

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(1)1453/00-01
(These minutes have been seen
by the Administration)

Ref: CB1/PS/2/00/1

**Subcommittee on matters relating to the
implementation of railway development projects**

**Meeting on
Thursday, 8 March 2001, at 10:45 am
in Conference Room A of the Legislative Council Building**

Members present : Hon Mrs Miriam LAU Kin-yee, JP (Chairman)
Ir Dr Hon Raymond HO Chung-tai, JP
Hon CHAN Kwok-keung
Hon LAU Kong-wah
Hon Andrew CHENG Kar-foo
Hon Albert CHAN Wai-yip
Hon LAU Ping-cheung

Non-Subcommittee member attending : Hon Fred LI Wah-ming, JP

Members absent : Hon LAU Chin-shek, JP
Hon Abraham SHEK Lai-him, JP
Hon Tommy CHEUNG Yu-yan, JP
Hon WONG Sing-chi

Public officers attending : Transport Bureau

Mr Roy TANG
Principal Assistant Secretary for Transport

Highways Department

Mr L T MA
Government Engineer/Railway Development

- Attendance by invitation** : **MTR Corporation Limited**
Mr Russell BLACK
Project Director

Mr Henry LAM
Project Manager (Tseung Kwan O Extension)

Mrs Miranda LEUNG
Corporate Relations Manager
- Clerk in attendance** : Mr Andy LAU
Chief Assistant Secretary (1)2
- Staff in attendance** : Ms Alice AU
Senior Assistant Secretary (1)5
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I Confirmation of minutes and matters arising
(LC Paper No. CB(1)475/00-01 - Minutes of meeting held on 4 January 2001)

The minutes of meeting held on 4 January 2001 were confirmed.

2. The Chairman drew members' attention to the supplementary information note provided by the Administration on the bidding programme of the Shatin to Central Link (SCL) railway project (LC Paper No. CB(1)772/00-01).

3. Given the Government's shareholding in the MTR Corporation Limited (MTRCL) and the Kowloon-Canton Railway Corporation (KCRC), Mr LAU Ping-cheung opined that the Administration decision to invite both corporations to submit proposals for the SCL project would be tantamount to a waste of public funds. The Chairman advised that as the item "East Rail Extension - essential public infrastructure works for Ma On Shan to Tai Wai Rail Link" would be put to the Finance Committee for consideration at its meeting to be held on 9 March 2001, members could pursue the matter further in that forum. Mr Albert CHAN considered that the Administration should be requested to consult the Subcommittee before a decision was made by the Executive Council on which railway corporation should be granted with the development right for the SCL project. Members agreed.

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4. Members also agreed that the Administration should be invited to brief the Subcommittee on the bidding programme of SCL at its next meeting to be scheduled.

(Post-meeting note: The next meeting of the Subcommittee was subsequently scheduled for 10 July 2001.)

II Terms of reference of the Subcommittee

(LC Paper No. CB(1)726/00-01(01) - Proposed terms of reference of the Subcommittee)

5. Members went through the proposed terms of reference (TOR) of the Subcommittee as set out in LC Paper No. CB(1) 726/00-01 (01). The Chairman also drew members' attention to the comments raised by the Administration on the proposed TOR. She said that in light of the Administration's comments, the proposed scope had been narrowed down to cover only resumption of land under the Railways Ordinance (Cap. 519). Mr Albert CHAN also opined that the Transport Bureau (TB) did have a role to play in the land resumption process. He therefore considered it not appropriate to refer the matter to the Panel on Planning, Lands and Works for follow up. After deliberation, members considered that land resumption matters under the Railways Ordinance should also be discussed by the Subcommittee. The Administration should be requested to brief members on the respective roles of relevant government bureaux/departments, particularly TB, in dealing with land resumption matters relating to railway development at a future meeting.

