

## **Legislative Council Panel on Transport**

### **West Island Line and South Island Line**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

This paper serves to update Members on the progress of the development of the West Hong Kong Island Line and the South Hong Kong Island Line (WIL and SIL).

#### **BACKGROUND**

2. After considering the previous proposals submitted by the Corporation for the Island Line Extension and the SIL and comparing these against the Route 7 proposal, the Executive Council decided on 21 January 2003 that -

- a. the Corporation should be asked to proceed with further planning on the WIL Phase 1 from Sheung Wan to Belcher including a possible link with the SIL; and
- b. the Corporation should be asked to examine modifications to its preliminary proposal for the SIL, with a view to arriving at a more cost effective option, in particular options in railway technology.

3. The Corporation subsequently commissioned a study in July 2003 to develop an improved railway scheme to serve Western and Southern districts, to interchange conveniently with the existing railway network on the northern side of Hong Kong Island, and to relieve traffic congestion within the central business areas.

4. The Corporation completed the study in early 2004 and submitted a project proposal to the Administration on 30 March 2004.

5. The following sections report the latest proposals for WIL and SIL.

#### **WIL/SIL PROPOSAL**

##### **Scheme**

6. The proposed WIL/SIL comprises the following key elements and as shown in the attached Figure.

- a. an Island Line extension from Sheung Wan to Sai Ying Pun;
- b. a new WIL from Sai Ying Pun to Wong Chuk Hang;
- c. a new SIL from South Horizons on Apleichau to Admiralty; and
- d. a depot for WIL and SIL at Wong Chuk Hang.

7. Three options for the SIL section between Ocean Park and Admiralty are proposed, which provide options for stations at Happy Valley and/or Wanchai.

8. Interchange stations are located at Sai Ying Pun, Admiralty and Wong Chuk Hang and at Wanchai for Option C.

9. A total of 10 new stations (11 stations in the case of Options B and C) are provided, which include stations at Kennedy Town (without the need for reclamation) and Aberdeen that were not included in the original scheme. For Tin Wan and Queen Mary Hospital, provisions will be made to enable stations to be built when the demand increases.

### **Railway System**

10. A medium capacity railway system, which can better match the demand and is more cost effective than the conventional MTR system, is recommended for the WIL and SIL. This system would have rubber tyre 4-car trains, of approximately 60m long, operating at up to 2-minute headways, and capable of carrying a peak demand of approximately 20,000 passengers per hour.

### **Journey Times**

11. The rail journey times between most of the stations in Southern and Western districts and Central or Admiralty will be less than 10 minutes. Typical rail journey times are shown in the following table.

From station	To station	Journey Times (min.)		
		Option A	Option B	Option C
Kennedy Town	Central	8	8	8
Wah Fu	Central	13	13	13
South Horizons	Admiralty	9	11	11
Ocean Park	Admiralty	4	6	7
Happy Valley	Admiralty	N.A.	3	4

### **Ridership**

12. About 85% of the population and 75% of the employment in Western and Southern districts will be within walking distance of a WIL or SIL station.

13. The forecast patronage has taken into account the current level of bus and mini-bus services and assumes that the same level of competition will continue. The new rail service will offer a competitive advantage through the much reduced and more predictable journey times.

### **Project Delivery Programme**

14. The Corporation will be able to complete the project and open the new railway lines to public service in 2009/2010 if an agreement with Government can be reached in 2004.

## **FARES, COSTS AND FINANCIAL SUPPORT**

15. The estimated capital cost of the WIL and SIL approximately \$15 billion in current prices.

16. The fares for the WIL and SIL will be in line with the existing MTR fare structure.

17. The forecast rate of return of the project is lower than the Corporation's required commercial rate of return and the project is considered not financially viable from the investment point of the Corporation.

18. On the other hand, given the substantial transport, external and social benefits that the project will generate, the project is worth pursuing for the benefit of the community at large. As Government and the society will capture most of the benefits of the project, the Corporation suggests that the Government should provide financial support of a maximum of half of the project cost. The Corporation will fund the remaining capital costs and all operating costs from fare revenue and by utilizing internal resources and borrowings.

## **EXTERNAL BENEFITS**

19. External benefits are those that stem directly from a project, but do not accrue to the organization (the Corporation in this case) undertaking the project. These benefits however can be captured by Government and the community. Hence estimating external benefits for major infrastructure is an essential step in assessing the appropriateness of public funding support for a project.

20. The external benefits of WIL and SIL have been assessed in a comprehensive study conducted by the Hong Kong University.

