throughout the city and 5,000 bicycles available for rent, the scale of which is second only to Paris; and on the Mainland, there is a similar bicycle rental service in the city of Foshan, and a comprehensive system of bicycle network is expected to complete in five years' time. Yet, quite a number of green groups stated that although the Environment Bureau has portrayed bicycle as a form of green transport in its "I Love Hong Kong, I Love Green" publicity to promote green living, relevant policies and measures are obviously not in place. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council whether it will follow the trend of other major cities in promoting the use of bicycle as a form of green transport, change its policy from positioning cycling as a recreational sport to promoting the use of bicycle as a form of green transport, and establish Hong Kong as a genuine "bike-friendly" city through provision of specific measures and facilities (including building additional cycle tracks and priority access for bicycles in urban areas, introducing self-service bicycle hire scheme with multiple service points, changing motorists' perception on bicycle through education and providing a safe cycling environment for cyclists)?

Reply:

President,

Hong Kong is densely populated. To strike a balance between the needs to alleviate traffic congestion and reduce air pollution, we have been actively pursuing the policy of having the public transport system as the main transport mode and encouraging the public to make use of the efficient mass transit system and other public transport services. It is also our policy to use railway as the backbone of the

transport system, with franchised buses and public light buses providing feeder services to the railway network, thereby helping to reduce vehicular traffic on the road and the impact on air quality.

Cycling is mainly a leisure and recreational activity in Hong Kong. Where circumstances permit, the Government will provide cycle tracks and ancillary facilities in new towns and new development areas of the New Territories (NT) so that the public may ride safely for leisure or recreational purposes and short-distance travel. The Government has been adopting specific measures to facilitate cycling, such as the gradual addition of cycle tracks facilities. The Civil Engineering and Development Department is developing the comprehensive NT Cycle Track Network by constructing a trunk cycle network linking various new towns between Ma On Shan and Tuen Mun in phases, with possible extensions to Tsuen Wan and Sai Kung. Currently, the cycle tracks in the NT is about 170 km in total length. About 70 km of new cycle tracks will be added to the existing network upon completion of the expansion. Furthermore, the Planning Department will work with other relevant departments to examine the suitability of providing cycle tracks particularly in planning new development areas.

Apart from providing new cycle tracks, the Administration will also review the cycle track networks in the nine new towns across the territory. In May 2010, the Transport Department (TD) commissioned a consultancy study to look into the connectivity of the cycle track networks of existing new towns with a view to linking up isolated segments, enhancing cycle track safety and improving ancillary facilities such as cycle parking spaces. The study is expected to be completed by end 2011. To ensure cycling safety, the TD is devising new design guidelines for cycle tracks, cycling ramps and subways. The new guidelines will require the provision of footway alongside new cycle tracks, more user-friendly geometrical configurations (including more gentle gradients and smoother curvatures) and better signage systems.

For bicycle parking, there are currently over 40,000 parking spaces across the territory. The TD will provide additional parking spaces at major transport hubs, such as the recent provision of a total of 300 plus parking spaces near two public transport interchanges (PTIs) in Tseung Kwan O and Shatin. Meanwhile, the TD has commenced a two-year retrofitting programme under which the existing cycle parking racks near MTR stations and public transport termini will be retrofitted and replaced by new parking racks based on the new design guidelines. It is expected that the programme will provide more than 1,000 additional parking spaces. As mentioned

above, the consultant engaged by the TD will also examine the demand and supply as well as the management of bicycle parking facilities in existing new towns with a view to addressing bicycle parking problems at major PTIs and MTR stations. The consultant will also propose improvement measures with reference to overseas experience and local situation, and recommend an implementation programme for the proposed improvement works.

For bicycle rental, currently private bicycle rental shops operated in the vicinity of MTR stations of some new towns (such as Shatin, Ma On Shan, Tai Wai and Tai Po) are providing bicycle rental services in response to market demand. Hirers may choose to return their rented bicycles at designated locations. Bicycle rental services are also offered by contractors at recreational venues managed by the Leisure and Cultural Services Department where cycle tracks are provided therein or nearby to facilitate cycling by the public at nearby cycle tracks.

We attach great importance to the education efforts in promoting cycling safety. The Road Safety Council, the Police and the TD have been promoting cycling safety to the public through different forms of publicity and educational activities, such as organising cycling training courses, launching safe cycling campaign and compiling Cycling Safety pamphlets, with a view to educating the public about the rules on proper use of bicycles and reminding cyclists to take heed of other motorists and keep a safe distance from vehicles ahead. The Administration will also strengthen publicity among other road users to remind them to watch out for cyclists on the road. To further facilitate cycling, the TD is setting up an internet-based Cycling Information Centre to provide a central point for the public to find information relating to cycling, including cycle track locations, bicycle parking sites, major cycling projects and temporary closures/ diversions of cycle tracks etc. Links to other relevant government departments which are responsible for the management of cycling facilities/ venues will be provided. Information on riding rules, safety tips and relevant laws on cycling will also be uploaded onto the virtual centre.

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