

LCQ19: Projects to improve pedestrian and traffic networks in Kowloon East

Following is a question by the Hon Paul Tse and a written reply by the Secretary for Development, Mr Michael Wong, in the Legislative Council today (June 19):

Question:

Some residents in Kowloon East have pointed out that a number of projects, implemented by the Energizing Kowloon East Office since its establishment to improve the pedestrian and traffic networks in an attempt to ameliorate the situation of traffic congestion, air pollution and competition between pedestrians and vehicles for road space in Kwun Tong and the Kowloon Bay Business Area (KBBA), are ineffective. As at early this year, Kowloon East had over 2.6 million square metres of commercial floor area, which was expected to increase to 7 million square metres in future. By then, the working population in Kwun Tong and KBBA will inevitably increase rapidly, driving an even greater demand for road space. Currently on weekdays, roads in the vicinity of Kwun Tong Road and Hoi Yuen Road are clogged with pedestrian and vehicular traffic during the periods when people commute to and from work. The situation will only worsen when the working population in the district increases substantially in future. In view of the above, I raised a question on June 7, 2017 suggesting that the Government should model on the Mong Kok footbridge system and construct a footbridge system in Kowloon East connecting the MTR Kwun Tong Station, Hoi Yuen Road, Shing Yip Street and Kwun Tong waterfront, so as to divert the pedestrian flows on the ground and facilitate pedestrian circulation in the district. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) as the Government indicated in the reply to my question that it would study the feasibility of constructing a footbridge at Hoi Yuen Road of Kwun Tong, of the progress of the study; in view of the convoluted walking route to the waterfront via the MTR Kwun Tong Station at present and the strong demand of pedestrians for the footbridge, whether the Government will expedite the study;

(2) as the Government has introduced an incentive, by way of land premium waiver since 2017, to encourage landowners in the business areas of Kowloon East to apply for constructing footbridges at their own cost, of the respective numbers of applications received and approved by the Government so far; the number of footbridges that will be completed in the coming three years; if only a few applications have been received, whether the Government has evaluated the causes for the lukewarm response for the initiative and considered the construction of pedestrian link bridges by the Government instead, so as to avert the situation that the pedestrian link network cannot be completed due to complicated title disputes involved in individual projects; and

(3) whether it has assessed the increase and the rate of increase in the resident and business population in Kai Tak Action Area, Kwun Tong Action Area and Kowloon Bay Action Area in the coming five years; in the light of the additional traffic demand to be generated by the population growth and the comments of some members of the public that the construction of the Environmentally Friendly Linkage System for Kowloon East (EFLS) to connect those Action Areas will effectively alleviate the current pressure on road traffic and facilitate the development of Kowloon East, whether the Government will expedite the feasibility study for EFLS, and decide and announce expeditiously if EFLS will be constructed?

Reply:

President,

Kowloon East (including the Kai Tak Development Area (KTDA), the Kwun Tong Business Area (KTBA) and the Kowloon Bay Business Area (KBBA)) is transforming into the second Core Business District (CBD2). Government departments concerned will continue to work on various fronts to improve the pedestrian environment and traffic in KTBA and KBBA to cater for the developments in the district.

The Energizing Kowloon East Office (EKEO) of the Development Bureau promotes the concept of Walkable Kowloon East in the two Business Areas through short-term measures such as providing pedestrian crossings and traffic signals, widening footpaths, providing roadside loading and unloading areas and improving junction arrangements to improve the pedestrian environment and traffic. The EKEO is also taking forward various medium and long-term improvement schemes in collaboration with relevant government departments, which include provision of three footbridges near MTR Kowloon Bay Station (i.e. footbridges near MTR Kowloon Bay Station Exits A and B and footbridge across Wai Yip Street near Siu Yip Street). In tandem, an investigation study is in progress to enhance walkability near MTR Ngau Tau Kok Station. The plan is to provide two pedestrian subways connecting to the area near Hoi Bun Road Park. The EKEO is also exploring the possibility of providing travelators along some road sections of Lai Yip Street and Sheung Yee Road.

On the traffic aspect, the Government is proactively taking forward transport infrastructure projects, including Route 6 (i.e. Tseung Kwan O-Lam Tin Tunnel and Central Kowloon Route under construction, and Trunk Road T2 and Cha Kwo Ling Tunnel pending funding approval by the Legislative Council) would provide relief to the traffic loads on the existing key road links in Kowloon East (including Kwun Tong Bypass and Kwun Tong Road). The Government will also leverage the future development of the two Action Areas in Kowloon East to improve the traffic condition. Proposals include a new through road extending from Kei Yip Lane in the Kwun Tong Action Area (KTAA) to divert traffic away from the Wai Yip Street/Hoi Yuen Road roundabout, conversion of the roundabout to a traffic signal controlled junction to rationalise the traffic flows, and widening of Sheung Yee Road and modification of Hoi Bun Road/Cheung Yip Street junction in the vicinity of the Kowloon Bay Action Area (KBAA) to increase traffic capacity. In addition,

the Police has stepped up enforcement actions against illegal parking to help ease the traffic flows.

