

立法會

Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(1)2181/03-04

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Report of the Panel on Transport for submission to the Legislative Council

Purpose

This report gives an account of the work of the Panel on Transport during the 2003-2004 legislative session. It will be tabled at the meeting of the Legislative Council on 7 July 2004 in accordance with Rule 77(14) of the Rules of Procedure of the Council.

The Panel

2. The Panel was formed by a resolution passed by the Council on 8 July 1998 and as amended on 20 December 2000 for the purpose of monitoring and examining Government policies and issues of public concern relating to transport matters. The terms of reference of the Panel are at **Appendix I**.

3. The Panel comprises 18 members, with Hon LAU Kong-wah and Hon Andrew CHENG Kar-foo elected as Chairman and Deputy Chairman respectively. The membership list of the Panel is at **Appendix II**.

Major Work

Public transport fare adjustment system

4. The Panel was well aware of the public's concern about the level of public transport fares. Whilst noting the Administration's plan to develop a more objective and transparent process for public transport fare adjustment which would allow for increase as well as reduction in fares, the Panel was very concerned about the slow progress in taking forward the proposed fare adjustment mechanism. The Panel called on the Administration to expeditiously discuss with various public transport operators to reduce the public transport fares and re-introduce the half-fare travel concessions for students, and encourage public transport operators to co-operate in offering more joint concessions.

Possible merger of MTR Corporation Limited and Kowloon-Canton Railway Corporation

5. On 24 February 2004, the Government announced that the two railway corporations would be invited to commence negotiations on a possible merger. The Panel noted the Administration's view that a merger provided an opportunity for synergies and a very good opportunity for the corporations to abolish the second boarding charge, and introduce a more objective and transparent fare adjustment mechanism. But prior to the implementation of the merger plan, the Panel took the view that the Administration should give impetus to the two railway corporations to reduce their fares and encourage them to co-operate in introducing interchange concessions expeditiously.

6. In considering a merger, the Panel was of the view that consideration must be given to satisfying the strong community demand for fare reduction. The merged corporation should not monopolize the public transport market so as to safeguard commuters' choice. There was also a need to provide seamless interchange arrangements for new projects under planning, notably Shatin to Central Link and Kowloon Southern Link. The Administration should also work out a clear framework for providing funding support for railway development in future, and set out clearly the rights and obligations of the merged corporation to ensure proper regulation of the merged corporation. The Panel was also concerned about the impact of a merger on the establishment of the two railway corporations and urged the Administration to consider measures to safeguard the employment conditions and remuneration packages of existing staff of the two railway corporations. The Panel noted that the negotiations between the two railway corporations would be concluded by 31 August 2004. The Administration was asked to brief members on the outcome of the merger study by the two railway corporations at the earliest opportunity.

Cross boundary traffic

7. For the long-term development of the economy and the logistics industry, the Panel considered that there was a pressing need for the Administration to implement various projects to enhance the transport link between Hong Kong and the Pearl River Delta region. The Panel noted that in addition to the Shenzhen Western Corridor (SWC), construction of the Sheung Shui to Lok Ma Chau Spur Line was underway. The Administration was also planning for the construction of another vehicular bridge connecting Huanggang and Lok Ma Chau. It would also continue the joint study with the Mainland authorities for the land transport link between Hong Kong and Pearl River West as well as the Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail.

Traffic impact on Tuen Mun and Yuen Long

8. The Panel was particularly concerned about the traffic impact on Tuen Mun and Yuen Long upon the commissioning of the SWC and Deep Bay Link (DBL) in late 2005. The Panel was worried that the Administration was merely relying on the improvement of existing highway infrastructure, namely, Yuen Long Highway, Castle Peak Road and Tuen Mun Road to cope with the increase in forecast demands. While calling on the early implementation of such improvement works, the Panel considered that these could only bring about temporary relief. Hence, the Administration should plan ahead and seriously consider the provision of new transport infrastructure to meet the long-term traffic demand. The Panel also expressed concern about the lack of progress in the Administration's negotiation with Route 3 (CPS) Company (Route 3 Company) on measures to divert traffic from Tuen Mun Road to Route 3. The Panel pointed out that it was incumbent upon the Administration to come up with an action plan to address the issues involved as a matter of priority.

9. The Administration assured members that in the run-up to 2011 after the commissioning of the SWC and DBL in 2005, the Administration would monitor the situation closely and would devise and implement the necessary improvement measures before the existing network reached its full capacity. Regarding the Administration's negotiations with Route 3 Company, the Administration pointed out that the process was by no means simple as it involved the commercial operation of a private company. The outcome of on-going discussions on toll concessions would largely depend on Route 3 Company's consideration of the future traffic projections on Route 3 as well as the resulting financial implications. Depending on the results of the negotiation with Route 3 Company on toll concessions, the Administration would decide on the way forward for the Easterly Link Road (ELR) to facilitate traffic diversion to Route 3 as the effectiveness of ELR in channelling motorists to use Route 3 would hinge largely on the toll levels of Route 3.

Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge

10. In examining the proposed Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge, the Panel called on the Administration to make early planning for the provision of local connecting infrastructure in addition to the proposed North Lantau Highway Connection to meet the additional traffic generated by the Bridge. The Panel was also concerned about the potential impact of the construction of the Bridge on the Chinese white dolphin population in the area and urged the Administration to take necessary measures to mitigate the environmental impacts.

Northwest New Territories Traffic and Infrastructure Review

11. The Panel also noted that the Administration had initiated the Northwest New Territories Traffic and Infrastructure Review in 2002 to assess the long-term needs for transport infrastructure development in the Northwest New Territories and Lantau. The Panel was briefed on the preliminary outcome of the Review, which comprised several packages of road networks within the region. The Panel recommended that the subject matter should be regularly brought up to the Panel for consideration so that Members could keep track of the infrastructural development in the areas.

Reconstruction and improvement of Tuen Mun Road

12. The Panel was generally in support of the proposed reconstruction and improvement of Tuen Mun Road with a view to bringing the Expressway Section up to the current highway standards. In considering the proposal, the Panel urged the Administration to consider widening the reconstructed road to dual four-lane standard as far as practicable. On the other hand, the Panel was also concerned about the traffic flow on Tuen Mun Road during the construction period, taking into account the effect of possible reduction in speed limit along the Road and also the commissioning of the SWC and DBL in end 2005. The Administration assured the Panel that the impact of the construction activities on traffic flow along Tuen Mun Road throughout the construction period was unlikely to be significant and suitable temporary traffic arrangements would be introduced to minimize traffic disruption.

Cross boundary passenger ferry services

13. The Panel welcomed the Administration's plan to invite tenders for the occupation, modification and use of part of the Tuen Mun Pier for the operation of cross-boundary passenger ferry services to Macao and cities in the Mainland. The Panel believed that this project would be a further step to enhance the transport link with the Mainland and Macao.

Road safety

Enhancement of highway safety

14. In November 2003, the Tuen Mun Road Traffic Incident Independent Expert Panel released its Report on Enhancement of Highway Safety. The Panel received a briefing by the Expert Panel on its findings and recommendations. The Panel shared the view that priority should be given to improving driving behaviour and attitude through public education and driving courses supplemented by enforcement as a deterrent. Whilst agreeing that the Speed Enforcement Camera (SEC) system was a proven effective tool to deter speeding and enhance road safety, the Panel was concerned about the slippage of the Administration's plan to install 75 SECs at strategic roads and

expressways. The Panel urged the Administration to speed up the related work and expand the coverage of SECs to other new strategic road network routes.

15. On highway design, the Panel noted that the local standards were in line with international practices. In reviewing the speed limits on roads, the Panel considered that the Transport Department should continue to conduct regular reviews of speed limits and, if necessary, adjust the speed limits to optimize traffic flow without compromising road safety. There was also a need to improve the signing and the provision, format and mounting of signs in Hong Kong. Regarding the choice of containment level and parapet height, the Panel was of the view that there was a need to consider the congested environment in Hong Kong and the unique situation of a large fleet of double-decked buses using the road network. The Administration should therefore actively pursue the technical feasibility and benefits of installing multiple containment parapets in Hong Kong.

Safety of franchised bus operation

16. The Panel also reviewed with the Administration and bus companies on measures to ensure the safety of franchised bus operation. The Panel noted that all the five franchised operators had been requested to conduct a safety review, covering aspects such as the correlation between bus accidents and drivers' age, experience and working hours, driver training, driver working schedule, installation of safety devices, measures to monitor driving behaviour, vehicle examination, and measures to promote safety awareness of drivers and passengers.

Safety of public light bus operation

17. The Panel noted that the accident rate and the rear seat casualty rate of public light bus (PLB) had been relatively high among all classes of vehicles. The 2003 accident and casualty rates per 1000 vehicles for PLBs were about 221 and 145 respectively whereas those for all motor vehicles were about 25 and 9 respectively. The Panel therefore supported the proposal to install passenger protection equipment, including seat belts and high back seats, on PLBs to enhance the safety of passengers. The Panel also urged the Administration to examine other contributing factors leading to PLB-related traffic accidents with a view to identifying suitable measures to address the problem.

Safety of school transport vehicle operation

18. The Panel noted that the Administration would continue to launch education and publicity programmes to promote the importance of safety on school transport vehicles. It would also require newly registered school

transport vehicles to be equipped with safer seats according to specifications set by the Transport Department. Further, arrangements would be made to extend compulsory provision of escorts to nanny vans that carried kindergarten students.

