

**Legislative Council Panel on Transport**

**Service Suspension of Airport Railway  
on 27 July 2003**

**(Paper from Transport Department)**

**Purpose**

This paper reports on the actions taken by the Transport Department (TD) during the service suspension of the Airport Railway (AR) including the MTR Tung Chung Line (TCL) and the Airport Express Line (AEL) on 27 July 2003 and the areas for improvement identified.

**The Incident**

2. At about 8:09 a.m. on 27 July 2003 (Sunday), train service delays were experienced on the section of AR between Lai King Station and Olympic Station due to signaling control problem near the new Nam Cheong Station. At about 8:25 a.m., the signaling control problem extended to all other stations of the AR leading to a total suspension of TCL and AEL services. The railway services progressively resumed as from 10:00 a.m. During the service suspension period, emergency bus services were provided by the MTR Corporation Limited (MTRCL) and alternative transport services were strengthened to cater for the passenger demand resulting from the train service disruption. About 5,000 passengers were affected in the incident.

**Actions taken by the Government during the incident**

3. Immediately upon receipt of alert message from MTRCL, TD took the following actions :

- (a) informed bus operators of the service disruption and requested for close monitoring of demand on services to/from Airport and Tung Chung and to provide additional buses where demand justified;

- (b) disseminated information on the AR service disruption and related bus service arrangements through the public media;
  - (c) liaised with KCRC on publicity at Kowloon Tong Station for passengers intending to interchange to MTR services;
  - (d) liaised with the Police on crowd control situation at the stations and the emergency bus stops; and
  - (e) sent site observer to Hong Kong Station to observe and report on the emergency bus arrangement, passenger queue length, crowd control and station information disseminations.
4. Throughout the incident period, TD maintained close communication with MTRCL on the progress of incident recovery, arrangement for emergency bus services and passenger demand for these services, and information disseminated to affected passengers.

### **Areas for improvement**

5. MTRCL is conducting a detailed investigation into the incident with a view to proposing recommendations to avoid recurrence of similar incidents, improve service recovery efficiency and enhance information dissemination and assistance to passengers.
6. TD and MTRCL have conducted a joint review meeting in light of the 27 July 2003 incident. Both parties agreed, with a view to minimizing the adverse impact of railway incidents on passengers, to strengthen communication and coordination when incidents occur, and to review the emergency bus arrangement from time to time. Areas for further improvement agreed include :

#### Alerting procedures

- (a) MTRCL would ensure that all relevant parties are alerted promptly in the case of any MTR/AEL incident. The Corporation has agreed to make more use of the Amber Alert so as to allow more time for TD and other public transport operators

to prepare supporting transport services and to provide clear messages according to the agreed alert system;

Dissemination of information to passengers

- (b) in response to public complaints about the confusing messages given to passengers, MTRCL would review ways to provide passengers with timely and precise information about the cause of service disruption, where possible the anticipated period of disruption and the alternative transport services available to facilitate passengers to plan their journeys ahead;
- (c) the Corporation would consider broadcasting messages in Mandarin, in addition to Cantonese and English, at all AEL Stations to provide timely information to overseas passengers;

Emergency transport services

- (d) MTRCL would examine means to improve the speed of providing emergency transport services for the stranded rail passengers. Other transport operators would be called up for help via TD where necessary;
- (e) TD and MTRCL would jointly review the provision of emergency bus routes along AR and alternative public transport arrangement to cater for the need of passengers resulting from rail service disruption; and
- (f) TD and MTRCL would review the temporary pick-up/ set-down points for the emergency bus services along AR and other transport modes taking into account the needs of passengers and the prevailing traffic condition.

Transport Department  
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