Dear Sir/Madam,

As I read from the Paper the vision statement "advancing our achievements and seizing new opportunities:
building on Hong Kong's position as a world digital city", I am quite disappointed about the local ICT development of Hong Kong. For the past 8 years, the digital divide of Hong Kong is still serious. The building of the CyberPort and the Science and Technology Park does not help in any way the ICT industry, university R&D and the IT literacy of the public.

For a fast-moving metropolitan like Hong Kong having 7million population densly packed into such a small area and having strong economic influence covering the whole Pearl River Delta and other major cities of China, South East Asia and more,we definitely need to be the leader in ICT and have ICT interweaved with every aspect of our daily life in order to facilitate growth and prosperity.

THREE major areas I believe Hong Kong is lagging behind are:
1   Intelligent Transports System
2   Mobile Broadband
3   Digital Broadcast (both audio and video)

Intelligent Transport System (ITS)

For the past 20 years, every major cities and countries around the world are having very clear long-term strategies for ITS. The advancement of ITS is especially important for city growth and productivity. For China, 9 cities are designated for ITS development, such as Beijing, Shanghai, ..., Guangzhou, ZhongShan and Shenzhen. Their development has been vigorous. From the 9 cities, 3 of them are in Guangdong. We can see how important is the Pearl River Delta region to the Central Government. The PRD being the most important industrial and financial centre of China, we need to ensure the smoothness and reliabilty of our transport systems, and hence improving the productivity of industries and logistics.

One important aspect in ITS is that we need to have central hub to collect and distribute traffic information of different modes. The Transport Information System (TIS) project was failed the first time, and it really putting us further behind. The new TIS project which will be dued in mid-2008 has limited capability, too. Real-time traffic data and incidence alert, dynamic routing, driver's assitance, etc are all missing from the current TIS. So, I would suggest the Government to

- speed up the pace for the 2nd phase development of the TIS

- set up an industrial standard for ITS that goes inline with China
- increase the use of onboard and navigation systems for both commercial and private vehicles
- lower the cost and enrich the content for digital map from the Lands Department

Mobile Broadband

Mobile broadband is one of the key components in briding the digital divide via pervasive computing. However, Hong Kong people usually mistaken 3G for mobile broadband. Of course 3G can deliver fast mobile data services, however it is limited to expensive and unusable mobile phones. For the past 2 years or so, over 300 cities worldwide has built their Metro WiFi networks. The latest Metro WiFi technologies have already surpassed the 3G data, costs less than 1/10 of 3G (both CAPEX and OPEX), matured and have terminals (notebook, PDA, IPPhone, etc) widely available today. As compared with WiMax, which is an incomplete and immatured standard, the WiFi standard is more appealing in many ways. The so-called 4G may never arrive, since WiFi and WiMax will eventually merge into one single standard having all the best breed technologies for mobile broadband, such as the telecom-graded mobility, QoS, mesh topology and MIMO.

The M-Taipei has been a successful case. Singapore has recently announced their country-wide MetroFi project. The Taipei case is a B-O model, where the government build the network and let it run commercially. The take-up rate has been growing healthily. For Hong Kong, people are more readily to accept new technologies and has much higher demand for mobile broadband, I believe it would be even more successful in Hong Kong. Just like the MTR and the Octopus. However, OFTA's regulation is prohibiting people to provide WiFi services in public places or forming WiFi based city networks.

Besides, briding the digital divide, mobile broadband is also a key element in ITS, especially for traffic data collection and onboard systems. The subscription fees of mobile carriers are far too high for any commercial value nowadays. Most mobile carriers are neglecting the small mobile data market. Fleet companies and private car owners are reluctant to use any wireless onboard systems mostly due to the high service fee. In the past 5 years, fleet management service providers, GPS application service providers are all disappearing. Also, metro WiFi networks can be used in positioning which can compensate the blindspots for GPS in Hong Kong.

Here I would suggest:

- OFTA to create suitable licensing for MetroFi
- Government to lead building of a MetroFi network for Hong Kong

Finally, I hope the Hong Kong ICT development can move forward at a much faster pace so that everyone benefits.

Regards,
Nicholas Lo