

LCQ1: Traffic problems in Southern District

Following is a question by the Hon Tony Tse and a reply by the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Mr Frank Chan Fan, in the Legislative Council today (June 2):

Question:

Quite a number of personnel from the architectural, surveying, town planning and landscape sectors as well as residents in the Southern District on the Hong Kong Island have pointed out that currently during peak hours, not only are the Aberdeen Tunnel and major roads in the Southern District quite congested, the train compartments of the MTR South Island Line are also very crowded. They are worried that with the gradual completion of a number of residential developments and industrial building conversion projects in the District, coupled with the forthcoming implementation of the "Invigorating Island South" initiative by the Government, the traffic congestion problem in the District will further deteriorate. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the specific measures to improve the external and local transport of the Southern District, and the timetable for implementing such measures;

(2) of the latest progress of the study on the MTR South Island Line (West) project, and the implementation timetable of the project; and

(3) whether it will conduct a study on the construction of the fourth road harbour crossing to connect the Southern District with the Kowloon Peninsula directly, so as to alleviate the traffic congestions at the Aberdeen Tunnel and the Cross-Harbour Tunnel?

Reply:

President,

Having consulted the Development Bureau, the Government's reply to the various parts of the Hon Tony Tse's question is as follows:

(1) and (2) The existing peak-hour traffic flows of major external roads in the Southern District, such as Wong Chuk Hang Road, Aberdeen Praya Road, Pok Fu Lam Road and Aberdeen Tunnel, etc., are mainly northbound traffic in morning peak and southbound traffic in evening peak on weekdays. With the commissioning of South Island Line (East) in December 2016, which provides the residents with another transport means for travelling to and from the Southern District, the traffic of the major external roads mentioned above has been alleviated. For example, the average traffic flows of Aberdeen Tunnel and Pok Fu Lam Road (section between Sassoon Road and Chi Fu Road)

decreased by 5.6 per cent and 4.4 per cent respectively in 2017, and the traffic flows of the concerned road sections also remained stable thereafter.

The Transport Department (TD) has all along been committed to improving the local traffic conditions in the Southern District, which includes setting up loading and unloading area for large vehicles at the periphery of the Aberdeen centre area so as to reduce the access of large vehicles to the Aberdeen centre area, establishing no-stopping restriction zones in the district to avoid traffic obstruction, installing adaptive traffic signals at the Dam section of Tai Tam Road, and arranging the installation of traffic signals to regulate the traffic at junction of Pok Fu Lam Road and Pok Fu Lam Reservoir Road, etc. On the other hand, in view of the new development projects within the district, TD has actively requested the project proponents to implement traffic improvement measures, including improving the traffic capacity at the junction of Pok Fu Lam Road and Victoria Road in the context of the Pok Fu Lam South housing development, and providing U-turn facilities within the Ocean Park Water World so as to improve the traffic of Shum Wan Road.

In order to facilitate early planning of the South Island Line (West) (SIL(W)), the Government invited the MTR Corporation Limited (MTRCL) to submit a project proposal in June 2019. We received the project proposal submitted by MTRCL in December last year. Relevant departments are considering the proposal and will duly consider the way forward taking into account the growth in transport demand from the development at the south of the Pok Fu Lam near Wah Fu, the redevelopment timetable of Wah Fu Estate and the Invigorating Island South (IIS) initiative.

We expect that the population of Pok Fu Lam will remain stable in the near future and have a more significant growth only after the completion of the redevelopment of Wah Fu Estate. The relevant works of the SIL(W) can only be carried out after the residents have gradually moved from Wah Fu Estate to the reception estates at Pok Fu Lam South, thereby vacating the relevant space within Wah Fu Estate as the construction site of the railway project. We will endeavour to coordinate with the redevelopment of Wah Fu Estate and adjust public transport services as appropriate. Before finalising the railway scheme for SIL(W), the Government will consult the public in line with established procedures.

The objective of the IIS initiative is to transform the Southern District into a place of vibrancy for people to work, live and explore. When planning major development projects, the project proponents should conduct traffic impact assessments for the proposed developments in order to review the cumulative traffic impacts of their developments as well as other planned and committed development projects within the district, and should also propose and implement appropriate traffic improvement measures whenever necessary. Relevant policy bureaux and departments will carefully assess the potential traffic impacts arising from the development projects and measures so as to ensure that the capacity of road network is sufficient to support the relevant projects. The Government will continue to closely monitor the external and local traffic conditions of the Southern District.

(3) The Government proposed to take forward a group of priority transport corridors connecting the coastal area of Tuen Mun, Lantau, Kau Yi Chau Artificial Islands and Hong Kong Island under the Lantau Tomorrow Vision. The transport corridors included the fourth cross harbour road tunnel, the completion of which could help divert and alleviate the traffic conditions of the existing three cross harbour tunnels and their connecting roads. The Legislative Council had approved the funding application for the "Studies related to Artificial Islands in the Central Waters". The studies are envisaged to commence in June this year.

Moreover, the Highways Department (HyD) and TD commenced the "Strategic Studies on Railways and Major Roads beyond 2030" in December last year. Based on the final development strategy of the "Hong Kong 2030+: Towards a Planning Vision and Strategy Transcending 2030" planning study which will soon be published by the Development Bureau, the studies will explore the layout of railway and major road infrastructure and conduct preliminary engineering and technical assessments for their alignments and supporting facilities, so as to ensure that the planning of large-scale transport infrastructure will complement or even reserve capacity to meet the overall long-term development needs of Hong Kong. The studies will also examine the impact of the proposed transport infrastructure on the existing transport network in order to formulate the corresponding strategies. The focus of the "Strategic Studies on Railways and Major Roads beyond 2030" is on the areas other than those to be studied under the studies related to the Lantau Tomorrow Vision, and this will include the Southern District.

HyD, TD, the Civil Engineering and Development Department, the Planning Department, etc. will closely communicate and coordinate in respect of the above studies.

Thank you, President.