Registration scheme for the vehicle maintenance trade

19. While mechanical defects of vehicles had not been a major contributory factor of road accidents, the Panel agreed that proper maintenance of vehicles was conducive to the enhancement of road safety. In addition, sub-standard maintenance services would bring about air pollution, which would have negative impacts on the health of the public. The Panel therefore welcomed the Administration's plan for introducing a registration scheme for the vehicle maintenance trade in Hong Kong. In discussing the proposal, the Panel reminded the Administration to ensure that the benefits and employment opportunity of employees would not be unduly affected and that proper training should be provided to in-service vehicle mechanics.

Co-ordination of different transport modes

20. The Panel noted that the existing transport policy was to accord priority to the mass carriers, viz. railways and franchised buses, with railways as the backbone of the public transport system. The other modes would assume a supplementary role. However, in order to make this hierarchy effective, there must be a high degree of inter-modal co-ordination.

Impact of railway development on other public transport modes

21. The Panel noted the concerns expressed by both franchised and non-franchised bus (NFB) operators, PLB and taxi trades about the rapid proliferation of railway development in the territory, particularly those unviable projects which intended to serve as extension or feeder to existing railways. This coupled with the difficult operating environment of the public transport trades had already jeopardized their businesses and livelihood. The transport trades were of the view that the Administration should critically review the need, cost-effectiveness and financial viability of the planned railway projects, taking into account the latest changes in land use planning, population size and other planning parameters as well as the roles of various modes in the public transport services system and their respective operating environment.

Route 4 vis-à-vis South Island Line and West Island Line

22. The construction of Route 4 vis-à-vis South Island Line (SIL) and West Island Line (WIL) was high on the agenda of the Panel. The Panel noted that there were divergent views among the public transport trades, the local community, green groups and professional bodies over the implementation of

Route 4 vis-à-vis SIL and WIL.

23. The public transport trades expressed strong reservation over the need, economic benefits and timing for the implementation of the SIL and WIL. Based on the recent performance of the West Rail, they urged the Administration to review the patronage forecast and economic benefits of the projects so as ensure the best use of community resources among the many competing demands. There was also a need to assess the impact of the railway projects on the business of franchised bus, NFB, PLB and taxi trades. As an alternative, they urged the Administration to speed up the implementation of Route 4 so as to address the transport needs of residents.

24. On the other hand, the Panel noted that the local community would like to see the early implementation of the SIL and WIL. The green groups and some professional bodies also considered the railway option a better alternative to Route 4. In their opinion, railway was more environmentally-friendly and would also facilitate the sustainable growth of the community.

25. In this connection, some members considered that the implementation of SIL and WIL should proceed without further delay so as to address the transport needs of local residents and facilitate the tourism development in the areas. Some other members however were of the view that the Administration should shelve any further development and planning for the SIL and WIL pending its review on the latest population growth in the southern and western districts, as well as its land-use planning to develop the southern district into a tourism/commercial centre. In the meantime, the Administration should expedite its study and decision process for the implementation of Route 4 so as to cope with the transport needs of the local residents. On 28 May 2004, the following motion was passed by the Panel:

"本事務委員會促請政府暫時擱置港島南、西鐵路的發展規劃，並重新評估港島南、西區的人口增長，以及發展南區成為旅遊／商業中心的計劃，在此期間則盡快研究並落實興建四號幹線(前稱七號幹線)，以應付該等地區居民的交通需求。"

"That this Panel urged the Government to shelve any further development and planning for the South Hong Kong Island Line and the West Hong Kong Island Line pending its review on the latest population growth in the southern and western districts, as well as its land-use planning to develop the southern district into a tourism/commercial centre. In the meantime, the Government should expedite its study and decision process for the implementation of Route 4 (formerly Route 7) so as to cope with the transport needs of the local residents." (Translation)

26. The Panel also requested the Administration to speed up the Interim Traffic Improvement Measures to improve the local traffic conditions along Pokfulam Road to a manageable level.

Non-franchised bus services

27. The Panel noted that public transport trades including NFB, PLB and taxi trades had expressed concerns about an oversupply of NFB services. During the last five years between 1998 and 2003, the number of registered NFBs increased from 5 868 to 7 206, representing an increase of 23% which was 19% higher than the 4% growth in the number of franchised buses over the same period. Besides, the trades were also concerned that individual NFB operators had recently gone beyond their established scope of operation to operate unauthorized services or services deviating from the NFB policy. For example, some individual NFB operators had abused the flexibility allowed to provide long-term bus services to the public with a fixed route or a fixed destination area. On the other hand, some individual operators picked up or set down passengers at unapproved locations or deviated from the approved routeing, etc. Whilst such NFB services might provide alternative services to passengers, their mode of operation would undermine the regular and legitimate transport services. In view of the above problems, the Panel called on the Administration to step up enforcement against unauthorized NFB services and review the regulatory framework and licensing system for NFB operation. The Panel noted that the a working group was formed under the Transport Advisory Committee to review the related issues.

