

LCQ2: Transport services for and infrastructure of South Lantau

Following is a question by the Hon Kenneth Lau and a reply by the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Mr Frank Chan Fan, in the Legislative Council today (July 21):

Question:

At present, South Lantau Road is the only road connecting various places of South Lantau, and Tung Chung Road is the only road that links North and South Lantau. During holidays, a large number of countryside visitors queue up at Mui Wo and Tung Chung for franchised buses to travel to various places of South Lantau. On the other hand, the Government commenced a Study on Traffic, Transport and Capacity to Receive Visitors for Lantau in 2017. Regarding the transport services for and infrastructure of South Lantau, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it has reviewed the demand and supply situation of the franchised bus services travelling to and from South Lantau on holidays and during peak hours; if so, of the outcome; if not, the reasons for that;

(2) of the progress of the aforesaid Study as well as that of the improvement works for the local roads and pier facilities in South Lantau; and

(3) given that the local and external transport of South Lantau will be paralysed whenever landslides or traffic accidents occur in South Lantau Road or Tung Chung Road, whether the Government will construct a new trunk road linking North and South Lantau; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

The major areas of South Lantau include Mui Wo, Pui O, Tong Fuk, Ngong Ping, Tai O, etc. As at end 2017, the population of South Lantau was around 17 500, accounting for about 10 per cent of the population of Lantau.

At present, South Lantau mainly relies on Tung Chung Road to connect with the northern part of Lantau and external roads. The road network of South Lantau includes South Lantau Road, Keung Shan Road, Tai O Road, Sham Wat Road and Ngong Ping Road, connecting Mui Wo and Tai O as well as the villages along the roads. For preservation of the tranquil environment of Lantau and given its road capacity, these roads are designated as closed roads and members of the public must first obtain Closed Road Permits before they could drive to South Lantau. As regards public transport, the New Lantao Bus Company (1973) Limited (NLB) currently operates 11 franchised bus routes serving various districts of South Lantau, covering various major areas and

tourist attractions including Mui Wo, Pui O, Tai O, Ngong Ping, Tong Fuk, etc. Besides, there are currently four licensed ferry routes serving South Lantau, namely the "Central – Mui Wo" route, the "inter-islands" route plying between different outlying islands including Peng Chau, Mui Wo, Chi Ma Wan and Cheung Chau, the route between Tuen Mun, Tung Chung, Sha Lo Wan and Tai O, and the "Discovery Bay – Mui Wo" route.

In consultation with the Development Bureau, Transport Department (TD) and Highways Department (HyD), my reply to the various parts of Hon Kenneth Lau's question is as follows:

(1) The TD has all along maintained close communication with NLB on franchised bus services serving South Lantau (especially during peak hours of long holidays and weekends) and reviewed the service level of individual routes from time to time. Where necessary, NLB will make timely arrangement to deploy additional vehicles and increase service frequency to meet passenger demand in a flexible manner. Besides, during peak hours of passenger traffic, NLB closely monitors the queuing situation at various bus termini and major en-route stops and arranges timely special departures to ease the flow of waiting passengers. The TD also conducts on-site surveys to monitor the franchised bus services. According to the on-site surveys conducted by the TD around the Lunar New Year holidays this year, the frequency of the four routes serving main attractions on South Lantau were strengthened to less than five minutes for each respective route during the peak hours, and the maximum average occupancy rates ranged from about 30 per cent to 90 per cent. According to the TD's assessment, the overall existing bus services in South Lantau can generally cater for the passenger demand except during individual periods of higher demand when the waiting time will be longer. The TD will continue to closely monitor passenger demand and follow up with NLB to make timely adjustment to the bus services.

(2) In order to improve the traffic conditions of the roads on South Lantau, the TD and the HyD completed 21 road widening and bend improvement projects along South Lantau Road and Keung Shan Road in 2018. To further enhance road safety on South Lantau, the two departments above are preparing to carry out a number of improvement works, including improving and widening the road surface along Keung Shan Road and Tai O Road, improving the bends of traffic lanes, and provisioning of additional traffic signs as well as road markings.

At present, three public piers in South Lantau are included in the "Pier Improvement Programme" co-ordinated by the Civil Engineering and Development Department (CEDD). The improvement works at Yi O pier are now in the design stage and is planned for submission to the Legislative Council for funding approval and commencement of works in 2022. The engineering feasibility studies of improvement works at Tai O Public pier and the Man Kok Tsui pier commenced in May this year and are expected for completion by end of 2022.

Apart from the above, the Sustainable Lantau Office of the CEDD is conducting the "Study on Traffic, Transport and Capacity to Receive Visitors for Lantau" with a view to examining the traffic and transport on South Lantau and to exploring the feasible improvement measures (including possible road and pier improvement works in the concerned areas), possible green

transport as well as to assessing the capacity to receive visitors in Lantau. The findings and recommendations of the study will serve as a reference for the strategic transport planning of Lantau. The study is expected to be completed in the fourth quarter of this year.

(3) The planning of Lantau is based on the overarching principle of "Development in the North, Conservation for the South". In conducting traffic planning for South Lantau, the Government will take into account the above principle and relevant factors including traffic demand, in order to provide suitable ancillary transport facilities.

The CEDD is currently conducting the above-mentioned "Study on Traffic, Transport and Capacity to Receive Visitors for Lantau". The study will examine from a macro perspective the needs for transport connections of Lantau (including Mui Wo, Tung Chung and Tai O), and recommend various feasible options to further improve the existing road network for further study. As I mentioned in the second part of this reply, the findings and recommendations of the study will serve as a reference for the strategic transport planning of Lantau.

Thank you, President.