

Commissioning of Central-Wan Chai Bypass and Island Eastern Corridor Link to take place on January 20

The Central-Wan Chai Bypass and Island Eastern Corridor Link (CWB) will be commissioned on January 20 (Sunday).

The CWB is 4.5 kilometres long of which 3.7km is in form of a tunnel, and connects the Rumsey Street Flyover in Central and the Island Eastern Corridor (IEC) in North Point. It will become a strategic highway running along the northern part of Hong Kong Island and will substantially alleviate the traffic congestion along the northern part of Hong Kong Island. Upon commissioning, it will take only 5 minutes to drive between Central and the IEC in North Point, making the traffic between the eastern and western part of Hong Kong Island more direct and smoother. To assist road users, three slip roads in Wan Chai and one slip road in Tin Hau have been constructed to connect the CWB with the local road network.

In addition, the CWB Tunnel will introduce the first air purification system for use in road tunnels in Hong Kong, which can effectively remove at least 80 per cent of the respirable suspended particulates and nitrogen dioxide, resulting in air purification. This air purification system represents the largest scale of such application in the world.

As the alteration work for connecting the CWB westbound carriageway with the Rumsey Street Flyover needs to be carried out after the opening of the CWB eastbound carriageway, the CWB will be commissioned in two stages. The major traffic arrangement involved is summarised below (see appendix):

* Stage 1 Commissioning (from January 20 onwards)

The CWB Tunnel will be commissioned except the westbound carriageway where the alteration work will be required to connect with the Rumsey Street Flyover. Closure of all eastbound traffic lanes of the Rumsey Street Flyover down ramp leading to Connaught Road Central, and the alteration works for connecting the westbound carriageway from the CWB Tunnel with the Rumsey Street Flyover, will last for about one month. At that time, eastbound traffic of Rumsey Street Flyover may travel to all districts via the CWB Tunnel eastbound and Man Po Street.

* Stage 2 Commissioning

The westbound carriageway of the CWB Tunnel connected with Rumsey Street Flyover westbound will be opened. The CWB Tunnel will then be fully commissioned.

At present, the works for the CWB are in the final stage, such as the replacement of existing traffic signs to match with commissioning of the CWB.

The Highways Department (HyD) is also co-ordinating with different departments and organisations (such as the tunnel operator) to prepare for the commissioning of the related road sections including conducting relevant training and drills. Regarding the water seepage identified previously, it has not affected structural integrity and safety. In fact, different from the requirements of some waterproof facilities (e.g. service reservoirs), the CWB Tunnel is designed to allow a limited extent of seepage; also, the design of the CWB Tunnel includes suitable drainage to drain off the seepage. The seepage identified previously was minor. The project team has properly carried out the necessary rectification works and the commissioning of the CWB will not be affected.

The Transport Department, together with the HyD and the relevant department, will announce the detailed arrangements for the two-stage commissioning in due course. The commissioning ceremony for the CWB will be held at the Central Portal of the CWB Tunnel on January 19.