

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(1)2442/03-04
(These minutes have been seen
by the Administration)

Ref: CB1/PS/2/00/1

Panel on Transport

Subcommittee on matters relating to railways

**Minutes of special meeting on
Thursday, 3 June 2004, at 10:30 am
in the Chamber of the Legislative Council Building**

Members present : Hon Miriam LAU Kin-yee, JP (Chairman)
Dr Hon David CHU Yu-lin, JP
Hon Albert HO Chun-yan
Ir Dr Hon Raymond HO Chung-tai, JP
Hon LAU Kong-wah, JP
Hon Andrew CHENG Kar-foo
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

Non-Subcommittee Members attending : Hon Fred LI Wah-ming, JP
Hon James TO Kun-sun
Hon Jasper TSANG Yok-sing, GBS, JP

Members absent : Hon CHAN Kwok-keung, JP
Hon TAM Yiu-chung, GBS, JP
Hon LAU Ping-cheung

Public Officers attending : **Agenda items I and III**

Miss Margaret FONG
Acting Permanent Secretary for the Environment,
Transport and Works

Mr Raymond HO
Principal Assistant Secretary for the Environment,
Transport and Works

Mr WAN Man-lung
Principal Government Engineer/Railway Development
Highways Department

Agenda item II

Mr Arthur HO
Deputy Secretary for the Environment, Transport and
Works

Mr K H LO
Chief Inspecting Officer (Railways)
Environment, Transport and Works Bureau

Ms Alice AU-YUENG
Principal Transport Officer/Bus & Railway
Transport Department

Mr Simon CHEUNG
Chief Transport Officer/Incident Management
Transport Department

**Attendance by
invitation**

: Agenda item I

Kowloon-Canton Railway Corporation

Mr Kenneth LEUNG
Director, New Railway Projects

Mrs Grace LAM
General Manager, Corporate Affairs

MTR Corporation Limited

Mr Malcolm GIBSON
Chief Design Manager

Mr Jason WONG
Senior Design Management Engineer - Civil

Ms Maggie SO
External Affairs Manager

Agenda item II

Kowloon-Canton Railway Corporation

Mr Samuel LAI
Acting Chief Executive Officer

Mr Y T LI
Senior Director, Transport

Mr K K LEE
Senior Director, Capital Projects

Mrs Grace LAM
General Manager, Corporate Affairs

Agenda item III

Kowloon-Canton Railway Corporation

Mr Samuel LAI
Acting Chief Executive Officer

Mr K K LEE
Senior Director, Capital Projects

Mrs Grace LAM
General Manager, Corporate Affairs

Canton Road Association

Mr David YIP
Treasurer

Mr Lawrence LEE
Representative
(Business Development Director, Wharf)

Mr Clement WONG
Representative
(Assistant Project Director, Wharf)

Individual

Mr Henry CHAN
Chairman of Yau Tsim Mong District Council

Clerk in attendance : Mr Andy LAU
Chief Council Secretary (1)2

Staff in attendance : Ms Alice AU
Senior Council Secretary (1)5

Miss Winnie CHENG
Legislative Assistant 5

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I Shatin to Central Link project

- (LC Paper No. CB(1)1841/03-04(01) - Supplementary information on "SCL patronage under the Preferred Scheme vis-à-vis the Original Proposal" provided by the Kowloon-Canton Railway Corporation;
- LC Paper No. CB(1)1676/03-04(02) - Information paper entitled "Update on the Shatin to Central Link" provided by the Administration;
- LC Paper No. CB(1)981/03-04(01) - Progress Report on the Shatin to Central Link provided by the Administration;
- LC Paper No. CB(1)1418/03-04(01) - Submission dated 26 March 2004 from the Environmental Light Bus Alliance;
- LC Paper No. CB(1)1464/03-04(01) - The Administration's response to the submission from the Environmental Light Bus Alliance;
- LC Paper No. CB(1)1732/03-04(01) - Submission dated 5 May 2004 from United Friendship Taxi Owners & Drivers Association Ltd;
- LC Paper No. CB(1)1732/03-04(02) - Submission dated 5 May 2004 from NT Taxi Operations Union;
- LC Paper No. CB(1)1732/03-04(03) - Submission dated 5 May 2004 from Taxi Dealers & Owners Association Limited;
- LC Paper No. CB(1)1784/03-04(01) - The Administration's response dated 6 May 2004 to the submissions from United Friendship Taxi Owners & Drivers Association Ltd, NT Taxi Operations Union and Taxi Dealers & Owners Association Limited;
- LC Paper No. CB(1)1732/03-04(04) - Submission dated 4 May 2004 from Whampoa Garden Section Owners Committee;

