



Letter to SCMP 27th March 2009

Dear Sir,

We refer to your article of March 18th, "Sai Kung Council won't extend talks on wider highway".

Friends of Sai Kung are not against improving safety standards and traffic flow on Hiram's Highway. We feel there is room for improvement but are strongly against the extension of the dual carriageway, or even building a continuous three lane highway. FSK has collected more than 1,800 signatures rallying against the expansion which would lead to the 'Over Development' of Sai Kung. Nearly half of the petitioners were visitors to the back garden of Hong Kong.

FSK are against the dual carriageway because:

1. Regarding congestion - Transport Department's figures on traffic flow and estimated population in Sai Kung do not justify a dual carriageway. Traffic flow is steady the majority of the time. Only during key hours on Sunday and public holiday afternoons does the traffic become an issue.
2. Regarding safety – last year's coach crash that claimed 18 lives on the existing dual carriageway demonstrates that highways encourage excessive speed and dangerous overtaking. They also limit access to pedestrians and cyclists.

A dual carriageway will mean more vehicles, and eventually more development, which will radically change the character of this small town.

There are alternatives to the proposed dual carriageway expansion:

1. From a congestion point of view: improve the public transport system with feeder eco-buses from MTR stations; set up park and ride facilities on either side of Sai Kung Town; add cycle tracks (to cater for the increasing number of cyclists) and implement a pedestrianisation scheme in the town at weekends and on public holidays, all of which would create revenue for Sai Kung.
2. From a safety point of view: create right-turn lanes at all road junctions and more bus and minibus lay-bys; paint better road markings; build pedestrian footbridges or underpasses, impose a clearway system and a heavy vehicle ban during rush hours.

People come to Sai Kung to experience and enjoy the fresh air, the lovely scenery, open spaces, perhaps for a walk, to enjoy some seafood and maybe to do watersports. Improving access to and from Sai Kung for people who live here and work outside of the environs would be wonderful, but not at the expense of the very thing that weekend visitors want to come to Sai Kung to experience.

Yours sincerely,

James Wong
Vice-Chair,
Renia Lopez
Hiram's Highway Committee

Friends of Sai Kung