

12 September 2008

Dear Editor,

Why can't our potholes be fixed for good?

We refer to the subject article published in the “Leaders & Letters” section of the South China Morning Post dated 8 September 2008, concerning how the road resurfacing works are supervised and controlled by Highways Department (HyD). The author is also interested in the resurfacing works in Tsing Yi Road West and Tuen Mun Road. We wish to provide information on this topic for the reference of the readers.

HyD always attaches great importance to the material quality and workmanship of road resurfacing works. We have established control mechanism on this task. In brief, we provide full-time supervision to our road resurfacing works to ensure their proper execution by the contractors. We collect on-site bulk samples of asphaltic materials and core samples of all resurfacing works for laboratory testings to verify the material quality and workmanship in accordance with the contract specifications. Moreover, all newly completed works are subject to a defects liability period of 12 months in which the contractors are liable to rectifying any defects related to the sub-standard material quality and poor workmanship at their own costs.

Concerning Tuen Mun Road, it is an aged road built in 70's and is carrying extremely heavy traffic everyday. To keep the road in safe and serviceable conditions, we have to resurface it on regular basis. Some sections of the road, such as the uphill slow lanes, are under severe conditions and have to be resurfaced once every 2 years. For other road sections, resurfacing is less frequent. Given its long length and heavy traffic usage, we resurface the road in sections and in stages, so as to minimize traffic disruption. Our inspection records revealed that all recently completed resurfacing works are in proper condition. It is probably a confusion of road users to take different but close sections of resurfacing works as repeated resurfacing in a short period of time. In fact, they are not. For long-term improvement, we have planned to reconstruct the entire Tuen Mun Road. To this end, we have already completed the design and will commence the reconstruction works this year.

As regards Tsing Yi Road West, it has served for 20 years. Like Tuen Mun Road, we resurface the road on regular basis, in stages and in sections. We last resurfaced a 150-metre long section of its slow lane near the junction with Liu To Road in September 2007. This resurfaced lane has performed properly since then, except that its middle portion of about 30-metre long has suffered from rutting problem afterwards. Despite our resurfacing this portion of slow lane again in March 2008, the rutting problem recurred recently. According to our investigation, heavy trucks running on the slow lane start to take brake in the concerned portion of the lane for a gentle stop before the road junction. The old age of the pavement, coupled with more frequent exposure to stronger braking forces, cause earlier surface rutting in this portion of slow lane. To address the problem at root, mere resurfacing is no longer effective. We plan to reconstruct the entire depth of this portion of bituminous pavement, from its surface down to the founding base, so as to restoring the pavement in full strength to sustain frequent and strong braking forces thereat. We have taken steps to formulate temporary traffic measures for the reconstruction works and expect to commence the construction next month. Meanwhile, we would closely monitor the road condition and arrange timely temporary repairs to safeguard road safety.

We trust that the above would present to your readers a better picture on road resurfacing works.

Thank you for your attention.

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