Study on Enhancing Walkability in Hong Kong
Stage 1 Public Engagement (June to August 2018)

Executive Summary

1. Background

In supporting the Government’s “Walk in HK” initiative, the Transport Department (TD) commissioned a study in December 2017 on “Enhancing Walkability in Hong Kong” to formulate planning and design standards that put priority on pedestrians, and a strategy to develop Hong Kong into a world-class walkable city. Central and Sham Shui Po are the two pilot areas to test and showcase the proposed walkability strategy.

In order to gather views/opinions from the public and stakeholders regarding the walkability strategy, there are 3 stages of Public Engagement (PE). The Stage 1 PE was carried out from June to August 2018 to collect public initial views and aspirations to enhance walkability.

2. Stage 1 Public Engagement

We concluded public views collected from the 4 brainstorming workshops with general public for Hong Kong Island, Kowloon, New Territories East and New Territories West, 5 focus group meetings with academia, professional institutes, think tanks, green groups, business sector and property developers, motorist representatives, community organizations and persons with special needs as well as online questionnaire survey and face-to face questionnaire survey and street outreach. To achieve a walkable Hong Kong, existing challenges and relevant solutions were discussed by participants in the above mentioned workshops and events.

Participants were very supportive on enhancing walkability in Hong Kong and they considered that walking experience should be safe, interesting and pleasant. A walkable city should provide accessibility for all and meet different pedestrians’ current and future needs. Walkability should be place-based with consideration of local context and needs.

The below summarize participants’ concerns/ suggestions/ opinions.

Institutional change and policy initiatives

Participants believed that inter-departmental coordination in planning, design, implementation, management and monitoring of pedestrian facilities is very important. Hence, it was suggested that a unit/ office should be set up as a “one-stop shop” to coordinate and follow-up on all matters related to street design and management in an efficient manner.

In order to successfully implement “Walk in HK” initiative, promulgation of “pedestrian-first” policies with consistent implementation by all Government departments would be crucial. The Government should review the current protocols in approving street improvement works and guidelines on pedestrian environment design. In addition, District
Councils should play a bigger role in planning, providing, managing and monitoring pedestrian facilities and environment with greater authority and resources/ funding.

Local community engagement

A Walkability Master Plan or District Walking Plan which requires periodic update by District Councils or a designated office with inputs from locals would be helpful since walkability should be based on local context/ characters and needs. Therefore, a bottom-up approach should be adopted to engage the local community and pedestrians’ needs when devising the various proposals for implementation, including gauging public opinion after implementation.

Pedestrian facilities and street design

Apart from good consideration of pedestrian’s habits and preferences in early planning stage, safe and comfortable walking environment could also be achieved through provision of pedestrian facilities/ amenities and tree planting. Continuous barrier-free access and wider pavements could enhance universal access around Hong Kong. Suitable pedestrians crossing arrangements (such as diagonal pedestrian crossing and shorter waiting time for green light etc.) and adequate lighting in pedestrian environment, could also contribute to a safe walking environment.

The street design should also consider different pedestrian needs, such as the elderly and the disabled. Suggestions included provision of barrier-free systems and convenient designs for elderly to extend the crossing time.

Vehicle Control

Reduction of car speed, pedestrianising or limiting vehicular access to areas with places with heavy pedestrian flow or narrow streets were mentioned as solutions for safer pedestrian environment. There is also a growing concern on the number of cars on the road which undermines the space available for pedestrian, as well as diminishing the perception of safety and comfort. The need for policy and roadmap to limit car growth should be brought forward by the government to create synergy with the walkability strategies and measures.

Street Environment

Proper street management policy is important that it should include coordinated on-street loading/ unloading activities along street sides as well as cleaner and less cluttered/ occupied streets. It would be helpful in making streets more appealing to walk. Participants also suggested pedestrian priority policy, such as provision of pedestrianized areas, pedestrian priority crossings and street widening. Pleasant walking environment including providing more tree planting for shadings and beautification of streets with art elements could also improve walking experience.
**Smart technology**

Adoption of smart technology in wayfinding improvement, road safety reminders to drivers and pedestrians, pedestrian connectivity enhancement with different transport mode and collection of pedestrian data through smartphone applications etc., could make walking easier.

With the advancement of technology and manufacturing industry, the illegal use of Personal Mobility Device (PMD) on footpath causes perception of unsafe pedestrian environment. The need to restrict use of PMD in designated area and stronger enforcement were suggested.

3. **Way forward**

With consideration of Stage 1 PE findings, the study team will suggest a set of preliminary proposals based on the criteria of walkability and solutions suggested by participants, as well as investigate the context and current and future needs of the two pilot areas. The preliminary proposals will be further discussed with the stakeholders in the two pilot areas in Stage 2 PE exercise which is planned to be held in mid-2019.

Public are invited to browse through our study website (https://walk.hk/) for the latest information.