

LCQ11: Public footbridges

â€œFollowing is a question by the Hon Doreen Kong and a written reply by the Secretary for Transport and Logistics, Ms Mable Chan, in the Legislative Council today (May 21):

Question:

Since the 1960s, with the growth of Hong Kong's population and economy, the Government has employed footbridges to grade separate vehicular and pedestrian traffic, so as to improve road safety and traffic flow capacity. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the current number of public footbridges (footbridges) in Hong Kong and, among them, the number of those equipped with lifts; whether the authorities have plans to install lifts at footbridges not yet equipped with lifts to facilitate public use in the future;

(2) of the current criteria for the construction of footbridges; whether the authorities have established a regular monitoring mechanism to track the utilisation rate of footbridges (e.g. by installing monitoring and counting devices), and incorporated such usage data into the standards for future footbridge construction; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(3) as it is learnt that many experts and academics have conducted studies in recent years on the social impact of footbridges, such as the benefits of opening up public spaces on the Mong Kok Footbridge, and that Dubai's Dubai Walk Master Plan has reportedly incorporated various elements into walkway design to transform them into meeting places and spaces for social interaction, whether the authorities have now obtained relevant data and empirical evidence to further optimise the use of public spaces on footbridges; if so, how the authorities plan to enhance existing footbridges; if not, of the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

â€œIn consultation with the Development Bureau, Highways Department (HyD) and Transport Department (TD), the consolidated reply to the question raised by the Hon Kong is as follows:

(1) At present, there are 731 footbridges maintained by the HyD, of which 280 are equipped with lifts. Among the remaining footbridges without lifts, about 70 per cent of them have already met the standards for barrier-free access (e.g. equipped with ramps, at-grade alternative crossings, or connected to buildings with barrier-free access), while about 15 per cent have been confirmed to be unsuitable for retrofitting barrier-free access facilities due to various factors (such as insufficient space).

The Government has all along been committed to retrofitting barrier-free access facilities at public walkways. Since the launch of the Universal Accessibility (UA) Programme in August 2012, the Government has been actively providing more barrier-free access facilities (i.e. lifts and ramps) at public walkways (i.e. public footbridges, elevated walkways and pedestrian subways) to facilitate access by the public. In order to benefit more members of the public, the scope of the UA Programme, initially covering only public walkways maintained by the HyD which were not equipped with any barrier-free access facilities, has been expanded to cover existing walkways that are equipped with standard ramps, provided that certain criteria are met. In 2019, the Government introduced a special scheme to retrofit lifts at footbridges, pedestrian subways, and elevated walkways in estates under the Tenants Purchase Scheme, Buy or Rent Option Scheme and public rental housing estates with properties divested under the Housing Authority, provided that certain criteria are met.

The HyD has been pressing ahead with the implementation of a total of 382 items under various phases of the UA Programme. As at end March 2025, 239 items under the UA Programme were completed, including retrofitting of lifts at 151 public footbridges maintained by the HyD. The HyD is pressing ahead with the remaining items of the UA Programme to ensure that they will be completed in phases as planned for the benefit and convenience of the public. In the next four years, the HyD will progressively complete the installation of lifts at 64 public footbridges. By then, the number of footbridges equipped with lifts will increase to 344.

(2) In considering the need for public footbridges, the TD will take into account, on a project-by-project basis, factors such as the anticipated pedestrian utilisation rate, the characteristics and layout of the road concerned (including traffic flow and speed), road safety and traffic capacity, the desired pedestrian path (in terms of convenience, comfort and safety, etc), the availability of other nearby crossings, the connectivity of the footbridge with the nearby developments and walkway systems as well as the relevant public views.

The TD closely monitors the utilisation of public footbridges, including deploying staff to conduct site surveys in a timely manner to collect data on pedestrian flow and reviewing the views provided by residents and stakeholders in the vicinity as well as considering appropriate enhancement measures, such as suitably adjusting directional signs and providing barrier-free facilities in light of the site environment and traffic conditions as necessary, in order to attract the public to make good use of the footbridges. As the TD has already been effectively monitoring the utilisation of public footbridges, it has no plan to install statistical monitoring devices at existing footbridges.

(3) From the perspective of town planning and design, existing planning guidelines encourage the consideration of landscape design when planning the construction of footbridges. If there is sufficient space, the design of landscaped decks can be considered to be adopted for pedestrian links while landscaping, installation of seats and public art elements can be added to the links to enhance the experience of pedestrians.

The TD also welcomes the opportunity to collaborate with relevant departments/project proponents, including the adoption of the Pedestrian Planning Framework in the pedestrian planning for new development areas to formulate and implement suitable pedestrian facility measures, with a view to widening the walking space and providing a comprehensive pedestrian network. In formulating the framework, the TD has studied the local walkability and planning needs and took reference from economies outside Hong Kong, including those in the Mainland, Asia, Europe and North America. The newly developed Pedestrian Planning Framework has been in use since 2022 to assist in creating a pedestrian-friendly walking environment and promoting walking as a sustainable mode of mobility.