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本局檔號 Our Ref. THB(T) L4/6/285

來函檔號 Your Ref.

14 April 2014

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Mr WONG Tak-yip
President
The Hong Kong Institute of Landscape Architects

Mr Raymond LEE
President
Hong Kong Institute of Planners

Prof. Bernard LIM
President
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Dear Presidents,

**Phase Two Public Engagement on
Pedestrian Environmental Improvement Scheme in Yuen Long Town**

Thank you for your letter dated 21 March 2014.

The existing Yuen Long town centre is overcrowded with heavy pedestrian activities. This is a long-standing concern of the Yuen Long District Council (YLDC) and the locals. There is an imminent need to resolve the congestion problem and provide a better and safer walking environment for the community. The proposed footbridge along Yuen Long Town Nullah aims at addressing the pressing traffic problem. It is the result of a series of public engagement exercises, and has received the support of the YLDC and the local community. The YLDC has in fact been urging for the early implementation of the project.

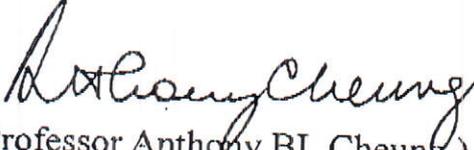
I fully appreciate the concerns of the Joint Institutes on the proposed footbridge scheme and your good intention to try to improve the pedestrian environment in Yuen Long town centre. The Director of Highways and his colleagues have been working closely with counterparts from the Institutes over the past few months through a Core Working Group (CWG) set up by your Institutes, to explore options that can address your concerns while achieving the objective of resolving the present pedestrian traffic congestion problem.

It is understood that the CWG came up with an alternative scheme in December 2013 for the Highways Department (HyD) to consider. The Transport Department (TD), however, had pointed out at the meeting that, as a prerequisite, any alternative scheme should be able to relieve the pedestrian congestion problem. As a follow up action, the consultant of the HyD has conducted a pedestrian flow analysis to assess the capability of this alternative scheme in diverting pedestrian flow away from the problematic areas. The result, which was presented to the CWG at a meeting in January 2014, indicated that the alternative scheme, whilst presenting no insurmountable difficulties to construct, could only bring very limited improvement to the critical crossings and footpaths. The forecast level of service at the critical pedestrian crossings and footpaths after implementing the alternative scheme would only be similar to the present situation. With this finding, the representative of the TD and the consultant of the HyD advised that they did not consider the alternative scheme to be effective in relieving congestion at existing footpaths and pedestrian crossings in Yuen Long town centre, and in removing the potential safety problem due to the possible overspilling of pedestrians onto the carriageway. TD also explained at the meeting that any new pedestrian scheme would normally need to achieve a level of service at Class "C" or above, but Class "D" might be acceptable under exceptional circumstances. The critical footpaths and crossings under the alternative scheme could not achieve the minimum acceptable level of service.

Since the alternative scheme is not effective in relieving congestion at existing footpaths and pedestrian crossings in Yuen Long town centre, it would be difficult for us to take it forward from the perspectives of road safety and improvement of pedestrian environment.

I have asked my Under Secretary, Mr YAU Shing-mu, to meet with you or your representatives, together with the HyD and TD, to discuss if there is any way to modify the alternative scheme such that the functional requirements of relieving the heavy pedestrian traffic situation could be satisfied. As you would agree, we have to strive to find the way forward as quickly as possible so as to address a longstanding concern of the local community. My colleagues will liaise with yours shortly to follow up.

Yours sincerely,


(Professor Anthony BL Cheung)
Secretary for Transport and Housing

c.c. Hon. Tony TSE
Permanent Secretary for Transport and Housing (Transport)
Director of Highways