

LCQ12: Transport planning for tourist attractions in Northern Metropolis

Following is a question by the Hon Yiu Pak-leung and a written reply by the Acting Secretary for Transport and Logistics, Mr Liu Chun-san, in the Legislative Council today (January 31):

Question:

The Northern Metropolis Action Agenda published by the Government at the end of October last year outlines the four major zones, including the Blue and Green Recreation, Tourism and Conservation Circle, in the Northern Metropolis and adopts an "industry-driven and infrastructure-led" approach as its key planning axle. Regarding the transport planning for tourist attractions in the Northern Metropolis, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) as there are views that the current restriction on the entry of tour coaches into the section of Luk Keng Road from Bride's Pool to Sha Tau Kok not only obstructs the access of tourists, but also wastes the scenery along Starling Inlet which may attract tourists, whether the Government has plans to widen Luk Keng Road, improve the transport infrastructure of the road, and relax the restriction on the access of tour coaches to the aforesaid road section;

(2) as the Second Phase Opening-up of Sha Tau Kok began on January 1 this year, whether the authorities will open up the Frontier Closed Area of the section of Lin Ma Hang Road between Wang Lek and Sha Tau Kok to allow vehicles or bicycles to go to Sha Tau Kok via that road section;

(3) as there are views pointing out that at present, the roads in the Northern Metropolis are narrow, making it difficult for tour coaches to get close to the declared monuments in the area, whether the authorities have studied the widening of the vehicular entrances and exits of the monuments or historic buildings in the area to facilitate tourists' visits to them; and

(4) whether it has adjusted the routes of public light buses and public buses as well as provided additional parking spaces for tour coaches in the light of the increase in the vehicular and passenger flows arising from the Opening-up of Sha Tau Kok?

Reply:

President,

As a new engine for the future development of Hong Kong, the Northern Metropolis will inject new economic impetus into Hong Kong. The easternmost part of the area, the Blue and Green Recreation, Tourism and Conservation Circle, is rich in natural resources and has many traditional rural townships

with potential for recreation and tourism development. Relevant bureaux/departments will plan and implement the necessary transportation and infrastructural facilities in the light of the development of this area.

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Having consulted the Development Bureau (DEVB), the Security Bureau and the Transport Department (TD), my reply to the questions raised by Hon Yiu Pak-leung is as follows:

(1) Luk Keng Road is currently designated as a prohibited zone for vehicles with gross weight over 5.5 tonnes, public light buses (except for scheduled service), buses and coaches because this road section is narrow and contains many turns. In view of this, the TD issues Prohibited Zone Permits and allows coaches with 29 seats or less to travel along Luk Keng Road southbound to Bride's Pool Road during non-peak hours on Sundays and public holidays. According to the TD's assessment, Luk Keng Road still has sufficient capacity at the moment to meet the overall traffic demand, including the demand from vehicles with Prohibited Zone Permits. The TD will continue to closely monitor the traffic conditions in the nearby area and make appropriate arrangements.

(2) The section of Lin Ma Hang Road between Wang Lek and Sha Tau Kok (STK), located inside the Frontier Closed Area (FCA), serves as an exclusive access for enforcement of boundary security by Police officers. For security reasons, the road section concerned will not be open to all members of the public and vehicles. Through issuing Closed Area Permits, the Police allow limited access to the road section concerned by local residents and other persons who have genuine need for access, such as works staff, and members of the public who need to go tomb sweeping at nearby burial grounds during the Ching Ming and Chung Yeung Festivals. In addition, the road section concerned ends at STK Boundary Control Point and does not provide direct access to the area already opened up under the Second Phase Opening-up of STK.

To tie in with the implementation of the Second Phase Opening-up of STK on January 1, 2024, the TD has implemented various measures to enhance the transport facilities in STK, including the introduction of an express franchised bus service connecting Fanling and Sheung Shui stations, enhancing the services of one existing bus route and one existing green minibus route, and provision of additional designated pick-up/drop-off points for coaches in the FCA to ensure smooth traffic flow. The public transport arrangements have been working smoothly since the implementation of the opening-up plan.

(3) Under the Revitalising Historic Buildings Through Partnership Scheme, the DEVB invites proposals from non-profit-making organisations for preservation of selected government-owned historic buildings in the form of social enterprise, by revitalising the historic buildings and putting them into good and innovative use, and opening them up for public enjoyment and appreciation as appropriate. As for privately-owned historic buildings, through the Financial Assistance for Maintenance Scheme on Built Heritage, the DEVB assists owners to carry out maintenance works on their historic buildings and requires owners receiving subsidies to open up their historic buildings where appropriate. The DEVB also encourages government departments to open up the historic buildings under their ownership and management. For government works

(including improvement works of transport ancillary facilities) involving declared monuments or historic buildings, the Antiquities and Monuments Office provides technical advice from the heritage conservation perspective to the works proponent departments and, where practicable, for enhancing the connectivity and accessibility of the historic buildings to facilitate visits by the public.

(4) To tie in with the Second Phase Opening-up of STK and for the convenience of tourists, the TD, as mentioned above, has arranged operators to introduce a new express franchised bus service and enhance the existing green minibus and franchised bus services to cope with the passenger demand. In addition, the TD completed the improvement works at the Sha Tau Kok Bus Terminus in December 2023 to provide additional coach parking spaces for passenger boarding and alighting.