6. The Chairman drew members' attention to the Administration's comment that environmental impact and assessment of railway projects should be taken up by the Environmental Affairs Panel. Members however considered that as the Subcommittee was set up to follow up on issues relating to railway development, it would be more appropriate for the Subcommittee to take the lead in the relevant discussion and that the Panel on Environmental Affairs should be invited to join the discussion, where appropriate.

7. Members endorsed the TOR of the Subcommittee as proposed in LC Paper No. CB(1)726/00-01(01).

III MTR Tseung Kwan O Extension Project Update

(LC Paper No. CB(1)726/00-01(02) - Information paper provided by the Administration)

8. With the aid of PowerPoint, the Project Director of MTR Corporation Limited (PD/MTRCL) gave a presentation on the progress of the Corporation's Tseung Kwan O Extension Project (TKE project). He advised that the overall progress of the project was good with a number of milestones being achieved ahead of programme.

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(Post-meeting note: A set of presentation materials tabled at the meeting was subsequently issued to members vide LC Paper No. CB(1)798/00-01.)

Ground settlement in Tseung Kwan O on TKE operation

9. Mr CHENG Kar-foo referred to the serious concerns raised by local residents, in particular the residents of On Ning Gardens, about the impact of uneven ground settlement caused by TKE construction works on the structural safety of their buildings. He said that given the severity of uneven ground settlement in Tseung Kwan O (TKO), the residents also had worries about the safe operation of TKE.

10. As regards the unusual ground settlement in TKO reclamation, the Principal Assistant Secretary for Transport (PAS for T) stated that the problem was first reported in early 1999. An independent investigation of the causes of the unusual settlement and its effect on existing buildings and other facilities were completed in November 2000. According to the findings of the investigation, the unusual settlement was mainly caused by a significant groundwater drawdown in the lower soil strata of the reclamation. The only credible cause of settlement was the inflow into the Strategic Sewage Disposal Scheme (SSDS) Stage I tunnel being constructed outside TKO reclamation. He further said that in addition to the investigation of the settlement cause, the Territory Development Department (TDD) had, together with other relevant departments, completed an assessment on the effect of unusual settlement on building safety. The checking confirmed that all the buildings were structurally safe.

11. Regarding the defects found in some residential blocks of On Ning Garden, PAS for T advised that the Administration was aware of and concerned about the complaints lodged by the residents. As far as he knew, MTRCL had actively taken up the matter with the affected residents. Recently, no complaint had been received by TB.

12. To supplement, PD/MTRCL stressed that the general settlement in TKO was not related to MTRCL's works. When construction works commenced in Hang Hau, there were already on-going grievances between the residents of On Ning Garden and the Government on building quality. Various problems were identified with the utilities connections, such as sewage pipes and fire mains, at the ground level of the buildings. As excavation works progressed, some localized settlement had occurred as expected. After some discussion with the owners' committee of On Ning Garden, the Corporation had agreed to reinstate the carpark and undertake the rectification works for the utilities connection, despite the fact that these problems were not caused by the Corporation. At present, there was a good relation between MTRCL and the owners' committee of On Ning Garden.

13. On the concerns raised about the impact of ground settlement on the safe operation of TKE, PD/MTRCL assured members that the factor of on-going settlement of reclamation had already been taken into account in the design of all railway structures. Hence, from the safety point of view, there was no major concern about

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the effects of SSDS tunnel-related settlement on the overall integrity of the railway structures. However, he said that in response to a request from the Buildings Department (BD), the Corporation had carried out additional monitoring as a result of settlement caused by the SSDS tunneling works.

14. To facilitate monitoring by members on the impact of ground settlement on the operation of TKE, Mr CHENG Kar-foo requested for information on the additional ground settlement monitoring work undertaken by the Corporation. In response, PD/MTRCL explained that ground water levels and settlement would be monitored as a normal routine for all the works undertaken by the Corporation and the relevant information would be furnished to BD for monitoring purpose. On specific issues arising out of SDSS tunnel-related settlement, the Corporation had been requested by BD to maintain some of the ground water level monitoring points for a longer period of time so as to allow BD to monitor the general situation of the area together with information obtained from other sources. While pointing out that the records in question was all technical information and they would not normally be released in the public arena, he suggested that members should approach the Administration for such records.