Having consulted the views of relevant departments, the consolidated responses to the various parts of the question are as follows:

(1) Hoi Yuen Road is a major pedestrian corridor in KTBA. Formulation of pedestrian environment improvement measures thereat must take into account existing activities. The Government is widening the footpaths on both sides of Hoi Yuen Road in phases to improve the existing congestion situation on the footpaths. The Planning and Engineering Study on Kwun Tong Action Area – Feasibility Study recommends constructing a footbridge across Wai Yip Street to connect Hoi Yuen Road to KTAA and the promenade along with the proposed junction improvement scheme at Hoi Yuen Road/Wai Yip Street. On exploring the feasibility of constructing a footbridge along Hoi Yuen Road to connect MTR Kwun Tong Station and Wai Yip Street, after examining the actual site conditions, the footbridge proposal would affect the emergency vehicular access for buildings on both sides of Hoi Yuen Road and is therefore not feasible.

Moreover, the Kwun Tong "Government, Institution or Community" composite development project is studying whether to use an elevated pedestrian platform to connect MTR Kwun Tong Station and the Kwun Tong Town Centre Redevelopment Project. A commercial site and a proposed footbridge at King Yip Street near the composite development project, the Tsui Ping River Garden which has been completed for use, and the revitalisation of Tsui Ping River project (including streetscape enhancement on streets linking Hoi Yuen Road and Tsui Ping River) pending funding approval by the Legislative Council will form a green river corridor connecting MTR Kwun Tong Station and the Kwun Tong Promenade, thereby help divert pedestrians away from Hoi Yuen Road and cater for the developments in the Business Area.

(2) To enhance walkability and connectivity, the 2016 Policy Address announced a policy initiative, waiving the land premium payable for lease modification for provision of pedestrian links (including footbridges and subways). Kowloon East is the pilot area. From February 2017, landowners in KBBA may submit lease modification applications to the District Lands Office/Kowloon East for constructing pedestrian links at their own costs in accordance with the planned pedestrian network. As for KTBA, the Outline Development Plan showing the planned pedestrian network was promulgated in January 2019, landowners in the area may also submit applications in the same way.

The Government has received three applications in Kowloon East. The first application proposes to connect seven commercial buildings in KBBA which would make pedestrian movements between MTR Kowloon Bay Station and KBBA more convenient. The second application proposes to construct a footbridge to strengthen the connection between Ngau Tau Kok and the East Kowloon Cultural Centre. The third application proposes to construct two footbridges to enhance the connectivity between the KTDA and the vicinity of Kowloonbay International Trade and Exhibition Centre. The Government could assess the completion time of the relevant footbridges exactly only after the

landowners have submitted the detailed design of the relevant footbridges and completion of the gazetting procedures under the Roads (Works, Use and Compensation) Ordinance (Cap 370). The Government is also conducting a mid-term review on the abovementioned policy initiative to evaluate its effectiveness.

(3) For the next five years, the residential and worker population of KTDA, KTBA and KBBA are estimated to increase as follows:

Area	Estimated residential population			Estimated worker population		
	2019	2024	Increase	2019	2024	Increase
KTDA	49 200	72 400	+23 200 (+47%)	14 500	27 700	+13 200 (+91%)
KTBA	–			172 300	196 600	+24 300 (+14%)
KBBA	–			87 800	102 400	+14 600 (+17%)

The Civil Engineering and Development Department is conducting the second stage of the detailed feasibility study of the proposed Environmentally Friendly Linkage System (EFLS) in Kowloon East with a view to formulating a scheme that could meet the relevant statutory and technical requirements (including fire services and the Protection of the Harbour Ordinance), as well as coming up with a scheme which is generally acceptable to the stakeholders and cost-effective to the general public. The second stage of the Study mainly includes the coverage, alignment and station locations, etc. of the proposed system. The Government will also make reference to the latest development and experiences in the environmentally friendly transportation technology at home and abroad, with the associated technical and financial assessments being carried out concurrently (including considerations of patronage assessment and fare estimate, etc.), so as to ascertain the feasibility of the proposed EFLS. Upon completion of the Study, the Government will formulate the way forward for the proposed EFLS project. The precise implementation programme is not available at this stage.