

LCQ 20: Planning for the ancillary facilities for major infrastructure projects

Following is a question by the Hon Tony Tse and a written reply by the Secretary for Development, Mr Michael Wong, in the Legislative Council today (November 28):

Question:

It has been reported that since the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge (HZMB) opening to traffic on the 24th of last month, a large number of Mainland residents have joined tour groups to Hong Kong that enter and exit Hong Kong on the same day through HZMB. Most of them are arranged to go to Tung Chung, which is close to the HZMB Hong Kong Port, for free activities because visiting time is limited and they are not received by any local travel agency. As a result, the catering, shopping, tourist and transport facilities in the district are overwhelmed, and the daily lives of the residents in the district are seriously affected. Some members of the public have pointed out that the aforesaid situation reflects an oversight of the Government in planning for the ancillary facilities needed for major infrastructure projects. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether, before the opening of the HZMB to traffic, it had assessed the number of tourists travelling to Tung Chung after their entry into Hong Kong through the HZMB and such tourists' impact on the residents in the district, and formulated mitigation measures; if so, of the assessment outcome and the mitigation measures, and the discrepancies between the assessment outcome and the actual situation; if not, the reasons for that;

(2) given that the Civil Engineering and Development Department is currently conducting the Study on Traffic, Transport and Capacity to Receive Visitors for Lantau and carrying out jointly with the Planning Department the Planning, Engineering and Architectural Study for Topside Development at Hong Kong Boundary Crossing Facilities Island of Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge, of the commencement dates and the latest expected completion dates of these studies;

(3) given the recent intake of residents of a new public housing estate in Tung Chung, whether the authorities have provided the ancillary facilities needed for the additional population and tourists in Tung Chung;

(4) whether it has assessed the daily number of tourists entering Hong Kong through the HZMB who will travel to Tuen Mun and other districts in New Territories West upon the full opening of the Tuen Mun-Chek Lap Kok Link to traffic; if so, of the number; whether it will provide the ancillary facilities needed for those tourists; if so, of the details; and

(5) whether it will, by learning a lesson from the situation that various problems were encountered when the HZMB opened to traffic, improve the planning work for other major infrastructure projects in future, with a view to making it more people-oriented, so that priority is accorded not only to transport infrastructure development but also to the provision of ancillary facilities?

Reply:

President,

The Government has been monitoring closely the vehicular and visitor flows crossing the boundary through the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge (HZMB) and the operation of the Hong Kong Boundary Crossing Facilities (BCF) since the commissioning of the HZMB. In view of the recent situation in Tung Chung, the Government has rolled out multi-pronged measures within a short time to help alleviate the pressure of the BCF and its nearby areas, improving the relevant situation.

Having consulted relevant bureaux and departments, my consolidated reply to the question raised by the Hon Tony Tse is as follows:

(1) When carrying out feasibility studies for the HZMB, the consultants have estimated the amount of passenger traffic, including the number of passengers travelling among Hong Kong, Zhuhai and Macao using the HZMB. However, the forecast of passenger traffic cannot estimate the final destinations of the passengers. In fact, the forecasted passenger flow may also vary as a result of external factors such as the respective further developments of the three places and new planning initiatives.

In view of the recent situation in Tung Chung, the Government has called various inter-departmental meetings to tackle the matter. Based on the experience gained from the past few weekends, around one-fifth of visitors arriving at Hong Kong through the HZMB BCF did not leave the BCF to visit other districts in Hong Kong by taking local public transportation. This indicates that many of the visitors arriving at Hong Kong through the HZMB BCF mainly intended to visit the HZMB itself and might not enter Hong Kong. The Government is exploring with relevant Mainland authorities the opening of the HZMB's East Artificial Island to the aforementioned group tourists, so as to allow such tourists to visit the HZMB and return to Zhuhai or Macao from the East Artificial Island without crossing the boundary of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region.

In addition, the Government is arranging for setting up temporary small-scale shops or booths in the HZMB BCF's Passenger Clearance Building to allow travellers to buy souvenirs. We are also exploring the introduction of food trucks to serve travellers near the BCF's Passenger Clearance Building and in Sunny Bay.

Besides, the Transport Department (TD) implemented new measures

concerning the operating arrangements of domestic tour coaches at the BCF on November 21. Under the new measures, registered coach operators could enter the BCF pick-up area to pick up passengers on any day provided that they had submitted an application and completed certain simple procedures via the TD's online system by 9pm the prior day. This arrangement helps Hong Kong receiving travel agents and Mainland inbound travel agents establish co-operation, so as to reduce the influx of visitors into Tung Chung through flexible deployment of tour coaches.

