

LCQ21: External transport for Tuen Mun

Following is a question by Dr the Hon Kwok Ka-ki and a written reply by the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Mr Frank Chan Fan, in the Legislative Council today (July 8):

Question:

Some Tuen Mun residents have relayed that as Tuen Mun Road, being the major trunk road connecting Tuen Mun to other areas, has rather high volume of traffic, and traffic accidents frequently occur, severe traffic congestions often happen there. On the 12th of last month, two traffic accidents happened on that road on the same day, causing serious traffic jams with tailbacks reaching as long as 10 kilometres, much to the agony of the local residents. Regarding the external transport for Tuen Mun, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the design maximum capacity of Tuen Mun Road and, as anticipated by the authorities when constructing the road, the average daily peak hour and non-peak hour traffic volumes of the road in the 10th and the 20th years after its commissioning;

(2) of the following information on Tuen Mun Road in each of the past three years:

- (i) the morning peak hour traffic volume,
- (ii) the morning peak hour traffic volume/capacity (v/c) ratio,
- (iii) the non-peak hour traffic volume,
- (iv) the non-peak hour traffic v/c ratio, and
- (v) the average daily traffic volume;

(3) of the number of traffic accidents which happened on Tuen Muen Road and the resultant casualties, in each of the past three years;

(4) of (i) the number of incidents of traffic jams which were caused by traffic accidents, (ii) the average and the longest duration of the traffic jams, and (iii) the average and the longest lengths of the tailbacks, on Tuen Mun Road in each of the past three years;

(5) of the works projects to be implemented and other ways to be adopted in the coming five years to alleviate the problem of traffic congestion on Tuen Mun Road;

(6) of the latest anticipated commissioning date of the Northern Connection of Tuen Mun-Chek Lap Kok Link (TM-CLKL); in the estimation by the authorities, (i) the v/c ratios on Tuen Mun Road during peak hours, and (ii) the reduction in the traffic volume per hour when compared with the pre-commissioning figure, in the first five years after the commissioning of the Northern Connection of TM-CLKL;

(7) of the (i) maximum traffic volumes, (ii) peak hour traffic volumes per hour, and (iii) average daily traffic volumes, in the first five years after

the commissioning of the Northern Connection of TM-CLKL, as anticipated by the authorities when designing the road; and

(8) in addition to the commissioning of the Northern Connection of TM-CLKL, of the authorities' plans in the coming five years to improve the external transport for Tuen Mun, and whether such plans include:

- (i) planning for the construction of additional roads to connect Tuen Mun to the urban areas,
- (ii) resuming the ferry services between Central and Tuen Mun,
- (iii) planning for the construction of additional railways to connect Tuen Mun to the urban areas,
- (iv) enhancing the franchised bus services between Tuen Mun and the urban areas, with a view to attracting motorists commuting to and from Tuen Mun by bus instead, and
- (v) prompting the reduction in the tolls of Tai Lam Tunnel with a view to making optimal use of its unused capacity;

If so, of the progress; if not, whether they will commence feasibility studies for such plans?

Reply:

President,

Tuen Mun Road, with heavy daily traffic, is the trunk road connecting the Northwest New Territories (NWNT) and the urban areas. The Transport Department (TD) has all along been closely monitoring the traffic of various major roads (including Tuen Mun Road) and disseminating traffic information to road users through different channels in a timely, effective and extensive manner, so that they could plan their trips and select transport modes having regard to the actual traffic conditions.

After consulting TD and the Highways Department (HyD), my reply to the various parts of the Dr Hon Kwok Ka-ki's question is as follows.

(1) and (2) At present, the section between Sham Tseng and Tsing Long Highway has the highest daily average traffic flow of Tuen Mun Road. According to the latest Annual Traffic Census (ATC) (i.e. traffic flow statistics up to 2018), the daily average traffic volumes, the morning peak hour traffic volumes, the morning peak hour traffic volume/capacity (v/c) ratios of the road section concerned from 2016 to 2018 and its maximum design capacity are tabulated below:

Year	Daily average traffic volume (vehicle)	Morning peak hour traffic volume (Note 1) (vehicle/hour)	Morning peak hour traffic v/c ratio (Note 2)	Maximum design capacity (Note 3) (vehicle/hour)
2016	63 230	5 510	0.9	6 300
2017	66 160	5 830	0.9	6 300

2018	64 040	5 850	0.9	6 300
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Note 1: The morning peak hour refers to the busiest one hour from 7am to 10am on weekdays (i.e. Mondays to Fridays, except public holidays).

Note 2: The v/c ratio is used to reflect the traffic situation during peak hours. A v/c ratio less than 1.0 means that the situation is acceptable.

Note 3: The maximum design capacity is calculated based on the number of traffic lanes and width of the road section concerned.

As Tuen Mun Road was constructed years ago, TD does not have information on its estimated peak hour and non-peak hour traffic volumes at the time of construction. ATC also does not contain traffic volume data during non-peak hours of the road section concerned.

