

Welcoming Speech by PS(W)

‘Walkable City, Living Street’

Organized by Civic Exchange, Community for Road Safety and
Designing Hong Kong
at EKEO on 7 May 2013

Good morning Prof. Anthony Cheung (the Secretary for Transport and Housing), Mr Simon NG (Head of Transport and Sustainability Research, Civic Exchange), Mr Julian KWONG (Chairman of Community for Road Safety), Mr Paul Zimmerman (CEO of Designing Hong Kong), Ladies and Gentlemen!

First of all, it is my honour to be invited by the organizers, Civic Exchange, Community for Road Safety and Designing Hong Kong, to give a welcoming speech for today’s conference. On behalf of the Development Bureau, may I extend a warm welcome to all of you to our Energizing Kowloon East Office (EKEO). I’m glad that the organizers find this place made out of recycled containers under a flyover in Kwun Tong a good venue for this event.

EKEO was established in June last year to facilitate the transformation of Kowloon East into a core business district to support Hong Kong’s long-term economic growth. In the past 11 months, we have been ‘place-making’ this area so that the community would like to work, to do business, to walk, to stay and to play here. One of our main strategies is to enhance ‘Connectivity’. This is the first ‘C’ of our ‘CBDD’ (or

CBD2), which is ‘Connectivity’, ‘Branding’, ‘Design’ and ‘Diversity’. We aim at creating a pedestrian environment here which is “walkable”, “stayable” and “sittable” and at the same time improving the traffic situation within Kowloon East. This is a humble aim and yet facing a lot of challenges as you can imagine in this high density area which is not designed as a business district at the start, and today with a working population of 220 000. In February this year, we have commissioned a study to improve the pedestrian and traffic environment in Kowloon Bay Business Area. We are also working with the Design School of the Hong Kong Polytechnic University on a research project on connectivity and mobility. We are looking forward to some innovative solutions to come and we will share our findings with you later.

I would like to take this chance to thank many Bureaux and Departments which have been fully supporting EKEO all along. Particularly our close working partners – Transport and Housing Bureau, Transport Department and Highways Department. They have worked with us hand in hand over the past months to implement many local improvement works which bring immediate improvements on walkability and better road traffic condition. With their dedicated efforts, 41 local road junctions including traffic signs, pedestrian crossing and traffic signals etc. will be improved and some of them have already been completed. The streetscape and greening works will also be further enhanced. In the time to come, we will continue to improve the pedestrian environment including development of pedestrian links and other necessary traffic improvement measures to create a walkable, green and low-carbon CBD. The title of today’s conference -- “Walkable City, Living Streets” – fits

our vision perfectly.

Hong Kong, a heavily built-up metropolitan city, is well known for its very efficient rail-base and road-base transport system. While we enjoy the comfortable and fast movement of vehicles, we shall not forget the walkability and vibrancy of our streets. Creating livable streets is essential to the success of our CBD2. How to make this area more walkable? What shall be done to make our streets ‘live’? I am sure this conference will provide a good platform for professionals, academia and all of you to exchange views and explore ways that are practical and applicable here. EKEO welcomes such suggestions and would offer ourselves to do experiments to try out some test cases in Kowloon East if possible.

In the afternoon session, my colleague Raymond Lee, who is the Head of EKEO, will talk about how to make walkable places in Kowloon East. I hope you will appreciate how we are working towards this objective. Today’s lunch-time forum will be held at our open space beneath the flyover just next to this office. This piece of land was opened to public as an informal cultural venue since January this year. I hope you will enjoy this public open space that we have created for you.

Finally, I wish the conference a great success! Thank you.

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