Furthermore, shuttle bus operators launched an online booking system on November 23 to allow travel agents or organisers of tour groups to purchase shuttle bus tickets (including return tickets in one single operation) for designated dates and time slots starting from November 24. The new arrangement helps manage and regulate visitor flows at all time slots, thereby preventing group visitors from entering and leaving Hong Kong at the same time, as well as reducing the waiting time of visitors.

In view of the large number of passengers going to Tung Chung, the bus company concerned has implemented a series of measures starting from November 10 to improve the queuing arrangement of Route B6 at Tung Chung, including arranging passengers to buy return tickets in advance, arranging two buses at a time for passengers to get aboard, and deploying more staff to facilitate passengers to get aboard. These measures have shortened the time for boarding the buses and there was no long queue during most of the peak hours. Besides, setting barriers at the bus stop has allowed the queues to proceed in an orderly manner. The TD and bus companies will continue to closely monitor the demand of various feeder bus routes and take appropriate measures as necessary.

In parallel, the Tourism Commission (TC) has assisted in co-ordinating the local trade to smoothen visitor flow near the BCF, including requesting the local trade to arrange travellers to use other means of transport (such as cross-boundary ferries) as far as practicable. The TC also encourages the trade, including tourist attractions, to launch travel itineraries and products such as half-day tours, so as to help divert travellers.

(2) The "Study on Traffic, Transport and Capacity to Receive Visitors for Lantau", which is being carried out by the Civil Engineering and Development Department (CEDD), commenced in mid-2017 and is expected to complete in 2019. In addition, the "Planning, Engineering and Architectural Study for Topside Development at Hong Kong Boundary Crossing Facilities Island of Hong Kong – Zhuhai – Macao Bridge" carried out by the CEDD and the Planning Department commenced in 2015. Meanwhile, the Government has invited the Airport Authority Hong Kong (AAHK) to submit a proposal for the topside development at the Hong Kong Boundary Crossing Facilities Island. Upon the submission of development proposal by the AAHK, the Government will consider it in detail and formulate the planning and uses of the topside development at the Hong Kong Boundary Crossing Facilities Island.

(3) In respect of Tung Chung New Town Extension (TCNTE), we will follow the planning concept of a balanced community in Tung Chung when taking the

project forward. Apart from providing some 49,000 new public/private residential units, the project will also provide over 870,000 square metres commercial floor space for office, retail, dining and hotel uses. To cope with the needs arising from the TCNTE, two new railway stations (Tung Chung East and Tung Chung West) will be constructed. We have also reserved sufficient land for the development of social welfare, recreation and education facilities. The reclamation works in Tung Chung East commenced in end-2017. We expect the first population intake in around 2023/24 the earliest. Relevant government departments will implement the above facilities gradually taking account of the progress of the TCNTE project.

(4) As explained in (1) above, the forecast of passenger traffic has only assessed the number of passengers travelling among Hong Kong, Zhuhai and Macao using the HZMB.

The mainline of Tuen Mun – Chek Lap Kok Link (TM-CLKL) Southern Connection, i.e. the part connecting to urban bound of the North Lantau Highway, was commissioned to dovetail with the commissioning of the HZMB on October 24 to facilitate the public going to the HZMB and also to relieve the traffic burden on the road network on Airport Island brought about after the commissioning of the HZMB. The part of the TM-CLKL Southern Connection connecting to the Tung Chung bound of North Lantau Highway is being strived to commission within 2018. The TM-CLKL Northern Connection is anticipated to be completed by 2020 the earliest.

Upon the commissioning of the whole section of the TM-CLKL, there will be an alternative route going between the Hong Kong Port and other areas of Hong Kong, alleviating the pressure borne by the Lantau Link. The TD and relevant public transport operators will review public transport services and arrangement in the areas concerned and will consult relevant District Councils and stakeholders, striving to provide efficient public transport services to the public. The TC will also keep a close eye on the travel trends of Mainland tourists, and report destinations that the latter tend to visit to District Offices and other relevant departments in various districts for advance planning. The Food and Environmental Hygiene Department, the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department, and the Leisure and Cultural Services Department will from time to time review their site management and staffing mechanism. These include stepping up inspection at popular destinations during peak arrival seasons of Mainland tourists, advising and educating individuals involved in inappropriate behaviours and to take enforcement actions against violations as appropriate, and at the same time stepping up site cleansing and crowd management, so as to minimise the impact of relevant activities on the districts concerned

(5) When implementing large-scale infrastructure projects, relevant Government departments will take into account a host of factors for providing ancillary facilities of the new development project, and engage consultants to conduct impact assessments and detailed studies. In planning the ancillary facilities of large-scale infrastructure, the Government will from time to time fine-tune the public transport service level and arrangements of other ancillary facilities under planning in response to the development of society

and public transport service networks, and other changes, as well as establishing contingency plans to ensure that new infrastructure projects are able to meet the expected transport demand and tackle the challenges from new developments and changing circumstances.