

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(1)1179/04-05
(These minutes have been seen
by the Administration)

Ref : CB1/PL/TP/1

Panel on Transport

**Minutes of meeting held on
Friday, 25 February 2005, at 10:45 am
in the Chamber of the Legislative Council Building**

- Members present** : Hon LAU Kong-wah, JP (Chairman)
Hon Albert CHAN Wai-yip (Deputy Chairman)
Ir Dr Hon Raymond HO Chung-tai, S.B.St.J., JP
Hon Mrs Selina CHOW LIANG Shuk-ye, GBS, JP
Hon LAU Chin-shek, JP
Hon Miriam LAU Kin-ye, GBS, JP
Hon Andrew CHENG Kar-foo
Hon TAM Yiu-chung, GBS, JP
Hon Abraham SHEK Lai-him, JP
Hon LI Fung-ying, BBS, JP
Hon Tommy CHEUNG Yu-yan, JP
Hon WONG Kwok-hing, MH
Hon LEE Wing-tat
Hon Jeffrey LAM Kin-fung, SBS, JP
Hon LEUNG Kwok-hung
Hon CHEUNG Hok-ming, SBS, JP
- Members attending** : Dr Hon YEUNG Sum
Hon CHOY So-yuk
Hon Audrey EU Yuet-mee, SC, JP
Hon MA Lik, JP
- Member absent** : Hon Patrick LAU Sau-shing, SBS, JP

**Public Officers
attending**

: Agenda item IV

Mr Thomas CHOW
Deputy Secretary for the Environment, Transport and Works
(Transport)¹

Ms Ernestina WONG
Principal Assistant Secretary for the Environment, Transport
and Works

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

Mr MAK Chai-kwong
Director of Highways

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

Mr David ENGLISH
Acting Project Manager/Major Works
Highways Department

Mr Anthony KWAN
Assistant Director of Planning/Metro & Urban Renewal

Mr Raymond CHENG
Acting Senior Engineer/Hong Kong
Transport Department

Agenda item V

Ms Annie CHOI
Deputy Secretary for the Environment, Transport and Works
(Transport)³

Mr Michael NG
Acting Principal Assistant Secretary for the Environment,
Transport and Works

Mr T F LEUNG
Chief Engineer/Road Safety and Standards
Transport Department

Miss Amy CHOW
Principal Executive Officer/Valid, Licensing and Prosecution
Transport Department

Attendance by invitation : **Agenda item IV**

MTR Corporation Limited

Mr Malcolm GIBSON
Chief Design Manager

Mrs Miranda LEUNG
General Manager – Corporate Relations

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

Staff in attendance : Ms Anita SIT
Senior Council Secretary (1)9

Miss Winnie CHENG
Legislative Assistant (1)5

I Confirmation of minutes and matters arising
(LC Paper No. CB(1)953/04-05 - Minutes of the special meeting held on
21 January 2005)

The minutes of the special meeting held on 21 January 2005 were confirmed.

II Information papers issued since last meeting
(LC Paper Nos. CB(1)898/04-05(01) & (02) - Submissions from the Citybus
Limited and New World First
Bus Services Limited on the
issue of fare adjustment
mechanism)
LC Paper No. CB(1)981/04-05(01) - Information paper provided by
the Administration on Traffic
and Public Transport Service
Arrangements for Hong Kong
Disneyland Resort

2. Members noted the information papers issued since last meeting.

Action

III Items for discussion at the next meeting scheduled for 18 March 2005

- (LC Paper No. CB(1)951/04-05(01) - List of outstanding items for discussion
LC Paper No. CB(1)951/04-05(02) - List of follow-up actions)

3. Members agreed that the following items as proposed by the Administration would be discussed at the next meeting scheduled for 18 March 2005:

- (a) Measures to enhance road safety;
(b) Northwest New Territories Traffic and Infrastructure Review 2004; and
(c) Reconstruction and improvement of Tuen Mun Road.

4. Regarding item (a) above, members agreed that the relevant parties should be invited to the meeting to give further views on the Administration's proposal to increase the penalties for red light jumping and measures to improve the design of road junctions and the display of traffic light signals. Members also agreed that the meeting should start at 10:00 am instead of 10:45 am.

IV West Hong Kong Island Line, South Hong Kong Island Line and Route 4

- (LC Paper No. CB(1)951/04-05(03) - Information paper provided by the Administration
LC Paper No. CB(1)952/04-05 - Background brief on Route 4, South Hong Kong Island Line and West Hong Kong Island Line prepared by the Secretariat
LC Paper No. CB(1)908/04-05(03) - Letter dated 7 February 2005 from Hon LEE Wing-tat notifying the motions he would move under this item
LC Paper No. CB(1)989/04-05(01) - Letter dated 24 February 2005 from Hon CHEUNG Hok-ming notifying the motion he would move under this item
LC Paper No. CB(1)897/04-05(01) - Submission from Public Omnibus Operators Association Ltd
LC Paper No. CB(1)908/04-05(01) - Submission from 爭取地鐵西延大聯盟
LC Paper No. CB(1)908/04-05(02) - Submission from 中西區發展關注社
LC Paper No. CB(1)951/04-05(04) - Submission from Mixer Truck Drivers Association
LC Paper No. CB(1)961/04-05(01) - Submission from Non-Academic Staff Association, The University of

