

LCQ7: Bus-only lane and designated bus gate

Following is a question by the Hon Frankie Yick and a written reply by the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Mr Frank Chan Fan, in the Legislative Council today (June 13):

Question:

In order to optimise the use of limited road resources, the Transport Department has all along been implementing measures which give priority to public transport modes over road use. Among them, the most commonly adopted measure is the designation of "bus-only lanes". However, some members of the public have relayed to me that during busy traffic hours, while the volumes of bus traffic on certain bus-only lanes are considerably low, the adjacent traffic lanes are extremely congested, thus causing a wastage of road resources. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the details of each bus-only lane in Hong Kong at present, including (i) the District Council district to which the lane belongs, (ii) the names of the road and road section on which the lane is located, (iii) the daily operating time, (iv) the length of the lane, (v) the daily average volume of bus traffic and vehicle speed, and (vi) how such average traffic volume and vehicle speed compare with the corresponding figures of the adjacent traffic lane(s) (set out in a table);

(2) whether the authorities cancelled in the past five years the designation of a certain bus-only lane on the ground that the volume of bus traffic on the lane was below a certain level; if so, of the details;

(3) as the last-term Government made an undertaking to me that it would study the conversion of bus-only lanes into "public transport-only lanes", so that the traffic lanes concerned would be open for use by other public service vehicles such as taxis and public light buses, whether the current-term Government has followed up such task; if so, of the results of the study; if not, the reasons for that; and

(4) whether it has studied arrangements in overseas countries for and usage of public transport-only lanes; if so, of the details; if not, whether it will consider conducting the relevant study?

Reply:

President,

Hong Kong residents mainly commute by public transport, which accounts for about 90 per cent of the total passenger trips each day. To support the priority use of roads by public transport services so to benefit the public

at large, the Transport Department (TD) has been introducing bus-only lanes (Note 1) and designating bus gates (Note 2) on appropriate roads. In pursuing such bus priority measures, the TD will consider the actual road situation and traffic conditions, including the design of roads and junctions, the number of traffic lanes, the number of bus routes and bus service frequencies, the traffic volume of other types of vehicles, availability of alternative routes, the impact on the flow of other vehicles, etc., and will carefully assess the feasibility of such measures in order to strike a proper balance. The TD will continue to keep in view the operation of bus-only lanes and designated bus gates after implementation, and review and enhance the arrangements of these facilities in a timely manner.

My reply to the various parts of the Hon Frankie Yick's question is as follows:

(1) Information on bus-only lanes and designated bus gates, viz. the District Council districts, locations and sections of the roads, restriction days and hours, applicable vehicle types and length, is set out in Annex 1 and Annex 2 respectively. The TD has not compiled any statistics on the daily average volume of bus traffic and vehicle speed in respect of each bus-only lane and designated bus gate, and the average traffic volume and vehicle speed of the adjacent traffic lane(s).

(2) The TD reviews from time to time traffic facilities on different road sections. Also, there are suggestions from the community (including individual District Council members) on the addition of bus-only lanes at various locations. In the past three years (from 2015 to 2017), the TD extended the operation hours of six bus-only lanes and introduced a new bus-only lane, the details of which are in Annex 3. The TD did not cancel any bus-only lane or designated bus gate in the past five years.

(3) and (4) Buses are road-based public transport mass carriers with the highest carrying capacity and can efficiently carry people to their destinations. To provide maximum convenience to bus passengers, the Government introduces bus-only lanes and designates bus gates so to reduce the chance of bus service schedules being affected by traffic congestions. For other public transport modes, the Government has also been designating taxi pick-up/drop-off points and, where traffic situations permit, relaxing some no-stopping restrictions for taxis and green minibuses to facilitate their operation and enhancement of service quality.

As regards the proposal of designating "public transport-only lanes" on busy roads for buses to share the use of such lanes with other public transport modes such as taxis and public light buses, the TD will follow up and study the proposal, including making reference to the overseas experience. The study will also consider possible reduction of bus operation efficiencies on such lanes vis-à-vis the original bus lanes caused by additional traffic flow from, and picking up/dropping off activities of, other public transport vehicles. Furthermore, if "public transport only-lanes" are to be set up, the number of traffic lanes on the concerned road sections for use by other vehicles (e.g. goods vehicles and private cars)

will be reduced, potentially affecting the traffic condition. Hence, the TD has to study the proposal in detail and consult various stakeholders.

Note 1: Bus-only lane is a traffic lane designated for use by "franchised bus" or "franchised and non-franchised bus" only. Other vehicles have to make use of other traffic lanes next to the bus-only lane or other alternative routes.

Note 2: Designated bus gate generally refers to a short section of bus-only lane that, while the road capacity is normally not affected, facilitates buses to access their destinations or change to other travelling routes more directly.