Clerk 15. At the suggestion of Mr CHENG Kar-foo, members agreed that BD should be requested to provide all the monitoring data it had gathered from the MTRCL on ground water levels and settlement in TKO. In this connection, the Chairman cautioned that the monitoring data gathered from one source alone would not be adequate to reflect the overall picture of the situation in TKO. In this respect, Mr CHENG said that other relevant Panels could be invited to evaluate the monitoring data in conjunction with any information they might have.

(Post-meeting note: A letter was sent to BD requesting for the relevant monitoring records provided by MTRCL on 15 March 2001.)

16. Referring to some information obtained from TDD, Mr CHENG Kar-foo asked whether there were any potential or on-going claims against the Government made by any parties involved in the construction of TKE in relation to the problem of ground settlement. In reply, PAS for T confirmed that no such claims had been received by TB. PD/MTRCL also advised that to his knowledge, none of the contractors had encountered any problems arising from the SSDS tunnel. He added that should the contractors had any claims of that sort, they would have launched those claims with the Corporation. So far, the Corporation had neither received nor expected to receive any such claims.

Implementation of TKE project

17. In connection with the implementation of TKE project, Mr LAU Kong-wah enquired about the proportion of local labour force, vis-à-vis imported labour force. PD/MTRCL stated that at present, there were about 4 500 workers in the contractors' labour force. Except for a few specialist technicians, all general labour were local

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workers. Given the state of the current labour market, it was not envisaged that the use of imported labour would be necessary in the remaining 18 months of construction work.

MTRCL 18. Mr LAU Kong-wah sought information on the Corporation's safety performance during the implementation of TKE project. In reply, PD/MTRCL assured members that MTRCL had a high expectation on safety and new initiatives had been steadily introduced to try to reduce the rate of accidents. While agreeing to provide members with the accidents rates of TKE during its construction after the meeting, he said that the safety performance of the Corporation was on par with the standard of public works projects and was better than the local construction industry as a whole.

(Post-meeting note: The information provided by MTRCL was subsequently issued to members vide LC Paper No. CB(1)1016/00-01.)

19. Mr LAU Ping-cheung expressed his appreciation on the good progress of the project. He referred to the rolling stock being manufactured in Korea and asked whether internal finishing work could be undertaken by local contractors so as to increase the level of participation by local companies. In response, PD/MTRCL explained that the contract for the supply of rolling stock was for the delivery of trains fit for service into the railway so as to minimize the problems created by interface with different contractors. Given that Hong Kong did not have the requisite technical capability in the manufacturing of rolling stock, it would thus be quite difficult to segregate the rolling stock contract as suggested by the member. However, the refurbishment of old rolling stock in existing lines of the Mass Transit Railway (MTR) was actually carried out in Hong Kong in one of the Corporation's workshops by an international contractor and with a significant element of local labour. In this way, the capability of Hong Kong in that area of work would be developed gradually. In this connection, Mr LAU hoped that for future projects, MTRCL could take his suggestion into account.

Provision of facilities and services on TKE

20. Noting that TKE would become operational in late 2002 as scheduled and that the two Public Transport Interchanges (PTIs) at Yau Tong Station would only be commissioned in 2004-2005, Mr Fred LI was concerned that the interface problems created by the late provision of such essential infrastructure. In order to divert the passengers from the heavily-congested Lam Tin Station and boost the utilization of Yau Tong Station, he considered that connecting footbridges should be built to provide pedestrian access by those residents who lived near the station. He opined that as a matter of policy, the Administration should not rely on feeder service in the form of green minibuses to provide access for passengers to railway stations as increased traffic congestion and air pollution would be created.

