

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(1)2021/06-07
(These minutes have been seen
by the Administration)

Ref : CB1/PL/TP/1

Panel on Transport

**Minutes of meeting held on
Friday, 25 May 2007, at 10:45 am
in Conference Room A of the Legislative Council Building**

- Members present** : Hon Andrew CHENG Kar-foo (Chairman)
Hon CHEUNG Hok-ming, SBS, JP (Deputy Chairman)
Ir Dr Hon Raymond HO Chung-tai, SBS, S.B.St.J., JP
Hon LAU Chin-shek, JP
Hon LAU Kong-wah, JP
Hon Miriam LAU Kin-yee, GBS, JP
Hon LI Fung-ying, BBS, JP
Hon Tommy CHEUNG Yu-yan, JP
Hon Albert CHAN Wai-yip
Hon WONG Kwok-hing, MH
Hon LEE Wing-tat
Hon Jeffrey LAM Kin-fung, SBS, JP
Hon LEUNG Kwok-hung
- Members absent** : Hon Mrs Selina CHOW LIANG Shuk-yee, GBS, JP
Hon Ronny TONG Ka-wah, SC
- Public Officers attending** : **Agenda item IV**
Miss Cathy CHU
Deputy Secretary for the Environment, Transport and Works
(Transport) 2
Mrs Hedy CHU
Principal Assistant Secretary for the Environment, Transport
and Works (Transport) 4

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

Miss Alice AU-YEUNG
Principal Transport Officer/Bus and Railway
Transport Department

Mr Michael NG
Chief Transport Officer/Boundary
Transport Department

Mr HO Siu-hung
Divisional Commander of Border Division
Immigration Department

Agenda item V

Ms Annette LEE
Deputy Secretary for the Environment, Transport and Works
(Transport) 3

Miss Rosanna LAW
Principal Assistant Secretary for the Environment, Transport
and Works (Transport) 2

Miss LUI Ying
Assistant Commissioner for Transport/
Administration & Licensing

Mr LEUNG Tak-fai
Chief Engineer/Road Safety & Standards
Transport Department

Mr Andy YAU
Chief Engineer/Hong Kong
Transport Department

Mr Tommy TSENG
Senior Engineer/Vehicle Regulations & Standards
Transport Department

Attendance by invitation : **Agenda item IV**
Kowloon-Canton Railway Corporation

Ir James BLAKE
Chief Executive Officer

Mr Y T LI
Senior Director, Transport

Mr Alok JAIN
General Manager, Marketing (Acting)

Mr Raymond WONG
Senior Corporate Affairs Manager

Mr MAK Kam-woon
Chief Engineer

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

Staff in attendance : Ms Sarah YUEN
Senior Council Secretary (1)6

Miss Winnie CHENG
Legislative Assistant (1)5

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I Confirmation of minutes and matters arising
(LC Paper No. CB(1)1609/06-07 - Minutes of the meeting held on
27 April 2007)

The minutes of the meeting held on 27 April 2007 were confirmed.

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II Information papers issued since last meeting

- (LC Paper No. CB(1)1530/06-07(01) to (03)) - Submissions from a member of the public on measures to enhance road safety
- LC Paper No. CB(1)1530/06-07(04) - Administration's response to the submissions from a member of the public on measures to enhance road safety (LC Paper No. CB(1)1530/06-07(01) to (03))
- LC Paper No. CB(1)1565/06-07(01) - Submission from The Experience Group on the structure of the rail merger
- LC Paper No. CB(1)1571/06-07(01) - Referral from Legislative Council Members' meeting-cum-luncheon with Tuen Mun District Council on Traffic impacts on the town centre of Tuen Mun to be brought about by the commissioning of Shenzhen Bay Port and Deep Bay Link
- LC Paper No. CB(1)1640/06-07(01) - Submission from a Yuen Long District Councillor on the traffic and transport arrangements for the commissioning of Sheung Shui to Lok Ma Chau Spur Line
- LC Paper No. CB(1)1651/06-07(01) - Referral from Legislative Council Members' meeting-cum-luncheon with Yuen Long District Council on public transport arrangement of Tin Shui Wai and Lok Ma Chau Spur Line Public Transport Interchange
- LC Paper No. CB(1)1663/06-07(01) - Information paper on "Amendments to the Road Traffic (Traffic Control) Regulations (Cap.374G)" provided by the Administration
- LC Paper No. CB(1)1709/06-07(01) - Information paper on "Position on Route 10 (Northern Section) and measures to rationalize the utilization of Route 3" provided by the Administration
- LC Paper No. CB(1)1710/06-07(01) - Information paper on "Projects relating to area traffic control and closed circuit television systems" provided by the Administration)