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- LC Paper No. CB(1)1784/03-04(02) - Submission dated 6 May 2004 from HK Public-Light Bus Owner & Driver Association;
- LC Paper No. CB(1)1784/03-04(03) - Submission dated 6 May 2004 from Association of N.T. Radio Taxicabs Ltd;
- LC Paper No. CB(1)1784/03-04(04) - Submission dated 7 May 2004 from 運輸業界關注鐵路發展大聯盟; and
- LC Paper No. CB(1)1784/03-04(05) - Submission dated 7 May 2004 from Public Omnibus Operators Association Ltd.)

1. Mr Abraham SHEK declared his interest as a Member of Managing Board of the Kowloon-Canton Railway Corporation (KCRC).
2. The Chairman recapped that at the previous meeting held on 7 May 2004, the Subcommittee had received views from various deputations/individuals on the Shatin to Central Link (SCL) project. The present meeting was a continuation of that meeting to allow members to follow up on the relevant issues with the Administration.

Provision of railway service in Whampoa area

3. With the aid of PowerPoint, Mr Malcolm GIBSON, Chief Design Manager of the MTR Corporation Limited (MTRCL) (CDM/MTRCL), briefed members about MTRCL's project proposal for extending the Kwun Tong Line (KTE) to the Whampoa areas.

(Post-meeting note: A set of presentation materials provided by MTRCL was tabled at the meeting and subsequently issued to members vide LC Paper No. CB(1)2044/03-04(01).)

4. The Chairman noted that MTRCL's proposed KTE, which was estimated to cost about \$3.1 billion (money-of-the-day prices), would not be financially viable and funding support from the Government would be required. In this regard, she sought MTRCL's preliminary view on the level as well as form of such funding support to be required.
5. Stressing the need to avoid causing disappointment among the local residents who had been requesting for the provision of railway service in the Whampoa areas for a long time, Mr LAU Kong-wah considered that as neither KCRC's Automated People Mover system (APM) nor MTRCL's KTE was financially viable, it might be more practical to pursue KCRC's proposal given its previous commitment to fund the APM as part of the SCL project without the need of any financial support from the Government. As regards MTRCL's proposal, he was worried that KTE might never materialize without a firm commitment of funding support from the Government. Comparing the two schemes on their own strengths, Mr LAU said that KCRC's

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proposal was preferred as it adopted a more direct alignment for cross harbour service and hence, had an advantage in terms of travel time savings as well as the level of fare for the passengers.

6. CDM/MTRCL said that in response to the Administration's request, MTRCL had reviewed its earlier proposal for extending the Kwun Tong Line to the Whampoa areas and submitted a revised proposal to the Administration in late February 2004. Acknowledging that each scheme had its own advantages, he said that with the merger talks underway, both corporations would endeavour to work together and come up with the best scheme to provide railway service to the Whampoa areas. In this regard, a working group had been set up to follow up on the related issues. As regards the level of funding support to be required for the KTE project, CDM/MTRCL said that the exact details would become clear when the merger proposal was finalized in August 2004.

7. The Acting Permanent Secretary for the Environment, Transport and Works (PSET(Atg.)) stated that it would be premature at this stage to say which proposal would be adopted as various project parameters and planning assumptions for KTE could not be fully ascertained given the on-going merger talks. Nonetheless, the Government would further examine and compare the proposals on the basis of their relative transport and economic benefits, impact on the environment and commercial viability. A decision on the railway service to the Whampoa areas would be made in conjunction with the final scheme for the SCL taking into account the outcome of merger talks between the two railway corporations.

