

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Coordination among utility undertakings (UUs) in carrying out road opening works is one of the major concerns of the public. Upon implementation of the Excavation Permit Management System (XPMS), involved parties have been equipped with a better information tool for facilitating coordination. In order to achieve better utilization of the facilities and further enhancement on the coordination process, guidelines are prepared below for both the staff of Highways Department (HyD) and those of the UUs.

2.0 Guidelines on Case Formulation

2.1 A radius of 30m should generally be adopted for delineating the influence boundary of a 'Plan' for conducting the spatial analysis. This radius may be adjusted to cater for any specific circumstances as appropriate.

2.2 A "Case"¹ for coordination consists of a number of Plans with locations being in close proximity and the scheduled implementation times are also close to each other. However, not every Plan within the influence boundary will be required to incorporate into a Case. The responsible Inspectorate Staff of HyD (*hereafter called "IOW"*) should exercise judgment in selecting Plans to form a Case for coordination. The IOW should try to restrict the maximum number of Plans in a Case for coordination to less than 10 Plans. Also, a Case should not cover a road length longer than 1 kilometer.

2.3 The IOW may wish to break down a Case of excessive size at less important locations to yield Cases of smaller size. Anyhow, if a Case of excessive size is unavoidable, the UU responsible for triggering the coordination may seek assistance from the IOW at the first instance. With HyD's active participation, it is expected that resolution of conflicts amongst UUs can be made easier.

2.4 In this connection, UUs should avoid grouping works items without intrinsic relations² into a single Plan. It is noted that the 450m guideline for extent of a Plan has sometimes been abused for incorporating a large number of scattered

¹ A "Case" consists of a number of Plans with locations being in close vicinity, of which the scheduled implementation times are also close to each other.

² Works items with intrinsic relations are hereby defined as those works that must be carried out together within a relatively short time period due to technical reasons although they may not appear continuous on plan.

works items without intrinsic relations into a single Plan, which causes the Case coordination involving such Plans to be more difficult. IOW may refuse such Plans unless the UU can justify the intrinsic relations on the contrary.

- 2.5 When a Plan consisting a long alignment or different distinct alignments (*hereafter called “multi-relation Plan”*) causes different groups of plans to become having indirect relationship (*“different groups of plans” means each group of plans may be selected to form single Cases if the multi-relation Plan does not exist*), the IOW may follow the following guidelines to form a Case in order to limit the number of Plans in the Case:
- (i) The IOW should assess the effect of the multi-relation Plan to other existing plans by means of the information of sectional start and end dates shown in XPMS and put the multi-relation Plan with those closely related existing plans together to form a Case. If necessary, using the “Remark” box in XPMS to request other Cases to liaise with the multi-relation Plan to resolve their individual conflicting issues or;
 - (ii) If the multi-relation Plan is in connection with different groups of plans and the total number of plans not exceeding 10, a single Case should be formed; and
 - (iii) If the effect and interface issues of the multi-relation Plan are considered having significant effects to different groups of plans, the multi-relation plan should then be extracted to form a single Case. However, the IOW should request the multi-relation Plan to coordinate with other Plans which have interface with this multi-relation Plan by means of the “Remark” box in XPMS.

3.0 Guidelines on Case Coordination

- 3.1 For cases that have not been coordinated before, the Plan with the earliest proposed start date should take the lead in coordinating with other parties. However, if the Plan with the earliest start date is an infrequent XPMS user (*e.g. XP applicant using ad-hoc XPMS account*), the Plan with the second earliest proposed start date will be required to take the lead in the coordination exercise.
- 3.2 Notwithstanding the provisions in the above, if the utility works are required as a result of a HyD project and the utility excavations will be partially or entirely within HyD project sites, the responsible HyD staff shall initiate the coordination.