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

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III Items for discussion at the next meeting scheduled for 22 June 2007

- (LC Paper No. CB(1)1611/06-07(01) - List of outstanding items for discussion
LC Paper No. CB(1)1611/06-07(02) - List of follow-up actions)

3. Members agreed that the following items would be discussed at the next meeting scheduled for 22 June 2007 –

- (a) Safety of franchised bus operation;
- (b) Measures to rationalize utilization of the three road harbour crossings; and
- (c) Traffic arrangements for the commissioning of Shenzhen Bay Port and the Northwest New Territories Traffic and Infrastructure Review.

4. Members then deliberated on whether to discuss the item on "Improvement to Sunny Bay Interchange" at this meeting. In this regard, members noted from the Chairman and the Clerk that it was on 22 May 2007 that the Administration requested for the inclusion of this additional item to the agenda for the meeting. The Administration had indicated that it would like to advance the submission of this item to the Panel to the current session so as to speed up the delivery of public works. If the item could be discussed at this meeting, the Administration planned to submit the relevant funding proposal to the Public Works Subcommittee on 20 June 2007. In consideration of the short notice of the request, the Chairman had decided to tentatively include the new agenda item in the agenda, and to seek members' views at the beginning of this meeting on whether the new item should be dealt with at the meeting.

5. In recognition that the project in question involved reclamation, Mr LEE Wing-tat opined that members should be allowed sufficient time to examine the relevant information paper. He and the Chairman also saw a need to, where necessary, to consult green groups and other parties. Mr LEE further pointed out that according to the established procedure, sufficient notice should be given for the inclusion of any item to the agenda of a meeting. Members therefore did not agree to deal with the above tentative item, and concurred that it should be discussed in October 2007, when the new legislative session began.

IV Lok Ma Chau Spur Line fares

- (LC Paper No. CB(1)1611/06-07(03) - Information paper provided by the Administration)

6. With the aid of power-point, the Chief Engineer of Kowloon-Canton Railway Corporation (KCRC) and the Senior Director, Transport of KCRC (SD/T of KCRC) took turns to brief members on the operational readiness and the fare of the Lok Ma Chau (LMC) Spur Line (the Spur Line) which would open for revenue operation in mid 2007.

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(Post-meeting note: The presentation material was tabled at the meeting and issued to members by email on 25 May 2007.)

Fares

The fare level of the Spur Line

7. Mr WONG Kwok-hing found the LMC fares too high, and called upon KCRC to consider reducing the fares on grounds that the journey concerned was short. In response, the Chief Executive Officer of KCRC (CEO/KCRC) explained that as the Spur Line was an extension of the East Rail system, it followed the existing fare structure. The LMC fares would therefore be the same as the Lo Wu fares (the LW fares). Notwithstanding, in setting the LMC fares, KCRC had also taken into account key parameters such as passenger acceptance, market competition, the project cost and value for money. In this regard, as learnt from passenger satisfaction surveys, passengers were satisfied with KCRC's cross-boundary railway service including the fare levels. The fares charged for KCRC's cross-boundary railway service also compared favourably with other public transport services, and could provide value-for-money service to the travelling public.

8. Mr LAU Kong-wah considered it unacceptable that the LMC fares should be the same as the LW fares, which were too high. In response, CEO/KCRC reiterated that as gathered from passenger satisfaction surveys and KCRC's market share, passengers found the fares for KCRC's cross-boundary service competitive.

9. Ms Miriam LAU noted that the journey from Sheung Shui to LMC was longer than that to Lo Wu, and asked whether it was a conscious decision to benefit passengers by charging the same level of fare for LMC and Lo Wu. In response, CEO/KCRC advised that while it could be argued that the LMC fares should be higher given the longer physical distance of the Spur Line and the high project cost, the same fare structure as that for the Lo Wu Line had been adopted because the Spur Line was an extension of the East Rail system. Moreover, the travelling times of going by the LMC Line and the Lo Wu Line were similar if the walking time was also taken into account. This was because the distance and hence walking time from the Lo Wu Station platform to the immigration facilities was longer.