Action

- Hong Kong
- LC Paper No. CB(1)961/04-05(02) - Submission from 爭取地鐵西區支線行動
 - LC Paper No. CB(1)961/04-05(03) - Submission from Democratic Alliance for Betterment of Hong Kong - H.K. Island West Office
 - LC Paper No. CB(1)961/04-05(04) - Submission from 西區居民爭取地鐵西延聯席大行動
 - LC Paper No. CB(1)961/04-05(05) - Submission from 明愛莫張瑞勤社區大使隊爭取地鐵西移行動組
 - LC Paper No. CB(1)979/04-05(01) - Submission dated 20 February 2005 from The Incorporated Owners of Hing Wong Building
 - LC Paper No. CB(1)979/04-05(02) - Submission dated 22 February 2005 from the University of Hong Kong Employees Union
 - LC Paper No. CB(1)979/04-05(03) - Submission dated 22 February 2005 from Clear The Air
 - LC Paper No. CB(1)979/04-05(04) - Submission dated 23 February 2005 from Citybus Limited
 - LC Paper No. CB(1)979/04-05(05) - Submission dated 23 February 2005 from New World First Bus Services Limited
 - LC Paper No. CB(1)984/04-05(01) - Submission dated 23 February 2005 from 專利巴士工會聯席
 - LC Paper No. CB(1)984/04-05(02) - Submission dated 23 February 2005 from Save Our Shorelines Society
 - LC Paper No. CB(1)984/04-05(03) - Submission dated 22 February 2005 from 的士、小巴權益關注大聯盟
 - LC Paper No. CB(1)984/04-05(04) - Submission dated 21 February 2005 from the Environmental Light Bus Alliance
 - LC Paper No. CB(1)989/04-05(02) - Further submission dated 21 February 2005 from the Environmental Light Bus Alliance)

5. The following papers were tabled at the meeting:

- (a) powerpoint presentation materials provided by MTR Corporation Limited on West Island Line (WIL) and South Island Line (SIL);
- (b) submission dated 24 February 2005 from 民主黨南區黨團;
- (c) submission dated 24 February 2005 from Southern District Council; and
- (d) submission dated 24 February 2005 from Central & Western District Council.

Action

(Post-meeting note: The above papers were issued to members vide LC Paper No. CB(1)1011/04-05.)

6. The Chairman said that it had been the practice of the Panel to invite the two railway companies to attend meetings of the Panel to brief members on railway-related matters. In line with this practice, MTR Corporation Limited (MTRCL) was invited to this meeting to give a presentation on its latest proposal regarding WIL and SIL. As to whether the Panel should conduct further meetings to receive views from interested parties, members agreed that they would decide on the way forward upon completion of deliberations at this meeting.

7. At the invitation of the Chairman, the Deputy Secretary for the Environment, Transport and Works (Transport)1 (DS/ETW(T)1) briefed members on the developments on the proposed Route 4 (section between Kennedy Town and Aberdeen), and the review on some basic planning parameters relating to the Project Proposals of the MTRCL regarding the WIL and SIL as set out in LC Paper No. CB(1)951/04-05(03).

8. The Chairman drew members' attention to the motions moved by Mr LEE Wing-tat and Mr CHEUNG Hok-ming. The terms of the motions were printed on LC Papers No. CB(1)908/04-05(03) and CB(1)989/04-05(01). Mr CHEUNG Hok-ming said that as he needed to attend another meeting, he would invite other members to speak on the motion.

9. At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr Malcolm GIBSON, the Chief Design Manager of MTRCL briefed members on the latest planning of SIL and WIL. He said that since the last Panel meeting in May 2004, MTRCL had reviewed a number of key issues raised by members, including patronage forecasts and economic benefits of SIL and WIL, planning of Southern District, and impacts of the two projects on other transport operators. The local communities were generally looking forward to having improved transport provisions and more choices and had demanded early implementation of SIL and WIL. The Government had agreed that the patronage forecasts were reasonable. The total economic benefits over the life of the railways estimated by the University of Hong Kong and Government were \$40 billion and \$36 billion respectively. As the two estimates were very close, MTRCL would be happy to accept Government's estimate. The planning for SIL was also in line with the land use planning for Southern District. With the expansion of the Ocean Park, the redevelopment in Wong Chuk Hang area, and other tourism developments in Aberdeen, the demand for public transport services would increase. With better planning and co-ordination of transport services in Western and Southern Districts, the impact on other transport operators could be minimized.

10. Mr GIBSON said that taking into account the views expressed by various parties, MTRCL had undertaken further studies on the feasibility of phased implementation of the project. The studies found that the WIL/SIL could be implemented in phases. The latest scheme consisted of three major components:

Action

- (a) WIL would run from Sheung Wan via Sai Ying Pun, University to Kennedy Town. WIL did not require any form of reclamation.
- (b) SIL (East) would run from the South Horizons, via Lei Tung, Wong Chuk Hang, Ocean Park to Admiralty.
- (c) SIL (West) would run from Wong Chuk Hang, via Aberdeen, Wah Fu, Cyberport to University.

