

**Legislative Council
Panel on Transport**

West Rail Fares

Introduction

This paper serves to brief members on the current thinking of the Kowloon-Canton Railway Corporation (KCRC) on West Rail fares with a view to seeking their opinions before a final decision is made. In addition to LegCo Panel on Transport, members of the Transport Advisory Committee and District Councils along the West Rail alignment will also be briefed.

Factors for Consideration

2. The factors that have been taken into consideration in determining the fares for West Rail are
- (a) Service Features

- (i) One of the main objectives of West Rail is to provide a fast and reliable travelling alternative to the residents of North-West New Territories (NWNT), especially for travelling to the urban areas. Phase 1 of West Rail currently ends in West Kowloon, which means passengers would still be required to use feeder modes for access to/from core business and employment areas, such as Tsim Sha Tsui and Central/Wan Chai. With the planned completion of Kowloon Southern Link (KSL) and Shatin Central Link (SCL), this shortcoming would be largely addressed and the railway network would be much more comprehensive. For the short term before the completion of KSL and SCL, West Rail service will have to be augmented by the use of convenient feeder services.
- (ii) West Rail will also offer an attractive alternative for longer distance inter-town travel within NWNT. Currently, Light Rail and KCR buses provide such services. As the majority of internal NWNT transport services is provided by the

Corporation, we would take this opportunity to rationalise these services to maximise complementarity and minimise duplication of resources. It is essential to ensure that passengers are presented with a real choice. The Corporation believes its rationalisation plan would achieve a balance such that passengers will have a genuine choice in choosing either Light Rail or West Rail.

(b) Market Situation

- (i) West Rail is a new service in the well-established travel market of NWNT residents. Currently, most of the journeys to the urban areas are made on franchised buses, which, unlike railways, generally offer more flexible point-to-point services and are highly competitive.
- (ii) The population in NWNT is sparsely distributed. Out of the current population of about 938,000 in NWNT, only 23% (2001 census) live within the practical walking distance of 500 m of a West Rail station. We have therefore focused on improved accessibility via feeders to offset this drawback. With feeder services designed to be integrated with West Rail stations, we believe West Rail services could effectively be extended to an overall 50% of the NWNT population.
- (iii) The Corporation has conducted regular surveys to monitor the expectations and travel preferences of NWNT residents. The most valued criteria for the selection of a travel mode are fares, journey time and easy access. By providing a fast and reliable journey, West Rail would already be very attractive. Competitive fares would ensure that West Rail services would be a well utilised alternative contributing to the socio-economic growth of NWNT.

(c) Social Consideration

In addition to being a commercial entity, the Corporation has placed great emphasis on passengers' demands and expectations. In setting West Rail fares, due consideration has been given to acceptability by NWNT residents. We intend to provide passengers

with a genuine alternative both physically and financially, especially during the current harsh economic times. This will help enthuse a positive travelling experience and boost the local economy.

(d) Fare Integration

- (i) Passengers living farther away from the stations or having their destinations away from the stations may be deterred from using railway services because of the need to interchange and, in most cases, to pay more. The Corporation intends to address this problem by providing integrated fares for Light Rail and West Rail, and bus inter-modal discounts at both ends of West Rail. This signifies a true partnership between public transport operators for the ultimate benefit of the travelling public.
- (ii) Under the aforementioned principles, West Rail fares will be set to
 - be highly competitive to attract passengers;
 - facilitate well integrated feeder services at both ends, especially in the urban sector prior to the completion of KSL and SCL;
 - offer a genuine alternative to Light Rail for intra-NWNT travel;
 - take into account the acceptability and expectations of the travelling public, and
 - incorporate integrated fares to enhance the attractiveness of the services.
- (iii) The Corporation has undertaken detailed analyses of existing public transport services, and will take steps to ensure that fares proposed would be competitive. Integrated fares will be offered to passengers who take KCRC's Light Rail, Bus and West Rail services on the same trip. The Corporation has also collected public views through surveys, extensive consultations and community interactions to gauge the

expectations and acceptability of the travelling public on West Rail Fares.

Next Step

3. Extensive consultations at district level on the restructuring of Light Rail services commenced at the end of last year. During these consultations and other community briefings on West Rail services, the Corporation has collected a lot of views on West Rail fares. A number of meet-the-passengers sessions were held in the format of West Rail Café, Light Rail Café and Passenger Liaison Group meetings. The Corporation will take into account the comments and expectations of the travelling public when finalising the West Rail fare structure.

4. Members of the LegCo Transport Panel, Transport Advisory Committee and District Councils along the West Rail alignment will be briefed on the above, and their views will be sought. A final decision will be made at the Managing Board.

Kowloon-Canton Railway Corporation
May 2003