

Legislative Council Panel on Transport
Subcommittee on Matters relating to Railways

Shatin to Central Link

INTRODUCTION

This paper provides Members with the latest update on the Shatin to Central Link (SCL) and addresses the enquiries raised by Members at the meeting on 1 August 2003.

BACKGROUND

2. The Railway Development Strategy 2000 (RDS-2000) promulgated in May 2000 provides the planning framework for future expansion of Hong Kong's railway network. It provides a list of railway projects for further studies and probable implementation. However, the decision on if and how these railway projects should be taken forward would be made only after detailed engineering, environmental and financial studies have been carried out. The SCL is one of the priority rail projects recommended in RDS-2000.

3. The SCL will form a new strategic rail link between North-East N.T. and Hong Kong Island. It comprises three sections of rail line including the Tai Wai to Diamond Hill Link (TDL), the East Kowloon Line (EKL) from Diamond Hill to Hung Hom and the Fourth Rail Harbour Crossing (FHC) from Hung Hom to Central West. The Second Railway Development Study (RDS-2) put forth two alternatives in providing the FHC, i.e. either extending East Rail or EKL across the harbour. In view of the need to foster healthy competition in the railway industry, we have adopted the EKL option and put the TDL, EKL and FHC together to form the initial configuration for SCL in the RDS-2000. A total of ten stations are proposed.

4. In January 2001, both MTRCL and KCRC were invited to submit bid proposals for the project. KCRC was awarded in June 2002 with the right to build and operate the SCL. The award was based on the Conforming Scheme as stipulated in the SCL Project Brief. However, under the provision in the Project Brief, the awardee is allowed to propose changes or additional details to arrive at the Final Scheme for the SCL. In order to yield the maximum benefits through SCL, we expect KCRC to make use of its existing rail infrastructure to

better serve the transport needs of the general public and enhance the project's financial viability. Planning and design for this project is currently underway.

LATEST POSITION

5. KCRC began the scheme design for the SCL in March this year, taking into account the latest planning parameters, results of site investigations, and forecast of population and patronage. Further to the progress reported in the information paper submitted to Members in July 2003, the latest development is given below:-

a) **Hin Keng Station**

6. The Hin Keng Station was not included in the SCL Project Brief and according to KCRC's forecast, it will only bring about a small marginal increase in daily patronage for SCL of about 17,000 passengers in 2011. Therefore, KCRC considers that provision of the station will not be commercially viable. However, provision will be made for its construction in the future.

b) **Tsz Wan Shan Station**

7. Although Tsz Wan Shan Station was not included in the SCL Project Brief, KCRC has indicated that it intends to provide rail service for the Tsz Wan Shan area. Site investigation was duly carried out and the results show that if a station had to be provided, the engineering requirements are such that the station would have to be located at a depth of 60-90 metres below ground. Apart from the engineering and safety problems associated with the station at such depth, access to the platforms and evacuation of passengers during emergencies are also matters of grave concern. KCRC is now working on the technical solutions and exploring other options, such as using an Automatic People Mover (APM) system to connect the areas with the main line.

c) **Rail Service to Whampoa**

8. Upon the requests of the Whampoa residents, KCRC, in addition to the Conforming Scheme, has proposed to build a light rail People Mover System to Whampoa, as part of the SCL.

9. Early this year, MTRCL also expressed an interest in providing rail service for Whampoa area by extending the Kwun Tong Line from Yau Ma Tei to Whampoa via Homantin. We have asked both MTRCL and KCRC to submit further details so that we can conduct an assessment on their proposals based on their relative merits on transportation, environment and financial aspects. We are aiming to come to a decision by early next year when the final scheme of SCL is confirmed.

d) **Admiralty Station**

10. KCRC is planning to locate the Admiralty station to the east of the existing MTR Admiralty Station. An earlier proposal for a SCL Station at Tamar has been ruled out because it cannot comply with the security requirement that no railway station or tunnel should be located underneath the planned new Central Government Complex and LegCo Complex. Interchange between the KCR and MTR systems is being planned. The new station will also be linked with the existing and proposed footbridges and subways, including a pedestrian link with the adjacent Tamar site. Once KCRC has firmed up its proposal, MTRCL will be consulted to provide for the most convenient interchange.

e) **Central West Station**

11. Site investigation has revealed very difficult ground conditions at areas around Staunton Street and Victoria Prison with soft unstable materials overlying rock at a depth of about 150 metres. Various scheme design options are being investigated by KCRC. This includes construction of a station in a rock dome near Lan Kwai Fong, with passenger adit connections to entrances at convenient locations on Queen's Road Central.

f) **East Rail across the Harbour**

12. KCRC, as a prudent commercial corporation, has to revisit and validate the various project assumptions and planning parameters in order to arrive at the most optimal scheme taking into account its rail configuration and the requirements stipulated in the SCL Project Brief. The feasibility of extending the East Rail from Hung Hom to Central (West) via Admiralty and Exhibition while building a new line to connect Tai Wai to Hung Hom via East Kowloon is being looked at in this context. Technical, financial and operational aspects are being considered.

13. With East Rail crossing the harbour, cross boundary passengers and the East Rail passengers can have a direct access to Hong Kong Island, although passengers from Ma On Shan and South East Kowloon will have to interchange at Hung Hom to continue their journeys to Hong Kong Island.

COST

14. The additional works and modifications to the SCL will affect the cost estimate for the SCL. However, having regard to the preliminary results from the scheme design, KCRC remains confident that the SCL is financially viable. The Corporation intends to finance the project by internal resources and borrowings. The cost estimate will be refined after the scheme design is completed. At this stage, the estimate of \$35 billion as provided to Members in July 2003 is not expected to be exceeded.

PROGRAMME

15. Under the current programme it is intended to complete the final scheme design around the end of this year. Statutory procedures under the Railways Ordinance (RO) and the Environmental Impact Assessment Ordinance (EIAO) will follow. The SCL project is still programmed to be completed within the window of 2008-2011 as recommended by the RDS-2000. A more definitive programme will emerge after the scheme design is completed.

Environment, Transport and Works Bureau
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