

**Legislative Council Panel on Transport
Subcommittee on Matters relating to Railways**

Commissioning of Light Rail Tin Shui Wai Extension and West Rail

Introduction

This paper seeks to inform Members of the issues encountered on the Light Rail services on the opening of the new Tin Shui Wai Extension, the remedial measures taken by the Kowloon-Canton Railway Corporation (“KCRC”) to improve the services and the measures taken to assure smooth running of West Rail.

Opening of Light Rail Tin Shui Wai Extension

2. The Light Rail Tin Shui Wai Extension with two new routes was opened on Sunday, 7 December 2003. The two new routes extend Light Rail services from the southern part of Tin Shui Wai to the northern part with 11 stops along the new routes. In a bid to relieve the anticipated heavy morning peak hour demand on the new routes, three new bus routes were introduced in October and November 2003 to supplement the new Light Rail service, and a fourth bus route was planned on standby.

3. Prior to the opening, trial rides were organized to familiarize residents in the Northwest New Territories with the extension. This was backed up by a publicity programme including newspaper advertisements, posters, and issue of free tickets and travel information to residents in Tin Shui Wai to try out the new service.

Incident on 8 December 2003

4. On the first weekday running of the new routes on Monday, 8 December 2003, crowding was encountered in the morning at some of the Light Rail stops.

5. Factors attributing to the passenger build-up at some Light Rail stops on that morning are: -

- (a) the setting of points at two Light Rail junctions had to switch from an automatic to manual operation shortly after 7:00 a.m. because the trackside equipment failed to recognize the

coding of some Light Rail vehicles assigned to the new service. This led to some irregularity of service;

- (b) as a result of the above, Light Rail vehicles were quite full when they arrived at stops in southern Tin Shui Wai between 7:00 a.m. and 7:30 a.m., resulting in passengers unable to board the first arriving train which further added to crowding on some station platforms; and
- (c) in spite of the publicity mounted on the availability of supplemental bus routes operating in parallel with the new Light Rail service, many passengers continued to use Light Rail service and the number of people using the buses was relatively small.

6. Following the resumption to normal automatic operation of the points at around 7:30 a.m. and with the operation of the standby (fourth) bus route, services gradually returned to normal.

7. The Corporation's subsequent analysis of service and passenger flow indicated that Light Rail was able to deliver its planned capacity prior to 7:00 a.m. Crowding appeared after the junction problem occurred.

Improvement Measures

8. Members of the KCRC senior management were on the ground to evaluate the situation on the morning of 8 December 2003. The Corporation has acted promptly to address the situation by way of announcing on the same afternoon the following additional measures to meet passenger demand: -

- (a) to attract more people to use buses, the Corporation decided to normalize the standby bus route and waive the fares of all the four bus routes operating in parallel with the two new Light Rail routes at least until the opening of West Rail;
- (b) the morning peak-hour service would begin half an hour earlier at 6.30 a.m.; and
- (c) more staff would be deployed at busy Light Rail stops to assist passengers and to direct them to parallel bus services.

9. These new measures have been effective since Tuesday, 9 December 2003, in maintaining a smooth passenger flow on the new Light Rail extension. Crowding as that encountered on the morning of 8 December was not repeated. The number of passengers using the supplemental bus services has doubled to more than 5,000 during the morning peak hour.

10. Moreover, to tie in with the opening of West Rail, a number of KCR bus routes have been detoured to serve West Rail stations. Two temporary supplemental bus routes have also been introduced since 17 December 2003.

Assurances of smooth running of West Rail

11. The Corporation has taken into account the experience in the Light Rail Extension opening in planning for the smooth opening of West Rail.

12. In anticipating that people would make their way to West Rail stations early, the Corporation will start the peak hour service of West Rail at 6:30 a.m. with a train departing every three minutes during the initial weekday period after the opening on 20 December.

13. West Rail will not have the carrying capacity problem as that encountered by the Light Rail Tin Shui Wai Extension because:

- (a) a 7-car West Rail train set can carry up to 2,345 passengers. This is equivalent in size to 11 Light Rail vehicles which can only carry 220 passengers each; and
- (b) the peak hour service will give an hourly capacity of 47,000 in one direction. This is almost 20% more than the total number of passengers carried by the entire Light Rail system during the morning peak hour.

14. Since the trial runs began in June 2003, West Rail trains have chalked up a combined total of 10 million kilometres. The final phase of the test runs has been completed smoothly. It out-performs the standards set by the Corporation by attaining an average daily punctuality rate of 99% and a service delivery rate of 99.6% in the trial runs for six weeks continuously.

15. Members of the public are given opportunities to familiarize with the facilities and services of West Rail. The Station Open Days attracted more than 100,000 people. Trial rides were also conducted between 16 and 18 December 2003.

16. West Rail staff have been trained and drilled to deal with every conceivable emergency situation. More than 1,800 emergency drills and exercises were held. The Police, Fire Services Department and Transport Department were involved in the relevant exercises.

17. For the initial period of operation, the Corporation has beefed up the number of the front line staff by having more than 300 temporary staff deployed at West Rail stations to assist passengers and to control crowd.

18. In case there is an emergency during train operations, the Corporation can mobilize up to 150 buses (30 from KCRC and 120 from other operators) to shuttle passengers. The first buses will arrive at the scene within 20 minutes. All of the 150 buses can be mobilized within two hours to give a carrying capacity of 11,000.

19. The Corporation will be maintaining a close contact with the Transport Department's Emergency Transport Co-ordination Centre which will be activated on the day of West Rail opening.

Kowloon-Canton Railway Corporation
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