

Community for Road Safety 道路安全研究小組

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Date: 2 November 2012

By email

Attention : Mr KK Ling/Ms Winnie Ho,

Dear Mr Ling/Ms Ho

Pedestrian Environment for East Kowloon and Kwun Tong Business District

We read with interest about Government's plan (news extract below) to commence a feasibility study on improving the pedestrian environment in Kowloon Bay and to evaluate improvement measures for the Kwun Tong Business District through footpath widening, traffic light adjustments, improvements to crossings and removal of traffic signs obstructing pedestrians. We welcome these moves and would like to offer our further views.

Conventional pedestrian improvement measures have contributed to much better safety conditions in Hong Kong. However, we have come to a bottleneck for further success i.e. high traffic speeds on urban streets which make crossing pedestrians particularly vulnerable whenever the idealised traffic rules have not been observed. This is often aggravated by impaired visibility due to railings, plantings, street furniture and parked vehicles. As a result, severe and fatal pedestrian accidents have continued to be a disturbing reality in our modern city. Likewise, perceived danger of speedy traffic tends to deter people from walking longer distance.

In the past two decades, lower speed limits on urban streets have become the norm in many European countries with great success. Various strategies have been developed and successfully deployed on a vast scale in urban areas. These include the "30km/h Zone", 40km/h speed limit and Shared Streets with speed limit up to 20km/h. In some circumstances, additional traffic calming devices such as raised plateau, crash cushion or chicane would be desirable. In their milder form, such devices may be used with relatively heavy traffic and on bus routes.

Lower speed limit increases safety by concurrently limiting harmful kinetic energy in a pedestrian collision and reducing braking distance in an emergency. Lower speed limit will marginally reduce average speeds for the majority of drivers and helps to suppress grossly inappropriate speeds adopted by a minority of irresponsible drivers.

We would like to stress that Lower Speed Limit for the minor street network and busy, mixed (traffic and pedestrian) main streets is crucial to making a breakthrough for both safety and quality of the pedestrian environment in Hong Kong. Unfortunately, current practice in Hong Kong has to date failed to recognize this important worldwide trend but rather strictly adheres to the outdated philosophy of a flat urban speed limit of 50km/h (Transport Planning and Design Manual TPDM Volume 6).

We are writing to recommend your inclusion of the following topics into the Consultants' Study Brief or evaluation agenda of Government's task force for East Kowloon:

1 Lower Speed Limit (30 and/or 40km/h) for secondary streets

- ❖ Formulation and comparison of alternative lower speed limit strategies and schemes
- ❖ Integration with street geometric criteria, traffic calming measures and streetscape design

2 Traffic Signs and Markings

- ❖ Strategy for reduced usage of traffic signs and markings
- ❖ Strategy for quality traffic sign design (graphics and mounting)

In addition to safety issues, the opportunity should be taken to improve pedestrian accessibility and create an overall environment which invites people to spend more time on the streets, by better integrating tree planting, seats, plazas and public parks with pedestrian routes. At-grade pedestrian connections between the existing industrial/residential areas and the waterfront should also be strengthened. Pedestrian underpasses and footbridges should be avoided except where absolutely necessary and attractive to use.

We are in a very good position to advise Government on strategies and techniques. We will be very glad to further explain our ideas in a meeting or with a presentation.

Yours faithfully,

(signed)

Julian TH Kwong

Chairman, Community for Road Safety

News Extract

【on.cc·東方互動·專訊】運輸及房屋局局長張炳良書面回覆議員提問時指出.....另外，張炳良指出，政府正籌備展開改善九龍灣商貿區行人環境的可行性研究，預期於 2014 年年底完成；當局亦成立跨部門的交通專題小組，集中研究觀塘商貿區的改善建議，並就擴闊行人路、調校交通燈號、改善行人過路設施、及移除阻礙行人的交通標誌四方面制定不同的改善措施。↵