11. Mr GIBSON then highlighted the transport, environmental, health, safety, social and economic benefits of the proposed implementation of SIL and WIL. He said that the projects were not financially viable from an investment point of view of the Corporation. Fare revenue would only be sufficient to cover the operating costs and a portion of the project costs. Funding support from the Government would therefore be required. However, given the substantial benefits that the projects would generate, they were worth pursuing for the benefit of the community at large.

12. In conclusion, Mr GIBSON said that:

- (a) WIL would generate substantial transport, environmental and social benefits to the community and should be pursued as soon as possible;
- (b) SIL (East) would generate substantial benefits to the community, facilitate tourism developments in Southern District and create a large number of new jobs. This project should be planned and implemented in conjunction with the tourism development projects.
- (c) SIL (West) could be implemented in parallel with the other two railway lines or at a later stage.

13. Members noted that Ms Miriam LAU had originally intended to move an amendment to Mr LEE Wing-tat's motion on SIL. Ms Miriam LAU said that she had discussed the motion with Mr LEE Wing-tat. Since Mr LEE agreed to revise his motion to incorporate her amendment, she would withdraw her amendment to Mr LEE's motion on SIL. Mr LEE Wing-tat said that he would withdraw his original motion on SIL and move a revised motion on SIL, incorporating Ms Miriam LAU's suggested amendment. The wording of the revised motion was as follows-

“本委員會促請政府盡快全面規劃及落實南區的旅遊及商業發展，並同時與地鐵有限公司商討，興建符合成本效益的南港島鐵路，確保有足夠的交通設施配合南區的發展及滿足該區居民的交通需要。”

Mr LEE Wing-tat's revised motion was seconded by Ms Miriam LAU.

Action

14. The Chairman ruled that the three motions moved by members should be voted on in the order in which they were presented to the Panel (i.e. the Panel should first vote on Mr LEE Wing-tat's motion on WIL, followed by Mr CHEUNG Hok-ming's motion and Mr LEE Wing-tat's revised motion on SIL.

15. Mr WONG Kwok-hing indicated that he had consulted the relevant labour unions on the proposed railway developments. Whilst there was a pressing need for providing railway infrastructure to satisfy the transport needs of residents, there was also a need to ensure that the proposed railway development was cost-effective and could bring about substantial economic benefits to the community at large. Based on these considerations, as WIL had been planned for years, he was of the view that it should be taken forward as soon as possible. On the other hand, there was a need to review the need and timing for implementation of SIL taking into account the experience of West Rail and the latest tourism and commercial developments in the Southern District to ensure the cost-effectiveness of the project. Since Mr CHEUNG Hok-ming's motion touched on both SIL and WIL, he could not render his support to Mr CHEUNG's motion. On the other hand, he would support Mr LEE Wing-tat's motion on WIL and his revised motion on SIL.

16. Mr WONG Kwok-hing enquired about the details of the land-use planning in Southern District and asked when a concrete implementation timetable could be finalized. DS/ETW(T)1 advised that the land use zoning of the Wong Chuk Hang area had already been changed from industrial to commercial. Up to now, nine proposed hotel developments in the Wong Chuk Hang area had been approved by the Town Planning Board. As regards tourism projects in Southern District, the Ocean Park Corporation (OPC) was currently undertaking a long-term business strategy review which would include an expansion plan for the Ocean Park. According to the latest progress update of OPC, the preferred design concept was currently under final refinement and the proposed detailed master plan and supporting business plan would be submitted to the Administration in due course. The Administration had set up a Task Force led by the Financial Secretary to study the strategies for the redevelopment of Ocean Park. The Administration would consider Ocean Park's long-term business strategy in conjunction with the overall tourism development framework for the Southern District. The Administration would speed up the related work but could not provide an implementation timetable at this stage.

17. Mr LEE Wing-tat said that residents in Western and Southern Districts had been asking for the early implementation of SIL and WIL for years. Whilst railway development would result in greater competition in the transport services market, it did not necessarily reduce the business viability of other public transport operators. Referring to the dockyard redevelopment projects in the United Kingdom, he said that the extension of the mass transit railway network had helped revitalize the local communities. The increased activities in those local communities in turn had generated greater transport demand benefiting other public transport operators as a result.

Action

18. Noting from MTRCL that SIL and WIL were not financially viable requiring Government's funding support, Mr LEE Wing-tat was worried that if the Government could not reach an agreement with MTRCL on the financing arrangement for the railway projects, there would be further delay in the implementation of the railway projects. He asked about the implementation programme for SIL and WIL.

19. DS/ETW(T)1 said that since the last Panel meeting in May 2004, MTRCL had refined its WIL and SIL project proposals which were received by the Administration two days before this meeting. As the development of railways required huge investments, the Administration needed to plan and implement new railway projects prudently. For the WIL and SIL Project Proposals of MTRCL, other than examining their economic and transport performance, their financial implications, their impact on other public transport modes, the changing community needs and changes in the relevant planning parameters such as the Ocean Park redevelopment plan, the Administration must also pay due respect to the motion passed by the Panel on 28 May 2004.

