

TRANSPORT NEWS – December 2001

Speech by Deputy Commissioner for Transport on ITS

The following is a speech (English only) titled Transport Department's Strategy to Enhance the Performance of the Hong Kong Transport System through the Deployment of Intelligent Transport Systems by the Deputy Commissioner for Transport, Mr George F. K. Lai at the Sixth Conference of the Hong Kong Society for Transport Studies on December 1:

Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS) are not new to Hong Kong. We have been deploying advanced information and telecommunication technologies to enhance the safety, efficiency, reliability, user and environmental friendliness of our transport system for the past twenty years. Area traffic control, traffic control & surveillance, autotoll, Octopus Card, electronic parking meters, red light and speed enforcement cameras, are some of the ITS applications in Hong Kong that have been introduced to satisfy the traveling needs of the community. These are single-purpose systems and have been developed and implemented mostly in small scales and on a project-by-project basis.

Indeed, the development of ITS has become a world-wide trend in the past decade and various applications are now widely used in Europe, the U.S.A., Japan and many other countries. Rather than continuing with the development of stand-alone systems, the present day ITS emphasize on the integration of systems as well as the integration of functions, both transport and non-transport.

THE NEED FOR AN ITS STRATEGY

In the light of the present trend of ITS deployment, the development of an integrated ITS Strategy which meets the following objectives is required:

Creating greater efficiency in traffic management

Providing better and more informed choices to road users with access to real-time information

Facilitating better interaction among people, roads and vehicles

Enhancing better utilization of existing transport infrastructure

Accordingly, Transport Department initiated an in-house ITS Strategy Review Study

in May 2000 to develop a strategy and a long-term development plan of ITS applications in Hong Kong. The Study examined the technical, administrative and financial requirements of implementing an ITS Strategy in Hong Kong to ensure that different systems developed under the Strategy are compatible and coordinated, and that seamless integrated services can be provided to all road users effectively and efficiently.

AN ITS FRAMEWORK

By making reference to overseas experience, we have drawn up an ITS Framework for Hong Kong that embodied the following Applications Areas which are considered suitable under our local environment:

- Transport Information
- Urban Traffic Management
- Strategic Road Network Management
- Public Transport
- Safety and Enforcement
- Payment, Toll and Parking
- Commercial/Emergency Vehicle Operation
- Pedestrian/Cyclist Facility
- Intelligent Vehicle
- Road Works, and
- Customer Services

The ITS Framework as shown in the chart below defines the relationships and interaction of various components in ITS systems and services to achieve optimum deployment of the selected ITS applications in Hong Kong. It is functional and service driven, instead of technology driven. As such, it is consistent with the socio-economic conditions and development of Hong Kong.

Within this framework, we have formulated an ITS Strategy for Hong Kong by identifying core projects to be implemented by Government and value-added services to be developed by the private sector.

THE ITS STRATEGY FOR 2001 TO 2010

The ITS Strategy for 2001 to 2010 includes two initiatives, viz., "A Smart Way to

Travel" and "A Smart Way for Safety and Efficiency", to support the long term ITS objectives. Core projects are selected to form the Strategy for the coming 10 years.

A Smart Way to Travel

Under this initiative, a Transport Information System (TIS) as the centralized data warehouse will be set up in TD. Adopting spatial information and web-based technologies, TIS would support real-time updating and retrieval of transport and traffic information such as traffic conditions, progress of road works, traffic diversion measures and public transport services.

Traffic information will be made available to Government agencies for planning and management of their transport related operations. Transport operators such as bus companies, railway companies, tunnel operators and commercial vehicle fleet operators would also be able to gain access to TIS and hence adjust their operation readily to cope with changes in the traffic conditions. Based on TIS, the private sector, such as third party service providers, would be able to develop value-added applications such as fleet management, personal notification of traffic conditions via mobile telephones, and in-vehicle route display units for drivers.

Eventually, traffic and transport information would be provided to the public directly or through service providers via variable message signs on roads, Internet, media, and mobile phones. Henceforth, with TIS and value-added services in place:

you can receive a message on your mobile phone in the morning telling you that one public transport service has been interrupted and advising you to take an alternative mode instead;

you can find the cheapest or fastest trip by travelling on different modes of public transport; and

you can find the shortest route by driving from point A to point B avoiding congested areas and obtain information on car parks near your destination.