10. Mr Albert CHAN considered both the LW fares and the LMC fares the highest by kilometre among all public transport services. While he recognized that the practice of cross-boundary passengers subsidizing domestic passengers (cross-subsidy) was an established policy, he pointed out that the times had changed and, while cross-boundary passengers in the early years were mainly travellers going on an outing, at present cross-boundary passengers mostly had to travel for the purposes of work or study. As such, use of the cross-boundary railway service was no longer a luxury but a daily necessity, and it was unreasonable and rigid not to change the fare structure in response to the changes. In his view, KCRC's total disregard of the above changes in pursuit of

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greater profits would inevitably give rise to grievances. The Administration should therefore stop supporting the cross-subsidy policy, and should ensure that changes would be introduced to KCRC's fare structure in keeping with the times. He also disagreed with CEO/KCRC's claim that KCRC's cross-boundary fares were competitive as indicated by KCRC's market share. In his view, KCRC's cross-boundary service appeared competitive mainly because the playing field was a controlled one, where other transport modes were denied entry or forced to charge similarly high fares. As such, he called for a full review of KCRC's fare policy, and opined that fare concessions should be granted for passengers who had to travel between Hong Kong and the Mainland frequently to reduce the heavy burden imposed on them by the unreasonably high cross-boundary fares.

11. In response, CEO/KCRC pointed out that as required by the law, KCRC had to operate according to prudent commercial principles, which meant KCRC had to look at the interests of its passengers as a whole and not just a particular sector. In this regard, cross-subsidy was necessary unless the fares for domestic services were substantially increased. He further reiterated that as gathered from passenger satisfaction surveys and KCRC's market penetration, passengers found KCRC's cross-boundary fares reasonable and competitive. Moreover, it should be noted that railway passengers had to pay for the cost of not only the service but also the facilities as well as the infrastructure concerned, while users of other transport modes did not have to pay for the cost of related services.

12. Mr CHEUNG Hok-ming shared other members' concern that the LMC fares were high, and opined that with the LMC fares at such a high level, the Spur Line might not be able to serve the purpose of diverting passengers from the Lo Wu Line. The Administration noted his views.

13. For a number of reasons, Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung was not convinced of CEO/KCRC's argument that the LMC fares and the LW fares could not be reduced because of KCRC's need to operate according to prudent commercial principles. Firstly, KCRC was in his view enjoying natural monopoly as a result of Government's transport policy tilted in favour of rail transport under the pretext of environmental protection. Secondly, the cross-subsidy policy was no longer justified because any profits so gained would as a result of KCRC's pending merger with MTRCL, which was a privatized company, only benefit commercial entities and not the general public. He was therefore opposed to the merger. Thirdly, the Government was in fact subsidizing KCRC's operation in many ways, such as by granting property development rights to it, providing the relevant infrastructure, providing assistance in KCRC's negotiation with the Shenzhen side on interchange arrangements, etc. KCRC was hence in fact not operating according to commercial principles but was subsidized. Mr LEUNG therefore urged KCRC to review the cross-subsidy policy, reduce the LMC fares, and provide concessions such as monthly tickets and student tickets as rail operators of many overseas countries.

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14. In response, CEO/KCRC reiterated KCRC's policy of setting competitive fares in the market that it operated, within the statutory framework of prudent commercial principles as required by the law, while at the same time, providing value-for-money services to the travelling public as a whole and not just those using its cross-boundary service. In his view, most passengers found KCRC's fare structure value for money. Moreover, special fare packages would be provided as and when necessary to promote new services. Such packages were already available for the West Rail. As for the Spur Line, it was not a standalone rail as the West Rail but an extension of the East Rail, whose fares passengers already found satisfactory.

