

Transcript of remarks by STH

Following is the transcript of remarks by the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Mr Frank Chan Fan, at a media session at the lobby of the West Wing in Central Government Offices today (January 22):

Reporter: Secretary, could you first explain why there is a sudden change? Because just hours earlier you were saying that you still had the slightest hope that the proposal will win enough votes in the Legislative Council. My second question is that you mentioned that there could be room for some minor changes, some concessions, small concessions. What sort of concessions are you talking about? Because you said the big framework, the tolls, shouldn't be changed. So are you thinking about subsidies or allowances for drivers, the transitional period? What do you have in mind? And thirdly, you mentioned that you are trying to persuade lawmakers, to spend the next two months to try to persuade the lawmakers. If you don't win enough support after two months, what's next?

Secretary for Transport and Housing: As you would be aware that throughout the process when we started promoting and campaigning for the acceptance of the motion by our friends in the legislature, we have been taking a very positive and very proactive approach to explain and earn their trust and acceptance of the proposal. But so far as you would appreciate, every one of them is speaking not because of something fundamental of difference, but rather focusing on the toll of the Cross Harbour Tunnel and the Eastern Harbour Crossing. That is why if these are the only differences or the major concerns they have, I would think that there are rooms for further discussion and agreement, and that is the belief we have in mind. Of course, when you ask whether or not there are rooms for changes, be it minor or major, we are rather open in that aspect because so far when we talked with our friends in the legislature, not many of them have come up with a concrete proposal per se. Instead, they would suggest us to lower the toll of the Cross Harbour Tunnel and the Eastern Harbour Crossing. Since these are things that we can't change unilaterally, I have explained to them that if they are agreeable to keeping these agreements in principal intact, perhaps we can focus on things that we can talk about, which are of value and benefit to the community at large. Therefore, we do have a hope and belief that we would be able to make it. Of course, whether or not we could make it depends on the reception and responses of friends in the legislature.

Reporter: What are things...

Secretary for Transport and Housing: We haven't come to that yet, I must say. Because since the time we introduced the motion, we haven't had that much of time to talk about whether or not and how we are going to make compromises. As you have reported during the past few months, the focus is mainly on toll. So there had not been any concrete suggestion or proposal put forward, and we are looking into that with an open mind.

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