

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

THB(T)036

(Question Serial No. 1746)

Head: (60) Highways Department
Subhead (No. & title): (-) Not Specified
Programme: (2) District and Maintenance Works
Controlling Officer: Director of Highways (Daniel K W CHUNG)
Director of Bureau: Secretary for Transport and Housing

Question:

It is stated in the Estimates that the Highways Department (HyD) is responsible for the maintenance of all public roads. There are quite a number of roads in the territory with damaged surfaces or defects, including openings, cracks or unevenness, posing danger to pedestrians, cyclists and other road users. Would the Government inform this Committee on -

- (i) The total expenditure and the average expenditure per kilometre for maintenance of public roads over the past 3 years;
- (ii) Does the Government have any dedicated staff for carrying out regular inspections of road conditions as well as handling maintenance tasks? If yes, what are the details (including the number, establishment, ranks and situations at work of the staff);
- (iii) It is a common phenomenon for road surfaces to remain uneven after repairs. What are the methods of repairs currently adopted by the Government and what is the expenditure on road repairs? Has the Government considered introducing methods of repairs that can better safeguard the safety of pedestrians and cyclists, such as those that can completely level the openings, cracks or uneven surfaces?

Asked by: Hon KWOK Wing-hang, Dennis (Member Question No. 101)

Reply:

- (i) The total expenditure and the average expenditure per kilometre for maintenance of public roads by the HyD over the past 3 years are as follows –
2014 – \$979.1 million (total expenditure); \$466,000 (average expenditure per kilometre)
2015 – \$921.1 million (total expenditure); \$438,000 (average expenditure per kilometre)
2016 – \$955.7 million (total expenditure); \$454,000 (average expenditure per kilometre)
- (ii) The HyD currently arranges contractors through 8 maintenance contracts to conduct regular inspection on public roads in the territory and makes timely arrangement for repairs to wear and tear as well as damaged road surfaces, with the HyD responsible for supervising the contractor's work. As at 31 March 2016, the HyD has an

establishment of 974 staff members under the Programme of District and Maintenance Works who are tasked with district administration and highway maintenance. District administration involves commenting on road matters related to land sale, public and private sector development plans and provision of accesses, as well as the implementation of minor road improvement works. Road maintenance includes routine road inspections, planning and managing road maintenance programme, supervising maintenance works, handling public complaints, managing the emergency control centres to deal with emergency matters such as landslips, washouts and fallen trees, as well as co-ordination of excavation works carried out by public utilities. Road inspection and handling of maintenance works are only part of the district administration and maintenance works. There is no breakdown on the staff establishment for road inspection and handling of maintenance works.

- (iii) The work of road maintenance can roughly be divided into “corrective repairs” and “planned maintenance”. Corrective repair works cover rectification of defects identified through reports received or regular visits and inspections to return the road surfaces to normal conditions as soon as possible. Corrective repair works mainly involve works such as patching of pot holes or small-scale repairs to road surfaces. On the other hand, planned maintenance is preventive in nature, the priorities and programmes of which are determined on the basis of the design standard and current conditions of individual highway facilities, as well as the quality and durability of the materials employed. The aim of planned maintenance works is to allow more comprehensive rehabilitation works bringing long lasting improvement when the facilities show signs of partial wear and tear but yet to develop into extensive serious defects. Such works are usually of a larger scale and take more time to complete.

In general, for non-structural defects which affect road safety (such as uneven road surfaces, pot holes, etc.), the HyD will use bituminous material or rapid hardening material as patching substance to rectify the defective road surfaces as soon as possible, so as to maintain the road in safe and proper conditions for public use. In contrast, road resurfacing which is generally of larger scale and requires more time for completion, the time of road occupation will inevitably be longer with greater impact on traffic. Thus, when the HyD plans for road resurfacing, the overall road usage, anticipated rate of wear and tear as well as impacts on roads nearby and the environment will all be taken into account.

In view of the constraints brought about by traffic and construction noise, the HyD has proactively conducted research into various methods of maintenance and repairs, including employment of thermal patcher, precast concrete panels, etc. for more effective road maintenance. As regards the expenditure on road maintenance, please refer to the reply in (i) above.

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