

Legislative Council Panel on Transport
Subcommittee on matters related to railways

Progress Report on Northern Link (NOL)

INTRODUCTION

This paper informs Members of the latest situation regarding the Northern Link (NOL)

BACKGROUND

2. The NOL is one of the six rail projects recommended by the Railway Development Strategy (RDS-2000) formulated in 2000. It connects West Rail (WR) at Kam Sheung Road to the new Lok Ma Chau boundary crossing and the Spur Line at Kwu Tung Station. There will be three intermediate stations along NOL, viz Au Tau, Ngau Tam Mei and San Tin.

3. NOL has three functions –

- providing the western part of Hong Kong with more direct train services to the boundary by linking WR to Lok Ma Chau;
- providing domestic train services to the New Development Areas (NDA) at Au Tau, Ngau Tam Mei and San Tin; and
- together with the Spur Line, forming a strategic link to join up WR and ER at northern New Territories.

4. RDS-2000 sets an indicative completion date of the NOL between 2011 – 2016. The actual time for implementation will be based on the planning timeframe of the development and the forecast of cross

boundary traffic growth.

CROSS BOUNDARY DEMANDS

5. Currently, the daily 2-way passenger traffic at Lo Wu averages about 260,000. At weekends and festive holidays, daily passenger demand can easily exceed 300,000 with the highest of about 360,000 recorded in October this year.

6. Planning Department and Highways Department regularly update the cross boundary forecast using their in-house transport models and taking into account the recent cross boundary travel characteristics, landuse development and network configuration in both Mainland and HKSAR.

7. The forecast shows that the weekday daily cross-boundary demand will exceed 300,000 around 2007. It will be further increased to 460,000 and 500,000 in 2016 for the cases without and with NOL respectively.

DOMESTIC PASSENGER DEMANDS

8. The second and third functions of NOL are to provide rail service for domestic passengers especially those living in the NDAs in NWNT along NOL.

9. The existing population within one-kilometer catchment of the future three intermediate stations of NOL is about 15,000. The latest planning assumption indicates that when the NDAs are fully developed, the catchment population will be over 100,000. However, the NDA development is being reviewed by Planning Department under the Study 'Hong Kong 2030: Planning, Vision and Strategy' in the light of the latest housing and landuse policy. The preliminary results of this Study will be available next year.

THE WAY FORWARD

Intermediate Solution

10. In order to relieve the congestion at Lo Wu, the Government has carried out a number of improvement works at Lo Wu including increasing the number of immigration counters and implementing the passenger flow management schemes. Furthermore, the Spur Line to be completed in 2007 will provide an additional boundary crossing at Lok Ma Chau.

11. Upon full expansion, Lok Ma Chau will have a capacity comparable to that of Lo Wu. With the relief by the Spur Line, Lo Wu can handle the demands in the next 10 years.

Long Term Planning

12. The programme for the NOL is contingent upon the long term growth of the cross boundary traffic and also the domestic demands arising from the development of the NDAs.

13. We are monitoring the cross-boundary traffic growth with statistics provided by Immigration Department, bi-yearly survey data by Planning Department and forecast reviews conducted by Planning Department and Highways Department. We are also keeping in view planning of the NDAs.

14. We have also regular dialogue with KCRC. They are performing similar forecast on the cross boundary traffic and the patronage of NOL. They are currently updating their forecast and will provide their findings to us when available.

CONCLUSION

15. Members are requested to note the latest situation of the NOL.

Environment, Transport and Works Bureau
December 2002
(ETWB(T)CR 14/1016/99)