LCQ5: New transport infrastructure for Kowloon East

Following is a question by the Hon Wu Chi-wai and a written reply by the Secretary for Development, Mr Michael Wong, in the Legislative Council today (April 22):

Question:

Since 2009, the Government has been studying the construction of an Environmentally Friendly Linkage System (EFLS) for Kowloon East. EFLS is an elevated monorail which will start and end respectively at the Kowloon Bay Station and the Kwun Tong Station of the MTR Kwun Tong Line, run through the Kai Tak Development Area (KTDA), and connect the Kai Tak Station of the Shatin to Central Link. Some members of the public have pointed out that as, in recent years, the Government has increased the development density of KTDA and the populations of the districts in the vicinity of Cha Kwo Ling and Yau Tong have increased continuously, it will be difficult for EFLS to meet the transport demand in Kowloon East. They also hold the view that given the high cost of EFLS, coupled with the Government's indication that quite a number of technical difficulties have been encountered in designing the alignment of EFLS, the Government should explore alternative options. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the respective current residential population and working population in (i) KTDA, (ii) Kowloon Bay Business Area, (iii) Kwun Tong Business Area, (iv) Cha Kwo Ling and (v) Yau Tong, as well as the relevant projected figures for the next five and 10 years;

(2) as the Government has indicated that it is conducting the second-stage detailed feasibility study for EFLS, of the progress and the preliminary conclusion of the study (including the latest cost estimates); whether it has explored alternative options, e.g. constructing a Kwun Tong South Line which will be an underground rail connecting the Yau Tong Station with the Kai Tak Station; if so, of the details (including the relevant cost estimates); if not, the reasons for that;

(3) whether, in view of the development and population growth in recent years of districts such as Cha Kwo Ling and Yau Tong, it will study the extension of EFLS to those districts; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(4) as it takes time to implement EFLS (or its alternative option), whether the Government has formulated short and medium term measures to alleviate the traffic congestion problems in Kowloon East; if so, of the details; and

(5) as the Government anticipates that upon the commissioning of the Route 6, the traffic load on the existing key road links in Kowloon East will be

greatly relieved, of the respective projected volume to capacity ratios of such key road links (i) after the commissioning of the Route 6 and (ii) after the completion of EFLS (or its alternative option), and how such figures compare with the existing figures?

Reply:

President,

With the gradual development and transformation of Kowloon East (including the Kai Tak Development (KTD)), the residential and working populations in the area are progressively increasing. We are fully aware of the public's concern about whether the developments may add burden to the traffic condition of the area. Indeed, relevant government departments have been striving hard to the timely provisioning of comprehensive railway and road infrastructure facilities, as well as proper public transport services to cope with the traffic demands in the area, thus meeting the travelling needs of the public. Relevant details are elaborated in Part (4) below.

Regarding the proposed Environmentally Friendly Linkage System (EFLS) for Kowloon East, the Government has incorporated the planning intent and its indicative alignment on the Kai Tak Outline Zoning Plan. The technical and financial viabilities, etc., of the EFLS are being explored and studied in-depth by the Civil Engineering and Development Department (CEDD).

Based upon the findings of the preliminary feasibility study completed in 2014 and the first stage of the detailed feasibility study (DFS) completed in 2017, the CEDD is conducting the second stage of the DFS to explore the EFLS' network coverage, alignment, station locations, mode of operation, financial and cost effectiveness, etc. We will also examine the interaction between the proposed EFLS and the public transport services, as well as make reference to and explore the latest development and applicability of environmentally friendly transport technologies at home and abroad. In the course of conducting DFS, the CEDD has encountered more-than-expected complicated challenges, thus requiring more time to review and explore feasible solutions, including studying on options other than the elevated mode. Besides, the long-term financial viability and cost-effectiveness of EFLS are also one of the key considerations of the DFS.

The CEDD anticipates to complete the DFS in this year that seeks to look for suitable, practicable and cost-effective EFLS scheme. Upon completion of the entire DFS, the Government will formulate the way forward for the EFLS project and report the findings and recommendations to the Legislative Council members and relevant stakeholders in due course.

