

LCQ18: Bus services for commuting between Yuen Long and North Lantau

Following is a question by the Hon Holden Chow and a written reply by the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Mr Frank Chan Fan, in the Legislative Council today (August 18):

Question:

Since June 20 this year, a number of franchised bus routes plying between Yuen Long (including Tin Shui Wai) and North Lantau (including the airport) have been diverted. They no longer pass through Tai Lam Tunnel (TLT) and instead run on Tuen Mun-Chek Lap Kok Tunnel. Quite a number of residents in Yuen Long and Tin Shui Wai who work at the airport have relayed that during peak hours, buses of such routes frequently encounter serious traffic congestion when they pass through Tuen Mun (particularly along the section of Tuen Mun Road (TMR) near Hung Kiu and that where TMR turns into Wong Chu Road), resulting in a longer rather than shorter journey time. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the plans in place to improve the situation of serious traffic congestion occurring frequently on the aforesaid road sections during peak hours; and

(2) whether it will, on the premise of not reducing the existing franchised bus services commuting between Yuen Long and North Lantau, consider increasing special departures during peak hours for bus routes passing through TLT?

Reply:

President,

The Tuen Mun-Chek Lap Kok Tunnel (TM-CLKT), commissioned in late 2020, provides a new strategic road connecting Northwest New Territories, Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge, North Lantau and Hong Kong International Airport (Airport). With the commissioning of the TM-CLKT, driving routes via Tuen Mun to/from North Lantau and the Airport area have been adjusted. A traffic survey conducted after the commissioning of the TM-CLKT showed that while traffic flows at relevant major road sections in Tuen Mun (including Tuen Mun Road (Town Centre Section) and the slip road connecting to Wong Chu Road) have indeed increased, their traffic conditions have remained manageable.

My reply to the various parts of the Hon Holden Chow's question is as follows:

(1) Before the commissioning of the TM-CLKT, the Government released driving guide videos and installed additional directional signs at appropriate locations in Tuen Mun for motorists to familiarise themselves with the driving routes via the TM-CLKT, with a view to facilitating smoother traffic.

Also, the Transport Department (TD) has adjusted the traffic light control at relevant road junctions in the district to meet the anticipated traffic demand.

The TD has been closely monitoring the traffic conditions in Tuen Mun so as to formulate corresponding traffic management measures. In this connection, the TD has arranged junction widening works at Ming Kum Road and Lung Mun Road to facilitate smoother traffic from these roads to the TM-CLKT and to alleviate traffic loads at the Tuen Mun Road and Wong Chu Road area. The works have commenced this year and are scheduled for completion by phases between 2022 and 2025.

For medium-term measures, the Government has planned to implement improvement works at Lung Fu Road, Wong Chu Road and Hoi Wing Road to improve the traffic conditions at Tuen Mun Road (Town Centre Section) and Wong Chu Road. The works include (i) constructing an additional traffic lane each for Lung Fu Road viaduct northbound and southbound, connecting to Tsing Wun Road; (ii) widening the slip road connecting Tuen Mun Road (Town Centre Section) southbound and Wong Chu Road westbound; and (iii) constructing a new carriageway connecting Tuen Mun Road (Sam Shing Section) northbound and Hoi Wing Road westbound. Investigation study and preliminary design of these traffic improvement works will be commenced within this year.

To cope with long-term traffic demand, the Government is actively taking forward a number of transport infrastructure projects, including Tuen Mun Bypass, Route 11 (section between Yuen Long and North Lantau), Tsing Yi – Lantau Link and the widening of Yuen Long Highway (section between Lam Tei and Tong Yan San Tsuen). Upon completion of these works, the traffic conditions of Tuen Mun and the connection between Northwest New Territories and the urban areas will be improved.

(2) The TD and the bus company concerned have been closely monitoring the impact of the commissioning of the TM-CLKT on franchised bus services, and made adjustments as appropriate. With the commissioning of the TM-CLKT, the driving distance between New Territories West (including Tuen Mun and Yuen Long) and North Lantau/Airport has been substantially reduced. In this respect, the TD and the bus company have diverted six bus routes plying between Tuen Mun and North Lantau/Airport to use the TM-CLKT instead of Tai Lam Tunnel (TLT) and Lantau Link since December 28, 2020. In addition, eight bus routes plying between Yuen Long and North Lantau/Airport have been diverted via the TM-CLKT since June 20, 2021. To cater for local development and the commuting needs of residents, the TD and the bus company have also suitably adjusted the routings of individual bus routes in Yuen Long and extended certain routes with a view to expanding the overall service network. Apart from reducing journey distance, the above routing adjustments have also resulted in lower fares for ten of the bus routes.

After adjustment, the bus routes have been operating smoothly in general. Meanwhile, the TD noted that there were feedbacks from passengers in the Yuen Long East area indicating that the journey time of individual routes has been lengthened during peak hours. In this connection, with effect from late August 2021, the TD and the bus company will redeploy some resources of

the existing route E36 (Yuen Long (Pat Heung Road) – Airport) to introduce special departures under route E36S (Yuen Long (Ma Wang Road) – Airport (Ground Transportation Centre)) via TLT and Lantau Link during peak hours, thus providing more options for passengers. The TD will continue to closely monitor the operation of these routes and take follow-up actions with the bus company as appropriate.