

Transcript of STH's remarks made after funding approval for Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge by Finance Committee (1)

Following is a transcript of remarks (English portion) by the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Ms Eva Cheng, at a media session after the funding approval for the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge by the Finance Committee of the Legislative Council today (November 18):

Secretary for Transport and Housing: I welcome the funding approval by the Finance Committee today for the Hong Kong Boundary Crossing Facilities, as well as the Hong Kong Link Road related to the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge, as well as funds for the detailed design of the Tuen Mun-Chek Lap Kok Link. I think this reflects the sentiment of Hong Kong people. They don't want these mega infrastructure projects to be delayed incessantly. And they would like to see the benefits accrued to Hong Kong, whether it's in enhancing our competitiveness or in job creation.

For the three funding approvals today, we are talking about an addition of 14,000 jobs that will be created. So I welcome the funding approval.

We will now proceed in earnest. We will start work before the end of this year. And then we will try our best to compress the programme. The target right now is to complete these facilities in line with the Main Bridge completion date of 2016.

(To be continued.)

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Reporter: Secretary, even though you are unhappy with the delay, did the delay in fact have any positive benefits, in terms of redesigning certain things to improve something environmentally?

Secretary for Transport and Housing: In fact, the delay had led to the cost increase, that is the fact, this \$6.5 billion (increase). We always take the opportunity of improving on our construction method or on other means of minimising impact on the environmental front. So this is a continuous work. Of course, we've already had the approval in terms of the environmental permit in the first place. So I think the original target was to start work in the end of 2010, and now we are in 2011. But right now, I think the good news is that through compression of programme, through the additional plant, machinery and manpower, we are able to complete the work in line with the main bridge in completion of 2016.

Reporter: As a result to this experience, will the Government in future when it comes to large infrastructure projects, perhaps approach the environmental impact assessment and reporting efforts any differently?

Secretary for Transport and Housing: I don't think it is something for the proponent to say. It is important we comply with the standards of the day, and I think this is fully reflected in the judgment delivered by the Court of Appeal, that is, we have complied with the law, technical memorandum as well as the guidelines. So in the future, of course, if the technical memorandum or guidelines are amended to reflect higher or other standards, and of course as a project proponent, we need to adhere to every letter of it.

(Please also refer to the Chinese portion of the transcript.)

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