8. Mr WONG Sing-chi considered that more information about the assumptions used by the two corporations in deriving the expected passenger demand of their respective proposals was required before members could ascertain their transport benefits.

9. CDM/MTRCL replied that thorough studies on the travel pattern of the 80 000 population in the Whampoa areas had been conducted before MTRCL's proposal was drawn up. Advising members that computer modelling had been deployed to derive the expected patronage, Mr Kenneth LEUNG, Director, New Railway Projects of KCRC (DNRP/KCRC) agreed that supplementary information on the estimation of origin-destination matrix used by KCRC for the Whampoa APM would be provided to members for consideration after the meeting.

10. Mr Abraham SHEK considered that instead of waiting until the merger talks were concluded, the Administration should make an early decision on the preferred scheme and then co-ordinate efforts by the two corporations to refine the chosen proposal so that no more resources would be wasted on abortive studies.

11. PSET(Atg.) assured members that previous studies undertaken by the two railway corporations would provide useful data for further refinements of the final scheme to be adopted. In this respect, CDM/MTRCL said that in case of a joint proposal from the two corporations after the merger talks, it would be formulated on

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the basis of either one of the proposals on hand. Stressing the need to provide passengers with more convenient interchange arrangements between railway networks, Ir Dr Raymond HO suggested that KCRC and MTRCL should adopt a more co-operative working relationship and set up a joint working group to look into the issues related to the provision of railway services in the Whampoa areas. PSET(Atg.) responded that a working group tasked to examine the relevant issues had already been established. The Administration was also involved in the discussions.

SCL Preferred Scheme

12. Mr CHENG Kar-foo referred to the information provided by KCRC on the additional patronage to be generated by the SCL Preferred Scheme as set out in LC Paper No. CB(1)1841/03-04(01), and reiterated his grave concern that the Preferred Scheme which adopted the East Rail (ER) across the harbour option would seriously undermine the viability of the Ma On Shan Rail (MOSR) as well as the future SCL as the number of cross harbour passengers on MOSR and the East Kowloon Line (EKL) of SCL would be reduced by 15 000 and 60 000 respectively. Moreover, it was very unfair to the residents in Ma On Shan (MOS) and East Kowloon that they should be deprived of through train service from MOS to the Central Business District of the Hong Kong Island by MOSR and SCL via EKL as promised under the Original Proposal. Given the reduction of patronage on MOSR and EKL, the Chairman also expressed concern about the cost-effectiveness of the Preferred Scheme and queried whether SCL should be implemented under the circumstances.

13. DNRP/KCRC responded that the Preferred Scheme was intended to bring about maximum benefits to the community at large as the overall efficiency of the whole KCR network would be enhanced. Notwithstanding the projected reduction of cross harbour patronage on MOSR and EKL, the Preferred Scheme would increase the number of cross harbour passengers on ER by 103 000.

14. PSET(Atg.) noted that the Preferred Scheme would bring about a net increase of patronage on the KCR network both in terms of cross harbour passengers and east-west passengers. Convinced of the cost-effectiveness of the Preferred Scheme, KCRC had stated that there was no need for financial support from the Government.

15. Notwithstanding the explanation given, both Mr CHENG Kar-foo and the Chairman called on the Administration and KCRC to carefully review, in the context of the on-going merger talks, the perceived benefits of the Preferred Scheme in terms of enhancing the overall efficiency of the KCR network.

16. Mr LAU Kong-wah also had queries about KCRC's claim that the Preferred Scheme was a better alternative. He was particularly concerned about the inconvenient location suggested for the SCL Central South Station as well as KCRC's proposal to downsize ER train configuration from 12-car to 9-car trains. DNRP/KCRC responded that KCRC was aware of the suggestion to move the Central South Station further west to near Hollywood Road. However, the ground conditions in Hollywood Road was not suitable for construction of the station. In the context of

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the on-going merger talks, KCRC would try to identify whether other more suitable locations were available for the provision of an SCL station in Central.

17. In reply to members' further enquiry, DNRP/KCRC confirmed that a new tunnel would be built for SCL from Tai Wai to Diamond Hill. Taking into account the views of the local community, KCRC was examining the feasibility of extending the Tsz Wan Shan (TWS) APM northward and eastward to improve the accessibility of the system.

