

LCQ9: Public transport measures and pedestrian environment in Mong Kok district

Following is a question by Dr Hon Priscilla Leung and a written reply by the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Ms Eva Cheng, at the Legislative Council meeting today (January 19):

Question:

As Mong Kok district is overcrowded with people and the roads are narrow, coupled with heavy traffic flows, congestion and dangerous conditions of vehicle-pedestrian conflicts frequently occur. For many years in the past, District Council members of the district and community members have repeatedly asked the Government to monitor the problem of large numbers of pedestrians gathering in the district because of narrow pedestrian walkways and over concentration of bus stops. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(a) of the criteria currently adopted by the authorities in vetting and approving bus companies' applications for erecting bus stops in busy areas; and whether they will consult the District Council concerned beforehand;

(b) whether there is at present any restriction on the number of bus routes having buses stopping along the same road section; if there is no such restriction, whether it will consider imposing restrictions by legislation;

(c) of the progress of the relocation plan of the offices of the Water Supplies Department (WSD) and the facilities of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) at Sai Yee Street, and when the relocation is expected to commence formally;

(d) given that some members of the Yau Tsim Mong District Council and community members have suggested that the sites vacated after the relocation of the facilities of WSD and FEHD in (c) should be used as a transport interchange for locating bus terminus, red minibus stands and green minibus stands in one place, so as to reduce the number of vehicle stops and ease congestion on roads, of the Government's position on the proposal, and whether it has conducted a feasibility study and the outcome thereof; and

(e) how the authorities will improve the overcrowding conditions of the pedestrian walkways in Mong Kok at present; of the latest progress of the works to extend the footbridge system in Mong Kok, and when the works are expected to complete?

Reply:

President,

(a) and (b) In vetting applications from the franchised bus companies for designation of bus stops, the Transport Department (TD) will consider the physical environment and other factors of the proposed site, such as the number of alighting/boarding passengers, the width between the bus stop and the pavement, the pedestrian and vehicular flows, as well as the potential impact of the proposal on nearby residents and shop operators. Taking all the above into account, TD will decide whether to approve the applications and, if so, the location and size of the bus stop.

Furthermore, TD has limited the number of bus routes stopping along the same road section, having regard to the actual traffic conditions. TD also keeps a close watch on the utilisation of bus stops, including the numbers of and the changes in the bus routes and alighting/boarding passengers, and relocate the bus stops if necessary.

TD will continue to optimise the utilisation of buses on busy corridors through rationalisation of bus routes and reduction of bus frequencies. Where practicable, the number of buses running along and the frequency of stopping at the busy corridors will also be reduced. The Administration will consult and discuss with relevant District Councils or the locals on specific proposals as necessary.

(c) According to the information provided by the Development Bureau, the Water Supplies Department (WSD) is exploring the relocation of its Sai Yee Street office in Mong Kok to a suitable industrial building in New Territories West. At the same time, the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) is studying the feasibility of relocating its Sai Yee Street facilities to West Kowloon, and preliminary planning of the facilities in West Kowloon is underway. After they have decided on the new sites, WSD and FEHD will work closely with the various Government departments concerned, in particular the respective District Offices, on the relocation timetable so as to tie in with the overall redevelopment of the existing site in Mong Kok.

(d) Planning Department (PlanD) completed a study on the "Area Improvement Plan for the Shopping Areas of Mong Kok" in July 2009. The Study recommended the accommodation of a Public Transport Interchange (PTI) in the future redevelopment of the WSD office/FEHD facilities site at Sai Yee Street. PlanD has been working with concerned Government departments, including TD, on the feasibility and details of the recommendation. The preliminary concept includes commercial development above the PTI, as well as provision of public open space and preservation of the existing mature trees at the site. Upon completion of the planning proposal later this year, PlanD will submit it to the Yau Tsim Mong District Council for consultation.

TD will study the possibility of relocating the services of some of the green minibus, red minibus or cross-boundary bus routes in the area to the proposed PTI, and draw up the corresponding planning and technical requirements for the transport facilities. TD will work with the relevant departments in the planning process.

(e) The Administration has always paid attention to the pedestrian environment in Mong Kok and has put in place appropriate improvement measures such as pedestrianisation schemes. Furthermore, TD engaged a consultant earlier to conduct a preliminary study of improvement to the pedestrian links in Mong Kok. The key recommendation is the phased construction of a footbridge system along the section of Argyle Street between Tong Mi Road and the redevelopment at the FEHD's depot and WSD's office at Sai Yee Street. It will connect the two MTR stations in the district with the vicinity of Tai Kok Tsui area. During the course of the study, apart from consulting the relevant District Councils and Area Committees, the Legislative Council Panel on Transport and the Transport Advisory Committee were also consulted on the proposed initial options on January 22 and February 5, 2010 respectively. The Administration is now preparing for a feasibility study on the schematic design recommended by the consultant. Upon confirmation of the feasibility of the proposed works, the Administration will consider how to take forward the project.

As regards the extension of the Mong Kok Road footbridge system, the Administration has issued the road closure order and notice in accordance with the Roads (Works, Use and Compensation) Ordinance (Cap 370) to tie in with the commencement of the works. The consultant of the developer concerned has largely completed the preparatory work required for the commencement of works, and has arranged with the utility undertakings to proceed with the diversion of underground public utilities. Under the current programme, the utility diversion works are

expected to take about 3.5 years, and the subsequent construction of the footbridge extension will take about 2.5 years.

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