15. Ms LI Fung-ying cast doubt on whether passengers really, as CEO/KCRC claimed, found KCRC's fare structure value for money. According to her, there were many complaints about KCRC's cross-boundary fares, which many considered high. She also pointed out that by denying other transport modes access to Lo Wu, KCRC was enjoying a certain degree of monopoly in the cross-boundary transport market. The public were thus somewhat forced to travel by the Lo Wu Line and had not voluntarily chosen to use the service because it was value for money as KCRC claimed. The Administration noted her views.

16. While glad to note that people living in the nearby Lok Ma Chau Village and Ha Wan Village would enjoy a special discount under the "railcard scheme", Ms LI Fung-ying opined that the scheme should be extended to benefit passengers who had to travel across the boundary to work and study on a daily basis, so as to relieve them of the heavy financial burden so created. In response, CEO/KCRC reiterated the need to provide all passengers using KCRC's service the same value-for-money service. He explained that KCRC had to rely on the revenue from its cross-boundary service to keep domestic fares low, which had seen no increase for some ten years. Since the cross-subsidy policy had been successfully implemented for a long time, it should continue to enable KCRC to keep up the world-class service it had been able to provide.

17. The Chairman echoed members' views on the fare level, and considered the LMC fares too high and unattractive to serve its purpose of diverting passengers from the Lo Wu Line. He therefore suggested that, apart from providing monthly tickets for daily travellers, special fare concessions should also be offered for nine months or one year from commissioning of the Spur Line to make the fares comparable to bus fares and hence the Spur Line more attractive. In response, CEO/KCRC pointed out that the Spur Line could provide East Rail passengers an alternative crossing to the Mainland with a direct access to Line 4 of the metro system in Shenzhen. In his view, the above convenience of quick connectivity between Hong Kong and the west of Shenzhen would attract passengers to change their travelling habit. Notwithstanding, KCRC would monitor the usage of the Spur Line. It would also discuss with the operator of the Shenzhen metro system on the provision of Spur Line and Shenzhen MTR interchange discount.

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18. Mr WONG Kwok-hing called upon KCRC and the Administration to map out fare concession plans such as monthly tickets for the many residents in Northwest New Territories who had to travel across the boundary frequently to take part in various economic activities. In his view, the concessions were important because these residents' participation in the above economic activities could help reduce the unemployment rate in this part of Hong Kong. Moreover, the LMC fares were high and KCRC was monopolizing cross-boundary service. He therefore urged the Administration to state its stance in this regard, and further pointed out that it was unfair to require residents in Northwest New Territories to bear the high LMC fares notwithstanding the high construction cost of the Spur Line.

19. In response, the Deputy Secretary for the Environment, Transport and Works (Transport)2 (DS(T)2) explained that in consideration of KCRC's need to operate according to prudent commercial principles, it had been given fare autonomy to enable it to balance its books to obviate the need for use of public money to subsidize its costly operation. In return for fare autonomy however, KCRC also had to bear the associated risks. Moreover, although KCRC had to consider the capital and operating cost of the Spur Line in setting the LMC fares, it also had to consider public acceptability and competition from road-based public transport services. In fact, according to a survey conducted by KCRC, the Spur Line was competitive when compared with other land transport services in terms of both the fare level and travelling time. She further pointed out that KCRC's domestic service was operating at a loss. The revenue from KCRC's cross-boundary service was therefore very important to maintaining the sustainability of its domestic service. Hence the differences in the fare structures of the two services.

Other fare-related concerns and views

20. Pointing out that the Spur Line would bring KCRC additional revenue, Mr WONG Kwok-hing called upon KCRC to reduce the fares of Light Rail. In response, CEO/KCRC explained that with the cross-subsidy policy, passengers of Light Rail had already benefited from fares so kept affordable. As revealed in passenger satisfaction surveys, passengers found the Light Rail fares agreeable.

21. Ms Miriam LAU enquired about the basis used for preparing the fare comparison between taking a LMC train and other land transport modes (sheet 10 of the power-point presentation material). In reply, SD/T of KCRC explained that the routings were basically the same except that the control point for the former would be the Spur Line crossing while for the latter, the Huanggang crossing. The main difference was the transport modes used, namely, going by train and then metro for the former, and using road transport all the way for the latter, be it bus or minibus.

