

TAC briefed on proposed toll plans for road harbour crossings and preliminary findings and recommendations of Strategic Studies on Railways and Major Roads beyond 2030

The following is issued on behalf of the Transport Advisory Committee:

The Transport Advisory Committee (TAC) was briefed today (December 20) on the proposed toll plans for road harbour crossings (RHCs), and the preliminary findings and recommendations of the Strategic Studies on Railways and Major Roads beyond 2030 (RMR2030+ Study).

The Government will take the opportunity of taking over the Western Harbour Crossing (WHC) in August 2023 to adjust the tolls of RHCs. The Government will adopt a two-step strategy, the first step of which is to adjust the toll differential for private cars at the three RHCs and to set a uniform toll for cross-harbour taxis, so as to rationalise the cross-harbour traffic flow. In taking forward the next step, the Government will, within one year after the WHC takeover, holistically review the impacts on traffic in response to the toll adjustment in the first step and the continued resumption of social activities, the operation of the new "HKeToll" to be implemented at various government tunnels progressively in 2023, as well as the community's reception, and then introduce "time-varying tolls" in a timely manner.

The TAC Chairman, Professor Stephen Cheung, said, "Members welcomed the Government's proposal of adopting a two-step strategy, and to first narrow the toll differential for private cars and taxis among the three RHCs, having regard to the feedback collected from consultations and the fact that the traffic volume is still fluctuating. This would encourage motorists to choose the RHC that suits their destinations, which would probably help alleviate traffic congestion caused by detours while maintaining the overall cross-harbour traffic volume at a similar level as present. Members appreciated the need for the two-step strategy and hoped that the Government would collect the latest traffic data within one year to fully assess the overall cross-harbour traffic situation before finalising the details of 'time-varying tolls'. The TAC will continue to advise the Government on this matter."

The RMR2030+ Study seeks to formulate a forward-looking Major Transport Infrastructure Development Blueprint for Hong Kong up to and beyond 2046 with a view to achieving the goals of "driving development", "strengthening connection" and "improving efficiency". The RMR2030+ Study adopts the "infrastructure-led" and "capacity-creating" planning principles to ensure that the planning of strategic railways and major road infrastructure can

drive development or even reserve capacity for new development areas, especially the Northern Metropolis, for the long-term development needs of Hong Kong. The Transport and Logistics Bureau together with the Highways Department and the Transport Department are conducting the public consultation exercise of the RMR2030+ Study. The consultation period will end on March 31, 2023.

"Members supported the three strategic railways and three major roads recommended by the Government, including the Hong Kong-Shenzhen Western Rail Link (Hung Shui Kiu – Qianhai), the Central Rail Link, the Tseung Kwan O Line Southern Extension, the Northern Metropolis Highway, the Shatin Bypass and the Tseung Kwan O – Yau Tong Tunnel. The recommendations will meet long-term transport demand and improve the transport network. Members looked forward to the Government's announcement on the Major Transport Infrastructure Development Blueprint for Hong Kong in the fourth quarter of 2023," Professor Cheung added.