20. Mr LEE Wing-tat asked whether the Administration would grant property development rights to MTRCL in connection with SIL and WIL. DS/ETW(T)1 said that the Administration first needed to establish whether SIL and WIL should be implemented, and, if so, would proceed to work out the alignments, the timing and the scope of the projects. All these factors would affect the project costs, based on which the financing arrangement would be determined. The Administration would discuss the matter with MTRCL, taking into account the views expressed by members at the meeting.

21. Mr CHENG Kar-foo enquired about the Government's policy for granting property development rights to MTRCL in connection with its railway projects. He was worried that the phased implementation of SIL (East) and SIL (West) was indeed a tactic adopted by MTRCL for bargaining purposes. He asked about the Administration's stance in respect of the implementation and funding arrangements for SIL and WIL, as no major progress in respect of the projects was observed.

22. DS/ETW(T)1 said that the Panel passed a motion in May 2004 urging the Government to shelve any further development and planning for 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 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 so as to cope with the transport needs of the local residents. As such, had the Administration decided to go ahead with SIL and WIL, it would have gone against the motion passed. MTRCL had put forward its latest proposal for SIL and WIL two days before this meeting. The Administration would further examine their proposal, taking into account the views expressed by members at this meeting. Regarding the financing arrangement for the new railway lines, it could only be finalized when a detailed design was available. The Administration would revert to the Panel and seek the approval of the Finance Committee where appropriate.

Action

23. Mr CHENG Kar-foo said that he had voted against the motion at the Panel meeting on 28 May 2004. He however respected the decision of the Panel. He called on the Administration to expeditiously examine the latest proposal put forward by MTRCL, and revert to the Panel as soon as possible with details on the financing arrangement and development programme for the areas. It was also necessary to set out the Government's policy in granting property development rights to MTRCL in respect of their railway projects. DS/ETW(T)1 noted Mr CHENG's view.

24. Referring to the motion passed by the Panel in May 2004, Ms Miriam LAU clarified that she did not object to railway development. She however considered that in planning for any railway development, great care must be taken in coordinating the railway development programme with the nature, pace and scale of the developments of the areas concerned. The Administration should learn from the experience of the Tseung Kwan O Line (TKE) and West Rail. In the former case, TKE was not put in place until there had been substantial intake of population and developments in the area. As a result, for a very long period since the development of Tseung Kwan O, residents in the new town had had to rely on other public transport services. But soon after the commissioning of TKE, some public transport operators were forced out of the market. In the case of West Rail, railway development preceded most residential developments in the North West New Territories. Due to economic downturn, some of the planned developments had to be deferred. As a result, West Rail had been operating at a loss. In order to avoid the recurrence of similar planning blunders, the Administration should ensure that the railway development in question would be well co-ordinated with the residential, commercial and tourism developments in the areas concerned. To this end, she asked whether the Administration had formulated a concrete land use development plan and transport plan for Southern District, including the respective roles played by different public transport modes including franchised and non-franchised buses, taxi, public light bus and railway.

25. DS/ETW(T)1 said that in deciding whether a particular railway project should be implemented, the Administration would take into account the latest planning data available. However, since there was a lead time of 7 to 8 years from the planning to the commissioning of a railway, it was possible that the actual circumstances at the time of commissioning deviated from the original planning assumptions, thus affecting the performance of the railway. The Administration would take into account the experience of West Rail in taking forward other railway development projects. Unlike West Rail in which case the pace of development along the West Rail alignment was determined by various property developers, the expansion plan for the Ocean Park would come with an implementation timetable. OPC was working on the preferred design concept and would submit the proposed detailed master plan and supporting business plan to the Administration in due course for assessment.

26. Regarding the overall land use planning in Southern District, the Assistant Director of Planning/Metro & Urban Renewal (AD of P) said that the land use zoning in Wong Chuk Hang had already been changed from industrial to commercial. This would

Action

facilitate the redevelopment in the area. Up to now, nine proposed hotel developments in the area had been approved by the Town Planning Board. As regards tourism development in Southern District, the Planning Department had commissioned a consultancy study to formulate a conceptual development plan for tourism projects in Aberdeen Harbour. The Administration would also consider Ocean Park's long-term business strategy together with the overall tourism development framework for Aberdeen, taking into account public views on the various proposals.

27. Ms Miriam LAU remarked that the Administration should take the lead to promote the developments in Southern District. There was great potential for developing Southern District into a tourism node. In order to speed up the delivery of various tourism projects, various bureaux and departments including Transport Department, Planning Department, Environment, Transport and Works Bureau as well as the Economic Development and Labour Bureau should work together to co-ordinate the development of various projects.

28. AD of P replied that the Planning Department would further discuss with the Tourism Commission to review the implementation programme for tourism facilities in Southern District. Regarding the timetable for the tourism development in Aberdeen, it would hinge on the Ocean Park's master development plan and long-term business strategy. It would also take some time to consult the public on the development framework of the proposed tourism projects in Aberdeen Harbour before the Administration could revert to the Panel.