18. The Chairman pointed out that with the changes contemplated under the Preferred Scheme, SCL had relegated from a strategic rail link to a railway connection between KCR's ER and West Rail (WR). Referring to the grave concerns expressed by various public transport trade deputations at the last Subcommittee meeting held on 7 May 2004, she called on the Administration to critically review whether such changes were in line with the Government's policy of relying on railways as the backbone of Hong Kong's public transport system with other public transport modes taking on a supplementary role. She was gravely concerned that the proliferation of railway development in the territory, particularly those railway extensions which only intended to provide feeder services such as the proposed TWS and Whampoa APMs, had already seriously affected the businesses of other public transport modes and the order of the public transport market.

19. PSET(Atg.) said that in response to the requests from the local community, KCRC had submitted its proposals for the TWS and Whampoa APMs as extensions of SCL. She stressed that the Administration would consider the two projects on their own merits, i.e. in terms of transport benefits, cost-effectiveness and environmental impacts, before a final decision on the implementation of these projects would be made. In assessing these proposal, the co-ordination of different public transport modes in providing feeder services for railways would be one of the major considerations of the Administration.

II West Rail service disruptions

(LC Paper No. CB(1)2007/03-04(01) - Information paper provided by the Administration; and

LC Paper No. CB(1)1986/03-04(01) - Information paper provided by the Administration for the Transport Panel)

20. The Chairman drew members' attention to the paper provided by the Administration on the subject (LC Paper No. CB(1)2007/03-04(01)), which included a report by the Kowloon-Canton Railway Corporation on the WR service disruption incidents which happened on 21 and 22 May 2004 (Annex to LC Paper No. CB(1)2007/03-04(01)).

21. Members in general were gravely concerned that in the morning of 21 May 2004 when a signalling system failure occurred affecting normal WR service, KCRC

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had failed to notify the Transport Department (TD) within eight minutes in accordance with the established alert mechanism. In fact, the notification was delayed for two hours. Members expressed worry about WR's reliability in view of the number of service disruption incidents that had occurred since its opening in December 2003. In view of the repeated occurrence of signalling system failures during WR's initial operation, some members also urged KCRC and the Administration to adopt more stringent standards for the testing and trial operation of the new MOSR before its commissioning.

22. Notwithstanding the public's concern about the safe and reliable operation of WR, Mr Abraham SHEK said that the Chairman of KCRC had already made a public apology for the inconvenience the service disruptions of 21 and 22 May 2004 caused to the passengers. Like other new railway systems, WR encountered some teething problems during the initial stage of operation. But WR remained an advanced and safe railway system by any international standards.

Alert mechanism

23. Mr WONG Sing-chi considered that instead of putting the blame on individual front-line staff, the senior management should also accept responsibility for failing to ensure that proper actions were taken in the handling of the incident. Looking forward, KCRC should learn from the mistake so that necessary procedural improvements were made to rectify the problems. He also asked whether the Administration would consider imposing any penalties on KCRC for making such a major mistake.

24. Mr Samuel LAI, Acting Chief Executive Officer of KCRC (CEO of KCRC(Atg.)), explained that at 6:09 am on 21 May 2004, the signalling system in the section between Tsuen Wan West Station and Mei Foo Station encountered a problem, leading to longer journey time for trains to Nam Cheong. During the affected period, average train frequency was at five- to seven-minute intervals. The Officer-in-charge (O/C) of the Control Centre did not accurately estimate that the delay would exceed eight minutes and therefore did not notify the media or TD in a timely manner. After the incident, KCRC had immediately set up monitoring points at WR Tuen Mun, Kam Sheung Road and Nam Cheong stations to monitor train services and record journey times so that the Control Centre would have more information to make a more accurate assessment of an incident's impact on journey times. In the long run, KCRC would also improve computer software to provide further information for the same purpose. KCRC would also ensure that similar arrangements were made for ER.