Conversion of red minibuses to green minibus operation

28. The Panel noted that in June 2003, a group of red minibus (RMB) drivers who operated services between Northwest New Territories and the urban area raised strong demand for opening up Route 3 to RMB operation on the ground that the commissioning of West Rail (WR) would divert passengers from their service and seriously affect their livelihood. The Panel appreciated their concerns and reviewed with the Administration a possible trial scheme for facilitating incumbent drivers of RMBs operating in the service area of the WR to operate green minibus (GMB) services via Route 3.

29. The Panel noted that having consulted the PLB trade, the Administration decided to proceed with the preparatory works of the trial scheme by inviting applications from RMB drivers for registration from 18 December 2003. Under the trial scheme, there would be three GMB routes from Yuen Long via Route 3 to Tsuen Wan, Jordan and Mong Kok respectively, which in effect replicated the origins and destinations of the existing RMB routes operating along Castle Peak Road between Yuen Long and urban areas.

Taxi touting activities

30. The Panel noted that under the prevailing economic conditions, the problem of illegal taxi touting activities and fare bargaining by passengers had seriously affected the operation and livelihood of law-abiding taxi operators. Members called on the Administration to maintain their vigilance in combating taxi touting activities, in particular those involving the use of illegal telecommunication devices and distribution of name cards or leaflets, so that the trade could operate in a fair environment. On fare bargaining by passengers, the Panel noted that there were divergent views among the taxi trade on the need for legislative amendments to prohibit passengers from asking for fare discount at this stage. Some trade members considered that fare bargaining by passengers was unfair to those who did not agree to such requests. Some however opined that it was not appropriate to take away the flexibility for the trade in responding to market situation during economic downturn. On this matter, the trade strongly requested that the Administration should step up publicity to advise taxi passengers of their duty to pay legal fare.

Interchange discount

31. The Panel considered that an important element of modal integration concerned the fares that passengers paid. In the current fare structure, each railway corporation and each service for other modes, charged a separate fare. This fare consisted of two components - a "boarding charge" required to use the service at all, and a distance related amount. The cancellation of boarding charges for multi-modal trips would therefore render the services more attractive and increase overall ridership.

32. In discussing the item "Interchange discount between West Rail/MTR" at the meeting on 23 April 2004, the following motion was passed by the Panel:

"本事務委員會要求政府促使地鐵有限公司延續及改善現有西鐵與地鐵之間的轉乘優惠。本事務委員會亦對地鐵有限公司至今對延續及改善上述優惠仍採取不積極的態度表示失望和遺憾。"

"That this Panel urged the Administration to give impetus to the MTR Corporation Limited to extend and improve the existing interchange fare discount arrangement between West Rail and MTR. The Panel also expressed disappointment and regretted that the MTR Corporation Limited had yet to respond positively to the request for extending and improving the existing interchange fare discount arrangement." (Translation)

33. Having considered members' view, the two railway corporation decided that starting from 1 May 2004, Adult Octopus cardholders transferring between

the MTR and KCR WR at Nam Cheong Station or Mei Foo Station would automatically enjoy an interchange discount of \$1.20 off the second leg of their journeys if they used the same Octopus card to travel on both rail systems. Passengers using concessionary Octopus cards would save \$0.60. The discount scheme would be valid until 1 January 2005.

Public transport services

Tramway

34. In reviewing the application from the Peak Tramways Company Limited for extension of the period to run and operate the Peak Tramway, the Panel pointed out that the Administration should take the opportunity to examine whether additional safeguards should be put in place to ensure the future service performance of the Company. Highlighting the importance of the peak tramway as one of the major tourist attractions in Hong Kong, the Panel also called on the Administration to further enhance the appeal of peak tramway to tourists and ensure the provision of adequate and clear signage to guide tourists to the peak tramway station.

Ferry service

35. In reviewing the issue of Sunday/holiday fares for the three outlying island services (i.e. Central - Cheung Chau, Central - Ping Chau and Central - Mui Wo) operated by New World First Ferry Services Limited (NWFF), some members were of the view that the difficulty of outlying island ferry services operation had been a long-standing issue. Considering the financial position of NWFF, they did not agree that the cancellation or reduction of holiday fare would bring about any real benefits to the local residents as it would inevitably affect the level of weekday fare. It would even be more undesirable if the company decided not to continue operation. Hence, the constructive approach was for the Administration to work together with the company to identify further ways to assist its operation.

36. Some other members however held the view that the level of holiday fares was too high and it was not conducive to attracting additional patronage. They pointed out that the company should take a proactive role in working with the local community to identify ways to attract more patronage on holidays. Meanwhile, more efforts should be made to enhance the attractiveness of the outlying islands so as to attract additional patronage.

