

LCQ4: Traffic problems at Borrett Road, Mid-levels

Following is a question by the Hon Mrs Regina Ip and a reply by the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Mr Frank Chan Fan, in the Legislative Council today (October 28):

Question:

It is learnt that Borrett Road at Mid-levels is a narrow, bendy and steep road with frequent occurrence of accidents. For instance, last month, a head-on collision between a motorcycle and a dump truck resulted in the death of the motorcyclist, and a private car running downhill lost control at a bend and fell off the slope, causing three injuries. During the school starting and finishing time, lunch break and holding of activities of the two nearby schools, a large number of private cars and school buses enter Borrett Road to pick up and drop off school children, causing traffic congestion. Moreover, there are heavy vehicles passing through Borrett Road from time to time which increases the traffic load there and makes traffic accidents prone to occur. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) given that heavy vehicles may enter Borrett Road within specified hours only if they hold a prohibited zone permit, of the respective numbers of drivers of heavy vehicles who were prosecuted, in each of the past three years, for entering Borrett Road without the permit and outside the permitted hours; the specific measures in place to reduce the use of Borrett Road by heavy vehicles;

(2) whether it will consider carrying out improvement works for Borrett Road, including widening the road and increasing the height of parapets at appropriate locations; and

(3) given that the new residential developments in the vicinity of Borrett Road will have their intake one after another, and the redevelopment of a school there will be completed in three years' time, of the Government's measures to relieve the traffic load of Borrett Road in the long run, so as to prevent the traffic congestion problem there from worsening?

Reply:

President,

Borrett Road at Mid-levels is a single two-lane two-way road of about one kilometre long, connecting Kennedy Road and Bowen Road.

After consultation with the Transport Department (TD) and the Hong Kong Police Force (the Police), my reply to the various parts of the Hon Mrs Regina Ip's question is as follows:

(1) To restrict the use of Borrett Road by heavy vehicles, since 2012, TD has

designated Borrett Road as a prohibited zone for heavy vehicles exceeding four tonnes in gross vehicle weight (except buses) and erected vehicle weight limit traffic signs thereat. Prior application to TD is required for such vehicles to travel via Borrett Road, and they have to obtain a prohibited zone permit issued by the Commissioner for Transport as well as comply with the conditions of the permit (including the permitted hours). The Police will take stringent enforcement actions against contraventions.

For Borrett Road, the Police issued 59, 82 and 31 fixed penalty tickets in 2018, 2019 and the first three quarters of 2020 respectively to heavy vehicle drivers contravening the vehicle weight limit traffic signs and the permitted hours specified in the permits. TD will continue to review the validity period, the number and the conditions of relevant prohibited zone permits in the light of the traffic conditions of Borrett Road in a timely manner, with a view to further reducing the number of heavy vehicles using Borrett Road.

(2) Similar to other roads in the Peak area, Borrett Road was built a long time ago, and there are considerable limitations on widening the road due to geographical constraints. Some sections of Borrett Road are on flyover structures, and the geographical environment is severe with steep slopes, old trees/stonewall trees or retaining walls on the roadside. In addition, the road is in close proximity to private land, historic buildings and monuments (e.g. the Annex Block of the Old British Military Hospital at No 10 Borrett Road). These factors greatly hinder the road widening.

To improve road and driving safety at Borrett Road, apart from designating Borrett Road as a prohibited zone for vehicles exceeding four tonnes in gross vehicle weight (except buses), TD has implemented several traffic management and improvement measures. These include adding a "Keep Clear" road marking and "No U-turn" traffic sign on the section of Borrett Road at its junction with Borrett Mansions to prohibit vehicles from stopping or making U-turn at the bend; and adding black-and-white chevrons marking at the bend of Borrett Road section between Bowen Road and Kennedy Road to alert motorists to the need to reduce travelling speed due to a sharp bend ahead.

TD also plans to impose a 24-hour "No stopping" zone at the bend of Borrett Road near Borrett Mansions, and add "Reduce Speed Now" traffic signs at appropriate bends to remind motorists to pay attention to driving safety. Separately, TD and the Highways Department have commenced a preliminary assessment on the feasibility of erecting and increasing the height of parapets at appropriate bends of Borrett Road. The preliminary assessment is expected to be completed in mid-2021.

(3) Overall, TD anticipates that the capacity of Borrett Road can cope with the potential increase of traffic flow arising from the completion of new residential developments and redevelopment of a school in the area. Regarding the occasional traffic congestion caused by large vehicles travelling from the opposite directions being unable to pass through the narrow section of Borrett Road near Borrett Mansions at the same time, TD is actively following up with a view to addressing the issue. With reference to the experience gained from the installation of Real-time Adaptive Traffic Signal System on

Tai Tam Road (Dam Section) in 2018, TD proposed in 2019, when the traffic flow reduced as a result of the redevelopment of Island School, to install a similar traffic signal system at the above-mentioned section of Borrett Road. Through the installation of sensors on traffic light poles and in the light of real-time traffic flow (e.g. the vehicle queue length) at the road junctions, appropriate allocation of green times could be derived. The system will operate round the clock and will make necessary adjustments in response to varying demands at different time periods or during unexpected traffic conditions, thereby facilitating alternate passing of vehicles travelling in both directions on Borrett Road in an orderly and safe manner.

During the works period for installing the above-mentioned traffic signal system, it would be necessary to close some sections of Borrett Road temporarily so as to carry out cable laying works. To minimise the impact on nearby residents, the relevant road works will be conducted by phases. After conducting local consultation and co-ordinating with relevant government departments, the first phase of the works commenced in June 2020 and was completed in August 2020. The remaining works will commence progressively within this year, and the entire project is expected to be completed in mid-2021. Afterwards, there should be significant improvement to the road safety and traffic conditions on Borrett Road.

TD will continue to closely monitor the traffic conditions of Borrett Road as well as in the adjacent areas, actively co-ordinate with relevant departments to take appropriate follow-up work and expedite actions in order to facilitate the early implementation of various traffic and road safety improvement measures.

Thank you, President.