

Contract signed for Central Kowloon Route – Yau Ma Tei West (with photo)

The Highways Department today (December 18) signed a contract for about \$3,464 million with Build King-SKEC Joint Venture for works in Yau Ma Tei West under the Central Kowloon Route (CKR) project. The works mainly comprise the construction of an approximately 250-metre-long depressed road at the western tunnel portal of the CKR, the construction of a landscaped deck structure of approximately 22,000 square metres above the western tunnel portal and Hoi Wang Road, the construction of approach roads and slip roads connecting the CKR with the existing road networks, and the construction of the re-aligned and regraded Hoi Wang Road and the associated bridges linking to West Kowloon Highway and Lin Cheung Road.

The landscaped deck above the western tunnel portal of the CKR will cover not only the depressed road but also the section of Hoi Wang Road between Yan Cheung Road and Lai Cheung Road, so as to mitigate the impact caused by traffic at the tunnel portal to the adjacent environment. It will also be connected with the landscaped deck of the West Kowloon Station of the Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong High Speed Link, thus forming a grade-separated pedestrian route between Yau Ma Tei and the West Kowloon Station. It will serve as a sitting-out area for public enjoyment.

The CKR is a 4.7-kilometre-long dual three-lane strategic trunk road in Central Kowloon linking the Yau Ma Tei Interchange in West Kowloon with the road network of the Kai Tak Development and Kowloon Bay in East Kowloon. It is anticipated that it will be commissioned in 2025. The CKR will relieve traffic congestion in the road network in Central Kowloon. It is estimated that the journey time between Yau Ma Tei and Kowloon Bay during peak hours will be much reduced from 25 minutes to about 5 minutes. A total of four works contracts including the present one have been awarded under the CKR project with a total value of about \$15 billion.



TCU's third quarterly report of 2018 released

The following is issued on behalf of the Transport Advisory Committee:

The Transport Complaints Unit (TCU) of the Transport Advisory Committee received 7 394 complaints and suggestions in the third quarter of 2018, with 49 pure suggestions. The total number of cases represents an increase of 8.5 per cent as compared with 6 816 cases in the previous quarter and a decrease of 2.9 per cent when compared with 7 615 cases in the same quarter of 2017.

The complaints and suggestions received during the quarter were mostly related to public transport services (87 per cent), enforcement matters (9 per cent) and traffic conditions (2 per cent).

The number of cases on public transport services increased by 9.0 per cent from 5 929 in the previous quarter to 6 461 this quarter, while complaints and suggestions on traffic conditions increased from 114 to 131. Cases about road maintenance increased from 26 to 56 and the number of complaints about illegal parking and other enforcement matters decreased from 711 to 700.

All the complaints and suggestions received by the TCU in the quarter were referred to the relevant government departments and public transport operators for follow-up action.

During the period under review, investigations into 7 159 cases were completed. Of these, 5 097 cases (71 per cent) were found to be substantiated, 77 cases (1 per cent) were unsubstantiated, and the remaining 1 985 cases (28 per cent) could not be pursued due to lack of evidence.

For the substantiated cases, the relevant government departments and public transport operators have either taken steps to rectify the situation or are considering possible solutions to the problems identified. Among these cases, 107 drivers were summonsed by the Police.

During the quarter, the relevant government departments and public transport operators took on board 13 suggestions made by the public to enhance public transport services and improve traffic conditions. A summary of the cases is in the Appendix.

Members of the public may make their suggestions or complaints to the TCU by dialling the hotline 2889 9999 (voice mail service is available outside office hours), by fax to 2577 1858, by email to info@tcu.gov.hk or by filling in a form on the TCU website (www.info.gov.hk/tcu).

TAC briefed on initiatives for enhancing public transport services and implementation arrangements for Public Transport Fare Subsidy Scheme

The following is issued on behalf of the Transport Advisory Committee:

The Transport Advisory Committee (TAC) was briefed today (December 18) on the initiatives for enhancing public transport services and the implementation arrangements for the Public Transport Fare Subsidy Scheme.

