Intelligent Transportation Systems – Hong Kong

Submission to the
Public Consultation Paper on the Draft 2007 Digital 21 Strategy
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Introduction

1. We are a non-profit making learned society with an aim to promote the application of intelligent transportation systems (ITS) and technologies in Hong Kong. According to IEEE, ITS can be defined as "those utilising synergistic technologies and systems engineering concepts to develop and improve transportation systems of all kinds" and is a branch of the overall IT. We welcome the opportunity to submit our views on the public Consultation Paper on the Draft 2007 Digital 21 Strategy. Our views and suggestions are as follows.

Enhance the use of ITS technologies for the benefits of the citizens

2. While the Consultation Paper did mentioned touch on ITS by mentioning that "*… the Government intends to establish a Transport Information System (TIS), which will provide two key services: Intelligent Road Network (IRN) and Public Transport Information Service (PTIS) ….*", we are of the view that the emphasis on the significance of ITS is not sufficient. For example, there is a much wider spectrum of ITS applications which the Consultation Paper has not addresses, such as the following, just to new a few:

   - ITS infrastructure on road transports – surveillance systems (e.g. CCTVs and over speed detectors);
   - ITS application for fare collection systems - ATC (Automatic Toll Collection) systems, electronic parking meters, etc;
   - ITS of vehicle positioning and fleet management;
   - Vehicle safety applications;
   - Control centre communications;

3. Riding on the world globalization trend, there will be an ever-increasing need for international and cross-border traffic in Hong Kong in the coming decade. To capitalize on this development trend for the better economic development of Hong Kong and maintain a competitive edge as an international hub, the Government should pay equal importance on the deployment of value-added ITS services on international and cross-border traffic in addition to domestic traffic. More precisely, the Government should proactively work with international and cross-border traffic providers, e.g. cruises, cross-boarder long-haul trains, airlines companies, etc. to facilitate the deployment of such

value-added ITS services, e.g. checking and booking of cultural activities in Hong Kong and nearby region, checking and booking of restaurants in Hong Kong, checking on recent exhibition events, on-line shopping for pick-up at hotel/air-port/railway terminal/cruise terminal, on-line reservation of business services such as car hiring, translation, etc. to meet the need of busy executives. The pilot project of On-board Trucker Information System (OBTIS) quoted in para 4.9.3 of the Consultation Paper is a good start.

4. The Government should also open up the information infrastructure platform of Government owned or funded ITS systems, as far as practicable (i.e. no concern on security/system capacity/IPR issues, etc), to allow public use of the platform (e.g. data transmission network) to deploy valued-added services, e.g. Tour Guide System on a smartphone, at affordable cost. This will avoid the need of double investment on common platform, which will encourage better utilization of social resources.

5. A key towards promoting IT and ITS development in Hong Kong is that the Government needs to have a very clear policy of encouraging local industries and businesses, of which the majority are SME (small and medium enterprises), in R & D of products and services. As the Government is the largest user of ITS services and technologies, without its support such as adopting technologies and solutions from local firms, our ITS SME will have great disadvantages in exploring overseas and mainland markets due to lack to track record in Hong Kong. This will end up in a vicious circle and Hong Kong will then always rely on imported technologies which may not fully tailored to the need of our citizens. As a comparison, Singapore which is only half in size of Hong Kong in terms of area and population can actually export her ITS products and services to us. The attitude of governmental support plays a vital role in this example.

Enhance Broadband connectivity

6. In para 4.9.1 the last bullet point of the Consultation Paper, it is stated that "*The Government will continue to provide an enabling environment for the introduction of new communications technologies, such as broadband wireless access for fixed-mobile convergence and ultra-wideband for home networking. Policy frameworks and regulatory arrangements, such as those relating to the radio frequency spectrum, will be reviewed as and when necessary to take account of prevailing market situations*." We wish to highlight that Hong Kong is already lagging behind in the provision of broadband wireless access in comparison to some other cities in Asia. For example, Singapore has announced earlier this year to build a full coverage of Wi-Fi access network to all public area, and fund the public use of this Wi-Fi network for the first two years. Similarly, Taipei has already achieved almost 100% coverage on Wi-Fi network in major parts of its city. We urge the Government to put more emphasis and drive on this aspect, e.g. by taking the

lead to build (or providing incentives to encourage private companies to invest in) a broadband wireless access network for the public area using industry de facto standard such as Wi-Fi or Wi-Max. With the increasing popularity of Wi-Fi or Wi-Max enabled mobile devices such as smartphones or PDAs this will also enhance the business competitiveness of Hong Kong people by providing the necessary access to business applications via broadband internet while away from the office. This will also provide an access platform conducive to the development of mobile broadband applications on the PDA and smartphones.

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