29. Dr YEUNG Sum pointed out that residents in Western District had been longing for the implementation of WIL for more than 20 years. In order to revitalize the district, there was an urgent need to improve the transport accessibility of the district. He urged the Administration to speed up the delivery of WIL. Regarding SIL, he pointed out that the new railway could relieve traffic congestion at Aberdeen Tunnel, and also would be conducive to the tourism development in Southern District. He hoped that public transport operators would not raise strong objection to the project. Given that the Panel was reconsidering the implementation of SIL and WIL, he asked the Administration to elucidate its stance in respect of the implementation and funding support for SIL and WIL.

30. DS/ETW(T)1 appealed to members' support for the proposed construction of Central-Wanchai Bypass which would help relieve the traffic congestion at Aberdeen Tunnel. Tailback at the tunnel was often caused by congestion on the Gloucester Road corridor. Regarding the implementation timetable for SIL and WIL, he reiterated that the Administration had yet to make a decision on the project. If the Panel had a consensus view on the implementation of SIL and WIL, the Administration would further examine MTRCL's latest Project Proposals, discuss with the relevant bureau on the funding arrangement for SIL and WIL, and revert to the Panel in a few months' time.

31. Dr YEUNG Sum said that the Democratic Party would not support the proposed construction of Central-Wanchai Bypass which involved reclamation of the harbour.

Action

32. Given the transport, environmental, social and economic benefits of railway development, Ms Audrey EU opined that WIL should have been implemented long ago to meet residents' transport need and support the development of Western District. On SIL, there was also a need to take forward the project so as to facilitate the tourism and commercial developments in Southern District. She enquired about the required level of Government's funding support, and the earliest implementation timetable for SIL and WIL.

33. Mr GIBSON said that it took about two years for undertaking the detailed design and other statutory processes for SIL and WIL and another four to five years for construction. DS/ETW(T)1 said that the Administration was examining MTRCL's latest proposals. The funding arrangement for SIL and WIL would depend on the finalized scheme design and subject to the approval by the Legislative Council.

34. Mr Albert CHAN queried that the Administration and MTRCL had adopted different planning criteria for railway development projects in different areas. In some areas, additional railway stations were provided at the request of property developers, while in some other areas, MTRCL and the Administration were unwilling to provide additional stations to meet the needs of local commuters. For example, there was only one West Rail station in Tin Shui Wai for a total population of 300 000. Likewise, only two railway stations were available in Tuen Mun for a total population of 600 000. Residents' request for providing an additional MTR station at Tung Chung West was also not acceded to. He considered this arrangement unfair and unreasonable.

35. The Chairman said that Mr Albert CHAN should focus his speech on SIL and WIL rather than the transport requirements in North West New Territories. He invited Mr Albert CHAN to state his view or raise his question on SIL and WIL.

36. Mr Albert CHAN indicated that he could not accept that his question on the planning criteria for railways was irrelevant to the subject under discussion. He considered that as other members were allowed sufficient time for expressing their views on the subject, he should be treated the same. He asked the Administration and MTRCL to explain how they could safeguard the overall interests of the general public in taking forward railway development projects.

37. Mr GIBSON said that MTRCL had an obligation to ensure that all proposed projects would be cost-effective and meet the required rate of return. On the other hand, the Corporation would also assume its social responsibility to provide a better solution to the transport problems faced by the Western and Southern Districts. Given that SIL and WIL had substantial benefits, MTRCL considered that the projects should be implemented with Government's funding support.

38. Regarding the provisions of stations along railway lines, the Director of Highways said that there was a need to maintain a proper balance in the course of scheme design. Whilst the provision of more railway stations would enable more

Action

convenient access to railway stations for the traveling public, excessive provision would cause delay to the journey and have other undesirable implications. The Administration would take into account relevant factors including the population density, the geographical conditions and environmental considerations in determining the scheme design of railways.

39. Mr Albert CHAN said that there should be a fair and reasonable mechanism for the allocation of resources for railway development in different areas in the territory so that residents in different areas could equitably benefit from such development.

40. DS/ETW(T)1 remarked that SIL and WIL were two of the key railway expansion schemes included in the Railway Development Strategy 2000. In considering the need and implementation timing for a railway, the Administration would take into account the latest demographic data, the forecast population growth, the forecast transport demand generated from commercial and tourism activities etc. in respect of the areas concerned. There was also a need to duly consider the economic benefits of the proposed railway. The actual implementation timetable would be drawn up based on the pace of developments in the areas.

41. Mr Tommy CHEUNG shared the views expressed by Ms Miriam LAU. He said that the Administration must set out the development plans for the areas concerned for members to consider whether there was a need to construct a new railway, taking into account the impact of the railway on other public transport operators. Given MTRCL's indication that SIL was financially not viable and would require Government's funding support, there was a need for the Administration to delineate the justifications for the railway project and the proposed financing arrangement for members to assess the relevant project and funding proposals.

42. DS/ETW(T)1 said that whilst SIL and WIL were not financially viable, the Administration reckoned that they would result in substantial economic benefits. The Administration would need to ascertain the scheme design and implementation programme of the projects before it could come up with a funding proposal. Assuming that the Panel could reach a consensus view on the implementation of SIL and WIL, the Administration would discuss with other policy bureaux with a view to coming up with a financial proposal for consideration by the Panel in a few months' time.