37. At the meeting on 23 April 2004, the following motion was passed by the Panel:

"本事務委員會要求政府當局促使新世界第一渡輪服

務有限公司取消其離島航線的假日附加費。"

"That this Panel urged the Administration to give impetus to NWFF to remove the higher holiday fares for its outlying island services." (translation)

Railway

38. The Transport Panel decided at its meeting on 15 December 2000 to form a subcommittee to oversee the development and implementation of railway projects in Hong Kong. The terms of reference of the Subcommittee were revised on 25 October 2002 to cover issues relating to the operation of existing railways. At the Panel meeting on 9 October 2003, members agreed that the Subcommittee should continue its work in the current session. During the 2003-2004 session, the Subcommittee continued with its vigorous efforts in overseeing the planning and implementation of railway projects, and monitoring the reorganization of public transport services upon the opening of new railways. A report prepared by the Subcommittee is in **Appendix III**.

39. During the period from October 2003 to June 2004, the Panel held a total of 12 meetings. The Panel also paid a visit to MTR Kowloon Bay depot to inspect the incident train of the arson attack which happened on 5 January 2004 and reviewed the detrainment arrangement, operation of ventilation windows and provision of fire precaution equipment on train. Further, the Panel also took a test-ride on WR and the Light Rail Tin Shui Wai Extension and inspected various WR station facilities prior to the commissioning of the railways.

Panel on Transport

Terms of Reference

1. To monitor and examine Government policies and issues of public concern relating to transport matters.
2. To provide a forum for the exchange and dissemination of views on the above policy matters.
3. To receive briefings and to formulate views on any major legislative or financial proposals in respect of the above policy area prior to their formal introduction to the Council or Finance Committee.
4. To monitor and examine, to the extent it considers necessary, the above policy matters referred to it by a member of the Panel or by the House Committee.
5. To make reports to the Council or to the House Committee as required by the Rules of Procedure.

**Legislative Council
Panel on Transport**

Membership list

Chairman	Hon LAU Kong-wah, JP
Deputy Chairman	Hon Andrew CHENG Kar-foo
Members	Dr Hon David CHU Yu-lin, JP Hon Albert HO Chun-yan Ir Dr Hon Raymond HO Chung-tai, JP Hon Mrs Selina CHOW LIANG Shuk-ye, GBS, JP Hon CHAN Kwok-keung, JP Hon Andrew WONG Wang-fat, JP Hon LAU Chin-shek, JP Hon Miriam LAU Kin-ye, GBS, JP Hon TAM Yiu-chung, GBS, JP Dr Hon TANG Siu-tong, JP Hon Abraham SHEK Lai-him, JP Hon Tommy CHEUNG Yu-yan, JP Hon Albert CHAN Wai-yip Hon LEUNG Fu-wah, MH, JP Hon WONG Sing-chi Hon LAU Ping-cheung, SBS
	(Total: 18 members)
Clerk	Mr Andy LAU
Legal Adviser	Miss Connie FUNG
Date	2 July 2004

立法會
Legislative Council

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**Report of the
Subcommittee on Matters Relating to Railways
for submission to the Panel on Transport**

Purpose

This report gives an account of the work of the Subcommittee on Matters Relating to Railways.

The Subcommittee

2. The Transport Panel decided at its meeting on 15 December 2000 to form a subcommittee to oversee the development and implementation of railway projects in Hong Kong. The terms of reference of the Subcommittee were revised on 25 October 2002 to cover issues relating to the operation of existing railways. At the Panel meeting on 9 October 2003, members agreed that the Subcommittee should continue its work in the current session. The terms of reference of the Subcommittee are at **Appendix IV**.

3. The Subcommittee comprises 14 members, with Hon Miriam LAU Kin-yeet elected as Chairman. The membership list of the Subcommittee is at **Appendix V**.

Major work

4. During the 2003-2004 session, the Subcommittee continued with its vigorous efforts in overseeing the planning and implementation of railway projects, and monitoring the reorganization of public transport services upon the opening of new railways.

Overall planning

5. The Subcommittee recognized that railways played a central role in the new transport strategy as they were efficient and environmentally friendly mass carriers. The West Rail (WR) was open for passenger services on 20 December 2003. Four other railway projects, namely the Ma On Shan to Tai Wai Rail Link (MOSR), KCR Extension from Hung Hom to Tsim Sha Tsui (TSTE), Penny's Bay Rail Link and Sheung Shui to Lok Ma Chau Spur Line (Spur Line) were being planned and implemented for completion between 2004 and 2007.