25. The Deputy Secretary for the Environment, Transport and Works (DS for ETW) advised that under the existing arrangement, KCRC was required to notify TD 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, so that the public could make preparation and TD could make necessary contingency arrangements. The reporting mechanism had been working generally well since its inception in 15 December 2003. As at 20 May 2004, the new reporting mechanism

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had been activated 31 times for ER, WR and Light Rail. To ensure the effective operation of the alert mechanism, TD had issued letters to both KCRC and MTRCL that they should strictly comply with the pledges laid down in the established mechanism.

26. Mr LAU Kong-wah did not consider KCRC's explanation plausible as the reporting mechanism had been activated many times before, and expressed disappointment about KCRC's reluctance to disclose the real cause of the delay in reporting to members and the public. He stressed that the objective of the alert mechanism was to ensure early and adequate preparation by all relevant parties as well as the travelling public. Hence, it was unacceptable for KCRC to delay giving notification to TD for two hours in case of a service disruption incident.

27. CEO of KCRC(Atg.) reiterated that the delay was caused as a result of inaccurate assessment by the O/C of the Control Centre. His assessment was that due to the signalling system failure, train service would be delayed by about five to six minutes. Hence, no notification was given to TD. CEO of KCRC(Atg.) also said that clear guidelines which had been agreed with the staff side were available to ensure that the reporting mechanism was adhered to. Taking into account the recommendations of the on-going enquiry, KCRC would strive to make the necessary improvements and continue to provide safe and reliable services to the public. In this regard, Mr CHENG Kar-foo pointed out that the Chinese term "服務中斷事故" as used by KCRC in its paper could give rise to certain misunderstanding. KCRC might need to make it clear to its staff that TD should be notified within eight minutes of any service "disruption" and not "suspension" incident.

28. On the issue of responsibility, DS for ETW stated that KCRC had already set up an enquiry panel to look into the incident. The enquiry would also consider the way the incident was handled by KCRC's Management as well as the improvements to be made to the Corporation's contingency procedures and systems. CEO of KCRC(Atg.) added that if any staff members were found to be responsible, appropriate disciplinary action would be taken in accordance with the Corporation's procedures. In this respect, Mr LEUNG Fu-wah cautioned that the enquiry should not only target front-line staff. KCRC should ensure fair treatment for all relevant staff. His concern was shared by Mr Albert CHAN who considered that the enquiry should also investigate into the responsibility of the senior management. Their views were noted by KCRC.

WR performance

29. Mr Albert CHAN said that the repeated occurrence of signalling system failures might be indicative of more serious defects in critical railway systems. Likewise, he was also concerned about the standard of civil works carried out in relation to various WR infrastructure. In order to put the mind of the travelling public at ease, he asked whether KCRC would conduct a comprehensive review on the quality of construction works and system installations for WR.

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30. Mr K K LEE, Senior Director, Capital Projects of KCRC (SDCP/KCRC), replied that as part of its improvement measures, KCRC was carrying out a comprehensive check on all signal cable terminal blocks, which would take about one month to complete. Moreover, KCRC would conduct an audit on various railway systems to ensure their compliance with the relevant standards before the contractors' quality guarantee period was over in October 2004. Addressing Mr Albert CHAN's concern about the standard of WR civil construction works, SDCP/KCRC stated that stringent supervision was exercised by KCRC, and the Buildings Department was also involved in the process.

31. Mr CHENG Kar-foo said that the repeated occurrence of service disruption incidents had already eroded the public's confidence on WR's reliability. Referring to paragraph 22 of KCRC's paper which stated that WR was able to achieve a high service delivery rate of 99.7% and a punctuality rate of 99.4%, he said that such performance indicators were clearly inadequate in reflecting the inconvenience railway service disruptions caused to the passengers. To ensure effective monitoring of the standard of railway service, Mr CHENG requested the Administration to seriously consider his long-standing suggestion of setting an additional performance requirement on train service disruptions so that public interest could be properly safeguarded.

32. In response, DS for ETW said that railway services in Hong Kong had been maintained at a very high standard, and this was only achievable through close monitoring by the Administration and stringent efforts by the railway corporations. He stressed that every major service disruption incident was taken seriously by the Administration and the railway corporations. The Administration would ensure that proper investigation was undertaken so that all necessary remedial and improvement measures were taken.

