

Legislative Council Panel on Transport
Subcommittee on Matters relating to Railways

Better Co-ordination of Public Transport Services arising from
the Commissioning of West Rail

Purpose

The West Rail ("WR") is expected to open towards end of 2003. This paper informs Members of the Administration's plan to consult the public about the proposed public transport service plan to tie in with the opening of WR.

Background

2. WR is a high capacity railway of 30.5 kilometres linking the North West New Territories ("NWNT") with the urban areas. There will be nine new WR stations : Tuen Mun, Siu Hong, Tin Shui Wai, Long Ping, Yuen Long, Kam Sheung Road, Tsuen Wan West, Mei Foo and Nam Cheong. The rail alignment and station arrangements are set out in Annex.

3. Within NWNT, WR links up conveniently with the Light Rail Transit ("LRT") system at 4 stations (viz Tuen Mun, Siu Hong, Tin Shui Wai and Yuen Long) providing connections to various places in NWNT. Upon commissioning of WR, the LRT system will be suitably adjusted to enhance its connectivity to WR stations. At the urban end, WR connects with MTR Tsuen Wan Line ("TWL") and Tung Chung Line ("TCL") at Mei Foo station and Nam Cheong station respectively. WR passengers can interchange with MTR services to various places in Kowloon, Hong Kong Island and Lantau.

4. During the initial stage of its operation, the frequency of WR will be at about 3 minutes, and the carrying capacity will be as high as 47,000 passengers per hour on each direction. It will increase the public transport capacity in the corridor by about 80%.

5. The WR will provide fast services for many passengers as illustrated below :

From \ To	Nam Cheong	Tsim Sha Tsui (interchange with MTR TWL)	Central (interchange with MTR TCL)
Tuen Mun	30 mins.	51 mins.	46 mins.
Tin Shui Wai	22 mins.	43 mins.	38 mins.
Yuen Long	17 mins.	38 mins.	33 mins.

6. Public transport interchanges ("PTIs") and pedestrian facilities will be provided near the new WR stations. New PTIs will be provided at all WR stations except Mei Foo Station which will be served by an existing PTI. Cycle park facilities will be provided in the vicinity of six WR stations in NWNT (i.e. Tuen Mun, Siu Hong, Tin Shui Wai, Long Ping, Yuen Long and Kam Sheung Road). Walk links will be provided for convenient access to the stations.

Public Transport Service Plan

7. Our transport objective is to provide a safe, efficient, reliable and environmentally friendly transport system which meets the economic, social and recreational needs of the community, and is capable of supporting sustainability and the future development of Hong Kong. The transport strategy is to place emphasis on rail transport and the co-ordination of public transport services. Priority will be accorded to the railways which are to form the backbone of our public transport system. Franchised buses will continue to be major transport service providers in areas not conveniently served by the railways, and their role in providing feeders to the railways will be strengthened. Green minibuses ("GMBs") and other modes will continue to supplement the railways and franchised buses. The different public transport services will be better co-ordinated to enhance network efficiency, maintain reasonable fares, relieve congestion and address environmental concerns.

8. At present, NWNT is mainly served by buses, GMBs and residents' services. When opened, the WR will increase the capacity provided on external public transport services for NWNT by 80%. The WR will provide fast, reliable and convenient service to passengers in particular those traveling to or from NWNT. There will be substantial changes to the

travel pattern of the passengers, some of whom are expected to switch to use the new railways.

9. Transport Department (“TD”) has examined the possible changes to passengers’ travel pattern. It is noted that some passengers will require walkway links while some will require feeder services to the WR stations. At the same time, the utilization of some existing bus and GMB routes is expected to decrease in varying degrees upon opening of WR. On the basis of the findings, changes will need to be made to the public transport services in response to the opening of WR, taking into account relevant factors including -

- (a) the broad transport policy framework described in paragraph 7 above;
- (b) the provision of feeder services to ensure good connectivity of the WR for easy access by passengers;
- (c) the maintenance of an efficient public transport network by rationalising and improving co-ordination of public transport services to better match changing demand and minimize wasteful competition;
- (d) the maintenance of viable networks of franchised bus and GMB services; and
- (e) the maintenance of healthy competition among service providers to ensure commuter choice.

10. The public transport service adjustments will include introduction of new routes and re-routeing of some existing routes to better feed passengers to the WR stations, and frequency adjustments or route modification/cancellation for overlapping services. It is expected that the service changes will help reduce bus trips in the busy urban areas and hence relieve congestion and reduce roadside emission.

Consultation and Implementation

11. The relevant District Councils (“DCs”) will be consulted on the

public transport service plan starting from early January next year. TD will set up working groups with DC members and local representatives to examine and discuss details of the arrangements. The target is to finalize the public transport service plan in mid 2003 so that adequate publicity can be mounted before opening of the WR.

12. The public transport service plan will be implemented in a progressive manner. Upon the commissioning of WR, the recommended new and modified bus services and also GMB services will be introduced to ensure good connectivity with the WR, while other changes will be made gradually in the light of on-the-ground observation to ensure smooth implementation and avoid confusion. There will be comprehensive publicity before implementation of the changes.

13. To ensure smooth commissioning of the WR and implementation of public transport service plan, a service hotline will be provided upon opening of the WR and it will be widely publicized. KCRC will ensure smooth train operations and arrange to make available spare buses. The franchised bus companies will also ensure that there are adequate spare buses on standby during the initial period of WR commissioning. In addition, TD will conduct site observations to monitor the actual situation and activate its Emergency Transport Co-ordination Centre to co-ordinate arrangements as appropriate.

14. There will be close monitoring of the implementation of the service changes after opening of the WR. If necessary, refinements may be made to the phased implementation programme and other service adjustments may be implemented in consultation with the concerned parties having regard to the actual situation on the ground.

West Rail Alignment

Annex