22. Mr CHEUNG Hok-ming noted that people who worked in the terminal building, or lived in the nearby Lok Ma Chau Village and Ha Wan Village, would enjoy a special discount under the "railcard scheme" similar to that offered at Lo Wu. In this regard, he enquired about the extent of the discount and how KCRC defined "people who worked in the terminal building", particularly whether people who worked in the shops and

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restaurants in the terminal building would also be covered. SD/T of KCRC replied in the affirmative, and reported that the special discount would be identical to that now being applied to Railcard holders at Lo Wu. As an indicator of such discount, he advised that while other passengers travelling from East Tsim Sha Tsui to LMC using an octopus card would need to pay \$34.8, the above categories of people might only need to pay \$13.

Operation

Operating hours

23. Mr LAU Kong-wah highlighted media reports that the Spur Line crossing and the Spur Line would stop operation at 10:00 pm, and pointed out that the early closing hour was not conducive to encouraging people to use the Spur Line. In response, CEO/KCRC explained that it was KCRC's plan to provide the same level of service for LMC as that for Lo Wu where operating hours and train frequency were concerned. It was hoped that in the long run, the Lo Wu crossing (the LW crossing) and the Spur Line crossing could operate to the same hours to avoid any possible confusion.

24. In response to Mr LAU Kong-wah on the reason for the short operating hours of the Spur Line crossing, DS(T)2 reported that the Administration was still liaising with the Shenzhen authority on the operating hours. While the Administration hoped that the operating hours of the Spur Line crossing could be the same as those of the LW crossing, the Shenzhen authority needed more time for detailed planning in the light of the required establishment before making a decision in this regard. Noting the explanation, Ms Miriam LAU pointed out that according to the relevant legislation, the operating hours of the Spur Line crossing should end at 00:30 hours. In response to her on whether this was the target closing hour in the long run, DS(T)2 replied in the affirmative.

25. The Chairman opined that the Spur Line might not be able to attract passengers presently using the Lo Wu Line to use it because the Spur Line's operating hours were too short, and passengers going to Lo Wu could likewise easily connect to Shenzhen's metro system. He therefore requested the Administration to liaise further with the Shenzhen authority with a view to extending the operating hours of the Spur Line to 12:00 midnight, and to report the outcome at the site visit scheduled by the Subcommittee on Matters Relating to Railways to take a trial ride on the Spur Line on 8 June 2007 (the site visit). In response, DS(T)2 agreed to follow up the Chairman's request. CEO/KCRC added that KCRC would also like to see both the Lo Wu Line and the Spur Line operating to the same hours, and expected that the differences in operating hours could be ironed out in due course, possibly in the following three to six months.

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26. Pointing out that there would be 10-12 trains to Lo Wu but only 5-6 trains to LMC every hour, Mr LAU Kong-wah cast doubt on the Spur Line's cost-effectiveness given its substantial construction cost, especially as its operating hours were short. He

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also considered it undesirable that with only forty days left before commissioning, the Administration should still be negotiating with the Shenzhen side on the operating hours of the Spur Line. According to him, it was undesirable and confusing that different crossings should have different operating hours. As such, in the long run, efforts should be made to standardize the closing hours of all crossings to 12:00 midnight except for Huanggang, which operated round the clock. The above standardization effort would also facilitate shifting arrangements, and enable people to benefit from the greatest convenience the Spur Line could provide for interchange with the Shenzhen metro system. In Mr LAU's view, if the present operating hours and train frequency of the Spur Line were not changed, the Spur Line would fall far short of serving the purpose of its construction and meeting public expectation.

27. In response, DS(T)2 assured members that there would be sufficient publicity on the operating hours of the Spur Line crossing to minimize confusion. While reaffirming that the Administration would liaise further with the Shenzhen authority on extending the operating hours of the Spur Line crossing, she also pointed out that the operating hours of the LW crossing were similarly short at the beginning. It was only progressively that they had been extended to 12:00 midnight in response to the growth of travellers using it.

Logistical arrangements

28. Noting that at Sheung Shui Station, trains would diverge to either Lo Wu or LMC, Mr WONG Kwok-hing enquired about the availability of special arrangements at the Sheung Shui Station to assist passengers to find trains of their destinations to avoid confusion and congestion in station premises. In response, SD/T of KCRC advised that trains for LMC would call at all East Rail stations from East Tsim Sha Tsui to Sheung Shui. No interchange would be required when boarding the trains for LMC. At all East Rail stations, there would be LED displays and broadcast on the platform to inform northbound passengers of the destination of the next arriving train. At Sheung Shui Station, additional LED displays had been installed on the northbound platform for every doorway to indicate the destination of the train. Clear markings would also be made on the platform floor to separate passengers queuing for trains for LMC and those for Lo Wu. Moreover, in-train announcements on the destination of the train would be arranged for northbound trains heading to Sheung Shui Station.