21. The total external benefits over the life of the railway are estimated to be in order of \$40 billion, of which the direct financial benefits accruing to Government will be \$4 to \$5 billion.

## **NEW EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES**

22. Construction of the new railway lines will generate some 5,000 new job opportunities for the construction and related industries.

23. In the longer term, as a result of the improved accessibility to the two districts, there will be a significant increase in the level of economic activity which will create a substantial number of new employment opportunities. Studies carried out by various independent consultants suggest that at least 20,000 new jobs will be created at Ocean Park and the rejuvenated Wong Chuk Hang area alone.

## **SOCIAL BENEFITS**

24. In addition to the external benefits described above, the project will also generate substantial social benefits to the society, which will include:-

- a. provision of a reliable, safe and environmentally friendly mode of transport to the Southern and Western districts;
- b. promotion of tourism developments in Southern district, creating opportunities for redevelopment of Ocean Park and Aberdeen Harbour;
- c. urban rejuvenation within Southern and Western districts;
- d. preservation of the south-western shoreline;
- e. enhancement of the living quality in both the Southern and Western districts.

## **PUBLIC CONSULTATION**

25. The WIL and SIL proposal has been receiving supportive responses in the public consultation process. Parties consulted include:

- the local communities;
- the concerned District Councils, namely, Southern, Central and Western, and Wan Chai;
- statutory bodies such as Advisory Committee on Environment, Town Planning Board;
- relevant parties like Ocean Park, University of Hong Kong, Cyberport;
- professional institutions such as Hong Kong Institution of Engineers, Hong Kong Institute of Architects, Hong Kong Institute of Planners; and
- the construction industry.

26. The local communities are generally looking forward to have improved transport provisions and more choices and have demanded early implementation of the WIL and SIL.

27. At the time of submitting this paper, over twenty thousand citizens had visited either the roving exhibitions for the WIL and SIL staged at South Horizons, Lei Tung Estate, The Belcher's, Wah Fu Estate, Kennedy Town, Cyberport, University of Hong Kong, MTR Hong Kong Station and Wanchai Station or had attended the residents briefings held in Southern, Western and Happy Valley districts. The roving exhibition and residents meetings will continue until July 2004.

28. The Corporation has also received over 6,000 written comments from the public in which over 97% of the respondents are in support of the WIL and SIL.

## **IMPACT ON OTHER MODES OF TRANSPORT**

29. The impact of the WIL and SIL on other modes of transport was also briefly studied in the feasibility study. The findings of the study are:-

- a. a significant portion of bus passengers are predicted to switch to WIL and SIL;

- b. a small number of existing green mini-buses services may be surplus however most can be redeployed to become new feeder services; and
- c. a small proportion of taxi trips to and from Southern District will also be affected.

30. The study is based on existing data available from Transport Department and does not take into account growth in transport demand that may occur due to revitalization of Southern and Western districts. It is expected that once these factors are taken into account the business prospects for minibus and taxi trade will actually enhance.

31. The shift from road based transport to rail is in accord with the Government transport policy to have railway as the backbone of transport system. It will help provide the needed relief to traffic congestion in Central, Wanchai and Causeway Bay.

32. As the WIL and SIL are currently proposed to be open in 2009/2010, it will pose no immediate impact to the existing operators. There should be adequate time to carry out the necessary planning for the co-ordination of transport services in Western and Southern districts.

33. The Corporation has also met the respective transport operators and trade unions and noted their concerns. The Corporation is prepared to join hands with the operators to carry out further studies to enhance the inter-modal co-ordination and to minimize the impact.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

34. With a total population of 430,000, Western and Southern districts have long been suffering from inadequate provisions and choices of public transport services. This transport constraint has restricted the development and rejuvenation of these two districts.

35. The WIL and SIL will provide a choice of transport services for residents of Western and Southern districts; a benefit which most other districts of Hong Kong already enjoy and one for which they have been waiting for many years.

36. The WIL and SIL will bring immense transport, economic and social benefits to the two districts and the community as a whole.

## **WAY FORWARD**

37. Members are invited to offer their comment and support to the WIL and SIL project.

38. The Corporation will continue discussions with Government to facilitate the early endorsement of the WIL and SIL proposal and an agreement in principle on the financial support arrangement.

39. The Corporation will commence further planning and design studies, environmental impact assessment, gazetting under the Railway Ordinance following endorsement in principle by the Government.

MTR Corporation Limited  
May

2004

## 西港島綫及南港島綫路綫

## West Island Line and South Island Line Alignments

