

LCQ19: Environmentally Friendly Linkage System for Kowloon East

Following is a question by the Hon Wong Kwok-kin and a written reply by the Secretary for Development, Mr Michael Wong, in the Legislative Council today (June 17):

Question:

The proposed Environmentally Friendly Linkage System (EFLS) for Kowloon East is an elevated monorail which will start and end respectively at the Kowloon Bay Station and Kwun Tong Station of the MTR Kwun Tong Line, run through the Kai Tak Development Area (KTDA), and connect the Kai Tak Station of the Shatin to Central Link. The Government completed the first-stage detailed feasibility study (DFS) for EFLS in 2017 and is currently conducting the second-stage DFS. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) whether it will study if the technical problems and environmental constraints relating to the following proposal can be overcome: to include in EFLS' network coverage those areas in Kowloon East without railway access (e.g. To Kwa Wan and Kowloon City);
- (2) given that currently, there are often traffic congestions along a number of road sections in Kowloon East (particularly Hoi Yuen Road and Wai Yip Street in Kwun Tong) during peak hours, of the Government's new measures in the short run to relieve the traffic congestions along those sections before the completion of EFLS;
- (3) whether it has conducted a detailed assessment on the impacts of the construction of EFLS on the traffic volumes of areas in the vicinity of KTDA, Kwun Tong and Kowloon Bay; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;
- (4) in view of the surge in population and the rising transport demand in KTDA following the completion of a number of development projects there in recent years, whether the Government will consider setting KTDA as an area to be covered in the first-phase project of EFLS; and
- (5) of the expected dates for the (i) completion of the second-stage DFS, and (ii) publication of the findings of the study?

Reply:

President,

The Government has incorporated the planning intent and indicative alignment of the proposed Environmentally Friendly Linkage System (EFLS) for

Kowloon East (KE) on the Kai Tak Outline Zoning Plan. The technical and financial viabilities, etc., of the proposed EFLS are being explored and studied by the Civil Engineering and Development Department (CEDD). Based upon the findings of the preliminary feasibility study completed in 2014 and the first stage of the detailed feasibility study (DFS) completed in 2017, the CEDD is conducting the second stage of the DFS to explore the proposed EFLS' network coverage, alignment, station locations, mode of operation, financial and cost effectiveness, etc. The CEDD will also examine the interaction between the proposed EFLS and the public transport services, as well as make reference to and explore the latest development and applicability of environmentally friendly transport technologies at home and abroad.

In the course of conducting the DFS, the CEDD has encountered more-than-expected and complicated challenges, thus requiring more time to review and explore feasible solutions, including studying on options other than the elevated mode. Besides, the long-term financial viability and cost-effectiveness of the proposed EFLS are also one of the key considerations of the DFS.

The CEDD anticipates to complete the DFS in this year that seeks to look for suitable, practicable and cost-effective EFLS scheme. Upon completion of the entire DFS, the Government will formulate the way forward for the EFLS project and report the findings and recommendations to the Legislative Council members and relevant stakeholders in due course.

Our responses to various parts of the question raised by Hon Wong, having taken into account the inputs of relevant bureau/departments, are as follows:

(1) and (3) As stated above, the study currently being undertaken by the CEDD includes, among others, the coverage for the proposed EFLS and its impacts to the vehicular traffic on major roads in KE.

In the course of study, the CEDD finds that the construction of the EFLS in elevated mode in KE will encounter lots of technical complications and challenges, particularly for those parts in developed areas. For instance, how the proposed EFLS could be efficiently constructed and operated in the narrow road space and crowded environment of the area; whether construction of the EFLS structures above Kwun Tong Road and the MTR Kwun Tong Line could ensure the operation and safety of the railway and road traffic underneath unaffected; and whether the passage of the EFLS alignment along Hoi Yuen Road could meet the statutory requirements of fire escape. Besides, we also need to consider how a balance could be struck, within the limits of practicality, on the multi-faceted opinions and aspirations of the stakeholders and public over the recommended alignment and site selection for various stations of the EFLS. Moreover, the long-term financial viability and cost-effectiveness of the proposed EFLS are also one of the key considerations of the DFS. Therefore, the CEDD has to take a longer time, including studying on options other than the elevated mode, with a view to identifying a suitable, practicable and cost-effective EFLS scheme.