29. Ms LI Fung-ying enquired whether additional staff support would be provided in the early days of operations to provide assistance to elderly passengers and passengers with visual or hearing impairment, who might have difficulty in using the new service. In response, SD/T of KCRC said that during the first three months of operations, KCRC would deploy Ambassadors at LMC and Sheung Shui stations to assist passengers in using the new service.

30. Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung opined that to avoid confusion, the Spur Line should be commissioned after all matters had been settled with the Shenzhen authority instead of prematurely commissioned as a political move to celebrate the tenth anniversary of

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Hong Kong's handover to the Mainland. In response, DS(T)2 emphasized that sufficient time would be allowed for notifying the public and publicizing the operating hours of the Spur Line. She also pointed out that the planned commissioning date of the Spur Line had always been mid 2007, which still left sufficient time for the necessary commissioning arrangements.

Other concerns and views

31. Mr LAU Kong-wah queried why, as indicated in sheet 10 of the power-point presentation material, if one used land transport services other than rail service, it would take 105 minutes to go from Shatin to Futian via Huanggang but only 70 minutes from Tsim Sha Tsui. In reply, SD/T of KCRC explained that this was because direct coach service was available in Tsim Sha Tsui/Jordan area. Residents in Sha Tin however would need to travel to Sheung Shui and then San Tin by bus or green minibus (GMB) before they could change to the LMC-Huanggang Cross-Boundary Shuttle Bus.

32. In reply to Mr LAU Kong-wah on why platform screen doors (PSDs) were not provided for the station platforms of the Spur Line, CEO/KCRC explained that the station platforms of the Spur Line, like those of East Rail and Ma On Shan Rail, were of an open environment relying upon natural ventilation and as such were without PSDs. KCRC, however, was in the process of examining the feasibility of retrofitting PSDs for all such above ground stations. As such, provision had already been made available for retrofitting PSDs to stations of the Spur Line should such retrofitting decision be made.

33. Ms Miriam LAU noted that passengers riding on the Spur Line would have direct access to Line 4 of the metro system in Shenzhen. Taking a LMC train would therefore shorten the travelling time to areas west of Lo Wu. Pointing out that such convenience might attract many passengers who presently took the Lo Wu train to take a LMC train, she enquired about estimates in this regard. CEO/KCRC confirmed her observation, and said that because of such convenience, many passengers from both the Hong Kong and the Shenzhen side were expected to use the Spur Line. The total market was therefore substantial, and KCRC was planning to capitalize on that market into the future. As to the anticipated split number between the Spur Line and the Lo Wu line, SD/T of KCRC elaborated that presently 18% of the some 240 000 travellers taking the Lo Wu Line went to areas west of Lo Wu. It was expected that most of them would switch to the Spur Line after its commissioning. It was also anticipated that 55 000 passengers would use the Spur Line when it was first commissioned. The number would grow to around 70 000 at year end, of which 70% would be travellers originally travelling on the Lo Wu Line. The remaining might have switched from other transport modes.

34. Mr CHEUNG Hok-ming found it undesirable that while residents of New Territories East could directly access the Spur Line, residents of New Territories West could not, and had to travel to Sheung Shui to take the Spur Line. Moreover, feeder service to LMC was only available in the form of one franchised bus route to/from Yuen Long East and one GMB route to/from Yuen Long town centre, so that residents of Tin

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Shui Wai could not so benefit. He therefore urged the Administration to note the following suggestions made at the meeting between Yuen Long District Council (YLDC) and Legislative Council Members on 10 May 2007 –

- (a) The existing GMB route no. 77 (Tin Shui Wai Tin Chung Court – LMC Public Transport Interchange (PTI)) should be extended to the Spur Line PTI; and
- (b) A new bus stop for the existing bus route no. 276B (Tin Shui Wai Tin Fu Bus Terminus – Sheung Shui Kowloon-Canton Railway Station) should be added to allow passengers to get on and drop off at the Spur Line PTI.

