

An overdose of traffic regulation

MY office is in Wheelock House and, through your column, I hope to draw the attention of the Government traffic planners what appears to me to be an overdose or wrong dose of traffic regulation at the heart of Central.

Pedder Street is (was, rather) one of the busiest streets in Hongkong and persistently caused major traffic congestion to build up on the roads that led to it. In the past few months, happily, Government has introduced measures to ease the pressure on Pedder Street and they include:

(a) the creation of a fourth traffic lane by receding the curb line in front of Wheelock House; and

(b) the direction of all downhill traffic from Wyndham Street into Queen's Road whereas approximately three-quarters of this traffic would have entered Pedder Street in the past.

More recently, loading and unloading restrictions during peak hours have also been introduced in Pedder Street in front of Wheelock

House, Pedder Building and China Building. In my view, this measure is unnecessary.

If traffic regulation in Pedder Street is their *sole objective*, these measures have apparently achieved tremendous success.

In the process, however, it does appear Government has made an overkill and is causing considerable unnecessary inconvenience to many road users including both drivers and passengers.

Take my own experience as an example. I come to work at Wheelock House in a private light bus that operates a circular route between my home in Tai Hang Road and Central. The bus used to allow passengers to board and alight in front of Pedder Building about a dozen times a day.

It can no longer do so because of the loading/unloading restrictions. It cannot do so at World-Wide House because it cannot get near the curb with two lanes of waiting cars consistently in the way. Furthermore, it would not be safe to do

so on the opposite side of Pedder Street either, because passengers would have to alight into moving traffic instead of on to the pavement, with the door opening on the left side of the bus.

So instead, the bus has to stop at Lane Crawford House in Queen's Road. This creates otherwise unnecessary traffic west of Pedder Street and wastes time and resources, directly and indirectly, for many. I suspect other buses and light buses (unless franchised) would have the same problem.

Because cars in Hongkong are, with few exceptions, right-hand drive models, it defies logic to ban loading/unloading on the left curb and allow loading/unloading on the opposite right curb unless there are better reasons otherwise. Private passenger cars and taxis are also affected, although most take the risk by default and allow front seat passengers to alight into moving traffic at the Landmark anyway.

For Pedder Street south of Des Voeux Road, Queen's Road is the

only source of traffic. Two lanes in Queen's Road allow a right turn into Pedder Street, which has *four* lanes. The present traffic volume in Pedder Street would argue forcibly in favour of lifting loading and unloading restrictions.

If traffic planners still feel strongly about restricting loading and unloading to one side of the street only, would it not be more logical to put the restrictions on the *right* side? Better safety for lives and property would be achieved and some unnecessary mileages would be saved, all without affecting traffic regulation.

Government may have good reasons for the present scheme and it would be informative if the reasons could be made public. If a principal reason is to accommodate major road works in Connaught Road, some time in the future, perhaps it could consider deferring the scheme until closer to the time and/or moving the restrictions to the opposite side of Pedder Street.

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