A Smart Way for Safety and Efficiency

In Hong Kong, traffic is managed and monitored by computerized traffic signals operated through Area Traffic Control (ATC) systems, and traffic control & surveillance (TCS) facilities installed on highways, such as closed circuit television (CCTV) systems, variable message signs and lane control signals.

However, the present ATC systems only cover the urban areas and the New Towns of Tsuen Wan/Kwai Tsing and Shad Tin/Ma On Shan, and the TCS facilities are only installed on limited sections of expressways such as Tuen Mun Road, North Lantau Expressway and Western Kowloon Expressway. These systems are controlled by their respective control centres with limited linkage among them.

Therefore, under this initiative, the priority is to have comprehensive traffic control and surveillance coverage over the territory and to instigate territorial-wide coordination among control centres for traffic and incident management. Accordingly, the following projects will be put in place:

Extension of the coverage of Area Traffic Control (ATC) Systems

Installation of Traffic Control and Surveillance (TCS) facilities on all major expressways

Establishment of Traffic Management and Information Centre (TMIC)

Implementation of the Journey Time Indication System (JTIS)

The proposed TMIC will coordinate territory-wide traffic and incident management. Specifically, it will have direct control of TCS facilities on the Strategic Road Network and ATC systems, and will co-ordinate with tunnel/bridge control centers. TMIC will also serve as a major source of real-time traffic information for TIS.

In addition, JTIS will be implemented on Hong Kong Island as a pilot project to advise motorists the estimated journey time for travelling to the Kowloon exits of the three cross-harbour tunnels.

With comprehensive coverage of TCS and ATC, the establishment of TMIC and the implementation of JTIS, well-coordinated territory-wide traffic and incident management, safety and efficiency in travelling would be assured.

PRIVATE SECTOR INITIATIVES

TIS and TMIC would form part of the transport infrastructure to be provided by the Government to make our transport system more efficient and user-friendly. In addition, they would provide the necessary information to facilitate commercial utilization such as development of car navigation systems for motorists and fleet management systems for public transport and freight operators. With the launching of the 3rd Generation

Mobile Phone, it is expected that general information packages and personalized services for individual road users would also become more popular.

BENEFITS OF "ITS"

The implementation of ITS would bring about significant benefits to our society. With more effective and efficient transport management, road capacity would increase and travelling time could be saved. Provision of ITS to produce more road capacity would also be a more cost-effective and environmentally friendly alternative to the building of new roads.

With improved traffic control, automated enforcement and coordinated incident management, ITS could also reduce the occurrence of traffic accidents and lessen the probability of fatality arising from traffic accidents, making our transport system much safer for all road users.

The implementation of ITS would further enhance support to trade and commercial activities through better fleet management, thereby reducing operating costs and increasing productivity. The whole community would enjoy better services provided by a smarter transportation system. The implementation of ITS in Hong Kong could also help alleviate pressure for constructing new transport infrastructure and hence contributing to sustainability in the future development of Hong Kong.

ITS is now an established trend in developed countries like the U.S.A., U.K. and Japan. Development of ITS in other Asian countries, such as Singapore, South Korea and Mainland China, is also advancing rapidly. Hong Kong would need to press ahead with the implementation of ITS to maintain our competitiveness and to enhance the image of Hong Kong as a leading international city.

CONCLUSION

The ITS Strategy as formulated will form the blueprint for the development and implementation of ITS applications in Hong Kong for the coming years. Basically it includes a number of key projects that will be undertaken by Government. They would form the corner stones for the private sector to develop and provide value-added services to road users, public transport passengers and transport operators to meet their individual needs. With the joint effort by Government agencies, transport operators, academic institutions, industries, professional institutes and service

providers, we shall have a Smart Way to Travel and a Smart Way for Safety and Efficiency in Hong Kong very soon.

Transport Department Signs ATC and CCTV Agreement

Transport Department signed a \$4.08 million consultancy agreement with Delcan Arup Joint Venture on December 6 for the Design and Construction Assignment for Area Traffic Control (ATC) and Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) Systems for Tuen Mun and Yuen Long Districts.

The Consultants shall be responsible for the detailed design and the administration of the contracts for implementation of the works. The assignment will commence on December 7, 2001. Subject to availability of fund from the Government, the construction works will commence in September 2003 for completion in November 2005.

Upon completion of the project, all the existing and planned signalized junctions in Tuen Mun and Yuen Long (approximately 280 in nos.) will be controlled under ATC system. By using the state-of-the-art technique, the proposed ATC system will interface with the existing signaling system of the Light Rail Transit (LRT), and will centrally co-ordinate traffic signal timings to minimize vehicle stoppage and delay resulting in reduction of journey time.