6. The Railway Development Strategy 2000 mapped out a blueprint for planning and implementing the next phase of railway network expansion to meet Hong Kong's needs up to 2016 or so. This phase of railway expansion involved a total investment of some \$100 billion (1998 prices) to complete the following six new railway projects, with an indicative completion time window between 2008 and 2016 or so:

- (a) Shatin to Central Link (SCL) comprising Tai Wai to Diamond Hill Link, East Kowloon Line (EKL) and Fourth Rail Harbour Crossing (FHC);
- (b) Island Line Extensions comprising the North Hong Kong Island Line (NIL) and West Hong Kong Island Line (WIL);
- (c) Kowloon Southern Link (KSL);
- (d) Northern Link;
- (e) Regional Express Line (REL); and
- (f) Port Rail Line.

7. Apart from these six projects, the Chief Executive in Council decided in January 2003 that the Administration should consider developing the South Hong Kong Island Line (SIL), which formed a transport "loop" with the WIL and provided rail service to the Southern District. The planning of the SIL and WIL would be taken up by the Panel together with the Route 4.

8. The Subcommittee noted the concerns expressed by both franchised and non-franchised bus operators, minibus and taxi trades about the rapid proliferation of railway development in the territory which had already jeopardized their businesses and livelihood. The transport trades were of the view that the Administration should critically review the need, cost-effectiveness and financial viability of the planned railway projects, taking into account the latest changes in land use planning, population size and other planning parameters as well as the roles of various modes in the public transport services system and their respective operating environment.

9. The Subcommittee noted the Administration's view that the actual implementation timing of railway projects would be subject to more detailed studies on engineering feasibility and financial viability, having regard to the growth of the transport demand, project interfaces and consultation with the general public and other stakeholders. Some of the projects might be completed in phases to better match the demands. The Government announced in June 2002 to award the SCL to the Kowloon-Canton Railway Corporation (KCRC). The railway scheme of the SCL was being finalized. The KSL was now under detailed planning and design. The Government decided in January 2003 to defer the implementation of the NIL and phase 2 of the WIL from Belcher to Kennedy Town. The planning of phase 1 of the WIL from Sheung Wan to Belcher would be further carried out together with the SIL. The Administration would continue to work in coordination with the Mainland side on the preliminary planning of the REL. The Administration would monitor any changes in land use, population and transport parameters in reviewing the implementation timing and triggering railway projects in a timely manner. Public consultation would be undertaken prior to the implementation of the railway projects.

East Rail Extension and Shatin to Central Link

10. The East Rail Extension (ERE), comprising the MOSR and TSTE, was expected to be commissioned by end 2004. The Subcommittee noted that whilst certain amount of technical difficulties had been encountered during the construction of the MOSR and TSTE, no major outstanding issues were being dealt with by the KCRC. The Administration was satisfied that good progress had been achieved for the ERE to date.

11. One of the concerns raised by the Subcommittee over the implementation of the MOSR was related to the latest changes in the scheme design of the SCL. Under the original proposal put forward by the KCRC, the MOSR would be extended from Tai Wai to Hung Hom Mass Transportation Centre via the EKL and FHC to Central. Residents in Ma On Shan areas would enjoy a through train service to Central. In early 2004, the KCRC came up with a Preferred Scheme for the implementation of the SCL. The Preferred Scheme with the East Rail (ER) across the harbour option consisted of a north-south railway from Lo Wu to Central by extending the ER across the harbour; and an extension of the MOSR from Tai Wai to Hung Hom Mass Transportation Centre via the EKL to serve the population in the southeast Kowloon.

12. The Subcommittee was concerned that if the ER across the harbour option was adopted instead of extending the EKL as originally planned, the attractiveness of the MOSR to Ma On Shan residents as an external transport

service would be seriously undermined. This would have great impact on the financial viability of the MOSR. The Subcommittee was also concerned that as the EKL would not be extended across the harbour, the MOSR passengers would interchange with the ER at KCR Tai Wai Station causing unacceptable overcrowding there. Coupled with the additional cross harbour passengers on the ER and the KCRC's proposal to downsize ER train configuration, the Subcommittee was worried that the ER would not have sufficient capacity to cope with the demand, bearing in mind the rapidly growing cross boundary traffic demand.

13. The Subcommittee noted that the Administration was reviewing the scheme design of the SCL. The MTR Corporation Limited (MTRCL) and the KCRC were also working together under the context of a possible merger to see how the SCL could be improved, in particular with regard to the provision of railway services in the Whampoa area and interchange arrangements. Whilst the proposed implementation of the SCL was well-received by local residents, the transport trades had expressed concern over its timing of implementation. Notwithstanding the Administration's plan to embark on an ambitious railway expansion programme to promote railways as the backbone of the public transport services system, the transport trades maintained the view that a balance should be maintained to ensure the viability and healthy competition of different modes of public transport. In their opinion, the proposed automated people mover link between Diamond Hill Station and Tsz Wan Shan Station, and the side link to Whampoa areas were essentially feeder lines to the railway "trunk line", and hence, should be provided by other public transport modes under the existing transport policy. The transport trades therefore strongly requested the Administration to review the implementation of the SCL project, having regard to the cost-effectiveness, viability and economic benefits of the railway project and its impact on other public transport modes. The Subcommittee would continue to follow up on the project, taking into account the views expressed by various local bodies, green groups, professional bodies and transport trades.

