

LCQ7: Improving accessibility of village areas

Following is a question by Dr the Hon Chan Han-pan and a written reply by the Secretary for Transport and Logistics, Ms Mable Chan, in the Legislative Council today (March 19):

Question:

The Government has provided additional barrier-free access facilities under the Universal Accessibility (UA) Programme to enhance the convenience of the elderly, people with disabilities and people in need in using public walkways. However, it is learnt that the complex terrain and the lack of such facilities have made commuting quite difficult for those village residents who moved to the hillsides due to urban development in early years. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether the Government has, in formulating policies on transport and barrier-free facilities, conducted accessibility studies targeting hillside villages (such as those in Tsuen Wan), and whether it has collected relevant data on the difficulties faced by village residents in travelling;

(2) whether the Government will launch a comprehensive survey on barrier-free facilities in village areas, so as to assess the conditions of the existing facilities in villages and identify those villages which are in urgent need of improvement; whether the Government has plans to provide additional public transport nodes to enhance the accessibility of villages; and

(3) whether the Government will consider extending the UA Programme to villages, so as to ensure that residents in village areas can also enjoy the right to barrier-free access; if so, of the specific timetable?

Reply:

President,

The Government is committed to providing barrier-free access facilities at public walkways. Since the launch of the Universal Accessibility (UA) Programme in August 2012, the Government has been actively installing more barrier-free access facilities (i.e. lifts or ramps) at all public walkways (i.e. footbridges, elevated walkways, and subways) in Hong Kong, including those in the vicinity of villages, so as to facilitate access by the public in using public walkways. In order to benefit more people, the scope of the UA Programme, initially covering only public walkways 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, subways, and elevated walkways in estates under the Tenants Purchase Scheme, the Buy or Rent Option Scheme and public rental

housing estates with properties divested under the Housing Authority, provided that certain criteria are met.

In consultation with the Labour and Welfare Bureau, Transport Department (TD) and Highways Department (HyD), the consolidated reply to the various parts of the question raised by Dr the Hon Chan Han-pan is as follows:

(1) and (2) The Government is committed to enhancing community accessibility by developing a comprehensive transportation network and installing more barrier-free facilities. In formulating relevant policies, the Government will consult various stakeholders in the community to ensure that these policies are user-friendly and socially effective.

Since December 2010, government bureaux and departments have appointed Access Co-ordinators and Access Officers to co-ordinate and manage accessibility issues in the premises under their purview (including premises and facilities in rural areas), with a view to facilitating access to the premises and the use of the services and facilities by people in need. Rural residents, Rural Committees or District Council members, etc, concerned may put forward proposals to the government departments to improve the barrier-free facilities in the rural areas when necessary. The relevant government departments will consider whether these works should be carried out, having regard to factors such as the feasibility of the works, resource allocation and views of local community.

In addition, in planning the public transport service network, the Government will carefully consider various factors such as existing public transport ancillary facilities and service level, completion of transport infrastructure, district development, demographic changes and passenger demand to meet the travel needs of the public. For example, many villages in Tsuen Wan District currently have access to public transport services, such as franchised buses and green minibuses, connecting various locations in the district, including railway stations and major public transport interchanges. The TD will continue to closely monitor the demand of the public for public transport services, including village residents, and will review relevant arrangements in a timely manner.

(3) 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 February 2025, 239 items under the UA Programme were completed, while 138 items are under construction. The completed projects include the retrofitting of lifts for pedestrian walkways in the vicinity of villages, such as the subway near Tai Po Lam Tsuen across Fanling Highway near Tai Po Road – Tai Wo (Structure No. NS145) and the footbridge near Tai Po Tong Hang Tung Chuen across the East Rail Line Track near Tai Wo Service Road East and Tong Hang (Structure No. NF82). The Government will continue to press ahead with the remaining projects to bring convenience to more citizens.