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21. In response, PD/MTRCL briefed members on the future developments in the vicinity of Yau Tong Station in the area. He assured members that the station would be designed to integrate with such developments and allow maximum accessibility for people into the station. However, the provision of transport services in the vicinity of the station would be out of the responsibility of the Corporation.

22. Mr Albert CHAN opined that TB, in its role to co-ordinate and oversee the planning and implementation of new railway projects, should ensure the timely provision of the PTIs at Yau Tong Station. In reply, PAS for T advised that as those PTIs would be built by the Housing Authority (HA), it would be up to HA to decide on the completion timing. However, he would relay the concerns raised by the member to HA for consideration. In terms of the provision of other PTIs for TKE, i.e. at Hang Hau Station, Tseung Kwan O Station and Tiu Keng Leng Station, he advised that the Administration had planned to submit the relevant funding proposal to the Public Works Subcommittee (PWSC) on 4 April 2001. Prior to submission, the Transport Panel would be consulted.

23. Reiterating the concerns raised by members in the past about the air quality of PTIs in general, Ir Dr Raymond HO asked whether the problem had been properly addressed in the design of PTIs for TKE. He was worried that if standardized design was adopted, the unsatisfactory condition of poor ventilation would persist. In reply, the Government Engineer/Railway Development of the Highways Department said that such concerns had already been taken into account in the design of the PTIs with the provision of ventilation systems. Relevant details would be given in the forthcoming proposal to be submitted to the Transport Panel and PWSC for consideration.

24. To supplement, PD/MTRCL explained that the standards of PTI construction and operation were prescribed by the Government as the Corporation was only entrusted to construct the PTIs. After completion, the PTIs would be handed over to the Government for operation and maintenance. As PTIs were central customer and service facilities to facilitate the use of railways, the Corporation was keen to have the PTIs constructed, operated and maintained to a high standard. For this purpose, discussions had been held with the Administration as to whether satisfactory commercial arrangements could be put in place for the Corporation to take over the maintenance and operational responsibility for PTIs. Although no agreement had been reached so far, on-going discussions were being held.

25. Given that the management responsibility of PTIs was currently undertaken by different parties, the Chairman opined that the Administration should seriously examine the issues involved and see whether improvements could be made. Noting the suggestion, PAS for T informed members that as a trial, the Administration would invite tenders for the management of the PTIs at Kowloon Station and Olympic Station in July 2001. Subject to the results of the trial, the Administration would consider contracting out the management of other PTIs.

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26. In reply to Ir Dr Raymond HO's enquiry, PD/MTRCL confirmed that TKE would have the same signaling system as used in other lines of MTR system. He assured members that the system which was fully-automated and heavily-computerized was amongst the best technologies available in the market.

27. Reiterating the requests made by local residents for the provision of toilets in the railway stations, Mr LAU Kong-wah asked whether consideration would be given to providing such facilities on TKE. PD/MTRCL replied that the Corporation all along had great reservation about the provision of toilets in the underground stations. For the TKE, toilet facilities including disabled access toilets would be provided in PTIs located adjacent to all stations.

28. Referring to the lack of radio reception on board MTR trains, Mr Albert CHAN considered that it was unfair that the rights of the passengers to receive public information had been deprived. In this respect, he urged the Administration to set down relevant policies requiring all public transport operators to provide radio reception on their service. Moreover, the provision of equipment for radio reception should also be taken into account in the selection of operators for future railway projects. Mr WONG Sing-chi opined that as the provision of such service would be welcomed by the travelling public, the matter should be considered by the Corporation in a positive light. In order to ensure fair competition, Mr CHENG Kar-foo opined that if radio reception was provided on board MTR trains, all radio stations should be allowed to broadcast their programmes.