43. Ms LI Fung-ying said that railway development would inevitably affect other public transport operators. She asked the Administration to consult the affected operators and local residents. In the course of consultation, the Administration should also draw up a public transport reorganization plan based on the projected traffic demand upon commissioning of the railway, so that the local communities would be in a better position to make their own choices.

44. DS/ETW(T)1 said that the Administration would carefully consider the impact of the railway projects on other public transport operators. Given that railway development involved huge investment, the Administration had to ensure that any new

Action

railway could reduce road-base traffic including public transport services and that it could generate sufficient revenue to sustain its operation.

45. Noting that the Administration would draw up a scheme design for consultation with the transport trades, Ms LI Fung-ying requested that when it reverted to the Panel on the railway projects, the Administration should also provide information on the level of impact on other public transport operators and their views expressed during the consultation.

46. Mr Jeffrey LAM said that there was a need to co-ordinate the land use development plans and transport development plans for various areas in the territory. In the past, due to poor accessibility, most of the factory operators in Wong Chuk Hang had chosen to move to other areas. Now that there were proposals for urban rejuvenation within Southern District and further tourism development in the district, the Administration should ensure that there would be a better co-ordination between land use planning and transport planning.

47. AD of P replied that the Planning Department would regularly review the need of the local communities and facilitate the urban rejuvenation programme in Southern District. Whilst the provision of SIL would certainly facilitate the redevelopment of Wong Chuk Hang, its implementation would depend on the decision of the relevant bureau.

48. The Chairman asked the Administration to take note of the concern expressed by members that land use development plans and transport development plans should be coordinated to achieve the optimal result.

49. Ir Dr Raymond HO said that the planning for WIL had been dragged on for more than 30 years and its implementation should be fast-tracked. Whilst it was ideal for the Administration to coordinate the land use and transport development plans, the present situation was that the respective planning work was undertaken by different bureaux with little communication between them. As such, it might take a longer time to complete the planning work for the SIL. To avoid unnecessary delay, he asked the Administration whether it was prepared to deliver the WIL first, followed by SIL.

50. DS/ETW(T)1 said that since there was no major redevelopment in Western District, it would be much easier for the Administration to determine the implementation of WIL. On SIL, as pointed out by Ir Dr HO, the Administration would need to consider Ocean Park's long term business strategy together with the overall tourism development framework for Aberdeen. He confirmed that the Administration would consider the feasibility of phased implementation of SIL and WIL.

51. Mr Abraham SHEK said that railway development could bring substantial economic benefits to the community and therefore he supported the proposed implementation of SIL and WIL. The question now was merely related to the timing of implementation. Given that MTRCL was a listed company, it would be difficult for the

Action

Corporation to account for its decision to take forward a railway project which was financially not viable. He therefore enquired about the circumstances under which Government would consider granting funding support to the railway corporations for their railway projects.

52. DS/ETW(T)1 said that railway development projects were implemented for the benefits of the community at large. As such, irrespective of which railway corporation was concerned, the Government would consider granting funding support if the project under consideration could bring substantial transport, economic, social and environmental benefits to the community.

53. Noting the Administration's reply, Mr Abraham SHEK also enquired whether the Administration would consider granting funding support to other public transport operators since they were providing services to the benefit of the community. If Government was prepared to grant funding support to MTRCL, a listed company, it would be unfair for the Administration to adopt a different approach for treating other public transport operators.

54. DS/ETW(T)1 said that the Administration had to consider the need and justifications for any proposed railway project on a case-by-case basis in deciding whether the Government should grant funding support. It was inappropriate to say that since funding support might be given to MTRCL for implementation of a railway project, the Government should also give funding support to other transport operators. This deviated from the standing practice of the Government.

55. Miss CHOY So-yuk said that the Democratic Alliance for the Betterment and Progress of Hong Kong was in support of the implementation of SIL and WIL. She however criticized that the current policy with regard to railway development was inappropriate. At present, railway projects would not be proceeded with unless there were sufficient population in the area and that the proposed project was financially viable. For example, in the case of WIL, the design and timing of the WIL had been dependent on the planning of reclamation and redevelopment in Western District. In the case of SIL, the projected poor financial performance of the SIL scheme had been the main reason for a delayed decision on its implementation. In her opinion, there was a need for a fundamental policy change. The Administration should broaden its perspective by taking into account the positive economic effects of railway infrastructure on an area. Railway infrastructure could certainly boost the development and population growth in an area and hence attract patronage. She therefore urged the Administration to give an undertaking to proceed with the implementation of WIL within a year and actively work out a feasible scheme for SIL.

56. At this juncture, Mr CHENG Kar-foo requested the Chairman to consider the ending time of the meeting and how to deal with the remaining items in the agenda. Mr CHENG said that he had some questions on agenda item V but not item VI. The Chairman said that the meeting had to be finished by 1:00 pm. He then asked members whether they had any particular questions/views in respect of agenda item VI. Members

Action

indicated that they did not have any questions, and agreed that there was no need for the Panel to discuss the item and that the Administration could put the item to the Finance Committee direct.