35. In response, the Chief Transport Officer/Boundary of the Transport Department explained that in deciding on the public transport services to be provided at the Spur Line PTI, several factors had to be considered, namely, the need to ensure the safe and smooth operation of the Spur Line crossing; the fact that the LMC Terminus was designed as a railway boundary crossing, and railway should continue to be developed as the backbone of the public transport system ; the need to note the limited size of the Spur Line PTI and the limited capacity of the road leading to the PTI; the need to minimize air pollution and congestion as the PTI was situated in a conservation area, etc. As such, the Administration could only plan one franchised bus route to/from Yuen Long East, one GMB route to/from Yuen Long town centre and the provision of urban and New Territories taxis for operation in the Spur Line PTI. Commenting on YLDC's suggestions, he pointed out that there were bus and public light bus (PLB) routes from Tin Shui Wai to Sheung Shui, where passengers could interchange for the East Rail. Tin Shui Wai residents could also go to Yuen Long, and use the above new bus and GMB routes to go to the Spur Line PTI. As a result, the Administration's plan remained that GMB route no. 77 and bus route no. 276B should both terminate at the San Tin Interchange, where residents of Tin Shui Wai could take the LMC-Huanggang Shuttle Bus.

36. Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung queried the rationale for constructing the Spur Line if high fares had to be charged for it to generate profits to subsidize domestic fares, so that few people might use it. He also opined that if KCRC was really operating according to commercial principles, KCRC should not have borrowed heavily to construct the Spur Line to compete with its Lo Wu Line. In his view, KCRC should not be allowed to take up a monopolistic position in the market but more rail operators should be allowed entry into the market to keep rail fares low. This was because, to ensure any profits gained would be used to benefit the public, monopoly should in his view only be enjoyed by corporations which did not operate according to commercial principles. With so many resources injected into the construction of the Spur Line, he queried who would be held accountable if the Spur Line could not operate sustainably.

37. In response, CEO/KCRC explained that KCRC had to expand its rail facilities as a whole. In this regard, he considered the Spur Line an attractive addition to existing railway services, particularly as it was linked to the Shenzhen metro system, which was

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also expanding. He emphasized that the Spur Line should be viewed as part of the railway development as a whole and, given its ability to improve KCRC's service, the decision to construct the Spur Line was justified.

The motion

38. Mr Albert CHAN pointed out that there was strong dissatisfaction with the cross-subsidy policy. It was undesirable and unfair to continue adhering to it regardless of the change of the times and repeated public calls for changes in this regard. He therefore sought to move the following motion, which was seconded by Mr LAU Kong-wah –

"本會促請政府及九鐵就鐵路票價的政策，特別就跨境票價的補貼問題，進行全面檢討及研究為經常使用跨境鐵路服務的乘客提供優惠票價及月票服務"。

(Translation)

"That this Panel urges the Government and the Kowloon-Canton Railway Corporation to conduct a comprehensive review of the rail fare policy, in particular the issue of cross-boundary passengers subsidizing domestic passengers, and to study the provision of concessionary fares and monthly ticket schemes for passengers who frequently use cross-boundary railway service."

39. Ms Miriam LAU indicated the Liberal Party's support for the motion. According to her, the cross-subsidy policy had been the subject of public debate and great concern to many people for over ten years. Since public debate on it had become more heated with more and more people travelling across the border to work and study, the policy should be reviewed. In this regard, while she agreed that it might not be possible to change the policy within a short time, she hoped that in the long run, it would be reviewed and solutions could be mapped out to address concerns about it.

40. Mr Jeffrey LAM highlighted the many economic activities going on across the border, and stressed the need to review the cross-subsidy policy to reduce the high travelling expenses of people who had to frequently travel across the border to take part in these activities. According to him, he had time and again called upon the Administration to help reduce such expenses, and suggested that measures such as monthly tickets be introduced to help these people. He therefore indicated support for the motion.

41. Members agreed to proceed with the proposed motion and put it to vote. Except for the Chairman who did not exercise his voting right, of the other members present, six voted for the motion. The Chairman declared that the motion was carried.