29. In response, PAS for T advised that the Administration would monitor the operation and performance of MTRCL in relation to its duty to maintain proper railway service in a safe and efficient manner. However, the Administration did not have any policy to require MTRCL or any public transport operators to transmit any kind of information on their services. He added that although there was no radio reception on board MTR trains, the passengers could receive news update provided by the Metro Broadcast Corporation from the passenger information display system. As a public transport provider and a listed company, he was certain that the Corporation would consider providing this value-added service to the passengers if it was commercially viable.

30. In this connection, the Corporate Relations Manager of MTRCL (CRM/MTRCL) advised that a number of technical feasibility studies had been carried out by the Corporation. Given the substantial cost involved in the installation of related equipment, the Corporation would have to work out the ways in which such costs could be recovered. Unconvinced that a substantial cost would be incurred, Mr Albert CHAN said that he would accept an increase in fare to absorb the relevant costs. In this connection, both Mr WONG Sing-chi and Mr CHENG Kar-foo requested for additional information on the costs involved in the provision of radio reception on board MTR trains. In view of members' concerns, CRM/MTRCL agreed to consider the matter further and revert to the Subcommittee in due course.

MTRCL

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(Post-meeting note: The response provided by MTRCL was subsequently issued to members vide LC Paper No. CB(1)1016/00-01.)

MTRCL 31. Citing the lack of art initiatives at the Airport Express Line stations as an example, Mr Albert CHAN expressed his disappointment that the Corporation had failed to honour its undertaking given previously in this regard. In response, CRM/MTRCL highlighted the details of the Corporation's Art in Stations Initiative and the Airport Express Artwork Programme which included live musical and theatrical performances, roving art exhibitions as well as community art projects. She stressed that the Corporation was committed to pushing forward with the Initiative for the benefit and enjoyment of both passengers and the art community. To facilitate members' understanding, she agreed to provide further details on the Initiative after the meeting. To supplement, PD/MTRCL said that the Corporation was also looking seriously into the idea of casting permanent art treatment in furnishing into the design of some stations.

(Post-meeting note: The information provided by MTRCL was subsequently issued to members vide LC Paper No. CB(1)1016/00-01.)

Other concerns

32. Referring to the change of land use for public facilities such as carparks or PTIs granted to MTRCL after the property developments above stations were sold out, Mr Albert CHAN criticized that this arrangement was unfair to small property buyers. He opined that if the Corporation had such intentions for its TKO sites, it would have a duty to ensure that the prospective buyers of the planned residential development projects along TKE were properly informed as the value of their properties might be affected.

33. In response, PD/MTRCL advised that the Corporation's ability to develop the sites was dictated by relevant Government policies and any development undertaken by the Corporation would have to be in compliance with the land grant provisions. However, as the Corporation had yet to receive all land grants from the Government, the actual layout for the locations of various facilities on the sites was still being worked out. He added that while he could confirm that the Corporation had no immediate plans for changing the land use of the sites, he was not in a position to give any undertaking for what might happen in future.

34. Relaying the concerns raised by local residents, Mr CHENG Kar-foo sought information on the level of fares on TKE. PD/MTRCL replied that in line with the practice adopted for new extensions, the Corporation would not decide on the fares until much closer to TKE's opening. It was anticipated that a decision would be made around mid-2002. He assured members that in determining the fare level, due consideration would be given to the prevailing economic climate and most importantly, competition from other public transport providers.

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35. In reply to Mr CHENG's enquiry about the Administration's policy in the timing of setting fares for new railways, PAS for T advised that in terms of fare levels set by MTRCL, TB would ensure that the consultation mechanism formalized in the Operating Agreement entered into between the Government and MTRCL would be adhered to. In that context, the Transport Panel and the Transport Advisory Committee would be consulted accordingly.

36. Members agreed that the Administration and KCRC should be invited to brief the Subcommittee on the progress update of the KCR West Rail project at the next meeting to be scheduled.

(Post-meeting note: The next meeting of the Subcommittee was scheduled for 10 July 2001.)

IV Any other business

37. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 12:50 pm.

Legislative Council Secretariat
6 June 2001