The ATC system will operate the traffic signals in a traffic responsive manner by automatically adjusting the signal plans and timings to meet the prevailing traffic conditions measured through detectors on the roads.

On the other hand, the CCTV system will facilitate monitoring the traffic conditions in the districts through the use of the CCTV cameras. About 47 nos. of remote controlled CCTV cameras will be installed at key roadside locations and be linked to the ATC Control Centre of the Transport Department for close traffic monitoring.

It is expected that the combined systems would substantially improve the efficiency of the road network in Tuen Mun and Yuen Long.

Taxi drivers appealed to join hands to improve taxi business: C for T

The Commissioner for Transport, Mr Robert Footman, appealed to members of the taxi trade to keep up their good work and join hands with the Transport Department and taxi trade leaders to improve the operating environment of the taxi trade.

Mr Footman made the appeal in an open letter addressing to all taxi trade members. He also personally distributed the open letters at LPG refilling stations in Kwun Tong and West Kowloon, on December 27 where he took the opportunity to issue the new version of the taxi service guide to taxi drivers he met.

In the letter, Mr Footman acknowledged that the income of taxi trade had decreased significantly from since 1997 owing to the economic downturn and the fragile consumer sentiment of the public.

He reaffirmed the Transport Department's commitment to help improve the operating environment of the taxi trade.

The Commissioner wrote the Transport Department had implemented a number of measures to improve taxi business in the past two years.

The measures included the relaxation of 700 restricted zones, designation of more than 30 taxi pick-up and drop-off points/ drop-off points and the implementation of a trial scheme of hiring taxis to assist Transport Department staff in discharging official duties in November this year.

Mr Footman wrote: "The Department will designate more taxi pick-up and drop-off points / drop-off points by the coming Chinese new years. We are examining the feasibility of permitting use of LED display panel on roof-top of taxis for advertisement to help generate additional revenue."

"Furthermore, we are also working with the Housing Department to devise appropriate measures to facilitate taxi operations at public housing estates."

Mr Footman also thanked the eight taxi trade members of the Working Group on Relaxation of Restricted Zones for Taxis and other taxi associations for their co-operation and support rendered to uplifting of clearway restrictions and the

implementation of various quality taxi projects in the past two years.

The new version of the taxi service guide is published to disseminate the relevant information on taxi services to taxi drivers, local passengers and tourists. The taxi service guide printed in bilingual contains useful information like taxi fares, 24-hours hotline for lost property on taxis, telephone numbers of taxi radio call stations, taxi service standards, and conduct of taxi passengers.

Copies of the service guide are available at Transport Department's licensing offices, district offices, the Airport Authority, tourist information centres of the Hong Kong Tourism Board, taxi associations and dedicated LPG refilling stations. The service guide will also be uploaded onto TD's homepage to facilitate Internet users.

Public urged to use public transport during New Year holiday

The Transport Department urges members of the public to make use of public transport services as far as possible and pay attention to a series of special traffic and transport arrangements to be implemented on New Year's Eve and New Year Day.

A spokesman for the Department said on December 29: "Traffic in shopping areas on New Year's Eve and New Year Day will be busier than usual.

" Moreover, road closures and traffic diversions will take place in busier districts like Central, Wan Chai, Causeway Bay and Tsim Sha Tsui where on-streets parking spaces will temporarily be suspended, it is very difficult for motorists to find parking spaces in these areas."

"As public transport operators will strengthen and extend their services to cater for demand, motorists are strongly advised not to use private cars and make use of public transport services instead."

On the public transport front, services of a number of bus and minibus routes will be extended or strengthened on New Year's Eve.

Both Mass Transit Railway (MTR) (Island, Tsuen Wan, Kwung Tong and Tung Chung Lines) and the East Rail of Kowloon-Canton Railway (Hung Hom - Sheung

Shui) will provide round-the-clock service on New Year's Eve. Hongkong Tramways and Peak Tram will extend their services on December 31 till early morning of January 1, 2002. Light Rail will provide normal Sunday and public holiday services.

Ferry services between Central/Wan Chai and Tsim Sha Tsui will also be extended on New Year's Eve while ferry services from Central to Cheung Chau, Mui Wo, Peng Chau, Yung Shu Wan and Discovery Bay will have additional sailings provided.

Those intending to take the Lok Ma Chau-Huanggang Cross-boundary shuttle bus during the holiday are advised to set out as early as possible to avoid last minute rush.

