

PROVISION OF CYCLE TRACK NETWORK IN THE NEW TERRITORIES

Executive Summary

1. Cycling is one of the popular recreational activities in Hong Kong. Many cyclists ride bicycles on cycle tracks for recreational and leisure purposes, particularly during weekends. Under the traffic management of the Transport Department (TD), cycle tracks with a total length of 218.5 kilometres (km) are provided in eight districts.

2. In 2008, with a view to enhancing the recreational value of cycle tracks and improving the quality of living of the public, the Administration pledged to carry out the New Territories (NT) Cycle-track Network for providing a continuous east-west cycle track from Ma On Shan to Tsuen Wan with a total length of 112 km, of which 70 km would be new cycle tracks. The Network was targeted to commence from mid-2009 onwards for completion in stages from mid-2011 onwards, and the Civil Engineering and Development Department (CEDD) is responsible for the planning, design and construction of the Network. As of August 2014, the Finance Committee (FC) of the Legislative Council (LegCo) had approved funding totalling \$553.9 million for implementing part of the Network.

3. In recent years, the number of bicycle accidents along cycle tracks has increased. From 2009 to 2013, there was a 66% increase in the number of accidents along cycle tracks and a 74% increase in cyclist casualties.

4. In view of the long time taken in only partially implementing the Network and the potential problems associated with cycle tracks, the Audit Commission (Audit) has recently conducted a review of the provision and management of cycle tracks in the NT with a view to identifying areas for improvement.

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Implementation of NT Cycle-track Network

5. In April 2009, the Development Bureau (DEVB) informed LegCo Panel on Development that the proposed NT Cycle-track Network would be divided into four sections, with the following implementation programme:

- (a) Section A: construction of the section from Ma On Shan to Sheung Shui (of 30 km) would commence in September 2009 and be completed by July 2012;
- (b) Section B: construction of the section from Sheung Shui to Tuen Mun (of 30 km) would commence in August 2010 and be completed by July 2013;
- (c) Section C: construction of the section from Tuen Mun to Tsuen Wan (of 22 km) would commence in stages from 2011 onwards and be completed from 2013 onwards; and
- (d) Section D: construction of the six branching-off sections (of 30 km) would commence in stages from 2011 onwards and be completed from 2014 onwards (para. 2.4).

6. *Time target for completing NT Cycle-track Network not met.* In May 2008, the DEVB informed LegCo Panel on Development that there was strong public aspiration for linking the existing cycle tracks in the NT to form a continuous network. However, Audit examination revealed that for Section A works, while the target completion was set for July 2012, the related cycle tracks were completed and open to the public only in March 2014 (with a 20-month slippage). For Section B works, the original target completion date of July 2013 could not be met. As of August 2014, no timeframe for implementing Sections C and D works had been set (paras. 2.3, 2.11, 2.12 and 2.15).

7. *Overall cost information for project implementation not provided.* Audit noted that, when informing LegCo Panel on Development of the proposed implementation of the NT Cycle-track Network and seeking funding from the FC for implementing the related works projects, the DEVB and the CEDD had not provided the Panel and the FC with the estimated cost of the whole Network. The overall cost information will help stakeholders assess the cost-effectiveness of the whole programme, and is useful for the Government to plan its resource allocation for implementing the programme (para. 2.16).

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Works-contract management

8. From May 2010 to November 2013, the CEDD had awarded three contracts (Contracts A1, A2 and B1) to three contractors for implementing works for Sections A and B. Contracts A1 and A2 were for implementing cycle-track works and cycle-hub works respectively in Section A, and Contract B1 was for implementing cycle-track and cycle-hub works in Section B Stage 1. Consultant A was the Engineer responsible for carrying out the detailed design, preparing the tender documents, assessing the tenders, and supervising the works under the three contracts (paras. 2.9 and 3.2).

9. *Errors in preparing Bills of Quantities (BQ) for Contracts A1 and B1.* For Contract A1, the quantities of two BQ items were erroneously stated and there were two missing items in the BQ. The errors were detected by the CEDD internal review procedures. In the event, Contract A1 had to be retendered. For Contract B1, the CEDD again found significant errors in the quantities of some BQ items. To rectify the errors, the CEDD had to conduct tender negotiation with the conforming tenderers before awarding the contract. The errors in the two cases had caused delays in awarding the related works contracts. If the above-mentioned errors had not been detected and rectified before contract award, the Government might have incurred nugatory expenditure totalling \$72 million for Contracts A1 and B1 (paras. 3.3 and 3.11 to 3.13).

10. *Widening works not carried out on some narrow cycle-track sections.* According to the Transport Planning and Design Manual issued by the TD, the minimum width of a two-way cycle track is 3.5 metres (m). Contracts A1 and B1 included works for widening related existing cycle-track sections of Sections A and B respectively to meet the minimum width standard. However, Audit site inspections revealed that some cycle-track sections of Sections A and B were narrower than 3.5 m. Some of these sections could have been widened (paras. 3.22, 3.23 and 3.26 to 3.33).

