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ACE Paper 8 /2026
For advice on 13 July 2026

Report on the 165th Environmental Impact Assessment Subcommittee Meeting

Northern Metropolis Highway – San Tin Section

PURPOSE

The Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Subcommittee considered the EIA report on “Northern Metropolis Highway – San Tin Section” (the Project) submitted under Section 6(2) of the Environmental Impact Assessment Ordinance (EIAO) at the meeting on 15 June 2026. The EIA report was submitted by the Highways Department (the Project Proponent).

2. Members are requested to note the views of the EIA Subcommittee and advise on whether the EIA report should be endorsed.

BACKGROUND AND NEED FOR THE PROJECT

3. Northern Metropolis Highway (NMH) is one of the three major road projects recommended under the Strategic Studies on Railways and Major Roads beyond 2030 (RMR2030+ Study). The 2022 Policy Address stated the NMH would be taken forward to create a highly interconnected and accessible road network, significantly driving and supporting Hong Kong's future development.

4. The NMH has an overall length of approximately 24 km and comprises four sections, namely the Tin Shui Wai Section, the San Tin Section, the Kwu Tung Section, and the New Territories North New Town Section. The San Tin Section is tentatively scheduled for commencement of construction in Year 2027/2028, with the target of commissioning in or before 2036. The remaining NMH sections are planned for phased completion within approximately 3 to 4 years after commissioning of the San Tin Section. As part of NMH, the Project comprises a dual three-lane carriageway formed by at-grade road sections, tunnels and viaducts, extending from the interchange of Yuen Long Highway / Tsing Long Highway in the

west to Fanling Highway (Pak Shek Au Section) in the east, together with associated interchanges and ancillary facilities.

5. Please refer to ACE-EIA Paper 3/2026 (*Annex A*) for details of the EIA project.

VIEWS OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE

6. Members noted that the EIA report was made available for public inspection during the period from 8 May 2026 to 6 June 2026 and EPD has received a total of 19 public comments. All public comments were submitted to Members of the EIA Subcommittee for consideration before its meeting.

7. Relevant extract of the draft minutes of the EIA Subcommittee meeting held on 15 June 2026 is at *Annex B*.

VIEWS OF THE DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

8. The Director of Environmental Protection (DEP), in consultation with relevant authorities, considered that the EIA report has met the requirements of the EIA Study Brief and the Technical Memorandum on EIA Process, for the purpose of its exhibition for public inspection under Section 7(4) of the EIAO.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE

9. Having regard to the findings of the EIA report and information provided by the Project Proponent and its consultants, the EIA Subcommittee recommended the full Council to endorse the EIA report with the following conditions –

Brief Introduction:

- (a) The Project Proponent has committed to enhancing and integrating the existing ponds and marsh / reed habitats located to the west of the Ngau Tam Mei (NTM) Water Treatment Works, with the aim of creating a diverse and interconnected wetland habitat of approximately 5 hectares (ha) (S. 8.11.4.8 of the EIA report). A Habitat Creation and Management Plan (HCMP) has been prepared and appended to the EIA Report. **Condition (1)** is recommended to require the submission of an updated HCMP. The updated HCMP shall include specific proposals and implementation proposal demonstrating collaboration with the relevant authorities responsible for the NTM Drainage Channel revitalisation works, with a view to strengthening ecological connectivity and maximising environmental benefits.

- (b) During the EIA study, the Project Proponent installed an AI-powered monitoring device at the Kam Tin River to better understand bird utilisation of the wetland habitats. Based on the monitoring findings, specific mitigation measures have been devised (S. 8.8.2.10 of the EIA report). For example, piling works during the dry season will be scheduled to take place at high tidal levels (i.e. above 1.0 mCD), when the riverbed of the Kam Tin Main Drainage Channel is largely submerged, in order to minimise disturbance to the watercourse and associated avifauna. To further strengthen environmental monitoring for wetland habitat (S. 7.3.3 of the EM&A Manual), **Condition (2)** is recommended to encourage the continual application of cost-effective and innovative technologies for long-term monitoring of wetland habitats, thereby facilitating timely review and adaptive management where necessary.
- (c) The EIA has proposed a woodland compensation site at She Leng (S. 8.11.4.6 of the EIA report). Together with the adjacent woodland compensation areas proposed under other projects, a contiguous and sizable woodland area of approximately 22 ha will be formed, with the potential to achieve moderate to high ecological value. The Project Proponent has committed to preparing a Woodland Compensation Plan (WCP). **Condition (3)** is recommended to require the submission of a detailed WCP, including appropriate fire prevention and fire management measures (such as the provision of firebreaks and application of AI-powered hill fire detector(s) where suitable), as well as long-term management and monitoring arrangements of the woodland compensation area.
- (d) Certain sections of the proposed alignment are located in close proximity to recognised sites of conservation importance and other ecologically sensitive areas, including the Lam Tsuen Country Park (LTCP). The EIA report has proposed a range of ecologically friendly mitigation measures (S.8.11.3 of the EIA report), such as the extensive adoption of viaduct structures to facilitate wildlife movement beneath the highway, and the incorporation of bird-friendly design features, including the use of non-transparent and non-glaring materials for noise barriers. **Condition (4)** is recommended to require the submission of a Wildlife-friendly Design Guideline (WFDG). The WFDG shall set out design principles and measures for highway structures and noise barriers aimed at minimising ecological impacts, including bird collision risks, roadkills, and barrier effects on wildlife movement.
- (e) For continuing the public engagement (S.8.11.4.10 of the EIA report) during the course of design and construction for the Project, **Condition (5)** is recommended in setting up an Environmental Committee (EC) for the Project, comprising government departments, green groups and academics, to advise on the preparation of the HCMP, WCP and WFDG.

