

Report No. 57 of the Director of Audit — Chapter 9

PROVISION OF PUBLIC TRANSPORT INTERCHANGES ADJACENT TO RAILWAY STATIONS

Summary

1. A public transport interchange (PTI) is a facility where passengers can board a particular mode of transport (e.g. railway, bus, mini-bus, taxi and ferry) or change from one mode of transport to another. It also provides space for boarding and alighting of passengers, and for stacking and temporary parking of vehicles. The Transport Department (TD) oversees the overall planning of PTIs, and is responsible for planning PTIs in new developments. The Architectural Services Department, the Civil Engineering and Development Department, the Housing Department (HD) and the Highways Department (HyD) are responsible for seeking funding and implementing pertinent PTI projects. These projects are usually carried out under the Public Works Programme and funded under the Capital Works Reserve Fund. As of August 2011, of the 286 PTIs provided territory-wide, about 80 (28%) were adjacent to railway stations. The Audit Commission (Audit) has recently conducted a review to examine the provision of PTIs adjacent to railway stations.

Planning of PTIs adjacent to railway stations

2. Since the promulgation of the first Railway Development Strategy in 1994, 28 PTIs adjacent to railway stations have been provided. They were provided under different railway development, transport, tourism and housing projects. Of these 28 PTIs, Audit selected four for review. The audit observations are shown in paragraphs 4 to 17.

3. *Achievement of objectives of PTI.* Audit noted that the utilisation of the four PTIs selected for review was low. Furthermore, among the 28 PTIs adjacent to railway stations (see para. 2), 17 were provided under Essential Public Infrastructure Works projects (railway-related PTIs). The primary purpose of these 17 railway-related PTIs was to facilitate passenger interchange between railway and other modes of transport. However, Audit noted that some of the 17 PTIs had allocated bus bays mainly for use by non-feeder bus routes (for serving non-railway passengers) instead of railway feeder bus or green minibus (GMB) routes. Audit also noted that many railway passengers accessed the railway stations on foot. *Audit has recommended that the Commissioner for Transport should conduct an effectiveness review of the 28 PTIs adjacent to railway stations.*

PTIs in Tiu Keng Leng

4. In March 1999, the Housing Authority approved the master layout plan of Area 73A in Tiu Keng Leng for a public housing development (later known as Kin Ming Estate), including the provision of PTI A at an estimated cost of \$29.8 million. PTI A, completed in July 2003, commenced operation in September 2004. In April 2001, the Finance Committee of the Legislative Council (LegCo) approved \$28.9 million for constructing PTI B adjacent to the MTR Tiu Keng Leng Station in Area 73B to the south-east of Area 73A. PTI B was completed in August 2002 and commenced operation in the same month (two years earlier than PTI A).

5. **Utilisation of PTI A.** PTI A comprises five bays, four for bus termini and one for a taxi stand. According to the original plan, two franchised bus routes would be assigned to terminate at two bays of PTI A. However, Audit examination revealed that, as of August 2011 (seven years after its commissioning), the two franchised bus routes assigned to terminate at PTI A together used only one bay of PTI A for less than an hour a day. Furthermore, Audit's field inspections in June and August 2011 revealed that the utilisation of PTI A was low, with only 64 to 105 passengers patronising it during the morning peak hour on a weekday, and that some people conducted recreational activities there. *Audit has recommended that the Commissioner for Transport should draw on the experience in the provision of PTI A with a view to improving the planning of PTIs in future.*

6. **PTI ingress and egress arrangements.** Before June 2011, there was a central divider separating the eastbound and westbound traffic in Choi Ming Street outside PTI A. Owing to the lack of a right-turn facility, buses travelling on the westbound lane of the Street needed to make a circuitous route and a u-turn, with an additional distance of about 700 metres and an additional journey time of three minutes, before entering PTI A. In June 2011, at the request of the TD, the HyD completed improvement works by removing part of the central divider in Choi Ming Street to facilitate buses accessing PTI A without making a detour. *Audit has recommended that the Commissioner for Transport should draw on the experience of PTI A in planning vehicular ingress and egress arrangements for PTIs in future.*

7. **Provision of two PTIs close to each other.** PTI A and PTI B are connected by footbridges and at-grade crossing facilities, providing convenient access facilities for passengers to use both PTIs. In 1997, in response to the HD's enquiry, the TD maintained the need for constructing two PTIs. In 2011, the HD informed Audit that one of the reasons for the low utilisation of PTI A (see para. 5) was its close proximity to PTI B. *Audit has recommended that the Commissioner for Transport should, in planning the provision of PTIs in future, critically review the arrangement of and the justifications for providing two PTIs close to each other.*

8. *Provision of information to LegCo.* In April 2001, the Administration submitted a paper to the LegCo Panel on Transport about the planned capacities of PTI B at Tiu Keng Leng Station, and two other PTIs at Tseung Kwan O Station and Hang Hau Station. However, Audit noted that the paper did not mention PTI A and its planned capacity. The fact that the catchment area of the public transport services using PTI A and PTI B extended beyond Tiu Keng Leng to cover the neighbouring areas (such as Sai Kung, Clearwater Bay and Tseung Kwan O Industrial Estate) was also not mentioned in the paper. *Audit has recommended that the Secretary for Transport and Housing and the Commissioner for Transport should, in compiling papers for LegCo in future, endeavour to provide all pertinent information as far as possible.*

PTI at Kam Sheung Road Station

9. PTI C is located at Kam Sheung Road (KSR) Station of the West Rail. It cost \$56.3 million to construct and commenced operation in November 2003. PTI C comprises two portions, namely the east portion and west portion. The east portion has 12 bays and 1 vehicle lay-by while the west portion has 4 bays.