With respect to railway connectivity of the area, the "Tai Wai to Hung Hom Section" of the Shatin to Central Link, which is under construction, will connect to the West Rail at Hung Hom Station via South East Kowloon to become the Tuen Ma Line. Tuen Ma Line Phase 1, including Hin Keng Station, Diamond Hill Station and Kai Tak Station, was put into service on February 14, 2020. The entire Tuen Ma Line, including the remaining "Kai Tak to Hung Hom Section", will be commissioned by the third quarter of 2021. Upon its commissioning, Tuen Ma Line will include Kai Tak Station, Sung Wong Toi Station, To Kwa Wan Station, Ho Man Tin Station and the Hung Hom Station Extension; and will benefit people in KE (including Kai Tak Development (KTD), To Kwa Wan and Kowloon City, etc.) in terms of transport connectivity and accessibility.

(2), (4) and (5) With the gradual development and transformation of KE (including KTD), the residential and working populations in the area are progressively increasing. We are fully aware of the public's concern about whether the developments may add burden to the traffic condition of the area. Relevant government departments have been striving hard to the timely provisioning of comprehensive railway and road infrastructure facilities, as well as proper public transport services to cope with the traffic demands in the area, thus meeting the travelling needs of the public.

The CEDD continues to carry out, within KTD, in a progressive manner various road infrastructure works. Apart from the recently commissioned Shing Kai Road and Kai Sun Road, the realignment and widening of the existing traffic route at Shing Cheong Road and Shing Fung Road to a dual two-lane road were completed substantially in end 2019. Besides, the Road D3 (Metro Park Section) has commenced construction for completion by 2022, providing connection to Shing Kai Road, the Kai Tak Cruise Terminal and the Hong Kong Children's Hospital. Upon completion of the said road works, the transport infrastructure of KTD will be further improved.

At the same time, the Government has formulated a number of measures to address the transport needs of KE. On the provision of inter-district roads, the Government is proactively taking forward the Route 6 project to directly link up Kowloon West and Tseung Kwan O, and thus help relieving the traffic burden along the major existing east-west road corridors in Kowloon (including corresponding major road links) and Tseung Kwan O. The Transport Department has also added road markings and traffic signs at the Hoi Yuen Road/Kwun Tong Road roundabout, which will help alleviate traffic condition at Hoi Yuen Road during peak hours. In addition, a number of traffic improvement measures would be implemented under the Kwun Tong Town Centre Redevelopment by the Urban Renewal Authority in phases, such as provision of an exclusive left-turn lane from Hip Wo Street southbound to Kwun Tong Road eastbound at the Hoi Yuen Road/Kwun Tong Road roundabout. This would help further alleviate the traffic condition at Hoi Yuen Road and Wai Yip Street in the neighborhood of the Kwun Tong Town Centre.

The Government also takes the opportunity of developing the two Action Areas in KE, i.e. Kwun Tong Action Area (KTAA) and Kowloon Bay Action Area

(KBAA), to further improve the traffic condition thereat, which include building a new road extending from Kei Yip Lane in KTAA to divert traffic away from the Wai Yip Street/Hoi Yuen Road roundabout, and convert the roundabout into a signal-controlled junction to rationalise traffic flows. The CEDD has commenced the investigation and design for the infrastructure works in KTAA in March this year and will seek funding approval timely for implementation of the relevant works. As for the area around KBAA, the Government is studying the widening of Sheung Yee Road and improving the Hoi Bun Road/Cheung Yip Street junction to increase the traffic capacity.

In addition, the two feasibility studies on improving the pedestrian environment in the Kwun Tong Business Area and the Kowloon Bay Business Area included formulation of 22 traffic improvement schemes, of which 16 have been completed, such as provision of kerbside loading and unloading bays and enhancement of road junction layouts, which are conducive to improving the road usage and junction capacity. The Government strives to complete the remaining improvement works as soon as possible. On the other hand, the Police has all along been paying much attention to the situation of illegal parking in the Kwun Tong Business Area, and relevant police districts will also heighten their attention and step up law enforcement against illegal parking therein. For drivers who commit traffic offences and cause traffic obstructions, the Police will issue warning and summons, or even tow away the vehicles concerned.

As stated above, with the commissioning of Tuen Ma Line Phase 1 (including Kai Tak Station) in early this year, railway services have been extended to KTD. Franchised bus and green minibus services are currently provided in the area connecting people to the nearby railway stations and other districts. The Government will continue to closely monitor the development progress of various projects in KTD, and adjust or strengthen different public transport services timely to meet the demand for public transport services.

As for the coverage, mode and related implementation aspects of the proposed EFLS, they are being explored by the CEDD under the second stage of DFS for the EFLS, which is anticipated to complete in this year. Upon completion of the entire DFS, the Government will formulate the way forward for the EFLS project and report the findings and recommendations to the Legislative Council members and relevant stakeholders in due course.