

LCQ16: Overall walkability strategy for Hong Kong

Following is a question by the Hon Judy Chan and a written reply by the Secretary for Transport and Logistics, Mr Lam Sai-hung, in the Legislative Council today (May 8):

Question:

From 2019 to early 2021, the Transport Department (TD) decluttered non-essential traffic signs and pedestrian railings in the pilot areas of Central and Sham Shui Po. To tie in with the overall walkability strategy for Hong Kong, TD will extend the decluttering works to other suitable locations progressively. However, some members of the public have relayed that at present, many narrow footpaths on Hong Kong Island are still cluttered with non-essential traffic signs, causing much inconvenience to pedestrians. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of (i) the number of non-essential traffic signs and (ii) the length of non-essential pedestrian railings removed each year since the completion of the pilot scheme, together with a breakdown by District Council (DC) district;

(2) of the existing mechanism adopted by the authorities to identify non-essential traffic signs and pedestrian railings for removal; whether they will consider establishing a channel for DC members and members of the public to formally put forward proposals for removal of non-essential traffic signs and pedestrian railings; and

(3) of the specific plans in future to achieve respectively the four objectives of "make it connected", "make it safe", "make it enjoyable" and "make it smart" under the overall walkability strategy for Hong Kong, so as to create a more comfortable walking environment for members of the public?

Reply:

President,

To promote "Walk in HK" and encourage the public to walk more, the Transport Department (TD) fosters a pedestrian-friendly environment and promotes walking as a form of sustainable urban mobility along four pillars, namely "make it connected", "make it safe", "make it enjoyable" and "make it smart". My reply to the various parts of the question raised by the Hon Judy Chan is as follows:

(1) The TD has commenced the work to declutter non-essential traffic signs at suitable locations in various districts across the city since August 2021. As at the end of 2023, the numbers of non-essential traffic signs decluttered in various districts are as follows:

District	2021 (August to December)	2022	2023
Central and Western	2	17	62
Wan Chai	4	26	27
Eastern	20	16	24
Southern	0	40	30
Yau Tsim Mong	14	17	247
Sham Shui Po	2	17	94
Kowloon City	1	0	48
Wong Tai Sin	9	6	91
Kwun Tong	0	32	93
Tsuen Wan	17	27	206
Tuen Mun	11	41	51
Yuen Long	18	17	26
North	3	30	111
Tai Po	0	12	54
Sai Kung	0	46	4
Sha Tin	2	35	78
Kwai Tsing	0	0	85
Islands	0	0	1
Total	103	379	1 332

The TD has also commenced the work to declutter non-essential pedestrian railings at suitable locations in various districts across the city since October 2020. As at the end of 2023, the lengths (in metres) of non-essential pedestrian railings decluttered in various districts are as follows:

District	2020 (October to December)	2021	2022	2023
Central and Western	0	14	35	52
Wan Chai	149	581	72	138
Eastern	0	393	243	120
Southern	0	23	21	219
Yau Tsim Mong	488	0	60	73
Sham Shui Po	93	60	74	192
Kowloon City	9	21	26	88

Wong Tai Sin	0	27	53	0
Kwun Tong	0	77	29	226
Tsuen Wan	65	140	216	186
Tuen Mun	116	945	670	110
Yuen Long	100	107	378	172
North	0	0	0	77
Tai Po	0	540	180	67
Sai Kung	590	2410	0	0
Sha Tin	200	23	175	0
Kwai Tsing	0	36	35	209
Islands	0	0	21	0
Total length (in meters)	1 810	5 397	2 288	1 929

(2) The TD has all along been committed to fostering a pedestrian-friendly environment. Regarding traffic signs, on the premise of not compromising road safety and traffic management, the TD declutters non-essential traffic signs in various districts across the city according to the Road Traffic (Traffic Control) Regulations (Cap. 374G), whilst taking into account factors such as public opinions and planning for traffic improvement works. For instance, when a traffic sign contains the same message as that of a road marking, the TD will consider decluttering it, such as removing a "24-hour No-stopping Restriction" traffic sign when "double yellow lines" have already been painted on the road.

The provision of pedestrian railings is meant to guide pedestrians to cross the roads and prevent them from inadvertently moving away from footpaths onto carriageways, thereby ensuring road safety and achieving traffic management. Pedestrian railings are mainly erected at road junctions, pedestrian crossings, transport interchanges, school entrances/exits, central reserves and pedestrian refuge islands, etc. Currently, the TD adopts a "minimal approach" in the provision of pedestrian railings, which aims at stripping away excessive railings that are not bringing value to the implementation of the policy of enhancing walkability of the pedestrian environment and reducing street cluttering, with a view to releasing more road space for pedestrians on footpaths.

The TD will continue to conduct regular reviews of traffic signs and pedestrian railings under its purview to determine whether they should be maintained, removed or replaced, taking into account the functions of the traffic signs and railings, prevailing guidelines, accident records of the locations concerned, public views, etc. On matters relating to the decluttering of traffic signs and pedestrian railings, the TD consults local stakeholders through District Offices as and when necessary and also welcomes views from the general public.

(3) Under the overall strategy of "Walk in HK", apart from its continued efforts to declutter non-essential traffic signs and pedestrian railings in

various districts, the TD also proceeds with various walkability enhancement measures, which include footpath widening, provision of more pedestrian crossings, expanding pedestrian crossing build-outs, setting up of wayfinding signage, provision of raised crossings and setting up of low speed limit zones, etc. Moreover, the Government has commenced projects of providing covers for walkways across the 18 districts, of which 11 projects have been completed while the works of the remaining seven projects are in progress. The Government is also taking forward projects of providing covers for walkways connecting public hospitals. The TD will continue to keep in view the results and effectiveness of the various measures to enhance the pedestrian environment and extend them to cover suitable locations, taking into account technical conditions and public views. The TD will also strive to take forward walkability enhancement measures in other suitable locations across the city, with new development areas and suitable urban redevelopment areas selected for adopting the pedestrian planning framework to formulate and implement appropriate pedestrian facility measures.