33. Concluding the discussions, the Chairman called on KCRC to note the concerns raised by members about the need to improve its procedures and systems for compliance with the established reporting mechanism.

III Kowloon Southern Link

(LC Paper No. CB(1)2018/03-04(01) - Submission dated 21 May 2004 from Canton Road Association;

LC Paper No. CB(1)2007/03-04(02) - Information paper provided by the Administration; and

LC Paper No. CB(1)348/03-04(03) - Information paper provided by the Administration.)

34. The Chairman welcomed the representatives of Canton Road Association (the Association) and Mr Henry CHAN, Chairman of Yau Tsim Mong District Council (who attended the meeting as an individual), to the meeting. At the Chairman's suggestion, members agreed that due to time constraint, the Subcommittee would first

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receive views from the attending representatives. A special meeting would be held on 24 June 2004, at 10:45 am, to continue discussion with the Administration on the Kowloon Southern Link (KSL) project. Members further agreed that the Yau Tsim Mong District Council would also be invited to attend the meeting to give views on the provision of Canton Road Station (CAR).

35. Mr Henry CHAN, Chairman of Yau Tsim Mong District Council (YTM DC), stated that he was attending the meeting as an individual. He invited members to note that during previous discussions by the Traffic and Transport Committee of YTM DC on the KSL project, a clear consensus was reached for the construction of CAR. Moreover, the bored tunnel method should be adopted for construction works for KSL along Canton Road so as to minimize disturbance on the shop operators nearby.

36. Mr David YIP, representative of the Association, expressed strong opposition to KCRC's proposal of deferring the construction of CAR under KSL. Stressing the envisaged public transport and economic benefits of CAR, the Association was baffled by KCRC's decision to construct a station in the more remote West Kowloon area while no station was proposed to serve Canton Road which was a busy tourism, commercial and entertainment spot. In this connection, he said that as far as he knew, Wharf Estates Development Limited (Wharf), a member of the Association, had conducted some discussions with KCRC earlier on about the provision of CAR.

(Post-meeting note: A speaking note and a submission from the Association were tabled at the meeting and subsequently issued to members vide LC Paper Nos. CB(1)2044/03-04(02) and (04).)

37. Mr Clement WONG, Assistant Project Director of Wharf (APD/Wharf) briefly recapped the development of events in relation to Wharf's discussions with KCRC on the provision of CAR. He said that after initial discussions with KCRC on its earlier proposal involving the resumption of two properties owned by Wharf fell through, Wharf had made a counter-proposal to build three mini concourses in the car park of the World Finance Centre at Canton Road. Further discussions had been conducted until shortly before the railway scheme for KSL, i.e. the one-station proposal, was gazetted.

(Post-meeting note: A set of diagrams provided by Wharf was tabled at the meeting and subsequently issued to members vide LC Paper No. CB(1)2044/03-04(03).)

38. Mr CHENG Kar-foo said that taking into account the views and suggestions from the representatives, his initial view was that the Administration should take a more active role in co-ordinating the discussions between KCRC and Wharf in the development of a viable proposal for CAR if public interest would be served. He hoped that with the Administration's co-ordination, good progress could be made in taking forward the matter before the Subcommittee's meeting scheduled for 24 June 2004.

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39. CEO of KCRC(Atg.) stated that it had always been KCRC's intention to construct CAR under KSL. But the station was dropped in the gazetted railway scheme in view of various engineering considerations and the extensive disruption to the public during its construction. Commenting on Wharf's proposal to construct three mini concourses for CAR, he said that the limited space would create serious safety concerns in case of emergency evacuation for such a crowded station.

40. CEO of KCRC(Atg.) added that KCRC had not precluded the provision of CAR which should best be constructed in conjunction with the redevelopment of the adjacent lots. However, KCRC would be prepared to explore other options, provided that the station would be able to meet the operation and safety requirements and it would be commercially viable to do so.

Admin 41. Noting KCRC's explanation, Mr Abraham SHEK requested the Administration to provide members with information in relation to the planning and design requirements of a railway station, particularly those related to the safety aspects. He also asked for information as to whether other interested parties had submitted any proposal for CAR.

Admin/
KCRC

IV Any other business

42. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 1:00 pm.