

LCQ12: Traffic congestion problems in New Territories East

Following is a question by the Hon Kenneth Lau and a written reply by the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Mr Frank Chan Fan, in the Legislative Council today (December 9):

Question:

It has been reported that the several ongoing housing development projects (i) at Shap Sze Heung, Sai Sha Road, Sai Kung, (ii) on the four land lots near Cheung Muk Tau Village, Sai Sha Road, Ma On Shan, (iii) at Whitehead, Ma On Shan, and (iv) at Pak Shek Kok, Tai Po can accommodate a total population of about 70 000. Moreover, the Hong Kong Science Park Expansion Programme will offer more than 30 000 jobs upon completion. Some residents of New Territories East (NTE) are concerned that the traffic congestion problems at a number of locations in NTE during peak hours will become increasingly serious. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it knows the following information about each of the aforesaid housing development projects: (i) project name, (ii) number of flats to be provided, (iii) number of residents to be accommodated, (iv) number of private car parking spaces to be provided, (v) number of public car parking spaces to be provided, (vi) anticipated year of completion, and (vii) gross floor area (set out in a table);

(2) whether it has assessed, upon the intake of residents of the aforesaid housing development projects, the rates of increase in the (i) traffic volume and (ii) traffic volume/capacity ratio on Sai Sha Road, Ma On Shan Road, Tate's Cairn Highway, Sha Lek Highway, Sha Tin Road, Tolo Highway, the roundabout on Chak Cheung Street near MTR University Station, and Shek Mun Interchange; whether it has assessed if these roads/road sections will reach saturation at that time; if it has assessed and the outcome is in the affirmative, of the mitigation proposals;

(3) of the measures in place to reduce the traffic load brought to Sai Kung, Ma On Shan and Tai Po by these housing development projects;

(4) whether it has plans to construct a new road tunnel linking Sha Tin and Kowloon so as to alleviate the traffic congestion at the Lion Rock Tunnel and the Tate's Cairn Tunnel; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(5) as it has been reported that the scale of an ongoing housing development project at Shap Sze Heung, Sai Sha Road, Sai Kung is very large and comparable to that of City One Shatin and Whampoa Garden, whether the Government (i) has assessed the long-term transport needs of residents commuting between Shap Sze Heung and Ma On Shan, (ii) will take measures to

prevent the occurrence of traffic congestion problems, and (iii) will construct an extension of the Ma On Shan Line with the addition of a Shap Sze Heung Station, and provide additional bus and green minibus feeder services; if so, of the details (including the implementation timetable); if not, the reasons for that; and

(6) whether it will consider afresh the suggestion of adding a Pak Shek Kok Station or a Science Park Station along the East Rail Line; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

The Government has been closely monitoring the road network and traffic conditions in the New Territories East, and will timely review the medium to long-term traffic changes and demands for considering the implementation of new road infrastructure projects or road improvement works. Besides, the Transport Department (TD) provides, from the traffic point of view, comments to the project proponents on the latter's proposed developments. Where necessary, TD requires the relevant project proponents to implement road improvement works so as to ensure that the proposed developments will not induce adverse impact on the local road network.

After consulting the Development Bureau and TD, my reply to the various parts of the Hon Kenneth Lau's questions is as follows:

(1) The information about the residential developments at Shap Sz Heung in Sai Kung, Cheung Muk Tau in Ma On Shan, Ma On Shan Tsuen Road and Whitehead, as well as Pak Shek Kok in Tai Po is provided at Annex.

(2) and (3) Based on the relevant traffic impact assessment (TIA) reports of the proposed housing developments in Cheung Muk Tau of Ma On Shan (i.e. the land lots near Cheung Muk Tau Village in Ma On Shan mentioned in the question) and the proposed Phase II Expansion of the Hong Kong Science Park, some of the existing roads and junctions will be operating near or over their capacities after completion of the proposed developments. Therefore, the relevant project proponents have plans to implement the following traffic improvement measures at the roads and junctions concerned in accordance with the recommendations of the TIA reports:

(i) widening the junction of Science Park Road and Chong San Road and adjusting its traffic light signal;

(ii) widening the approach roads of Sai Sha Road westbound and Nin Fung Road northbound to the roundabout of Sai Sha Road/Nin Wah Road/Nin Fung Road;

(iii) enhancing the traffic light signal at the junction of Sai Sha Road and Kam Ying Road;

(iv) widening the road section from the exit of the roundabout of Ma On Shan Tsuen Road/Ma On Shan Road/Hang Hong Street to Ma On Shan Tsuen Road; and

(v) widening a section of Tate's Cairn Highway southbound outside A Kung Kok Fishermen Village from a three-lane carriageway to a four-lane carriageway.