11. *Long time taken in completing Contract A1 works.* The original scheduled completion date of Contract A1 was September 2012. However, as of August 2014, despite that the new cycle track of Section A had been open for public use since March 2014, there were still some outstanding works, including the construction of two rest stations and improvement of some existing cycle tracks (para. 3.34).

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12. *Delay in providing cycle-hub facilities for public use.* Audit noted that, notwithstanding that Section A had been open for public use since March 2014, essential cycle facilities including bicycle-rental kiosks, first-aid stations and public toilets would only be provided at the two cycle hubs at Section A in December 2014 (paras. 3.41 and 3.43(a)).

13. *General works-contract management.* Audit noted that there were significant errors in preparing the tender BQ for Contracts A1 and B1 (see para. 9 above). Audit also found in recent audit reviews on government works projects that errors were sometimes made in the tender BQ, some of which had resulted in additional costs to the Government. There were also incidents where consultants' substandard work in works design and supervision of works implementation had resulted in substantial contract claims (paras. 3.47 and 3.48).

Traffic management and maintenance of cycle tracks

14. In May 2010, the TD appointed a consultant to conduct a traffic and transport study on cycling networks and parking facilities in nine new towns in Hong Kong (2010 General Study). The Study identified 20 accident-prone sites along Sha Tin and Tai Po cycle tracks, and proposed improvement measures for implementation in two phases. Phase 1 works involving conventional measures were targeted to commence in June 2012 and for completion by April 2014. Phase 2 works involving new measures would commence at a later stage upon the completion of a pilot study to be carried out in Tai Po, and subsequent evaluation of the effectiveness of the new measures implemented under the pilot study (paras. 4.2, 4.4 and 4.5).

15. *Slow progress in carrying out improvement measures at accident-prone sites.* Since June 2012, the TD had requested the Highways Department to carry out Phase 1 improvement works at 16 accident-prone sites in Sha Tin and Tai Po for enhancing cycling safety. However, Audit noted that the works for four sites had been/would be completed 10 to 21 months after the scheduled completion dates (para. 4.10).

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16. *Need for minimising regulatory dismount zones along cycle tracks.* Under the Road Traffic (Traffic Control) Regulations (Cap. 374G), cyclists must dismount and push their bicycles when crossing regulatory cycle dismount zones. However, Audit examination revealed that, if the signs were followed, cyclists needed to dismount 105 times at dismount zones during their ride along the 45.6-km cycle track in Yuen Long. In other words, cyclists on average needed to dismount at a dismount zone once every 0.4 km when riding on the cycle track (paras. 4.22 and 4.27).

17. *Cyclists not complying with dismount requirement.* Notwithstanding that cyclists are legally required to dismount and push their bicycles when crossing a cycle dismount zone, Audit surveys at a cycle dismount zone in Tung Chung during an hour on a Sunday afternoon and on a Monday morning respectively found none of the 92 cyclists and 119 cyclists dismounted while crossing the dismount zone (paras. 4.22 and 4.33).

Audit recommendations

18. **Audit recommendations are provided in the respective sections of this Audit Report. This Executive Summary only highlights the key recommendations. Audit has *recommended* that the Administration should:**

Implementation of NT Cycle-track Network

- (a) **endeavour to ensure that a publicly announced public-works programme is implemented according to the committed timeframe and scope as far as possible (para. 2.17(a));**
- (b) **expedite actions to implement works for Section B Stage 2, Section C and Section D (para. 2.17(b));**
- (c) **inform LegCo Panel on Development that the timeframe for completing the NT Cycle-track Network cannot be attained, and the Administration has not decided on a revised timeframe for completing the whole Network, including those for Sections C and D (para. 2.17(e));**

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- (d) when seeking funding from the FC for implementing a works programme in stages in future, inform the FC as far as practicable of the estimated cost of the whole programme (para. 2.17(f));

Works-contract management

- (e) take early actions to implement the recommendations made by the CEDD Task Group for improving the preparation and checking of tender BQ items (para. 3.18(a));
- (f) review the feasibility of widening the cycle-track sections with a width of less than 3.5 m along Sections A and B as far as possible (para. 3.35(a));
- (g) strengthen actions to ensure that Contract A1 works are completed as early as possible (para. 3.35(c));
- (h) in implementing a public-facilities project in future, take measures to ensure that essential related public services are timely provided upon opening of the facilities for public use (para. 3.45(b));
- (i) conduct a review of the system for engaging consultants and managing their work with a view to identifying better mechanisms for minimising errors made by consultants, and making them more accountable for their work (para. 3.49);

Traffic management and maintenance of cycle tracks

- (j) take measures to ensure that improvement works at accident-prone sites are completed on schedule as far as possible (para. 4.19);
- (k) consider taking measures, as far as possible and without compromising cycling safety, to minimise mandatory cycle dismount zones along existing cycle tracks and in planning new cycle tracks in future (para. 4.34(b)); and

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- (1) **conduct a review of cyclists' compliance with the dismount requirement when crossing mandatory cycle dismount zones (para. 4.34(c)).**

Response from the Administration

19. The Administration agrees with the audit recommendations.