

Progress Report of the 9th Meeting of the Kowloon City District Council

Purpose

This paper aims to report on the major issues discussed at the 9th meeting of the Kowloon City District Council (KCDC) on 19 March 2009.

Meeting with the Commissioner for Transport

2. The Commissioner for Transport briefed the Members on the positive impacts of various major infrastructure projects including Central Kowloon Route (CKR), Kwun Tong Line Extension (KTE) and Shatin to Central Link (SCL) of the Mass Transit Railway (MTR) upon the development of Kowloon City District. In addition, he outlined the plan of the Transport Department to introduce the Intelligent Transport Systems with measures including erecting display panels at appropriate locations to indicate the projected time of using different harbour-crossing tunnels as well as installing electronic maps to show the traffic condition of different areas. With such facilities, drivers would have additional information for reference.

3. Members took the chance to reflect their views on the following issues:

- (1) The location of stations along KTE and SCL should cope with the needs of residents in this district. Besides, MTR entrances / exits should be constructed as many as possible at all stations in order to extend the service to more places.
- (2) It was proposed that motor bus companies should provide interchange bus stops at main roads like Nathan Road and Argyle Street or allow passengers to take the buses of the same company free of charge so that bus routes on the roads could be reduced and thus traffic congestion alleviated.
- (3) It was proposed that before the removal of the Star Ferry Bus Terminus in Tsim Sha Tsui, the last stop of KMB route 5 should be moved back to the original place. If that was not possible, the feasibility of increasing the service hours of bus route 5A from rush hours to 24-hour period should be considered.

- (4) As oil prices had dropped substantially from the peak, the Government should initiate a review of bus fares to see if there was room for downward adjustment.
- (5) Attempts should be made to restore fare concessions offered by the MTR to elderly passengers on Sundays.
- (6) The study of methods for solving noise problems caused by the traffic flow on the East Kowloon Corridor during nighttime should be carried on.
- (7) And it was suggested that large underground car parks were to be built in Kowloon City District so as to address the inadequacy of parking spaces attributed to a large number of people visiting restaurants in the district.

Report on Heritage Conservation, Revitalization of Stone Hut and Ex-Ma Tau Kok Animal Quarantine Depot together with Conservation of Lung Juen Stone Bridge

4. Members were glad that Ex-Ma Tau Kok Animal Quarantine Depot was recommended to be upgraded from a Grade III historic building to Grade II upon assessment by the Antiquities Advisory Board. They pointed out to the Commissioner for Heritage's Office that though the Cattle Depot Artist Village was set up at the site, the artists generally regarded it as an office only. Moreover, as the Village was managed by the Government Property Agency with restricted access to people, community arts activities were inadequate to appeal local communities in peripheral areas. Hence, the Commissioner was urged to speed up the study undertaken by the Hong Kong Arts Development Council and the Chinese University of Hong Kong so that Ex-Ma Tau Kok Animal Quarantine Depot could be used in a way conducive to the development of this district.

5. As to the stone hut situated at the old site of the Hos' family, Members welcomed the Government's decision of including it into the revitalization plan and allowing it to be managed as a social enterprise. In view of its inaccessibility, the stone hut was suggested to be turned into a piece of architecture of late Qing Dynasty with its style paralleling other historic buildings in Kowloon City District to attract visitors and tourists.

Request for Regulations against Light Pollution

6. Members said that many shopkeepers exploited massive neon lights for advertising purposes. Some even installed spotlights to add illumination, causing great disturbances to residents of the same building. However, there were no existing laws and regulations against light pollution and the public lacked of channels to lodge complaints.

7. The Environment Bureau stated that due to the special environment in Hong Kong, it was common to find shops and residences mix together, hence making the problems of noise pollution more complex than those in other advanced countries. The Government undertook to study the issue in the 2008-09 Policy Address by taking as reference the experience of cities facing similar problems and assessing the feasibility of enacting laws to regulate the installation of lights in open areas in Hong Kong. Despite the fact that no existing legal provisions could be invoked to control the problem, the staff of the Environmental Protection Department would start lobbying the advertisers concerned once irregularities were spotted. They would try to persuade the advertisers to adjust the intensity of light or the angle of illumination in order to minimize the negative effect of the lights on the residents. And such administrative measures had been proved to be effective in settling a number of complaints against light pollution in the city.

Concern over the Impacts of Various Infrastructure Projects in Kowloon City

8. Members said newspapers recently reported that To Kwa Wan was expected to become one of the most polluted areas in Hong Kong with large scale infrastructure projects commencing one after another. The government departments responsible for the CKR and SCL projects as well as the Kai Tak Development were invited to report on plans of minimizing the impacts of the projects on the traffic and environment of Kowloon City District. The representatives from the Highways Department, the MTR, the Transport Department and the Civil Engineering and Development Department thus accounted for the progress of works and the methods of dredging and mud dumping under consideration. In respect of the cumulative effects of the projects which were of great concern to Members, the departments stressed that if the projects were to commence one by one, the cumulative impacts of projects already in progress would naturally be taken into account when assessment for every ensuing project was to be made. And the approving department would take

this as a principle when examining the reports submitted. Under such principle, the infrastructure projects scheduled to commence in later stage would not be allowed to begin until the problems arising from the former ones were resolved.

Using a false Address for Application under the Primary One Admission System

9. Members noted that the Education Bureau had established a checking mechanism to confirm if the children really resided at the school net of the primary one school places for which they applied. However, Members opined that the Bureau could conduct more random checks and strengthen the work by adopting different ways of checking. Members added that the Bureau should step up publicity to enhance the knowledge of parents about the risks and consequences of reporting false addresses when applying for a primary one school place. In so doing, the parents who had ambitions for their children would rationally assess the risk and would not attempt to defy the law.

10. The Education Bureau stressed that publicity had been strengthened through various means with the aim of alerting parents not to use a false address when applying for a school place in primary one. As for random checks of addresses, the Bureau would continue to monitor the exercise so as to further improve the current mechanism.

Kowloon City District Office
May 2009