14. Regarding the public transport reorganization plan after the opening of the MOSR, the Subcommittee was of the view that any service changes should only be introduced progressively subject to the actual changes of passengers' travel pattern. Without a highly competitive fare level with interchange discount as well as an efficient and convenient interchange for passengers at the KCR Tai Wai station, the Subcommittee was worried that the MOSR would not be an attractive alternative to the local residents. As such, the Subcommittee urged the KCRC to formulate a competitive pricing strategy, together with the introduction of convenient interchanging facilities and feeder services to boost the attractiveness of the MOSR. To minimize the noise impact of the MOSR on local residents, the Subcommittee also urged the KCRC to provide additional noise absorption and introduce necessary containment measures.

Kowloon Southern Link

15. The KSL would extend the WR from its terminus at Nam Cheong Station, through the West Kowloon reclamation to Hung Hom Station. It would provide an efficient east-west link in the southern part of the Kowloon peninsula and enhance the network coverage and attractiveness of the WR. Upon its completion, the KSL and WR passengers could interchange at Hung Hom with the ER and SCL.

16. The Subcommittee noted with concern that the KCRC had revised its proposal to construct only one station at West Kowloon and defer the Canton Road (CAR) Station in view of the engineering considerations and the extensive disruption to the public during its construction. The Subcommittee was worried that the proposal might not be able to address the transport needs of passengers and would also undermine the cost-effectiveness of the proposal. If the CAR were to be constructed eventually in future, the cost of providing the station would be escalated.

17. The KCRC pointed out that the decision was not made out of financial considerations. Although CAR was contemplated in the earlier planning for the KSL, the KCRC had subsequently confirmed that the major disruptions and technical risks arising out of the cut-and-cover construction methods would be unacceptable. As regards the alternative bored tunnel option, it would require resumption of two buildings nearby. However, the presence of two railway stations in the vicinity would also make it not justifiable on transport grounds to support such resumption. To address members' concern, the KCRC agreed to contemplate the provision of connecting underground subways to facilitate passenger access to other railway stations in Tsim Sha Tsui. The Subcommittee nonetheless considered that given the perceived transport and economic benefits of the CAR, the KCRC should review its decision and explore other options of providing the station to serve the local community.

18. In connection with the implementation of the KSL, the Subcommittee was also concerned about the impact of ground-borne noise and vibration on the Cultural Centre and the Space Museum. It urged the Administration and the KCRC to pay special attention to ensure that neither the construction nor operation of the KSL should have any adverse noise or vibration impact on the adjacent cultural and exhibition facilities. There was also a need to put in place adequate measures to reduce the impact of the construction works on business operations and traffic flow in the area.

West Rail and Light Rail Tin Shui Wai Extension

19. The Light Rail (LR) Tin Shui Wai (TSW) Extension with two new routes was opened for passenger service on 7 December 2003. The two new routes extended the LR services from the southern part of TSW to the northern part with 11 stops along the new routes. On the first weekday running of the new routes on Monday, 8 December 2003, crowding was encountered in the morning at some of the LR stops. The Subcommittee was gravely concerned about the service disruption, the preparatory work undertaken by the KCRC prior to opening, and the adequacy of the LR inter-town services after WR's opening. The Subcommittee convened a special meeting to review the related issues with the KCRC and the Administration. The Subcommittee urged the KCRC to take necessary improvement measures to ensure the smooth opening of the WR. The arrangement to provide free bus services to back up the newly-opened LR TSW Extension should be maintained during the initial operation of the WR. Contingency arrangements should be made to allow other public transport operators to provide emergency transport support services as and when necessary. Improvements could also be made to ensure the timely dissemination of accurate information to the public.

20. Prior to the commissioning of the WR on 20 December 2003, the Subcommittee also reviewed with the Administration and the KCRC on measures to resolve the problems identified during the WR trial operations, particularly in respect of the signalling system and the vibration problems. The Subcommittee noted that the KCRC Managing Board had decided on a 42-day test period during which train service was required to maintain the minimal punctuality and service delivery rates required for normal trial operations on a full daily schedule. Measures were also taken to improve the vibration problem as identified by members. To ensure safety and service reliability upon the commissioning of the WR, the Subcommittee also called on the Administration and the KCRC to conduct full-load and half-load testings as part of the trial operations.

