

LCQ10: Transport facilities in New Territories North

Following is a question by Dr the Hon Lo Wai-kwok and a written reply by the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Mr Frank Chan Fan, in the Legislative Council today (June 9):

Question:

The development projects being taken forward in New Territories North (NTN) and North East New Territories can accommodate a population of more than 800 000 upon completion. Some residents of NTN have pointed out that currently they mainly rely on the Tolo Highway and the MTR East Rail Line to travel to and from the urban areas. As such transport facilities have reached their maximum capacity during peak hours, they can hardly cope with the additional transport demand arising from these development projects. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the respective (i) average vehicular flow (vehicle/hour) and (ii) average vehicular speed (kilometre/hour) of the Tolo Highway and the Fanling Highway (southbound and northbound) during peak hours in each of the past three years;

(2) as the Government indicated in January this year that it had commenced the strategic studies beyond 2030 in respect of railways and trunk roads, which included exploring proposals to construct a new north-south railway and improve the north-south road network, of the progress of the studies concerned (including the preliminary proposed railway alignment); and

(3) as the Government has indicated that if the proposed Northern Link spur line is re-routed to the Lok Ma Chau Loop and connects with the redeveloped Huanggang Port, it will help strengthen the cross-boundary transport links and those between the Loop and the urban areas, and the Government has thus requested the MTR Corporation Limited to study the feasibility and benefits of this option, of the timetable for the relevant work?

Reply:

President,

Our reply to various parts of Dr the Hon Lo Wai-kwok's question is as follows:

(1) The average vehicular flows of Fanling Highway and Tolo Highway at peak hours in 2018 and 2019 (Note 1) are listed in Table 1.

Table 1

Road	Direction	Average vehicular flow per hour at peak hours (Note 2)			
		2018		2019	
		AM	PM	AM	PM
Fanling Highway	Southbound	2 210	2 650	2 310	2 430
	Northbound	2 280	2 080	2 090	2 250
Tolo Highway	Southbound	6 870	5 580	6 840	5 240
	Northbound	4 850	5 790	5 140	6 140

The average vehicular speeds of Fanling Highway and Tolo Highway at peak hours from 2018 to 2020 are listed in Table 2.

Table 2

Road	Direction	Average speed at peak hours (Note 2) (km/hr)					
		2018		2019		2020	
		AM	PM	AM	PM	AM	PM
Fanling Highway (Note 3)	Southbound	68	—	74	—	80	—
	Northbound	70	—	76	—	82	—
Tolo Highway	Southbound	47	68	28	71	49	76
	Northbound	61	55	72	72	75	74

Note 1: Traffic volume statistics in Annual Traffic Census are currently available up to 2019. The Transport Department (TD) does not have relevant figures of 2020.

Note 2: The relevant data were collected from different surveys. Peak hours generally refer to the periods from 7am to 10am and from 4pm to 7pm on weekdays. The figures in Table 1 indicated the traffic situation during the above mentioned periods, whereas the vehicular speeds in Table 2 were collected during the busiest periods of the peak hours (i.e. from 8am to 9.30am and from 5pm to 7pm).

Note 3: TD does not have the average vehicular speed data of Fanling Highway during the evening peak hours.

(2) The Highways Department and TD commenced the "Strategic Studies on Railways and Major Roads beyond 2030" in December 2020. Based on the final development strategy of the "Hong Kong 2030+: Towards a Planning Vision and Strategy Transcending 2030" planning study which will soon be published by the Development Bureau, the Studies will explore the layout of railway and major road infrastructure, including the connection between new development areas in New Territories North and the urban area, and conduct preliminary engineering and technical assessments for their alignments and supporting

facilities, so as to ensure that the planning of large-scale transport infrastructure will complement or even reserve capacity to meet the overall long-term development needs of Hong Kong. The Studies will also examine the impact of the proposed transport infrastructure on the existing transport network in order to formulate the corresponding strategies.

It will take around 38 months and 27 months respectively to complete the railways part and major roads part of the Studies. We will consult the Legislative Council at an appropriate time when preliminary findings of the Studies are available.

(3) According to the recommendation of the Railway Development Strategy 2014, in addition to the main line connecting the Kam Sheung Road Station to the Kwu Tung Station of the proposed Northern Link (NOL), subject to the growth in cross-boundary transport demand, a bifurcation could be added to connect the Kam Sheung Road Station to the existing Lok Ma Chau Station direct.

Based on Shenzhen's redevelopment plan of the Huanggang Port, the redeveloped Huanggang Port will become a transport hub complex. If the NOL bifurcation is realigned to connect to the redeveloped Huanggang Port through the Lok Ma Chau Loop, it will help strengthen the cross-boundary transport link as well as the connection between the Lok Ma Chau Loop and the urban area. It will also provide another option for citizens and tourists travelling within Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area. We notice that the Shenzhen authority has stated that space will be reserved in the redeveloped Huanggang Port to enable connection of the NOL bifurcation. This will provide flexibility in the planning of the NOL bifurcation.

Considering that the optimisation of the Huanggang Port may drive cross-boundary transport demand, we have requested the MTR Corporation Limited to investigate the feasibility and benefits of constructing the NOL bifurcation, so that the Government can consider the way forward of the project in due course.

Railway projects involve huge capital investment, and the Government has to plan in a prudent manner. We will review the need for constructing the NOL bifurcation and its technical and financial feasibility, and will make adjustment to the railway implementation timetable in accordance with the detailed studies, latest demand assessment and availability of resources.

Thank you, President.