"While the number of passengers will increase significantly during public holidays, the service period for the shuttle bus (6.30 am to 11.30 pm) will not be extended," said the spokesman.

Passengers are advised to call the shuttle bus' enquiry hotline 2471 0792 before departing for the Lok Ma Chau terminus.

The Department also appealed to tourist companies who feed patrons to the Lok Ma Chau terminus for transfer to the shuttle bus to evenly spread out their trips throughout the day to help reduce their patrons' waiting time for the service.

Transport Department will closely monitor both local and cross-boundary traffic during the holiday, and will take prompt action whenever necessary.

Details of the special traffic arrangements during New Year holiday are now available at the "Traffic Notices" of the Department's Homepage (http://www.info.gov.hk/td/eng/notice/specialtravel/specialtravel_index.html).

PLBNet launched to enhance PLB quality service

A newsletter for the Public Light Bus (PLB) trade - "PLB Net"- was today launched on December 29 to enhance the quality of the PLB service.

The newsletter, in Chinese language only, was produced by the Quality Public Light Bus Service Steering Committee (QPSSC) to promote awareness of the PLB operators and drivers on PLB matters.

A total of 15,000 copies were printed and distributed to members of the trade.

Distributing the newsletters to PLB drivers and passengers at a green minibus terminus at Star Ferry to mark the launching of the Newsletter, the Commissioner for Transport, Mr Robert Footman, said: "Publication of this newsletter could disseminate the message of quality PLB services within the trade as well as strengthen the communications among trade members and the Government.

The newsletter carries articles from the PLB trade, information on traffic and environmental matters, codes on good PLB driver and passenger, etc. Public can collect the newsletter at TD Licensing Offices or District Offices or visit Transport Department's web site at www.info.gov.hk/td."

The Chairman of the QPSSC, Mr Yeung Ka-sing, said: "I hope the newsletter will become a forum of exchange among PLB trade, PLB drivers and the Transport Department, and lead us to strive towards the aim of providing quality PLB services."

"Besides the newsletter, other projects to promote service quality include a PLB Passenger Satisfaction Survey, Workshops for PLB operators, a Quality PLB Driver Award Scheme, driver training and improvements on passenger facilities, including displaying of enquiry hotline, driver's name plate, installation of grip handle, call bell and speed display unit on PLBs," Mr Yeung added.

The QPSSC comprises representatives from the PLB trade associations, Transport Bureau, Transport Department, Police Force, District Councils, Hong Kong Tourism Board as well as the Consumer Council.

Motor-driven bicycle/skateboard must be licensed for road use

All motor-driven bicycles and skateboards, which are classified as motorcycles by law, must be registered and licensed according to the requirements of Road Traffic Ordinance Cap. 374 for use on roads, regardless of their size and fuel type.

A Transport Department (TD) spokesman said: "It is illegal to use motor-driven bicycles and skateboards, including those propelled by electricity, on roads in Hong Kong if they have not been registered and licensed, even the power is switched off."

"Driving an unlicensed vehicle is liable to a maximum fine of \$5,000 and imprisonment for 3 months on first conviction."

The spokesman added that whether a vehicle would be registered and licensed depended on its compliance with the requirements in the Road Traffic (Construction and Maintenance of Vehicles) Regulations. Owners of motor-driven bicycles and skateboards could submit their vehicles to TD for type approval or pre-registration inspection. Relevant information was available at offices of TD's Licensing Branch and TD's website (<http://www.info.gov.hk/td>).

The spokesman pointed out that major faults found on most motor-driven bicycles and skateboards included weak and misaligned vehicle frames, weak steering handle bar and seating frame, insufficient and unreliable braking system, inadequate lightings and reflectors, lacking essential equipment such as rear view mirror and speedometer.

"Most of them would unlikely meet requirements of relevant regulations, therefore unsuitable and illegal to be used on roads," he added.

Road Traffic Ordinance Cap. 374 specifies that "road" includes every highway, thoroughfare, street, lane, alley, court, square, car park, passage, path, way and place to which the public have access either continuously or intermittently, whether or not the same is the property of the Government. A public park is therefore a road. Driving those unregistered or unlicensed vehicles in private road shall also be illegal unless the private roads in question have been specified by notice in the Gazette.

TD has issued a letter to all selling agents and shops reminding them of the need for those vehicles to comply with relevant regulations for use on roads. Relevant notice is requested to be displayed in the shops to alert potential buyers.

Source: Information & Public Relations Unit