

LCQ9: Repair and maintenance of roads

Following is a question by the Hon Yung Hoi-yan and a written reply by the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Mr Frank Chan Fan, in the Legislative Council today (October 20):

Question:

During my recent inspection to Tai Po District, I have noticed that quite a number of road sections (including the junction of On Chee Road and On Cheung Road, the junction of On Chee Road and Ting Kok Road, the section outside 105 Kwong Fuk Road, as well as the road section turning from Po Heung Street into Kwong Fuk Road) have uneven surfaces, which may jeopardise the safety of road users. Regarding repair and maintenance of roads, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) of the respective numbers of complaints or reports about uneven road surfaces received by the Highways Department (HyD) in each of the past three years, with a breakdown by District Council district; the average time taken from receipt of a complaint or report to completion of maintenance works in respect of such cases;
- (2) of the details of the road inspection and maintenance work carried out by the HyD in each of the past three years, including the number of inspections, as well as the manpower and expenditure involved;
- (3) whether the HyD in the past three years looked into the main causes for uneven surfaces and damage of roads; of the expected time when a more durable material (such as Highly Modified Stone Mastic Asphalt) can be widely adopted for paving roads, with a view to reducing the occurrence of uneven road surfaces; and
- (4) as the HyD has undertaken in its performance pledge that it will reply to public enquiries and complaints within seven working days, whether the HyD will set a more aggressive performance pledge, with a view to expeditiously responding to complaints or reports about uneven surfaces and damage of roads?

Reply:

President,

After consulting the Highways Department (HyD), my reply to the various parts of the question is as follows:

The HyD is responsible for the repair and maintenance of public roads and ancillary facilities within its ambit. When damages of road surfaces or ancillary facilities are identified during regular road inspections or are reported by the public, appropriate repair works will be arranged taking into account actual circumstances and needs, so as to keep the roads in good condition and ensure the safety of road users.

(1) The HyD received about 6 000, 4 900 and 3 400 cases of public complaints or reports about uneven road surfaces in 2019, 2020 and 2021 (as at late August) respectively. The number of cases is tabulated below with a breakdown by District Council district:

District	2019	2020	2021 (as at late August)
Central and Western	492	459	336
Eastern	289	237	215
Southern	362	365	276
Wan Chai	405	423	266
Kowloon City	435	191	110
Kwun Tong	247	174	68
Sham Shui Po	395	346	179
Yau Tsim Mong	486	364	233
Wong Tai Sin	284	309	121
Tsuen Wan	216	178	248
Kwai Tsing	368	308	367
Sai Kung	208	178	74
Sha Tin	412	307	255
Tai Po	133	109	66
North	170	120	73
Tuen Mun	266	254	165
Yuen Long	825	523	309
Islands	54	79	42

Upon receipt of such reports, the HyD will arrange for site inspection as soon as possible and arrange contractors to promptly repair any damages which might cause road safety concerns. For example, when potholes are identified on roads, the HyD will, in accordance with the department's performance pledge, complete the repair works of the pothole within 48 hours after receiving the report. In case the road section concerned is heavily trafficked, the HyD will use certain temporary repair materials to repair the damaged road, taking into account the actual circumstances and needs, in order to reopen the affected road sections as soon as possible and minimise traffic impact. The HyD will thereafter continue to closely monitor the overall condition of the road section and carry out resurfacing works of larger scale in due course so as to further improve the overall condition of the road surface. The time required for the completion of repair works varies from case to case, depending on factors such as the extent of road damage and site constraints. The HyD does not keep statistics on the average time required for repair works of the relevant cases.

(2) The HyD has in place a regular road inspection mechanism, through which

term contractors are engaged to carry out the relevant works. Expressways carrying high-speed traffic and high traffic throughput are inspected daily, other trunk roads are inspected every week while ordinary roads are inspected every one to six months respectively (Note). The HyD's road inspection teams are required to conduct detailed inspection on all road types once every six months in order to collect information relating to surface and structural conditions of the roads for planning medium to long-term repair works.

As at September 30, 2021, the HyD has an establishment of 1 119 staff members under the Programme of District and Maintenance Works, who are tasked with district administration and road maintenance works. Apart from the aforesaid regular road inspection and planning of maintenance works, the scope of road maintenance works also includes managing the emergency control centres to deal with emergencies such as landslips, washouts and fallen trees, as well as co-ordinating road excavation works carried out by public utilities. Besides, the relevant manpower is required to handle other district administration work, which includes providing advice on road matters relating to land sale, public and private sector development plans and provision of access, as well as the implementation of minor road improvement works. There is no separate breakdown of the staff establishment for public road inspection and handling of maintenance works.

The total expenditure for the maintenance of public roads by the HyD over the past three years are as follows:

Year	2019	2020	2021 (Estimate)
Expenditures for maintenance of roads (\$ million)	1,139.4	1,599.2	1,649.0

(3) Roads wear and tear alongside daily use. There will also be damage of different extent due to unforeseen circumstances, including traffic accidents, inclement weather or bursting of underground pipes.

The HyD has been conducting research on more durable road paving materials, so as to minimise the frequency of maintenance works of extensive scale or long works duration, as well as adopting a more cost-effective approach in maintaining the road network of Hong Kong. In collaboration with the Hong Kong Polytechnic University, the HyD has researched and developed a more durable bituminous paving material – Highly Modified Stone Mastic Asphalt. This material is composed of bitumen binder of higher viscosity and therefore has improved durability. Site trials have been conducted since end 2018 at road sections in the urban area. As at end September 2021, the HyD has tested the use of this new bituminous paving material at 31 road sections with busy traffic. According to the trial outcome, the new material indeed has a better anti-deformation, anti-aging and anti-fatigue performance on site than the existing bituminous materials in general and is considered useful in improving road durability and thereby reducing road maintenance

frequency. The HyD is going to conduct trials on this new material at more road sections with a view to collecting further data. The study is expected to be completed in 2022 to finalise the research findings in 2022, based on which relevant plan on the wider application of this new material will be formulated.

(4) Currently, members of the public can express their views to the HyD through different channels, including making calls to the HyD or 1823 hotline, using the 1823 mobile application, filling in and submitting the Road Damage or Defect Report on the HyD's website, as well as contacting the HyD via email or fax. Upon receipt of opinions from the public, the HyD will take appropriate follow-up actions and give a reply as soon as possible. The department's performance pledge will be reviewed regularly with a view to further improving service quality and ensuring that citizens' opinions are followed up properly.

Note: Expressways refer to roads as stipulated in the Road Traffic (Expressway) Regulations (Cap. 374Q). Trunk roads refer to high-capacity roads connecting various major areas which are densely populated. Ordinary roads refer to other roads which are neither expressways nor trunk roads.