To enhance public transport services, the Policy Address of this year proposed a number of new initiatives, which include waiving the toll of Government tunnels and roads charged on franchised buses to relieve the fare increase pressure; subsidising franchised bus operators for retrofitting three safety devices on appropriate existing buses with a view to further enhancing the operating safety of franchised buses; funding and developing a data collection system and a mobile application, as well as installing global positioning devices on green minibuses (GMBs), so as to enable passengers to get access to the real-time arrival information of GMB routes and release relevant data for public use; relaxing the vehicle length restriction of light buses to facilitate the introduction of light buses with more environmental benefits and barrier-free facilities by the trade; and re-commissioning the Central-Hung Hom ferry route and launching a pilot water taxi service.

The TAC Chairman, Professor Stephen Cheung, said, "Members welcomed the new initiatives, which could enhance the safety and service quality of public transport services, and provide more comprehensive ancillary facilities that keep up with the time so that the public can travel conveniently."

Members also noted that the Government would take forward the new initiatives mentioned above as early as possible and meanwhile continue to enhance public transport services through implementing other on-going initiatives.

Regarding the implementation arrangements of the Public Transport Fare Subsidy Scheme, members noted that the Scheme would be implemented on January 1, 2019. Under the Scheme, commuters with public transport expenses exceeding \$400 are eligible for the public transport fare subsidy. The Government will provide subsidy amounting to 25 per cent of the actual public transport expenses in excess of \$400, subject to a maximum of \$300 per month. Monthly subsidy is calculated on the basis of the actual monthly transport expenses recorded on each Octopus. The Government estimates that the annual subsidy

amount will be around \$2.3 billion and over 2.2 million commuters will benefit from the Scheme.

Members understood that the fares of public transport services covered by the Scheme paid by Octopus, and the expenses on the designated transport tickets (e.g. concessionary tickets such as monthly passes, day passes and holiday tickets) of these public transport services purchased by any payment means would be taken into account in the calculation of the monthly public transport expenses. Commuters may collect the subsidy for the first month (i.e. January 2019) starting from February 16, 2019. Thereafter, on and after the 16th of each month, commuters can collect the subsidy of the previous month. The subsidy is valid for collection within three months.

Professor Cheung said, "Members welcome the implementation of the Scheme by the Government to relieve the fare burden of the commuters who travel on local public transport services for daily commuting and whose public transport expenses are relatively high. Members were pleased to note that the Scheme is simple and easy to understand, and that neither application nor pre-registration of Octopus is required. Collection of subsidy is also simple. Commuters just need to tap their Octopus at the designated subsidy collection channels and the subsidy will be credited to the Octopus automatically."

Members also noted that the Government would closely monitor the operation of the Scheme upon implementation and would commence the first review of the Scheme around a year after the Scheme's implementation (i.e. early 2020) to examine its effectiveness, impacts on the travelling patterns of commuters and the overall strategic arrangement of public transport services, as well as its financial implications having regard to actual data.

[Hong Kong Customs seizes suspected smuggled smartphones and watches \(with photo\)](#)

Hong Kong Customs yesterday (December 17) seized 5 443 suspected smuggled smartphones and 90 suspected smuggled watches at Lok Ma Chau Control Point with an estimated market value of about \$20 million in total.

Customs officers intercepted an outgoing container truck at Lok Ma Chau Control Point for inspection yesterday and seized the batch of smartphones and watches in the driving cabin.

The 36-year-old male driver was arrested. Investigation is ongoing.

Smuggling is a serious offence. Under the Import and Export Ordinance,

any person found guilty of importing or exporting unmanifested cargo is liable to a maximum fine of \$2 million and imprisonment for seven years.

Members of the public may report any suspected smuggling activities to Customs' 24-hour hotline 2545 6182 or its dedicated crime-reporting email account (crimereport@customs.gov.hk).