21. As the WR's network would need to be supplemented by feeder services, the Subcommittee called on the KCRC to provide better arrangements, both in terms of facilities and fare discounts, to facilitate the WR passengers to interchange with other modes of public transport. Where appropriate, covered walkways linking between residential developments and the WR stations, as well as convenient and user-friendly interchanging facilities should be provided. As a means to minimize the financial burden of the travelling public, the Subcommittee considered that the two railway corporations should introduce interchanging discounts between the MTR and WR networks. The reorganization of public transport services after the opening of the WR should also be introduced progressively to reduce the impact on the local residents.

Preventive and response measures for emergency incidents

22. The Subcommittee was very concerned about the arson incident on 5 January 2004 where a passenger unlawfully ignited some inflammable materials on a MTR train travelling from Tsim Sha Tsui Station to Admiralty Station. While the incident did not result in serious injuries to passengers, the Subcommittee urged the Government and both railway corporations to review if the existing facilities, arrangements, procedures were adequate to prevent and handle railway incidents and whether any improvements should be made. The Subcommittee called on the railway corporations to provide adequate means and equipment for the safe evacuation of passengers in case of an emergency. The Subcommittee also reminded the MTRCL to ensure the proper operation of passenger alarm devices and hopper windows on the trains through regular checks and maintenance. Adequate staffing support should be provided to ensure passenger safety. Where appropriate, passengers should be involved in future drills and exercises to increase public knowledge and awareness. The railway corporations were also requested to consider installing air curtain or water screen at gangways to confine the spread of smoke and/or fire in case of an emergency, installing closed-circuit television on MTR trains for safety monitoring, and providing radio reception on board MTR trains to facilitate dissemination of information.

23. In reviewing the service disruptions of the WR which happened on 21 and 22 May 2004, the Subcommittee considered that the Administration should impress upon the two railway corporations the need to strictly comply with the pledges laid down in the established alert mechanism and to notify the Transport Department within eight minutes and the media as soon as possible on any service disruption incident that had occurred for eight minutes or was expected to last for eight minutes or more. Apart from facilitating the arrangement of emergency transport services, this could also help the travelling public make better preparations for their trips. Some members were of the view that in view of the frequent occurrence of railway service disruptions, the Administration should consider imposing penalties on the two railway corporations with a view to achieving some deterrent effect. The Administration should also step up the monitoring work to ensure the reliable and safe operation of railway services.

Supporting infrastructure for railway development

24. When consulted on the funding proposal for the design and construction of a public transport interchange at the Lok Ma Chau (LMC) Terminus of the Spur Line, the Subcommittee suggested that adequate terminating bays and stacking areas should be provided at the LMC Terminus to allow the operation of other public transport modes including bus, public light bus and taxi.

Provision should also be made to allow future expansion, given the rising demand for cross-boundary traffic and the need of the traveling public.

25. During the period from October 2003 to June 2004, the Subcommittee held a total of ten meetings.

Council Business Division 1
Legislative Council Secretariat
30 June 2004

Panel on Transport

Subcommittee on matters relating to railways

Terms of Reference

To follow up various issues relating to the planning and implementation of new railway projects, and the operation of existing railways as follows:

Planning and implementation of new railway projects

- (a) planning and financing of new railway projects;
- (b) environmental impact assessment of new railway projects;
- (c) resumption of land arising from the implementation of new railway projects under the Railways Ordinance (Cap. 519);
- (d) progress update on the implementation of new railway projects;
- (e) provision of supporting public infrastructure for new railway projects; and
- (f) co-ordination of public transport services arising from the commissioning of new railway lines.

Railway operation

- (a) performance of existing railway lines including train service performance and safety management;
- (b) maintenance programme; and
- (c) train service disruptions and breakdowns, and arrangements for handling emergency situations.

Matters relating to the two railway corporations in respect of their merger feasibility, corporate governance and fares should be dealt with by the Transport Panel.

**Legislative Council
Panel on Transport**

Subcommittee on matters relating to railways

Membership list for 2003-2004 session

Chairman	Hon Miriam LAU Kin-ye, GBS, JP
Members	Dr Hon David CHU Yu-lin, JP Hon Albert HO Chun-yan Ir Dr Hon Raymond HO Chung-tai, JP Hon CHAN Kwok-keung, JP Hon LAU Kong-wah, JP Hon Andrew CHENG Kar-foo Hon TAM Yiu-chung, GBS, JP Hon Abraham SHEK Lai-him, JP Hon Tommy CHEUNG Yu-yan, JP Hon Albert CHAN Wai-yip Hon LEUNG Fu-wah, MH, JP Hon WONG Sing-chi Hon LAU Ping-cheung, SBS (Total: 14 Members)
Clerk	Mr Andy LAU
Legal Adviser	Miss Connie FUNG
Date	2 July 2004