

20 May 2009

Dear Editor,

Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge

We refer to the letter of Mr. E. E. J. Bunker (*'A bridge too fast'* , May 8) asking the planning position of the projects associated with the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge (HZMB).

The Government has planned to build the Hong Kong Link Road (HKLR) with about 12km long running through the Airport Channel, linking the HZMB Main Bridge at the HKSAR Boundary and the Hong Kong Boundary Crossing Facilities (HKBCF) to be located at the north-east waters off the Airport Island.

Concerning the HKBCF, the Government has examined various possible sites including reclamations at the eastern and western waters off the Airport Island, at Tai Ho and at Tung Chung Bay; and also land formation and/or reclamation options at San Shek Wan. Upon balancing all factors including environmental impact, transport and synergy effect, etc., we conclude the HKBCF to be reclaimed at the waters off the north-east of the Airport Island most preferable. Furthermore, being efficiently linked up with the roads on airport island and Tung Chung, North Lantau Highway as well as the North West New Territory via the Tuen Mun-Chek Lap Kok Link and with its proximity to the Airport Terminal, Sky-pier, MTR stations, the HKBCF will serve as a strategic multi-modal transportation hub for the benefit of Hong Kong and the Tung Chung residents.

Since September 2008, we have conducted a series of public consultation events. The final proposed layout has received support from various sectors in the community.

As regards the railway provision in HZMB, we have critically assessed the demand forecast, engineering requirements, attraction to passengers and compatibility with the planning of railway network in the Pearl River Delta etc.

From engineering perspective, the gradient of a freight railway line is considerably more demanding than that of a road link. As the HZMB will be constructed in bridge-cum-tunnel form, it will not be possible to accommodate both the freight railway line and the road in the same alignment. Besides, Tsing Ma Bridge was not designed for freight loadings, cargoes would need to be unloaded in Lantau Island before reloading onto trucks for transportation to urban areas which is extremely inconvenient and inefficient.

Traffic projection also shows that the incorporation of railways into the HZMB would not significantly increase the passenger flow volume, but will increase the project cost significantly.

Accordingly, railway provision in HZMB is not viable from engineering, overall railway planning and financial viability viewpoints.

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