10. *Utilisation of terminus facilities at east portion of PTI C.* Audit examination revealed that, as of August 2011 (seven years after its commissioning), only 4 of the 12 bays at the east portion of PTI C were used for passenger boarding. The actual bay demand was much lower than the estimate. Audit's field inspections in June and August 2011 also revealed that most of the railway passengers made use of the lay-by in front of the KSR Station for boarding and alighting. *Audit has recommended that the Commissioner for Transport should: (a) in planning PTIs in future, take measures to refrain from providing excessive bays, taking into account the experience in planning PTI C; and (b) take measures to make gainful use of the spare bays at PTI C.*

PTI at Olympic Station adjoining Lin Cheung Road

11. In order to facilitate passenger interchange between the MTR Tung Chung Line and other road-transport modes, in the early 1990s, the Government proposed to provide three PTIs (PTI D, PTI E and PTI F) in Tai Kok Tsui to serve Olympic Station. In January 1996, the Finance Committee of LegCo approved \$18.6 million for constructing PTI F, which was completed in 1999.

12. *Utilisation of PTI F.* PTI F has 18 bus bays and some stacking areas. According to the original plan, most of the 18 bus bays would be allocated for use by franchised buses. However, Audit examination revealed that, as of August 2011 (12 years after its commissioning), only 4 franchised bus routes and 3 GMB routes were using PTI F as termini. *Audit has recommended that the Commissioner for Transport should: (a) in planning PTIs in future, take measures to refrain from providing excessive bays, taking into account the experience in planning PTI F; and (b) take measures to make gainful use of the spare bays at PTI F.*

PTI at East Tsim Sha Tsui Station (Mody Road)

13. In 2002, the Tourism Commission (TC) of the Commerce and Economic Bureau proposed to implement a project (Piazza Project) in Tsim Sha Tsui (TST), comprising: (a) converting the TST Star Ferry Pier PTI (PTI G) into a piazza (Piazza A) for providing a tourist attraction; (b) constructing a new PTI (PTI H) to replace PTI G on the site of the Wing On Plaza Garden near East TST Station (and re-provisioning the garden on the podium deck above PTI H); and (c) providing a new turnaround (Turnaround A) outside the Hong Kong Cultural Centre near PTI G to provide bus stops for buses originally terminating at PTI G. In the same year, the TC commenced public consultation on the proposed relocation of PTI G. The District Councils consulted did not raise objection to the relocation plan.

14. In June 2003, the Administration informed the then LegCo Panel on Economic Services that PTI H was planned to be commissioned in 2007 to allow for the subsequent relocation of PTI G, and Piazza A would be built for commissioning by 2008-09. PTI H cost \$143 million to construct and commenced operation in August 2007.

15. In June 2009, the construction of Turnaround A was gazetted. The Administration received representations expressing concerns on the adequacy of the future bus service arrangement, the possible impact of the Piazza Project on the traffic flow and the need to conserve the bus terminus at TST pier. The Administration also received similar representations on a revised design of Turnaround A gazetted in October 2010. In June 2011, the TC provided the Yau Tsim Mong District Council with a new design of Piazza A and Turnaround A, under which the size of Piazza A would be significantly reduced to make way for a new PTI at Turnaround A, which would accommodate all the 15 bus routes calling at PTI G. In September 2011, the Administration gazetted further amendments to the proposed works for Turnaround A.

16. **Utilisation of PTI H.** PTI H has nine bus bays and seven bus stacking spaces. In June 2011 (about four years after its commissioning), Audit's field inspection revealed that only three of the nine bus bays had been allocated for use by buses, and very few passengers made use of PTI H. *Audit has recommended that the Commissioner for Transport should expedite action to implement measures to make gainful use of the spare bays at PTI H.*

17. **Implementation of a tourism project.** The Piazza Project comprises three phases, namely Phase 1 for constructing PTI H, Phase 2 for Turnaround A and Phase 3 for Piazza A. The main purpose of the Piazza Project was to provide Piazza A at the waterfront of TST, and the construction of PTI H and Turnaround A was ancillary works in support of the main works for the provision of Piazza A. Therefore, the provision of PTI H and Turnaround A may not be necessary if Piazza A is not to be constructed. Audit however noted that while the construction of PTI H was completed in 2007, the Administration was still conducting consultation on the provision of Turnaround A and Piazza A as of August 2011. *Audit has recommended that, in implementing a tourism project comprising main works and ancillary transport works in future, the Commissioner for Tourism, in collaboration with the Commissioner for Transport, should finalise the design and public consultation of the main works before proceeding with the ancillary transport works as far as possible.*

Response from the Administration

18. The Administration agrees with the audit recommendations.

November 2011