

LCQ10: Development of piazza in Tsim Sha Tsui

Following is a written reply by the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Mrs Rita Lau, to a question by the Hon Frederick Fung in the Legislative Council today (February 23):

Question:

Regarding the Government's plan to relocate the bus terminus facing the Tsim Sha Tsui Star Ferry Pier (the bus terminus) with a view to releasing the site for development into a piazza, will the Government inform this Council:

(a) of the latest progress of the aforesaid development plan and the expected timetable for relocation of the bus terminus and development of the piazza;

(b) in drawing up the aforesaid development plan, whether the authorities have consulted, comprehensively and in detail, the views of the various stakeholders and concern groups; if so, of the major views for and against the plan obtained, and how the authorities have finally reached the decision of relocating the bus terminus; in planning and implementing the proposal on relocating the bus terminus, how the authorities will meet the public's aspirations of conserving the bus terminus as people's collective memories and maintaining the important function of the bus terminus as an interchange for land and sea transport, as well as the public's request for promoting the use of ferries to alleviate the traffic burden on the Cross Harbour Tunnel in Hung Hom; and

(c) given that the main objective of the development of the piazza is to provide a new public open space for local residents and visitors for leisure and holding activities, and it has been learnt that the economic benefits involved are not very substantial, whether the authorities will consider adopting a policy direction which promotes conservation and alleviates the traffic burden on the cross harbour tunnels, and on the basis of shelving the plan of relocating the bus terminus, and re-examine other means to enhance the site so as to achieve preserving people's collective memories, while at the same time redevelop the site into an important land and sea transport interchange with additional facilities provided (including bicycle parking spaces, etc.) for attracting and facilitating the public to use ferries to cross the harbour; if they will not, of the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

In June 2005, the Finance Committee of the Legislative Council (LegCo) approved funding for the construction of a "Transport Link in Tsim Sha Tsui (TST) East", which included developing a new public transport interchange (PTI) adjacent to the Wing On Plaza to replace the existing bus terminus outside the TST Star Ferry Pier, so that the waterfront site can be released for development into a piazza.

My reply to the three parts of the question is as follows:

(a) The new PTI in TST East, which constitutes the first phase of the scheme for relocation of the TST Star Ferry Pier bus terminus for development of a piazza, was already completed and has commenced operation since August 2007. Currently, two bus routes have been relocated to the new bus terminus there. According to our plan, the Transport Department (TD) would, having regard to the progress of the piazza project, relocate the bus routes using the TST Star Ferry Pier bus terminus to the new bus terminus in phases, and would also continue to listen to the views of different parties to the bus routes relocation plan.

The construction of a new turnaround outside the Hong Kong Cultural Centre (HKCC) forms the second phase of the development. The new turnaround will enable the majority of bus routes currently terminating at the TST Star Ferry Pier terminus to continue to call at the TST Star Ferry Pier when the relocation of bus routes to TST East is completed. Bus stops to be provided outside HKCC will facilitate the boarding and alighting of bus passengers, who could take only 1 - 2 minutes' walk to the Pier. The Administration is currently following up with the gazettal of works for the turnaround road scheme.

The third phase of the development involves the construction of a piazza. The Tourism Commission obtained the support of the LegCo Panel on Economic Development in June 2008 to organise an open design competition for the planned piazza. Adjudication for the design competition has completed, and results would be announced later.

(b) Since 2002, we have conducted a series of public consultation on the proposed relocation of the TST Star Ferry Pier bus terminus for development of a piazza. Apart

from the general public, those consulted included relevant stakeholders and organisations such as public transport operators, the tourism and hotel trade, District Councils (DCs), members of the local community, etc.

In February 2003, Yau Tsim Mong District Council (YTMDC) gave in-principle support for the plan of relocating the bus terminus outside the TST ferry pier to TST East, and developing the site into piazza. YTMDC further endorsed the conceptual design for the new bus terminus in TST East in April 2004. Between 2004 and 2005, TD consulted the Yau Tsim Mong, Kowloon City, Wong Tai Sin, Kwun Tong and Sham Shui Po DCs about the relocation plan for bus routes using the TST ferry bus terminus. The various DCs had no objection to the plan. Noting the results of the public consultation, the LegCo's Finance Committee approved funding for the construction of the new PTI in TST East in June 2005.

Since then, we have continued to explore the possible uses and modes of development and management of the piazza with different parties through various channels. In May 2007, we organised a workshop to facilitate the exchange of views among professional bodies, business operators in the vicinity of the future piazza, developers, public transport operators, the travel and hotel trades, and members of YTMDC. We also conducted a three-month online public consultation exercise on the uses and development and management modes of the piazza. In parallel, we continued to approach different stakeholders and organisations to obtain their views and discuss the project with them, including the YTMDC, Sub-committee on Harbour Plan Review and Task Group on Management Model for the Harbourfront of the former Harbour-front Enhancement Committee (HEC), related professional bodies and the tourism trade.

In general, the majority of views collected, including those from YTMDC, the tourism sector and former HEC sub-committees, inclined to support the development of the piazza. Some expressed concerns over the vehicular and pedestrian arrangements in the vicinity of the future piazza. The views collected on the piazza project were processed by an independent consultant, and summarised in a consultant report which has been uploaded on the Tourism Commission's (TC) website for public viewing.

During the gazettal for works of the turnaround in June 2009, the Administration also received objections concerning the possible impact of the traffic and transport arrangements in relation to the piazza project. Moreover, some considered that the

TST ferry bus terminus should be conserved so as to preserve the collective memory of the Hong Kong community. Having regard to the public views collected during the gazettal period, the Administration had revised the design of the turnaround scheme, and consulted the YTMDC's Traffic and Transport Committee (TTC) on the revised scheme in September 2010. At the TTC meeting, DC members expressed grave concerns over the possible impact of the turnaround and piazza project on the traffic flow in the vicinity. The TTC suggested that TD should, under the principle of maintaining smooth traffic flow, actively consider allowing all existing bus routes to return to the new turnaround in future, and should consult all affected DCs on the bus routes relocation plan. The revised turnaround scheme was gazetted in October 2010. We are currently considering further improvement measures in the light of TTC's concerns and other views collected during the gazettal period.

All along, the waterfront site adjacent to the TST Star Ferry Pier has been a focal point for sea-land transport. Bus stops and taxi stand will be provided at the new turnaround to be constructed under the piazza project so as to facilitate passengers using the Star Ferry. The new piazza will create synergy with its adjacent ferry pier. With the completion of the piazza, the site will continue to serve as a focal point for sea-land transport.

In planning for the piazza project, one of the major principles is to retain in situ the existing TST Star Ferry Pier, Clock Tower, the five flag poles, and Mr Tseng Tsou-choi's graffiti at the pier. In addition, based on the rules of the design competition, the design of the future piazza should reflect the history of the area, so as to conserve the collective memory of the Hong Kong community.

(c) The proposed piazza will effectively link up the various attractions, cultural facilities, and activity nodes in its vicinity. Together with the TST Clock Tower which is one of the top ten tourism attractions of Hong Kong, the magnificent harbour view and the Star Ferry, the future piazza will become another popular focal point for both locals and visitors, and a prime attraction and landmark displaying community and historic characteristics.

We have all along been consulting the public on the proposed relocation of the TST Star Ferry Pier bus terminus for development of a piazza. We will continue to communicate with various parties for further assessment of the project proposal. We will balance the different views received before firming up the implementation of the project.

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