57. Replying to Miss CHOY So-yuk's question, DS/ETW(T)1 said that in taking forward railway projects, the Administration must consider their cost-effectiveness, given that they involved huge investments. There was also a need to examine their economic performance, their financial implications, and their impact on other public transport operators. The Administration would take into account the views expressed by various parties and come up with relevant proposals for members' consideration. However, he could not give an undertaking at this meeting that WIL would definitely be implemented.

58. Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung said that the present case illustrated the downside of privatization of public assets, which he had all along objected to. In order to protect the interests of the small investors of MTRCL, the Government now had to grant subsidies to the company to finance their railway projects which were not financially viable. He asked if the Government was prepared to build the railway itself so as to avoid transferring benefits to a private entity. He commented that it was wrong for the major political parties to have supported the privatization of the former Mass Transit Railway Corporation, resulting in the present day situation.

59. DS/ETW(T)1 said that both SIL and WIL were extensions of the MTR network. The Government could not take forward the projects on its own.

60. Mr TAM Yiu-chung said that WIL should have been implemented to meet the transport needs of local residents. For SIL, the Administration should come up with a feasible scheme to meet the transport needs of Southern District. It should consult the transport trade and consider the impact of the project on other public transport operators. He indicated his support to all the three motions to be dealt with by the Panel.

Motions

61. The Chairman said that as members had already indicated their position on the motions, he would not allow members to give further views on the motions. He then invited members to vote on the motions.

62. At the request of Ms Miriam LAU and with the leave of the Chairman, Ms Miriam LAU gave a short remark regarding the motion moved by Mr CHEUNG Hok-ming. She said that she was in support of the Route 4 project. However since Mr CHEUNG's motion did not touch on the comprehensive planning and implementation of tourism and commercial developments in Southern District of Hong Kong Island, she would abstain from voting on Mr CHEUNG's motion.

Mr LEE Wing-tat's motion on WIL

Action

63. Mr LEE Wing-tat's motion on WIL was seconded by Mr CHENG Kar-foo. The Chairman invited members to vote on Mr LEE Wing-tat's motion. 10 members voted for, none against, and one abstained. The Chairman declared that the motion was passed by the Panel. The terms of the motion were as follows-

“鑑於港島西區居民爭取興建西港島線地鐵支線已達二十年之久，本委員會促請政府與地鐵有限公司盡快就興建西港島線達成協議，連接上環至堅尼地城，以徹底解決港島西區居民的交通需要。”

English translation

“In view of the fact that the residents of Western District of Hong Kong Island have been striving for the construction of the West Hong Kong Island Line (WIL) for as long as 20 years, this Panel urges the Government to expeditiously reach an agreement with the MTR Corporation Limited on the construction of WIL which will connect Sheung Wan with Kennedy Town, so as to fully meet the transport needs of the residents of Western District of Hong Kong Island.”

Mr CHEUNG Hok-ming's motion

64. Mr CHEUNG Hok-ming's motion was seconded by Mr TAM Yiu-chung. The Chairman invited members to vote on Mr CHEUNG's motion. Six members voted for, none against and five abstained. The Chairman declared that the motion was passed by the Panel. The terms of the motion were as follows-

“為解決港島西區和南區長期面對的交通問題，本委員會支持盡快落實區內的鐵路及道路網絡發展計劃，包括應盡快將地鐵港島綫西延至堅尼地城，同時必須設站於西營盤和大學，以及盡快興建南港島鐵路及四號幹線。本委員會促請政府積極與地鐵有限公司商討符合公眾利益的財務安排，以便及早展開相關工程，並在鐵路新站的選址和設計過程中充分諮詢區內居民意見。”

Action

English translation

“In order to resolve the long-standing transportation problems faced by both the Western and Southern Districts of Hong Kong Island, this Panel supports the early implementation of the railway and road network development plans in these areas, including a westward extension of the MTR Island Line to Kennedy Town at the earliest time possible, which must have stations located at Sai Ying Pun and the University, as well as the early construction of the South Island Line and Route 4. This Panel urges the Government to proactively discuss with the MTR Corporation Limited to work out a financial arrangement which is in the best interests of the public, so that the relevant works can commence soon, and there should be full consultation with local residents on the location and design of the new railway stations.”

Mr LEE Wing-tat's motion on SIL

65. Mr LEE Wing-tat's motion was seconded by Ms Miriam LAU. The Chairman invited members to vote on Mr LEE's motion. 10 members voted for, none against and two abstained. The Chairman declared that the motion was passed by the Panel. The terms of the motion were as follows-

“本委員會促請政府盡快全面規劃及落實南區的旅遊及商業發展，並同時與地鐵有限公司商討，興建符合成本效益的南港島鐵路，確保有足夠的交通設施配合南區的發展及滿足該區居民的交通需要。”

English translation

“This Panel urges the Government to expedite the comprehensive planning and implementation of tourism and commercial developments in Southern District of Hong Kong Island, and also discuss with the MTR Corporation Limited the construction of a cost-effective South Island Line, so as to ensure that there will be adequate transport facilities to support the development of Southern District and to cater for the transport needs of local residents.”

