Cycling is a fun activity good for the body and soul of all ages. It is a family activity, social activity and an energizer for desk-bound / computer-bound work class. You don’t need an apple a day to keep the doctor away. With no busy work on your back, biking in the countryside is always delightful. Roaming on the bike in the boundless and beautiful nature with your friends or families, you come closer to them. In Hong Kong and advanced countries around the world, biking is simply becoming more and more popular.

To meet the public aspiration for a continuous cycle track for recreational purpose, the Development Bureau pledged in the 2007-08 Policy Agenda to develop a comprehensive cycle track network in the New Territories (NT), improving the quality of life. The Civil and Engineering and Development Department (CEDD) has been tasked to implement the work.

The NT Cycle Network

The 104 km long NT Cycle Track Network (the Network) comprises a backbone section with a total length of about 82 km made up of the Tuen Mun — Ma On Shan section (60km), the Tsuen Wan — Tuen Mun Section (22 km), and a few branching off sections, including extensions from Yuen Long to Nam Sang Wai, Ma On Shan to Sai Kung, Tuen Mun to Lung Kwu Tan and a section at Sam Mun Tsai.

The Network is tailor-made for the enjoyment of the public. Entry/exit hubs with on-site bicycle rental services will be provided serving as a gathering place near public transport interchanges to facilitate public access by public transport means. Cyclists may also return their bikes in other entry/exit hubs along the Network at locations where they want to finish their bike trips. In the hubs, we also provide supporting facilities such as toilets, practicing areas, food kiosks, information board and first aid stations, etc. The Network alignment is also always designed to pass through scenic spots and cultural attractions as far as possible. In addition, resting stations and direction signs are available.
For early enjoyment by the public, we are implementing the Network in phases. The eastern backbone section from Sheung Shui to Ma On Shan is already in progress and scheduled to complete in end 2013. It features a new cycle track, 2 entry/exit hubs and 3 resting stations. The western backbone section from Tuen Mun to Sheung Shui is the second phase. This section together with 3 entry/exit hubs in Tuen Mun, Tin Shui Wai and Yuen Long, as well as 5 resting stations, will be implemented from end 2013 with completion in end 2016.

**Difficulties being faced**

Even though the Network is much welcome by the public, we are facing a lot of challenges in the implementation of the Network. They include:

a) **Cycle Tracks in Developed Areas**

Construction of long distance new cycle tracks, though only four metres wide in developed areas, are bound to be overwhelmed with problems, such as land problems, environmental problems and the impact on the residents nearby.

b) **Impact on local Residents**

Many local residents have raised strong objection to proposed cycle tracks when they knew that these tracks might run adjacent to their homes for fear that their tranquil environment would be affected. For example, in the Tsuen Wan to Tuen Mun cycle track section, the cycle track alignment is designed to run along some sections of the existing Castle Peak Road and residential areas. Even though there is vehicular traffic already along Castle Peak Road, some residents still express their worry that the presence of cyclists could lead to additional noise nuisance, especially at night time, and they raise objections against the proposed cycle track.

c) **Environmental Concerns**

As cycle tracks are intended for recreational purpose, they naturally would need to pass through scenic spots as far as possible. However, a few green groups have raised concerns, not only on the environmental impacts of the construction work itself, but also on the increased convenience of public access to existing undisturbed precincts. For instance, it was raised that the environment might potentially be affected by the extension of a cycle track to Nam Sang Wai. We were also advised by bird experts that the Network could result in more cyclists near Hop Shing Wai. Notwithstanding the existing vehicular traffic and pedestrians on Castle Peak Road, and that the proposed cycle track section between Castle Peak Road and Hop Shing Wai in fact would not directly affect the dwelling trees much, there remained concerns by the bird experts of adverse impacts on the egret dwellings.

d) **Design Constraints**

The existing preferred maximum sloping gradient for cycle tracks intended for recreational purpose is 3%, whereas for vehicular traffic, the gradients of the roads can be up to 8% or even 10%. Thus, in many areas with topographical constraints, such as Sai Sha Road with existing gradient of 5%, the design brings a lot of challenges to the designers. Various means, such as providing flat areas, narrowing the cycle tracks at suitable
locations or providing steps along the cycle track, are being explored to overcome such problems at Sai Sha Road.

e) Management and Maintenance Responsibilities
As the various facilities of the Network are managed and maintained by different government departments, we often need to discuss and co-ordinate with more than a few departments to resolve management and maintenance issues.

Moving with Times

Through implementing this project, we have gathered much experience. We endeavour to enhance the Network design and its supporting facilities in many different ways, including:

a) Early and comprehensive consultation with relevant parties
We have widely consulted the relevant parties, including the District Councils, resident associations, green groups and cycling associations, etc.

b) From the People and For the People
To enhance the architectural/landscape merits of the proposed cycle track section from Tsuen Wan to Ting Kau, CEDD and ArchSD jointly organized a design competition in 2012 for architects/landscape architects of ArchSD to contribute schematic architectural design ideas for that section. Besides, CEDD also conducted a design competition for cycle parking racks in early 2013 inviting the public to contribute innovative ideas for cycle parking racks. We will continue our efforts through various means to enhance the design of the Network to better serve the public and achieve cost effectiveness.

c) Overseas Experience
We will also learn from overseas examples, such as self-serve rental systems or smart logos wherever possible and practicable.