Our responses to various parts of the question raised by Hon Wu, having taken into account the inputs of relevant bureau/departments, are as follows:

(1) The latest figures on current residential and working populations of the KTD, the Kowloon Bay Business Area (KBBA), the Kwun Tong Business Area (KTBA), Cha Kwo Ling and Yau Tong, as well as those relevant figures in 2026

and 2031 are estimated as follows:

Area	Residential Population			Working Population		
	Current	Year 2026	Year 2031	Current	Year 2026	Year 2031
KTD	53 000	128 000	134 000	25 600	72 300	119 000
KBBA	—	—	—	79 400	87 300	105 300
KTBA	—	—	—	180 400	206 100	215 000
Cha Kwo Ling	27 650	30 150	31 650	9 150	12 900	12 100
Yau Tong	62 650	76 500	90 350	14 400	15 700	13 950
Total	143 300	234 650	256 000	308 950	394 300	465 350

(2) and (3) As stated in the preamble above, the CEDD is currently conducting the DFS for EFLS, with its study area encompassing such areas as KTD, KBBA, KTBA, Cha Kwo Ling and Yau Tong. In the course of study, the CEDD finds that the construction of EFLS in Kowloon East, be it in elevated or underground mode, will encounter lots of technical complications and challenges, particularly for those parts of developed areas. Therefore, the DFS has to take a longer time, and to explore and make reference to the latest development and applicability of other environmentally friendly transport technologies at home and abroad with a view to identifying a suitable, practicable and cost-effective EFLS scheme. The CEDD anticipates to complete the DFS within this year.

(4) The Government has planned a number of measures for addressing the transport needs of the Kowloon East. On the provision of inter-district roads, the Government is proactively taking forward the Route 6 projects, which will provide a link between Kowloon West and Tseung Kwan O, to help relieve the traffic burden along the major east-west road corridors in Kowloon (including the existing major road links in Kowloon East) and Tseung Kwan O. The Government will also leverage the development of the two Action Areas in Kowloon East (i.e. Kwun Tong Action Area (KTAA) and Kowloon Bay Action Area (KBAA)) to improve the local traffic condition. Relevant measures include a new through road extending from Kei Yip Lane in KTAA to divert traffic away from the Wai Yip Street/Hoi Yuen Road roundabout, which will be converted into a signal-controlled junction to rationalise the traffic flows. As for KBAA, it is recommended to widen Sheung Yee Road and modify the Hoi Bun Road/Cheung Yip Street junction to increase the traffic capacity.

The Energizing Kowloon East Office has completed two feasibility studies on improving the pedestrian environment in KTBA and KBBA, and formulated 22 traffic improvement schemes. Among those traffic improvement schemes proposed, 16 of them have been completed, such as provision of kerbside loading and unloading bays and enhancement of road junction layout, which are conducive to improve the road usage and junction capacity. The Government strives to complete the remaining improvement works as soon as possible.

In addition, the Transport Department (TD) and franchised bus companies

have all along been jointly studying the feasibility of rearranging the bus stops along Kwun Tong Road. From 2017 to 2019, the TD and bus companies re-arranged the bus stops of six bus routes which travel via Kwun Tong Road to alleviate traffic congestion arising from buses queueing for stops.

In the meantime, the CEDD carries out in a progressive manner various road infrastructure works in KTD. Apart from the recently commissioned roads including Shing Kai Road and Kai Sun Road, the realignment and widening of the existing traffic route at Shing Cheong Road and Shing Fung Road to a dual two-lane road were completed substantially in end 2019. The construction works in regard of the Road D3 (Metro Park Section) for connecting among Shing Kai Road, the Kai Tak Cruise Terminal and the Hong Kong Children's Hospital commenced already. The concerned works are anticipated to complete by 2022. Upon completion of the said road works, the transport infrastructure of KTD will be further improved.

(5) The Route 6 comprises the Tseung Kwan O – Lam Tin Tunnel at its eastern section, Trunk Road T2 and the Cha Kwo Ling Tunnel in its middle section and the Central Kowloon Route at its western section. It will provide an east-west express link between Tseung Kwan O and West Kowloon to ease the traffic congestion problem in existing key east-west road corridors in Kowloon and Tseung Kwan O as well as support new development projects. The completion of Trunk Road T2 and Cha Kwo Ling Tunnel in 2026 will bring about the full commissioning of Route 6. By then, the traffic demand on the existing major road links in Kowloon East (including Tseung Kwan O Tunnel, Kwun Tong Bypass and Kwun Tong Road) will be greatly relieved. According to the traffic impact assessment completed in 2018, the projected volume to capacity (v/c) ratios of the relevant road links during peak hours after the commissioning of Trunk Road T2 and Cha Kwo Ling Tunnel will be improved as follows:

Road Link	v/c Ratio during Peak Hours in 2026	
	Without Trunk Road T2 and Cha Kwo Ling Tunnel	With Trunk Road T2 and Cha Kwo Ling Tunnel Completed
Tseung Kwan O Tunnel	1.3	1.0
Kwun Tong Bypass (near Sheung Yee Road)	1.3	1.0
Kwun Tong Bypass (near Hoi Bun Road)	1.1	0.9

With respect to the EFLS, CEDD is conducting the second stage of DFS with a view to examining and establishing the suitable mode, technical feasibility and its implication to the major roads in the area.