

LCQ21: Hillside escalator links and elevator systems

Following is a question by the Hon Lam Cheuk-ting and a written reply by the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Mr Frank Chan Fan, in the Legislative Council today (July 4):

Question:

The Government formulated in 2009 criteria for assessing proposals for construction of hillside escalator links and elevator systems. Upon completion of assessment, the Government decided in 2010 to take forward 18 proposals. So far, the progress for implementing those proposals has been slow as only three of them have been completed and four are under construction. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) given that among the aforesaid 18 proposals, the Escalator Link System between Hong Sing Garden and Po Hong Road which is ranked the 14th in priority, the Lift and Pedestrian Walkway System between Saddle Ridge Garden and Sai Sha Road which is ranked the 16th, as well as the Escalator Link System between Sui Wo Court and MTR Fo Tan Station which is ranked the 18th, are still stuck at the stages of feasibility studies or internal discussion within the Government, of the original and latest timetables for the various work stages of these three proposals (including completion of design work, submission of funding applications to this Council, invitation of tenders, commencement and completion of works), the reasons for their slow progress and their latest cost estimates; the respective timetables for the various work stages and the actual costs/cost estimates of the remaining 15 proposals; and

(2) of the measures to be put in place to expedite the progress of the three proposals mentioned in (1)?

Reply:

President,

My reply to the various parts of the Hon Lam Cheuk-ting's question is as follows:

To enhance the accessibility of hillside area and facilitate people to commute, the Government established in 2009 a set of objective and transparent scoring criteria for assessing proposals for hillside escalator links and elevator systems (HEL) to determine the priority for conducting preliminary technical feasibility studies for the 20 proposals received at that time. Upon completion of the assessment, the assessment results were reported to the Legislative Council (LegCo) Panel on Transport in February 2010. Two proposals were screened out initially, and 18 others were ranked. The Government indicated at the time that preliminary technical feasibility

studies for the proposals ranked top ten in the assessment would be conducted first by batches, and that the remaining proposals would be followed up after the smooth implementation of the top ten proposals. Among the remaining proposals are the Escalator Link System between Hong Sing Garden and Po Hong Road which is ranked 14th, the Lift and Pedestrian Walkway System between Saddle Ridge Garden and Sai Sha Road which is ranked 16th, as well as the Escalator Link System between Sha Tin Sui Wo Court and MTR Fo Tan Station which is ranked 18th.

Subsequently, the Highways Department (HyD) also completed the preliminary technical feasibility studies for the proposals ranked 11th and 12th. As for the proposals ranked 14th (Note), 16th and 17th, the Transport Department (TD) determined the scope of works in April this year, while the HyD is currently carrying out the preliminary technical feasibility studies, which are planned for completion in the third quarter of 2018. If the studies show that the proposals are technically feasible upon preliminary assessment, the HyD will progressively conduct ground investigation, carry out preliminary design and consult District Councils as well as relevant stakeholders. For the proposal ranked 18th, the project involves works of relatively large scale and is rather complex as a substantial part of the proposed alignment runs through lots held by the Hong Kong Housing Authority and private owners. The TD is actively following up on the proposal to expedite the determination of its scope. As these lower-ranking proposals are still at a very early stage of development, their implementation schedules have yet to be finalised.

Overall, three out of the 18 proposals have been completed and opened for public use; four are under construction; one proposal has just obtained funding approval for the construction works; five are in various phases of planning, investigation and design; and another four are at the stage of preliminary technical feasibility studies. The current progress and cost estimates of the 18 proposals are set out at Annex 1 and Annex 2 respectively.

The taking forward of the HEL projects involves various considerations such as the alignment of the HEL, the pedestrian flow, the layout of structures, the impact of the projects on the surrounding environment and on residents, the diversion of underground utilities, etc. Moreover, in line with the established procedures for public works, the HyD has to arrange for the gazettal of the proposals and handle objections (if any) under the Roads (Works, Use and Compensation) Ordinance, and, where necessary, carry out land acquisition for the HEL projects. The projects can therefore be considerably complex. Some of them may also be controversial, with the affected residents having divergent views on the alignment of the project. As such, the HyD has to discuss with various stakeholders and undertake relevant studies to resolve the problems. HyD would seek to balance the demands of relevant stakeholders in the process, which inevitably takes considerable time.

We understand the concerns of Members on HEL projects. HyD has also increased its manpower for taking forward the projects and engage engineering consultants as necessary to assist in taking the projects forward. When the projects has progressed to a mature stage, we will seek funding approval from

the LegCo as soon as possible for commencing the construction works for the HEL projects.

Note: Two proposals share the rank of 14, the other one being the Lift and Pedestrian Walkway System between Lai King Hill Road and Princess Margaret Hospital.