- (f) In view of the numerous planned noise sensitive receivers along the proposed alignment (S.4.4.1.4 of the EIA report), ongoing liaison with the proponents of the planned developments is necessary to refine both at-source mitigation measures (such as the erection of vertical and cantilever noise barriers) and at-receiver mitigation measures (such as the provision of acoustic windows), with a view to formulating a cost-effective and practicable proposal. **Condition (6)** is recommended to require the submission of an updated Road Traffic Noise Mitigation Plan (RTNMP). The updated RTNMP shall set out the refined mitigation measures at both source and receiver, and demonstrate the effectiveness and cost-efficiency of the proposed noise mitigation measures.

Conditions of Endorsement

The Project Proponent shall –

- (a) submit an updated HCMP for the proposed wetland compensation and enhancement areas as recommended in the EIA report to the DEP for approval no later than three months before the commencement of construction of the wetland compensation and enhancement areas. Specifically, the HCMP shall include the collaboration with the relevant authorities on the NTM Drainage Channel revitalisation. Moreover, construction works at the wetland habitat to the west of NTM Water Treatment Works shall commence only after the construction of the wetland compensation and enhancement areas has begun. The Project Proponent shall consult the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) on the HCMP prior to submission to the DEP;
- (b) no later than three months before the commencement of construction of the Project, submit a proposal of smart initiatives (including artificial intelligence (AI)-powered device) to enhance the monitoring works of birds and mammals at the wetland compensation and enhancement areas and at Kam Tin River to the DEP for agreement;
- (c) submit a WCP for the compensatory woodland as recommended in the EIA report to the DEP for approval no later than three months before the commencement of compensatory woodland planting. Specifically, the WCP shall include the fire control measures to be implemented along with application of AI-powered hill fire detector(s). Any construction works of the Project affecting the existing woodland shall start only after the commencement of compensatory woodland planting. The Project Proponent shall consult the AFCD on the WCP prior to submission to the DEP;
- (d) submit a WFDG for the Project, including highway structures and noise barriers, to the DEP for approval no later than three months before commencement of construction of the Project. The Guidelines should

provide measures to minimise threats including bird collision and roadkills, and barrier effects on wildlife movements. The Project Proponent shall consult AFCD on the WFDG prior to submission to the DEP;

- (e) set up an EC no later than three months before the commencement of construction of the Project. The EC shall advise on the preparation of the HCMP, WCP and WFDG, and review the effectiveness of implementation of the proposed ecological mitigation / enhancement measures of the Project according to the EIA report and the approved HCMP, WCP and WFDG. The EC should have a wide representation such as representatives of the relevant government departments (including the AFCD), green groups and academics. The list of members and terms of reference of the EC shall be submitted to the DEP for approval; and
- (f) no later than six months before the commencement of construction of road traffic noise mitigation measures, submit a RTNMP to the DEP for approval. For the planned developments as identified in the EIA report along the project alignments, the Project Proponent shall, in consultation with the relevant implementation party(ies) of these planned developments, review and explore the wider use of at-receiver mitigation measures, and provide documentation of their noise reduction performance to demonstrate that the road traffic noise performance requirements set out in the EIA report will not be exceeded with the mitigation measures in place, and to reflect the findings in the RTNMP.

10. The Project Proponent would be required to attend the subsequent ACE meeting to present and explain the project details to the full Council.

EIA Subcommittee Secretariat
July 2026