

LCQ2: "Bicycle friendly" policy

\*\*\*\*\*

Following is a question by the Hon Wu Chi-wai and a reply by the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Professor Anthony Cheung Bing-leung, in the Legislative Council today (November 21):

Question:

It is the Government's policy not to encourage members of the public to use bicycle as a mode of transport in the urban areas, and cycling is regarded merely as a leisure and recreational activity. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(a) whether the authorities will comprehensively review the role that bicycle should assume in the entire transport system and consider afresh making bicycle a mode of general transport, with a view to promoting the development of low-carbon transport effectively; if they will, of the details and the timetable; if not, the reasons for that;

(b) of the amount of resources allocated (including those allocated for publicity and education) in the past three years by the authorities for formulating bike-friendly policies and perfecting complementary measures and planning for cycling in various districts, as well as the results achieved (e.g. the length of cycle lanes increased and number of bicycle parking spaces newly provided, the efforts in improving safety facilities, etc.), with a breakdown by year and work initiative; whether they know the arrangements made and restrictions imposed by public transport operators on carriage of bicycles by passengers; and whether they will take the initiative to require various public transport operators to put in place arrangements which are more convenient and bike-friendly; and

(c) whether it has formulated objective criteria for assessing if it is suitable to adopt bicycle as a major mode of transport and implement relevant trial schemes in new development areas ("NDAs") (e.g. West Kowloon Reclamation Development and Kai Tak Development); if it has not, of the reasons for that; if it has formulated such criteria, the details and the NDAs which have been assessed with such criteria, as well as details of the planning concerned?

Reply:

President,

Hong Kong is densely populated. To address the problems of traffic congestion and air pollution, the Government has been actively implementing the policy of using public transport as the main transport mode and encouraging the public to make use of the highly efficient mass transit transport systems and other public transport services. Any measure to encourage cycling as a means of transport must take into account that Hong Kong is a small but dense populated city with concentrated development, and that cycling safety should be the prime concern.

My reply to the various parts of the question is as follows:

(a) Hong Kong's road traffic is heavy with carriageways and footpaths so congested that it is difficult to spare spaces for developing tracks designated for cycling. Allowing a large number of bicycles to share busy roads with other vehicles in urban areas without providing designated cycle tracks will increase the risk of accidents. In fact, there is a rising trend of cycling accidents in recent years as the activity gains popularity. The numbers of cycling accidents and cyclist casualties have increased from 1,793 and 1581 respectively in 2009 to 2,348 and 2,194 in 2011. The Government is very concerned about this.

Due to safety consideration, the Government does not encourage the public to use bicycle as a transport mode in urban areas. Compared with urban areas, new towns in the New Territories or new development areas (NDAs), where density is relatively low, have better conditions for using bicycle for short-distance travel. If situation permits, we will provide cycle tracks and ancillary facilities in new towns and NDAs as well as enhancing existing facilities, to allow people to ride bicycles for recreational purposes and short distance travel.

(b) The Government has been striving to provide "bicycle friendly" environment in new towns and NDAs.

The Civil Engineering and Development Department (CEDD) continues the development of a comprehensive cycle track network in the New Territories as pledged in the 2007-08 Policy Agenda.

Works are constructed in phases to allow early enjoyment by the public.

Construction of the section between Sheung Shui and Ma On Shan was commenced in May 2010 for completion in 2013. The first phase of the section between Tuen Mun and Sheung Shui will commence in 2013 for completion in 2017. Works on the remaining sections will commence as early as possible. Upon completion of the project, we shall have a 105 km long cycle track network traversing various districts of the New Territories.

At the same time, under several leisure facility projects administered by the Leisure and Cultural Services Department, facilities like cycle tracks and BMX cycling ground are provided.

The Transport Department (TD) is proactively increasing the number of bicycle parking spaces. In the past three years (2010 to 2012), the TD provided about 2,000 additional bicycle parking spaces for public use in various new towns. Regarding general improvement measures for cycle tracks, such as retrofitting speed reducing bollards and providing traffic signs and road markings, we have completed improvement works at about 500 junctions where cycle tracks intersect footpaths or carriageways, covering 30% of the locations requiring improvement. The whole improvement project is expected to be completed in 2015.

To further improve the existing cycle tracks and parking facilities, the TD engaged a consultant in May 2010 to conduct a study on problems commonly found in new towns. A series of preliminary improvement measures, including painting the sharp bends of cycle tracks in yellow, installation of convex mirrors (commonly known as "fish-eye mirrors") at locations with poor sightline, is being carried out in Tai Po under a pilot scheme to test their effectiveness prior to extended implementation. Simpler measures under the scheme are expected to be completed by late 2012. The more complicated ones, such as widening of the bends of cycle tracks, installing protective pads along cycle tracks and tunnel walls, will be completed by late 2013. Subject to the trial results, and having regard to physical environment of individual areas and views of local residents, we will determine the specific arrangements and priorities for extending the various improvement measures to other districts.

On publicity and education, the Administration organises regularly activities on cycling education and safety, and distribute promotional leaflets and display banners and posters at locations frequented by cyclists. The TD has launched an internet based one-stop information platform and produced educational videos. Government

expenditure in the past three years on cycling facilities and activities is at Annex I.

Furthermore, the Government encourages public transport operators to allow the carriage of bicycles on board on the condition that safety and passenger convenience would not be compromised. Given that public transport is mainly for the carriage of passengers and over 90% of the commuters travel by public transport, the operators have to set appropriate requirements for the carriage of bicycles by passengers according to the actual occupancy characteristics and having regard to passenger safety and convenience. Details are at Annex II.

(c) Appreciating the community's aspiration for a quality living environment, the Government adopts the principle of sustainable development in planning projects for the NDAs, so as to build an environmentally-friendly, people-oriented and balanced society and promote low-carbon urban development.

Taking Kai Tak Development as an example, a cycle track about 6 km long running along both sides of the runway and the seafront of the south apron area of the former airport has been planned to tie in with the design of the seafront promenade in the area mainly for leisure and recreational purposes. The CEDD is actively exploring the extension of the coverage of the cycle track network.

Separately, according to the current planning of the West Kowloon Cultural District (WKCD), cycle tracks will be provided in the WKCD park for public use. The specific design proposals of the cycle tracks will be examined in the detailed design stage.

The North East New Territories NDAs will have a comprehensive network of footpaths and cycle tracks network to encourage the public to walk and cycle. In the planning and engineering study of Hung Shui Kiu NDA, apart from providing a comprehensive network of footpaths and cycle tracks in the area, different green measures have also been considered, including the use of electric vehicles.

Ends/Wednesday, November 21, 2012

Issued at HKT 12:55