66. Ms Miriam LAU suggested that the Panel should conduct a joint meeting with the Panel on Planning, Lands and Works to review the land-use planning and transport planning in Southern District together with the comprehensive commercial and tourism development plan in the district. She also called on the Administration to come up with a scheme design for consultation with the transport trades.

67. The Chairman invited members' views on whether a separate meeting should be held to receive views from the general public.

68. Ms Miriam LAU indicated that it would be more fruitful to defer the public hearing session to a later stage, pending the detailed scheme design for the railway

Action

projects and comprehensive land use plan from the Administration. Mr LEE Wing-tat agreed that it would be more desirable for MTRCL and the Administration to come up with a scheme design for the railway projects together with all the necessary information before the Panel held further discussion on the matter. Mr Abraham SHEK asked the Administration to provide further information on the impact of SIL and WIL on other public transport operators and the public transport re-organization plan for Western and Southern Districts upon commissioning of SIL and WIL.

69. The Chairman asked the Administration to take note of members' requests and speed up the related work.

V Proposed introduction of the probationary driving licence scheme for private cars and light goods vehicles

- (LC Paper No. CB(1)951/04-05(05) - Letter dated 22 February 2005 from the Administration providing supplementary information in response to members' requests at the meeting on 17 December 2004
- LC Paper No. CB(1)298/04-05(05) - Information paper provided by the Administration for the meeting on 17 December 2004
- LC Paper No. CB(1)679/04-05 - Minutes of the meeting held on 17 December 2004)

70. The Chairman said that the same subject was last discussed at the meeting on 17 December 2004. Members had agreed to further discuss the subject upon provision of further information from the Administration.

71. Mr Jeffrey LAM expressed support for the proposed Probationary Driving Licence Scheme (PDL Scheme) for private cars and light goods vehicles (LGVs). He said that the display of "P" plates on the vehicles of novice private car and LGV drivers would remind other drivers to be more cautious of and patient with them. He enquired whether there would be special arrangements for novice LGV drivers who already had driving experience.

72. The Deputy Secretary for the Environment, Transport and Works (Transport)3 (DS/ETW(T)3) advised that the Administration concurred with some members' view expressed during the previous discussion that it should not be necessary to apply the PDL Scheme to novice LGV drivers who already had a certain extent of driving experience. As such, the Administration now proposed that the following persons be exempted from the Scheme –

- (a) holders of a valid full private car driving licence for at least three years before the date of application for full LGV driving licence, and has passed the LGV driving test; and

Action

- (b) holders of a valid full driving licence for medium goods vehicles or heavy goods vehicles.

73. Mr Jeffrey LAM considered that for the purpose of exemption from the Scheme, one or two years' previous driving experience should be adequate. He asked whether the Administration would consider shortening the three-year period in (a) above to one or two years. DS/ETW(T)3 responded that the three-year period was proposed having regard to the existing arrangement that applicants for driving licences of certain vehicle classes such as medium and heavy goods vehicles were required to have at least three years' driving experience. She agreed to consider Mr LAM's suggestion taking into account relevant statistics.

74. Ms Miriam LAU opined that since the PDL Scheme was mainly aimed at addressing the problem of novice drivers lacking on-road experience and relevant statistics showed that first-year drivers were those having higher accident involvement rates, possession of one-year private car driving experience should be adequate for the purpose of exemption from the PDL Scheme. Moreover, applicants for the LGV driving licence would be issued the licence only after they had passed the relevant driving test demonstrating that they possessed the required driving skills. She added that the freight transport trade had criticized that the existing requirement of at least three years' driving experience for applicants for driving licences of medium and heavy goods vehicles was too stringent; they considered that the period of previous driving experience should be shortened.

75. DS/ETW(T)3 reiterated that the Administration would consider the suggestion of shortening the period of previous driving experience required of novice LGV drivers for exemption from the PDL Scheme taking into account relevant statistics. The Administration would provide an account on this issue in the future legislative proposal for the PDL Scheme for private cars and LGVs.

76. Ir Dr Raymond HO said that having regard to the overseas practices regarding the restrictions imposed on new drivers, he considered that the proposed arrangements under the proposed PDL Scheme for private car and LGV drivers were reasonable. He therefore supported the present proposal.

77. Mr CHENG Kar-foo said that the Democratic Party supported the present proposal. He enquired when the legislative proposal would be introduced to the Legislative Council. In reply, DS/ETW(T)3 said that the drafting of the legislative amendments was underway. The Administration planned to introduce the legislative proposal in mid-2005.

78. Mr Albert CHAN expressed support for the present proposal.

VI Replacement of switchboards and transformers in the Aberdeen Tunnel

Action

(LC Paper No. CB(1)951/04-05(06) - Information paper provided by the Administration)

79. Taking note of the information paper provided by the Administration, members indicated that they had no objection to the Administration submitting the relevant funding proposal to the Finance Committee as scheduled.

VII Any other business

80. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 12:45 pm.

Council Business Division 1
Legislative Council Secretariat
30 March 2005