

LCQ15: Hillside escalator links and elevator systems

Following is a question by the Hon Chan Han-pan and a written reply by the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Mr Frank Chan Fan, in the Legislative Council today (February 16):

Question:

In 2009, the Government established a mechanism for assessing proposals on hillside escalator links and elevator systems (HEL) (the assessment mechanism). Upon completion of initial screening and scoring for the proposals received then, the Government decided to take forward 18 of such proposals. In 2017, the Government announced that a consultancy study would be commenced to review and improve the assessment mechanism, and by then the Government received a total of 114 HEL proposals. The Government subsequently indicated that, of the 114 proposals that had been received, around 20 proposals would be shortlisted under the revised assessment mechanism as the first batch of projects for implementation by the first quarter of 2020. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) among all the 114 proposals, of the respective projects the implementation of which has been advanced and postponed (and the reasons for that), and those the implementation of which has remained unchanged, under the revised assessment mechanism (set out in a table);

(2) among all the 114 proposals, of the respective current numbers of projects which have been completed and are in the pipeline (and the current progress, expected completion dates and estimated expenditures of such projects) (set out in a table);

(3) of the time normally taken from assessment to completion of an HEL project; whether any mechanism is in place to streamline procedure and reduce construction time; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(4) given that the Government currently needs to seek funding approval from this Council for taking forward some of the HEL projects, whether the Government will consider making reference to the practice of setting up a dedicated fund for the Universal Accessibility Programme in order to expedite the vetting and approval procedure; if so, of the details and timetable; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

Since 2009, the Government has been taking forward the hillside escalator links and elevator systems (HEL), which aims to enhance the accessibility of hillside areas through construction/installation of a mix of

pedestrian facilities, such as footbridges, subways, lifts, escalator links, etc. The Government commenced a consultancy study in December 2017 to review and improve the assessment mechanism for the HEL proposals. In December 2018, the Government consulted the Legislative Council (LegCo) Panel on Transport on the proposed revisions to the assessment mechanism. The revised assessment mechanism was subsequently endorsed by the LegCo.

Based on the revised assessment mechanism, the consultant engaged by the Transport Department (TD) completed initial screening, shortlisting and prioritisation of the 114 proposals received in the past. Under the revised assessment mechanism, the consultant screened out more than half of the proposals which were obviously technically infeasible or unjustified for implementation in the Initial Screening Stage. The remaining proposals were then assessed based on their "Social Benefits" and "Cost-effectiveness" respectively. After prioritisation of these proposals with their integrated scores, the HEL proposals with evident benefits were accorded priority for implementation.

My consolidated reply to the question raised by the Hon Chan Han-pan is as follows.

(1) and (2) As at end January 2022, we have consulted the respective District Council of the Central and Western District, Wan Chai District, Eastern District, Sham Shui Po District, Sha Tin District, Tsuen Wan District and Kwai Tsing District or their relevant committees on 10 of the projects proposed for implementation, and obtained their support for the preliminary alignment and conceptual design of the projects concerned. Details of the projects are tabulated below:

District	No.	Preliminary Alignment
Central and Western	HKI03	From Pokfield Road along Pokfield Path to Smithfield
Wan Chai	HKI23	From Wood Road to Queen's Road East near St. Joseph's Primary School
	HKI30	From Lau Sin Street to Tin Hau Temple Road
Eastern	HKI34	From Sai Wan Ho Street to Holy Cross Church, Sai Wan Ho
	HKI35	From Healthy Street East to Pak Fuk Road
Sham Shui Po	KLN04	From Lai King Hill Road near Ching Lai Commercial Centre to Ching Cheung Road footbridge near Mei Foo MTR Station
Sha Tin	NTE04	From Sha Tin Tau Road to the footway near Greenview Garden
Tsuen Wan	NTE12	From Kwok Shui Road to Kwok Shui Road Park

Kwai Tsing	NTW10	From Castle Peak Road – Kwai Chung to Wah Sing Street
	NTW11	From Tai Pak Tin Street near Kam Shek Building to Shek Yam Road

The Highways Department (HyD) is commencing the next stage of works for taking forward these projects, including technical feasibility study, ground investigation, preliminary and detailed design, etc. The TD will also continue with the local consultation for the rest of the proposals.

(3) Making reference to the past experience in implementing the HEL projects, the implementation readiness of proposals has been included as one of the main considerations when revising the assessment mechanism. Under the revised assessment mechanism, more comprehensive preliminary technical assessments have been conducted in the Initial Screening Stage to better ascertain the feasibility of proposals. In the Detailed Scoring Stage, "Implementation Readiness" is also one of the assessment criteria. With such assessment criteria, we have evaluated whether environmental or heritage impact assessments are required for the proposals in accordance with the relevant legislation. Proposals not requiring such assessments have been given a higher score under "Implementation Readiness". Therefore, projects selected for priority implementation under the revised assessment mechanism should be more ready for implementation, and hopefully can be taken forward smoothly.

The HyD will take forward these projects in accordance with the relevant public works procedures, while the actual time required hinges on various factors such as the complexity of and public views on individual project. We are actively taking forward all projects selected for priority implementation in tandem and will seek funding approval from the Finance Committee of the LegCo as soon as possible with a view to commencing the construction works early. As these projects are still under preliminary planning, the expected completion dates and estimated expenditures cannot be provided at the moment.

We will adopt a multi-pronged approach to expedite the delivery of these projects, including:

- (a) Project consolidation – suitably consolidating several projects into one consultancy agreement or works contract according to their implementation progress and budgets;
- (b) Using innovative design and construction technologies, such as Building Information Modelling and Modular Integrated Construction, to shorten the construction time;
- (c) Commencing the advance works for utilities diversion earlier with regard to the needs of the project, so as to expedite the progress of the subsequent main construction works; and
- (d) Strengthening co-ordination with relevant government departments and conducting local consultation as early as possible in the preliminary design stage, so as to reduce the need for substantial changes to the alignment or

design of the projects at the later planning stage due to public objections or interfacing issues with other works projects, which will affect the completion date of the projects concerned.

Besides, depending on the actual situation and progress of the projects, we will prepare for the tender exercises as early as possible, and expedite the award of contracts and commencement of construction works after obtaining the approval from the Finance Committee of the LegCo.

(4) Currently, expenditure on projects under the Universal Accessibility Programme is charged to the block allocation Subhead 6101TX under Capital Works Reserve Fund Head 706 – "Highways". In general, block allocation arrangement is more commonly used for works of a smaller scale with lower costs. As the HEL projects generally have to overcome greater level differences and may involve major advance works such as upgrading works for slopes and construction of new public walkways, the works involved are relatively larger in scale with higher expenditures. In addition, the scope, nature and complexity of each HEL project vary, and so do their estimated project costs. It is very difficult to set a financial ceiling for the proposed block allocation subhead. Thus, it is more appropriate to take forward HEL projects following the established public works procedures.

To expedite the vetting and approval procedures, we will consolidate the funding proposals for the HEL projects submitted in the same legislative year into one single item for consideration as far as practicable when seeking funding approval from the LegCo.