Upon completion of the above-mentioned improvement measures, it is expected that the traffic conditions at the relevant roads and junctions will be improved.

Besides, the relevant TIA reports also indicate that traffic congestion will be observed at the section of Tate's Cairn Highway across Shing Mun River (i.e. T6 Bridge) and the roundabout at Chak Cheung Street. Although the Shek Mun roundabout is not covered in the above-mentioned TIA reports, TD notes that the traffic at the said roundabout is fairly busy currently. In view of the situation of T6 Bridge, the Government will study relevant improvement schemes. As regards the roundabouts at Chak Cheung Street and Shek Mun, the Government will also review their traffic conditions in the relevant study and identify feasible improvement measures.

Generally speaking, when conducting a TIA, the project proponent should take into account the traffic generated by other developments adjacent to its development. In the above cases, the additional traffic arising from the developments in Whitehead, Ma On Shan, and Pak Shek Kok, Tai Po, have already been considered in the relevant TIA reports.

(4) The Government has started the road widening works for Tai Po Road (Sha Tin Section) and is changing the section between Sha Tin Plaza near Sha Tin Rural Committee Road and Man Wo House of Wo Che Estate near Fo Tan Road of approximately 1.1 kilometres in length from a dual two-lane carriageway to a dual three-lane carriageway. The construction commenced in July 2018 for scheduled completion in 2023. The road widening works will help divert traffic travelling between Sha Tin and Kowloon to the Eagle's Nest Tunnel and the Sha Tin Heights Tunnel, thereby improving the traffic conditions of the Lion Rock Tunnel and the Tate's Cairn Tunnel.

Besides, the Civil Engineering and Development Department is conducting an investigation study on the construction of Trunk Road T4. The purpose of the project is to provide a dual two-lane carriageway connecting Sha Tin Road and Shing Mun Tunnel Road/Tsing Sha Highway. Vehicles can then travel between Ma On Shan and Tsuen Wan/West Kowloon via Trunk Road T4 directly without going through the local roads in Sha Tin district, including the Chak Cheung Street roundabout. The new trunk road will help improve the traffic conditions of the roads connecting the New Territories East and the urban areas.

(5) During the planning application for the Shap Sz Heung development in Sai Kung, the relevant developer has already conducted a TIA to ensure that the proposed development would bring no adverse impact on the traffic nearby. According to the assessment result, the developer will need to implement traffic improvement measures, including widening the section of Sai Sha Road between Sai O Village and Tai Tung Tsuen from a single two-lane carriageway (i.e. two lanes in total for both bounds) to a dual two-lane carriageway (i.e. four lanes in total for both bounds) together with other related

measures to cater for the additional traffic arising from the development.

As regards transportation support, TD has required the developer to plan, design and build a covered transport interchange with a view to facilitating passengers in the district to interchange for public transport modes. TD will closely monitor the construction progress of the development and introduce bus routes and other public transport services in a timely manner so as to meet the commuting demand from the new population intake.

In the long run, TD and the Highways Department plan to conduct the "Strategic Studies on Railways and Major Roads beyond 2030", based on the development strategy of the "Hong Kong 2030+: Towards a Planning Vision and Strategy Transcending 2030" planning study, to explore the layout of railway and major road infrastructure of Hong Kong (including New Territories East), and to conduct preliminary engineering and technical assessments for the alignments and supporting facilities, so 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.

(6) Before the announcement of the Railway Development Strategy 2014 (RDS-2014), the Government conducted two stages of public engagement exercises in 2012 and 2013 respectively, during which the Government received suggestions including that of adding a station in the vicinity of Pak Shek Kok on the East Rail Line. When assessing the suggestion, the consultant commissioned by the Government at that time had adopted the then latest population and employment data from the Planning Department and had taken into account the population growth brought by the new developments in the vicinity of Pak Shek Kok. According to the consultant's analysis, the financial viability and economic benefits of such a suggestion were poor due to insufficient transport demand. Therefore, the suggestion was not included in RDS-2014. Nevertheless, we will re-visit the population growth and transport demand of the area from time to time.