Employment and vacancies statistics for September 2018

According to the figures released today (December 18) by the Census and Statistics Department (C&SD), total employment in the private sector surveyed increased by 1.0% or 27 900 persons in September 2018 compared with a year earlier. The total number of vacancies was 78 340, representing an increase of 10% or 7 190 over the preceding year.

Employment statistics

In September 2018, the selected industries as a whole employed 2 871 700 persons. The import and export trade engaged 476 000 persons, followed by the professional and business services (excluding cleaning and similar services) engaging 303 100 persons, the retail trade 273 100 persons, and the food and beverage services 251 600 persons.

Employment increased in many surveyed industries compared with a year earlier. Increases in employment were mainly recorded in the industries of accommodation services (covering hotels, guesthouses, boarding houses and other establishments providing short term accommodation) (5.8% or 2 200 persons), professional and business services (excluding cleaning and similar services) (3.5% or 10 300 persons), human health services (3.2% or 4 000 persons), food and beverage services (3.1% or 7 500 persons), and financing and insurance (2.8% or 6 200 persons). On the other hand, employment decreased mainly in the industries of construction sites (manual workers only) (-11.4% or -13 900 persons) and manufacturing (-2.8% or -2 600

persons). Employment figures for selected major industries are shown in Table 1.

Vacancies statistics

Among the 78 340 private sector vacancies, 12 060 were from the industry of food and beverage services, 8 120 from professional and business services (excluding cleaning and similar services), 8 010 from retail trade, 6 230 from import and export trade, and 6 030 from financing and insurance.

Vacancies increased in majority of the selected industries in September 2018 over a year earlier. Increases were mainly observed in the industries of professional and business services (excluding cleaning and similar services) (1 380 or 21%); food and beverage services (1 280 or 12%); education (970 or 25%); and transportation, storage, postal and courier services (880 or 24%). On the other hand, vacancies decreased mainly in the industries of construction sites (manual workers only) (-310 or -38%) and retail trade (-120 or -1%). Job vacancies figures for selected major industries are shown in Table 2.

Analysed by major occupation category, private sector vacancies were observed mainly in the categories of service and sales workers (22 980 vacancies), elementary occupations (15 520 vacancies), associate professionals (15 350 vacancies), and clerical support workers (9 390 vacancies). Job vacancies figures by major occupation category are shown in Table 3.

Seasonally adjusted statistics

For discerning the latest trend in employment and vacancies in the private sector, it is useful to look at changes over a three-month period in the respective seasonally adjusted figures. Compared with June 2018, both the seasonally adjusted total employment and total vacancies in the surveyed industries increased by 0.1% in September 2018. The changes over three-month periods in the seasonally adjusted series of employment and vacancies are shown in Table 4.

Other information

The above employment and vacancies statistics were obtained from the Quarterly Survey of Employment and Vacancies and the Quarterly Employment Survey of Construction Sites conducted by the C&SD. In the former survey, some economic activities (e.g. those dominated by self-employment, including taxi operators and hawkers) are not covered. Therefore, the respective employment and vacancies figures relate only to those selected industries included in the survey. In the latter survey on construction sites, employment and vacancies figures relate to manual workers only.

A detailed breakdown of the above statistics is published in the following reports:

"Quarterly Report of Employment and Vacancies Statistics, September 2018"

(www.censtatd.gov.hk/hkstat/sub/sp452.jsp?productCode=B1050003)

"Quarterly Report of Employment and Vacancies at Construction Sites,
September 2018"

(www.censtatd.gov.hk/hkstat/sub/sp452.jsp?productCode=B1050004)

Users can download these publications free of charge at the website of the C&SD.

Enquiries on more detailed employment and vacancies statistics can be directed to the Employment Statistics and Central Register of Establishments Section, C&SD (Tel: 2582 5076; fax: 2827 2296; email: employment@censtatd.gov.hk).