

Keeping Hong Kong moving

Civil Service Newsletter Editorial Board

■ **ENSURING that Hong Kong's busy network of roads and public transport systems are flowing smoothly is a massive job at any time — but with the 2008 Olympic and Paralympic Equestrian Events (the Events) just around the corner, the job is even tougher!**



Paving block designs with 2008 Olympic and Paralympic Equestrian Events pictograms were embedded in pavements.

Together, the Transport Department (TD) and the Highways Department (HyD) are working tirelessly to ensure that there are no hiccups during this all-important period. They also want to ensure that visitors to Hong Kong see the best side of our city.

HyD started preparing for the Olympics in late 2006 when the Home Affairs Bureau (HAB) conducted the Traffic Assessment Study. Though HyD has not set up a special taskforce at the departmental level, its officers meet regularly to monitor the progress of the preparation work. Basically its work in the lead-up to the Events is fourfold:

- enhancing streetscapes through greening and planting, street-lighting decorations, painting of highway structures and street furniture, and subway refurbishment in areas like the North Lantau Highway, high-speed roads in Sha Tin, and streets near the Event venues.
- rectifying any irregularities in the streets and streetlights along the route of the torch relay and in the vicinity of the Events.
- carrying out minor road improvement works at the request of TD to align with the Transport Plan for the Events.
- constructing a temporary public transport interchange (TPTI) near the Mass Transit Railway (MTR) University Station, Sha Tin to cater for the anticipated surge of spectators of the Events. The TPTI has 13 bus bays and 14 bus stacking spaces for shuttle buses taking spectators to and from the TPTI and the core venue in Sha Tin.

A team, comprising a Senior Engineer, an Engineer, an Inspector of Works and a Works Supervisor, has been assigned to look after the construction of TPTI since July 2007. The biggest challenge has been the tight time schedule under which HyD has to accomplish these tasks in addition to its already busy programme of constructing and maintaining its highway network.

The department has constructed the TPTI from scratch, liaised with many parties including the Equestrian Events (Hong Kong) of the Games of the XXIX Olympiad Company

Limited (Equestrian Company), the Chinese University of Hong Kong, HAB and TD, and ensured compliance with tree preservation procedures.

TD has particularly focused on ensuring that Hong Kong's public transport system will be accessible to all people, including those with disabilities. In fact, since late 2002 the department has adopted the vision of Transport for All, and now with the city soon to co-host the Paralympic Equestrian Events, this vision of an accessible transport system and a barrier-free environment is even more relevant.

With the support from public transport operators, every MTR station has at least one barrier-free exit for people with disabilities and there are over 2,700 franchised buses accessible to wheelchairs (about 47% of the total bus fleet).

The requirements for access to facilities in TD's Transport and Planning Design Manual was revised in 2001. Public transport interchanges designed since then are equipped with facilities such as dropped kerbs to facilitate wheelchair-bound passengers. These dropped kerbs are also installed at new and existing pedestrian crossings with electronic audible traffic signals to serve the visually impaired if the crossings are signalled. The paralympians visiting Hong Kong should find the new facilities very convenient.

Since the focus for the paralympians is the Equestrian Events, TD has offered advice to the Equestrian Company in preparing to serve the spectators of equestrian events, such as arrangement for wheelchair-accessible vehicles to serve wheelchair-bound passengers. TD has also helped the Equestrian Company to collect views from disabled people to improve the plans in this regard.



Improvement works at the temporary public transport interchange at Chak Cheung Street near the University Station.