

LCQ20: Traffic conditions in Causeway Bay and Happy Valley

Following is a question by the Hon Paul Tse and a written reply by the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Mr Frank Chan Fan, in the Legislative Council today (November 20):

Question:

Some residents have complained that traffic congestion frequently occurs in the vicinity of Caroline Hill Road, Ventris Road, Link Road and Leighton Road in Happy Valley and Causeway Bay, particularly during evening commuting hours on weekdays and at noon on weekends. During peak hours, the tailback even reaches Broadwood Road, thus paralysing the traffic to and from the Broadwood district, Jardine's Lookout and Tai Hang. During the time when matches are held in the Hong Kong Stadium, vehicles can hardly move in the areas concerned. In addition, driving test candidates learning driving and taking road tests in these areas are also major causes for the traffic congestion. On the other hand, the Government is planning to use the site of the ex-Electrical and Mechanical Services Department Headquarters and the adjacent sites on Caroline Hill Road for the construction of a new district court and for commercial purposes, including the provision of as many as 600 car parking spaces. Some residents are worried that the development project, once implemented, will inevitably aggravate the traffic congestion in the areas concerned. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it knows the respective numbers of persons across the territory who (i) learned driving and (ii) took road tests, as well as the respective rates of year-on-year increase, in each of the past three years; among such persons who took road tests, of the number and percentage of those who chose to take the tests in the So Kon Po Driving Test Centre in Wan Chai;

(2) whether it conducted any assessment in the past three years on the traffic load caused by driving test candidates learning driving and taking road tests in the aforesaid areas; if so, of the assessment outcome; if not, whether it will do so expeditiously;

(3) as some members of the public have criticised that with an increasing number of persons learning driving in recent years, coupled with the busy traffic in the adjacent business districts, the aforesaid areas are not suitable for activities of learning driving and conducting road tests, and that the aforesaid development project, upon its completion, will bring extra traffic load to the areas which may aggravate road congestion, whether the authorities will expeditiously relocate the two driving test centres in the areas (particularly the So Kon Po Driving Test Centre), or adjust the driving test routes, so as to alleviate the traffic load in the areas concerned; if so, of the details (including the sites identified and the timetable); if not, the reasons for that;

(4) as vehicles often stop inside the yellow box markings at three road junctions in the areas (namely the junction of Leighton Road, Caroline Hill Road and Hoi Ping Road, the junction of Caroline Hill Road and Link Road, as well as the junction of Broadwood Road and Ventris Road), causing obstruction to the traffic, whether the Police will deploy traffic police officers to station there during traffic peak hours to step up law enforcement and direct traffic; and

(5) as the aforesaid development project has been drawn up on the basis of the data of a traffic flow survey conducted more than two years ago, whether the Government will conduct a survey afresh in order to more accurately assess if the roads in the areas can cope with the traffic flow to be generated by the project?

Reply:

President,

All along, the Government monitors the traffic conditions in various districts closely (including the Causeway Bay and Happy Valley areas) in order to maintain smooth traffic for the convenience of the commuting public. Regarding the Causeway Bay and Happy Valley areas, when major events take place at the Hong Kong Stadium or the Happy Valley Racecourse, the Transport Department (TD) and the Hong Kong Police Force (the Police) would implement special traffic arrangements to divert traffic as appropriate.

Our reply to the various parts of the question raised by the Hon Paul Tse is as follows:

(1) The numbers of valid learner's driving licence holders and the numbers of road tests arranged (including the respective year-on-year changes), as well as the numbers of road tests arranged at the So Kon Po Driving Test Centre (including the percentages to the total numbers of road tests arranged) in the past three years (2016 to 2018) are set out in the Annex.

(2) and (5) From 2017 to 2019, the traffic consultant engaged by the Highways Department conducted an assessment on the impact of rezoning of the Caroline Hill Road site for development (the development project) on local traffic. The assessment has already taken into consideration the traffic volume arising from activities of those learning driving and taking road tests. Currently, the traffic conditions of the junctions in the vicinity of the site are still acceptable, and most vehicles are able to clear the junctions without waiting for more than one traffic signal cycle during peak hours.

At the same time, the consultant has assessed the traffic impact in the fifth year after completion of the development project (i.e. 2031) on the basis of the traffic data of 2017, taking into account additional traffic flow to be generated by the development project and other planned developments or redevelopments nearby, as well as the projected annual growth in traffic volume.

As recommended in the traffic assessment, when taking forward the development project, the project proponent would need to improve the junction of Caroline Hill Road and Leighton Road and that of Caroline Hill Road and Link Road so as to cope with the additional traffic upon completion of the project and to avoid creating unacceptable impact on the local traffic.

(3) Given the results of the above-mentioned traffic assessment, TD has no plan to adjust the routes for driving tests in the areas.

All along, TD strives to identify suitable sites in the territory for setting up additional driving test centres. Prior to the identification of any suitable replacement sites, TD has no plan to relocate the Happy Valley and So Kon Po Driving Test Centres.

(4) The Police has been mindful of the traffic conditions in the Causeway Bay and Happy Valley areas. Appropriate enforcement action has been taken against traffic offenders having regard to the actual circumstances in accordance with the "Selected Traffic Enforcement Priorities" so as to ensure road safety and smooth traffic flow. The Police will closely monitor the traffic conditions near the yellow box markings of the junction of Leighton Road, Caroline Hill Road and Hoi Ping Road, the junction of Caroline Hill Road and Link Road, and the junction of Broadwood Road and Ventris Road. Additional traffic police officers will be deployed to control traffic and summons action be stepped up against those driving into yellow box markings wilfully.