

LCQ3: Pedestrian-friendly measures

Following is a question by the Hon Hui Chi-fung and a reply by the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Mr Frank Chan Fan, in the Legislative Council today (June 13):

Question:

In order to improve the pedestrian environment, the Transport Department (TD) has set up pedestrian precincts in a number of districts since 2000. In recent years, some researchers and planners have proposed to set up a pedestrian and tram precinct or an open space in a section of Des Voeux Road Central. Meanwhile, some members of the public have criticised the government departments concerned for the unclear delineation of powers and responsibilities in managing pedestrian precincts, which has given rise to environmental hygiene and noise problems in some pedestrian precincts, such as the Mong Kok Pedestrian Precinct. Regarding measures to improve the pedestrian and street environment, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether the Transport and Housing Bureau (THB) can coordinate the efforts of the Development Bureau, TD, Highways Department and the Police to enhance the management of pedestrian precincts, so as to avoid the bureaux/departments each administering its own way or the emergence of a situation that "comes within nobody's jurisdiction";

(2) given the commissioning of both the MTR Shatin to Central Link and the Central-Wan Chai Bypass as well as the implementation of the Electronic Road Pricing Pilot Scheme in Central and its adjacent areas in the next two to three years, whether the THB will, in the light of those new situations, commence a feasibility study on setting up a pedestrian and tram precinct in a section of Des Voeux Road Central; and

(3) given that the Transport for London of the United Kingdom has launched the Transport Strategy of Healthy Streets Approach, under which elements will be incorporated into pedestrian precincts to cope with climate change, reduce carbon emission, encourage walking and improve public health, whether the THB can break out of the established policy framework to implement a long-term policy on healthy streets with an audaciously innovative attitude?

Reply:

President,

The Government has been striving to create a pedestrian-friendly environment. We have introduced a host of measures over the years to foster Hong Kong as a walkable city. As announced in "The Chief Executive's 2017 Policy Address" last October, the Government will continue to take forward "Walk in HK" by launching a series of measures to encourage citizens to walk more. Our policy objective is to enhance the overall walkability of our city to facilitate citizens to commute, connect and enjoy, making walking an

integral element of Hong Kong's sustainable development.

My consolidated reply to the various parts of the Hon Hui Chi-fung's question is as follows:

Since 2000, the Transport Department (TD) has progressively implemented pedestrian environment improvement schemes in Causeway Bay, Central, Wan Chai, Mong Kok, Tsim Sha Tsui, Jordan, Sham Shui Po, Stanley, Yuen Long and Shek Wu Hui. Under the schemes, full-time or part-time pedestrian streets (commonly known as pedestrian precincts) are implemented to improve pedestrian environment. Relevant government departments regulate the activities and conditions of these pedestrian precincts in accordance with the respective powers conferred on them by the law. For instance, the TD is responsible for formulating suitable traffic management measures with regard to the pedestrian and vehicular traffic of the relevant streets; the Police is responsible for maintaining public safety and public order, and deploying staff to the scene upon receipt of noise complaints concerning pedestrian precincts; the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department is responsible for handling issues related to environmental hygiene, street cleansing, hawking activities, etc.; the Home Affairs Department conveys the views of local residents and the District Councils, and co-ordinates the joint efforts of relevant departments in addressing the issues concerned. Various departments have been maintaining close collaboration, and jointly manage, regulate and monitor pedestrian precincts.

The TD has been monitoring the traffic situation in Central and its vicinity, including Des Voeux Road Central. It will also pay close attention to the traffic situation after the commissioning of the Central-Wan Chai Bypass and the cross-harbour section of the MTR Shatin to Central Link, including the changes in routes, frequencies and patronage of public transport services. Furthermore, the TD is conducting a feasibility study on the Electronic Road Pricing Pilot Scheme in Central and will map out the details and implementation strategy in due course for public consultation. The Pilot Scheme will further improve the traffic situations in Central and its vicinity.

With regard to the creation of a pedestrian-friendly environment, the Government welcomes proposals from all sectors to improve the walking environment. When considering various proposals, the Government will take into account the demands of the local community and businesses, local characteristics, street management and impact on traffic.

In the past, some organisations proposed to set up a pedestrian and tram precinct in Des Voeux Road Central. Some community organisations filed an application in 2015 under the Town Planning Ordinance requesting to rezone Des Voeux Road Central as a pedestrian and tram precinct. The proposal had implications on the traffic and public transport of the nearby road sections, demand for loading/ unloading of goods and passengers, operation of emergency access and traffic arrangements during redevelopment or maintenance of buildings, etc. Relevant departments provided views to the Town Planning Board under their respective purviews. The organisations concerned withdrew the rezoning request in 2016. Should there be other feasible study or

proposal in future regarding the setting up of a pedestrian and tram precinct in Des Voeux Road Central, relevant departments are prepared to provide views.

As mentioned above, the Transport and Housing Bureau and the TD are actively taking forward the "Walk in HK" policy to enhance the overall walkability of Hong Kong. This is not only a transport policy, but also an integral part of the Government's various policies to tackle climate change, encourage a healthy lifestyle, strengthen community interaction and build an age-friendly environment. We are also aware of the Healthy Streets Approach launched by the Transport for London to encourage the public to reduce the use of private cars and to walk, cycle and use public transport more as the major means of commuting. The Healthy Streets Approach is in line with the "Walk in HK" policy in many ways.

We will continue to adopt a comprehensive strategy by consolidating past efforts to foster a pedestrian-friendly environment. We encourage the public to walk more and reduce the use of mechanised transport for short-distance commuting. This will help alleviate traffic congestion, improve air quality and enhance public health. Specific measures include: (i) "Make it smart" by providing user-friendly information, for which we enable citizens to use the TD's "Hong Kong eTransport" mobile application for planning and searching for the best walking routes; (ii) "Make it connected" by enhancing our pedestrian networks, for which we are currently exploring ways to enhance connectivity between Wan Chai and Sheung Wan; (iii) "Make it enjoyable" by making walking a pleasant experience, for which we will continue to provide covers on certain walkways connecting to public transport facilities; and (iv) "Make it safe" by providing a safe and quality pedestrian environment, for which we will review and update existing planning standards and design in relation to pedestrian environment and facilities.