

LCQ21: Making good use of the Shenzhen-Zhongshan Link

Following is a question by the Hon Kenneth Lau and a written reply by the Secretary for Transport and Logistics, Mr Lam Sai-hung, in the Legislative Council today (July 17):

Question:

The Shenzhen-Zhongshan Link (SZL) was officially opened on the 30th of last month. There are views that SZL, which straddles the eastern and western sides of the Pearl River Estuary and connects three places, namely Shenzhen, Guangzhou and Zhongshan, is a strong boost to the economic ties, flow of people and exchanges in such aspects as culture and tourism among cities in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA) and of great significance in driving the regional integration process. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it will consider extending the Quota-free Scheme for Hong Kong Private Cars Travelling to Guangdong via the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge to the Shenzhen Bay Port, which is close to SZL, and at the same time, discuss proactively with the Mainland authorities the expeditious implementation of 24-hour clearance at the Shenzhen Bay Port to facilitate members of the public and visitors to make better use of SZL to travel between Hong Kong and various Mainland cities in GBA;

(2) whether it has studied ways to make good use of SZL to promote the development of the logistics industry in Hong Kong, such as introducing measures to attract companies from regions such as the western part of Guangdong Province and Guangxi Province to use the airport and container terminals in Hong Kong, so as to strengthen Hong Kong's position as an international aviation hub, international maritime centre and international logistics hub; and

(3) of the measures in place to encourage the tourism sector on the Mainland and in Hong Kong to make good use of SZL to jointly develop multi-destination tourism products of GBA cities, thereby promoting tourism development in GBA?

Reply:

President,

The Shenzhen-Zhongshan Link (SZL) is one of the major transport infrastructure projects proposed under the Outline Development Plan for the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area. With a total length of 24 km, the SZL is currently the fifth corridor across the Pearl River Estuary, mainly connecting Shenzhen and Zhongshan which are located on the two sides of the central waters of the Pearl River Estuary. The completion of the SZL will shorten the travel time between Hong Kong and Zhongshan via Shenzhen and help

promote the flow of passengers and freight, as well as economic connections between Hong Kong and Zhongshan and its neighbouring regions.

Having consulted the Security Bureau, the Culture, Sports and Tourism Bureau (CSTB) and the Transport Department, our reply to the Hon Kenneth Lau's question is as follows:

(1) "Northbound Travel for Hong Kong Vehicles" (the Scheme) allows eligible Hong Kong private cars to travel between Hong Kong and Guangdong via the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge (HZMB) without the need to obtain regular quotas. It facilitates Hong Kong residents' self-driving to Guangdong for business, visiting families or sightseeing on a short-term basis, thereby further making good use of the HZMB and promoting the development of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA). Since the implementation of the Scheme in July 2023, it has been well received by Hong Kong citizens. The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government has all along been maintaining close communication with the relevant Mainland authorities to implement enhancement measures in a timely manner, with a view to providing citizens with greater convenience and travel experience. Regarding the extension of the Scheme to other land-based boundary control points, the governments of Guangdong and the HKSAR have agreed to draw on the implementation experience of the Scheme at the HZMB and proactively study the extension of the Scheme to a Shenzhen/Hong Kong land-based boundary control point in due course, such that Hong Kong private cars can travel to and from both the eastern and western parts of Guangdong.

In addition, in view of the resumption of normal travel between the Mainland and Hong Kong since early February last year, the HKSAR and Shenzhen Government have been closely monitoring the demand for clearance services at various land-based boundary control points. On the basis of the 24-hour passenger clearance services currently provided at Lok Ma Chau Control Point and HZMB Hong Kong Port, the HKSAR Government will liaise with the Mainland authorities on extending the operating hours of the passenger clearance service at respective boundary control points as and when necessary to further facilitate the flow of people between the two sides.

(2) Western Guangdong and Guangxi have always had close economic ties with Hong Kong. Among other things, as the regional logistics hub of the GBA, Hong Kong has all along been one of the major gateways for air and sea cargoes to and from Western Guangdong and Guangxi. In particular, with the commissioning of the HZMB, the driving distance between Hong Kong and Western Guangdong and Guangxi has been greatly shortened, thereby further unleashing the enormous potential for logistics co-operation between Hong Kong and the two places.

For this reason, the Government has proposed in the Action Plan on Modern Logistics Development to further explore the logistics development opportunities in the western part of Guangdong by enhancing multimodal transport measures and making good use of the HZMB, as well as encouraging the industry to collaborate with other cities in the GBA in formulating management standards for logistics services in relation to high-value goods, thereby strengthening the synergistic development of Hong Kong and other cities in the GBA. The Transport and Logistics Bureau also signed the

"Framework Agreement on Deepening Strategic Co-operation for the Guangxi-Hong Kong Task Force on Transport and Logistics" with the Department of Transport of Guangxi in May this year, with a view to strengthening logistics co-operation with Guangxi.

We believe that the SZL can further enhance the transport connectivity between the east and west banks of the Pearl River Estuary and is conducive to strengthening the transport and logistics links between Hong Kong and the western part of Guangdong and Guangxi. It will also have a positive effect on attracting enterprises therein to utilise Hong Kong's comprehensive sea, land and air transportation network for cargo import or export, thereby consolidating Hong Kong's status as an international aviation hub, international shipping centre and international logistics hub. The transport and logistics sectors can make good use of the existing quotas for cross-boundary goods vehicles and select appropriate border control points allowed under the quotas to travel to and from Western Guangdong and Guangxi via the SZL to capture the business opportunities arising therefrom.

(3) The Outline Development Plan for the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area and the Culture and Tourism Development Plan for Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area respectively promulgated in February 2019 and December 2020 expressly support Hong Kong in developing into an international tourism hub and a core demonstration zone for multi-destination tourism. The HKSAR Government has been striving to complement the content of the national planning documents, maintaining close communication with the Mainland authorities and encouraging Hong Kong and Mainland tourism trade to utilise the well-developed cross-boundary transport infrastructure and rich tourism resources in Hong Kong in jointly developing multi-destination travel itineraries.

The CSTB provided funding support for the Travel Industry Council of Hong Kong to organise visits to the GBA in October and November 2023 to promote business co-operation between the travel trade of Hong Kong and the GBA. The visit in October 2023 focused on the development of tourism resources in western Guangdong through travelling on the High Speed Rail and the HZMB, while the visit in November 2023 focused on the development of new tourism resources related to professional fields such as technology in eastern Guangdong, with a view to attracting more high value-added visitors to embark on GBA multi-destination journeys via Hong Kong. More than 200 representatives from the trade participated in the two visits.

With the opening of the SZL, nearly a hundred representatives from the travel and related trades in Hong Kong organised a visit to Zhongshan via the SZL on June 21, 2024 together with the representative from the CSTB to meet with the Zhongshan Culture, Radio, Television and Tourism Bureau and the local travel trade to explore the development of more multi-destination tourism products connecting different GBA cities through the SZL.

With the continuous enhancement of the transport network covering GBA cities, it is believed that the travel trade will develop more multi-destination tourism products to satisfy market demand.