

LCQ14: Making good use of spaces released from toll collection facilities of road harbour crossings

Following is a question by the Hon Chan Chun-ying and a written reply by the Secretary for Transport and Logistics, Ms Mable Chan, in the Legislative Council today (February 19):

Question:

In order to implement the HKeToll free-flow tolling service, the Highways Department is demolishing the toll booths, toll islands and toll plaza shelters of the three road harbour crossings (RHCs) and adjusting the traffic lane arrangements. On making good use of the spaces released from the toll collection facilities of RHCs, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) as it is learnt that the demolition works of the toll booths, toll islands and toll plaza shelters of the three RHCs have basically been completed, but many water-filled barriers and traffic cones used for the purposes of road works have not yet been removed from the road surfaces in the vicinity of the three RHCs, causing vehicles entering and exiting RHCs to reduce their speed, thus affecting the smooth flow of traffic, and that the Government indicated in its reply to a question from a Member of this Council on November 13 last year that the demolition works involving the three RHCs were not expected to be completed until the second quarter of this year, of the complexities of the remaining works and whether the Government has explored early completion of such works; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(2) given that in its reply to a question from a Member of this Council on October 18, 2023, the Government indicated that the demolition of all the manual toll booths could release land with an estimated total area of about 23 000 square metres at the three RHCs, whether, apart from using the land to provide more bus stops or improve the existing ones and increase the number of buffer zones, the Government has considered landscaping the RHC entrances to create three scenic cityscapes; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(3) as it is learnt that there are many advertising spaces at the three RHCs, whether the Government has studied taking this opportunity to revamp these advertising spaces to provide digital advertising screens, three-dimensional advertising screens and projection advertising screens, etc, thereby attracting more advertisers and increasing government revenue; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

The HKeToll, a free-flow tolling service, has been implemented in all government-tolled tunnel since end-2023 and will be implemented at the Tai Lam Tunnel after the Government takes over it in May this year. The HKeToll enables vehicles to pay tolls remotely without having to stop at the toll booths, thereby enhancing the efficiency of toll collection, and providing more effective traffic management as well as safer and smoother commuting for motorists; and the freed-up areas following the removal of manual toll booths will be utilised to improve the traffic at the tunnel entrances and exits.

Having consulted the Development Bureau and the Transport Department (TD), my reply to the various parts of the question raised by the Hon Chan Chun-ying is as follows:

(1) All HKeToll related works at the Cross-Harbour Tunnel (CHT) and Eastern Harbour Crossing (EHC) have been completed, including the removal of toll islands and toll plaza canopies, and adjustment of lane arrangements. The traffic cones currently placed on site mainly aim at guiding vehicles along the lanes and preventing them from entering the shadow area of the central dividers, so as to rationalise the traffic near the tunnel entrances and exits and maintain road safety.

As for the Western Harbour Crossing (WHC), we are currently carrying out road resurfacing and related works in the vicinity of the former toll plaza, which requires removal of the existing concrete pavement of the main traffic lanes at the former toll plaza for repaving the road base as well as the bituminous pavement. As the works are close to existing traffic lanes, bus stops, branch road entrances and exits, etc, they need to be carried out in phases to ensure that the project will not cause significant impact on tunnel operations, traffic conditions and road safety. Upon the completion of the works at the main traffic lane, we will continue the remaining works at the freed-up areas and remove temporary traffic management measures such as water barriers after completion. The relevant departments will complete the works as soon as possible, and it is expected the works at WHC will be completed in the second quarter of this year.

(2) The freed-up areas following the removal of toll booths will be used for improving the traffic at the tunnel entrances and exits, including widening the existing space for loading/unloading of buses and access to bus stops, increasing the number of lane-side buffer zones to ensure the safe operation of the tunnels, as well as rationalising traffic lane arrangements, with consideration given to road safety and landscaping. In the long run, the TD will continue to review the future traffic condition of the road section and the spaces available, and proactively consider how to complement the development of the neighbouring areas and improve the traffic and cross-harbour bus service. Besides, taking the CHT as an example, at the Government's invitation, the MTR Corporation Limited (MTRCL) has conducted a study to re-plan the sites in the vicinity of the Hung Hom Station and the waterfront, including exploring ways to enhance the pedestrian connectivity between Hung Hom and Tsim Sha Tsui East, and improve the passenger bus waiting environment at the CHT. The Government is currently considering MTRCL's report, and expects stakeholder consultation on the land use

proposals will take place by mid-2025.

(3) At present, there are a total of 95 advertising panels located at the tunnel entrances and exits, tunnel buildings (such as administration buildings and ventilation buildings) and bus stops of the three road harbour crossings. The tunnel operators under the TD appoint advertising agents through open tender to sell advertising spaces, and the relevant advertising revenue goes to the Government.

The TD has been closely monitoring the market demand for advertising display within the tunnel areas with a view to optimising the use of advertising spaces. The TD also reviews the number and types of advertising panels from time to time, taking into account factors such as cost-effectiveness, avoiding distraction to motorists, road safety and visual impact to nearby residents. To tie in with the market demand and changes to the toll plaza, the TD has commissioned a total of four new advertising panels from November 2024 to January 2025 at the EHC to increase advertising revenue.

The TD will continue to maintain close liaison with tunnel operators and advertising agents to keep in view the market demand for displaying advertisements within the tunnel area, and consider the feasibility of different options, including the proposal in the question, with a view to increasing advertising revenue.