- 3.3 When a coordinated programme has been agreed by all parties within the Case, all concerned Plans within the Case must immediately amend their programmes respectively to reflect the coordinated programme, if any change is needed. Once the updating of all the affected Plans is done, the Plan which takes the lead in coordination can put forward the case to the IOW for acceptance through XPMS. As a good practice, the lead UU should keep records of agreed programmes in case of argument.
- 3.4 If the IOW accepts the coordinated programme, the case status will be changed to “coordinated”, and all the uncoordinated plans within the Case will also be set “coordinated”. Otherwise, the leading Plan will be informed of the rejected reason(s).
- 3.5 If a coordination request is received from the Plan which takes the lead or any other concerned Plans, the recipient should respond within two weeks by amending the programme, or reply by email if his works programme cannot be compromised. If there is any recipient reluctant to respond, other Plan(s) after two weeks, may report to the Excavation Permit Processing Team (XPPT) of HyD with evidence. XPPT can then consider taking the following actions as suitable to assist other Plans to achieve the coordination:
- (i) If one of the Plans in a coordinating case refuses to discuss/amend the programme, the leading Plan can write down the reasons in the comment box in XPMS and submit the incompletely coordinated programme to HyD for consideration.
 - (ii) If the leading Plan is considered not properly taking the lead of forming coordinated programme, individual plan can write down the reasons in the comment box in XPMS and submit his/her Plan to HyD direct for consideration.
- 3.6 The primary objective of coordination is to implement the potentially conflicting works in an efficient and effective manner, as well as to ensure that nuisance caused to the public is kept to the practical minimum. In line with the primary objective, IOWs will base on the following criteria to determine whether a proposed coordinated programme is acceptable:
- (i) Within a section of 20m in the same bound of a footpath or carriageway, only one XP should normally be working at any one time.
 - (ii) Overlapping of time programmes for different Plans is allowed provided

that the XPs could commence in a coordinated manner.

- (iii) Time gaps between works under successive Plans within the same Case should be avoided.
 - (iv) Subject to the above, the overall duration of the coordinated programme should be the shortest possible.
- 3.7 It is no doubt that common trench cooperation can minimize disruption to the public due to road works. In this connection, UUs should exercise due diligence on adopting common trench approach if circumstances render it feasible. In order to promote common trench cooperation, a document namely “Simple Guidelines on Common Trench Cooperation”, which is endorsed by the Joint Utilities Policy Group (JUPG), is appended in **Appendix 4.1.3** for UUs’ reference.

4.0 Alert Mechanism for Bring Up Problematic Cases

- 4.1 It is expected that coordination for a Case should be completed within one month under normal circumstances. Each Regional Office of HyD will generate a monthly report for uncoordinated Cases and upload the report to XPMS for UUs to download and for their reference. In monthly ROCC meetings, the Chairmen of ROCC will remind the responsible UUs of uncoordinated Cases to expedite coordination or to delete obsolete Plans.
- 4.2 Notwithstanding the above, should UUs encounter any problems that could not be resolved among themselves in the coordination process, they should approach HyD for assistance without waiting for the reminding reports. Upon request from UUs, the responsible HyD staff shall assist proactively to resolve those Cases remaining uncoordinated.

5.0 Procedures for Resolving Problematic Cases

- 5.1 It is understood that UUs are very cooperative with each other under most circumstances. Yet unresolved Cases may arise essentially owing to the following reasons:
- (i) The coordinator cannot contact the other persons designated to be responsible for other Plans in the Case.
 - (ii) Due to genuine technical difficulties, the involved UUs cannot amend their own programmes to suit each others.

- 5.2 It is noted that most of the unresolved Cases fall within the first category. To overcome the problem, the responsible UU of an unresolved Case may approach the Representative of the respective UU in ROCC to ask for assistance. Under extreme cases when the respective UU's ROCC representative also cannot be reached, the UU leading the coordination for the Case may acquire assistance from the responsible HyD inspectorate staff who shall try to approach the concerned ROCC representative direct. If the attempt still fails, HyD shall escalate the issue to the UTLC representative or other senior management of the concerned organization.
- 5.3 For problematic Cases due to genuine technical difficulties, the concerned UUs shall invite HyD to step in. With the opinion from HyD, it is expected that achievement of a compromised solution would be easier. In addition, the concerned UUs may also bring up the Case to the monthly ROCC meeting for acquiring a compromise programme. If all such measures have failed, HyD shall judge the Case and exercise authority in making the decision.