

Transcript of remarks by STH

Following is the transcript of remarks at a media session by the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Mr Frank Chan Fan, after attending a radio programme this morning (January 19):

Reporter: Secretary, the Government has been trying to lobby and persuade lawmakers to support the proposal next Wednesday. Are you hopeful though so far given the conversations and discussions with lawmakers? And you also mentioned during the radio show that some lawmakers had suggested maybe the toll rise for the Eastern Harbour tunnel and Cross-Harbour Tunnel in Hung Hom can be a little less but you sort of rejected the idea as well. Could you explain why?

Secretary for Transport and Housing: When we are talking about the rationalisation of toll, we have to bear in mind the impact on drivers of private cars, taxi operators and motorcycle drivers. We are talking about a change in behaviour in the use of different tunnels. Therefore, the tunnel toll, the time taken to pass the tunnel, and the kind of perception of drivers' concern will come into play. A modest change in pricing would have induced less change in behaviour and the sustaining of the change in behaviour in the longer term. We have conducted a survey in respect of the inclination of drivers as to whether or not they would use the same tunnel or divert to use other tunnels and whether or not they would stop using that tunnel. We do have a conclusion as to the kind of change at different levels of toll. That is why we have explained very frankly to our friends in the legislature that such a change of below \$40 for the Cross-Harbour Tunnel in Hung Hom and the Eastern cross harbour tunnel (Eastern Harbour Crossing) would have less impact on their change of behaviour and consequently the queue length and also the delay congestion would be even much longer for the Hung Hom Cross-Harbour Tunnel and Eastern harbour tunnel (Eastern Harbour Crossing).

Reporter: ... on Wednesday, you are going to get the non-binding motion passed. Also you mentioned some difficulties in the Government's discussion with the operator of the Western harbour tunnel. Could you talk about that?

Secretary for Transport and Housing: We are facing quite a challenge in convincing our friends in the legislature to give us their entire support but we (have been) and are still working very hard from day one until now. We will continue to work (hard) until next Wednesday with a hope to convince them to give us their support. What we are talking about is not just about the rationalisation of toll for the three tunnels concerned. We are talking about the efficiency, the ease of transport. The entire transport infrastructure is not meant only for private cars but also for every person taking public transport in Hong Kong and the transport of food, products and waste. A city won't work if its transport system is congested or stuck. It won't be healthy because transport system of a city is very much like the circulation system of a human body. If the circulation is not good, the health of the body would not be good either.

(Please also refer to the Chinese portion of the transcript.)