(3) Based on records, the numbers of traffic accidents that happened on Tuen Mun Road and the resultant casualties from January 2017 to May 2020 are tabulated below:

Year	Number of traffic accidents	Number of casualties		
		Killed	Seriously injured	Slightly injured
2017	225	1	34	345
2018	256	1	34	355
2019	263	1	42	359
2020* (January to May)	78	1	14	104

*Provisional figures

(4) During the period from June 2017 to mid-June 2020, there were 589 traffic accidents that caused traffic obstruction on Tuen Mun Road. The average and the longest duration of the traffic obstruction caused by these accidents were about 30 minutes and 270 minutes respectively. TD does not maintain records of the lengths of vehicle queues caused by each accident.

(5) to (7) HyD is taking forward the construction of the Tuen Mun – Chek Lap Kok (TM-CLK) Link Northern Connection which will connect NWNT, Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge Hong Kong Port, North Lantau and the Hong Kong International Airport. Upon the commissioning of TM-CLK Link Northern Connection, it is anticipated that some of the vehicles will choose to travel between NWNT and Lantau through TM-CLK Link Northern Connection, alleviating the traffic conditions at Tuen Mun Road. The actual traffic volumes of Tuen Mun Road and TM-CLK Link Northern Connection will be subject to various factors, including choices of the motorists, economic conditions, traffic conditions on other roads, etc.

TM-CLK Link Northern Connection is planned to be completed in end 2020 at the earliest. Due to unforeseen events in recent months, including

COVID-19, the supply of construction materials and installations has been affected and the workforce for site works was once reduced. HyD will monitor the progress of works and assess continuously the impact of the epidemic on the project as a whole.

TD will also continue to monitor closely the traffic conditions of Tuen Mun Road and review the design of the road facilities in due course. Additional traffic signs and road markings will be provided as necessary to further remind motorists to pay attention to the traffic conditions.

(8) (i) HyD is conducting a feasibility study on Route 11 for enhancing the connectivity of major roads between NWNT and the urban areas. Upon finalisation of the feasibility study, the Government will consult the Legislative Council and relevant District Councils on the recommended alignment and other engineering-related matters.

(ii) Due to inadequate patronage, the "Tuen Mun-Central" ferry route ceased operation in 2000. Regarding the proposed resumption of operation of the ferry route, the Government welcomes any operator interested in running a new ferry route to submit application. The Government will take into account all factors, including passenger demand as well as financial and operational viability.

(iii) The Tuen Mun South (TMS) Extension is one of the seven recommended railway schemes in the Railway Development Strategy 2014. The proposed project will extend the West Rail Line from Tuen Mun Station southwards by about 2.4 kilometres, including the provision of a new station near Tuen Mun Ferry Pier and an intermediate station at Tuen Mun Area 16, thereby improving railway access to the community south of the Tuen Mun town centre. The TMS Extension will offer an alternative commuting choice to the residents in the vicinity and divert more commuters to rail-based transport, which may help relieve the congestion on existing roads. The Government has already invited the MTR Corporation Limited to proceed with the detailed planning and design of the TMS Extension project.

In addition, in order to complement the proposed development of the artificial island in the Central Waters, the Government plans to implement a major transport corridor with roads and railway linking Hong Kong Island North, the artificial island in the Central Waters, North Lantau and the coastal areas of Tuen Mun. The proposed transport corridor will help relieve the current day-to-day congestion at the existing West Rail Line and Tuen Mun Road during peak hours, improve the transport situation in NWNT and enhance the flexibility and resilience of the entire transport network of Hong Kong, and improve the transport performance in NWNT and even the entire Hong Kong.

(iv) At present, franchised buses are the major road-based public transport mass carriers connecting NWNT and the urban areas. To facilitate the operation of franchised buses, the Government has already put in place bus-only lanes and bus-bus interchange on Tuen Mun Road.

Given the impending commissioning of TM-CLK Link Northern Connection, TD will adjust the current bus routes plying between Tuen Mun and North Lantau

by re-routing via the Northern Connection of TM-CLKL in lieu of Tuen Mun Road, Ting Kau Bridge and Lantau Link. The arrangement will shorten the journey distance and time of the bus routes to and from the two districts, as well as ease the traffic flow on Tuen Mun Road. TD will continue to closely monitor the operation of various public transport services, and make timely adjustments in response to passenger demand with a view to further improving the public transport services of the district.

(v) TD commenced the Study on "Congestion Charging" (the Study) in July 2019 to examine the hierarchy and levels of tolls of government tolled tunnels and control areas (including the Western Harbour Crossing and Tai Lam Tunnel which will be taken over by the Government upon franchise expiry in August 2023 and May 2025 respectively). The Study adopts the principle of "Efficiency First" to enable efficient people carriers to enjoy lower tolls for using government tolled tunnels and control areas, while imposing higher tolls on vehicles with low-carrying capacity.

The Study will also consider how the implementation of Congestion Charging will affect vehicular traffic flows of the relevant alternative routes (including Tuen Mun Road). TD plans to consult relevant stakeholders on the recommendations arising from the Study in 2021.