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(*Post-meeting note:* The wording of the motion was circulated to members vide LC Paper No. CB(1)1740/06-07 on 28 May 2007.)

Admin 42. Summing up the above discussion, the Chairman suggested that the Panel should take the opportunity during the site visit to discuss further with the Administration and KCRC on the proposed granting of concessionary fares for passengers who needed to travel between Hong Kong and Shenzhen frequently, as well as the provision of Spur Line and Shenzhen MTR interchange discount. The Administration was also urged to report to the Panel progress of its liaison with the Shenzhen authority on members' proposed extension of the operating hours of the Spur Line to 12:00 midnight.

V Safety of reversing goods vehicles

(LC Paper No. CB(1)1611/06-07(04) - Information paper provided by the Administration

LC Paper No. CB(1)763/06-07 - Minutes of the meeting held on 15 December 2006)

Briefing by the Administration

43. The Deputy Secretary for the Environment, Transport and Works (Transport)3 (DS/T3) and the Chief Engineer/Hong Kong (CE/HK) briefed members on the progress on measures taken to enhance safety of reversing goods vehicles by highlighting the salient points in the paper, through the aid of a Powerpoint presentation.

Discussion

44. With reference to paragraph 5 of the paper, Mr Jeffrey LAM enquired about the feasibility of designating specific period of the day for loading and unloading activities at the 132 priority road sections, and the number of road sections where vehicle and pedestrian access could be separated. Mr LAM was concerned that some goods vehicles might have to install more than one reversing video device (RVD) in order to meet the safety requirements which might add to the operating costs of the trade. The effectiveness of the RVDs might also be affected by inclement weather.

45. DS/T3 responded that the safety of reversing vehicles relied largely on the drivers' attitude and behaviour, and reversing aids only served a safety enhancement purpose. The Government was liaising closely with the trade with a view to finding practical ways for implementing the safety measures. The relevant District Councils and local residents and shop operators had been consulted on measures to improve road safety at selected road sections. CE/HK supplemented that different measures had been taken to enhance the safety of the priority road sections, including the prohibition of access by long vehicles, or restriction of access for all vehicles during certain periods of the day, and installation of warning signs. The relevant District Councils and local residents had been consulted on such measures before implementation.

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46. Mr Jeffrey LAM enquired about the time taken to improve the remaining 51 locations.

47. CE/HK replied that the Transport Department was discussing with the relevant District Councils and local residents regarding the safety enhancement measures at the 51 locations, and it was hoped that the measures could be implemented by the end of the year.

48. Mr WONG Kwok-hing opined that there should be a time frame for completion of the consultation with the relevant trade as many goods vehicles involved in the traffic accidents were ordinary goods vehicles and there should not be any technical difficulty for installation of safety enhancement devices on such vehicles. Mr WONG was concerned that out of the 49 priority road sections in Central and Western District, improvement work had only been agreed on 13 road sections. Given that many vehicle reversing accidents occurred in Central and Western District, Mr WONG requested that consultation with the relevant parties in the District on road improvement work should be expedited.

49. DS/T3 responded that the consultant had just completed the study on installation of reversing aids for goods vehicles, and the Government would discuss with the trade on the findings of the study shortly, particularly as regards the practicalities of applying the proposed performance requirements of reversing video device to the various types of goods vehicles. Meanwhile, guidelines would be prepared for distribution to the trade on how to select more appropriate reversing aids for their vehicles. CE/HK supplemented that as agreed with the Central and Western District Council, improvement works for 31 road sections would be undertaken within this year and the works for the remaining 18 road sections would be completed by mid-2008.

50. Mr WONG Kwok-hing opined that the legislation for enhancing the safety of reversing vehicles could be implemented by phases, e.g. by first covering the general goods vehicles and then for goods vehicles which had difficulty in installing the reversing aids.

51. DS/T3 responded that the Government had an open mind regarding the mandatory requirement for installation of RVDs on goods vehicles. However, there were technical problems for some of the goods vehicles to install the RVDs. DS/T3 stressed that as the relevant legislation should be clear, fair and enforceable. Consultation with the trade in this respect would take place soon. If the process was smooth, a proposal could be made to the Legislative Council during the next legislative session. During the interim, guidelines would be issued to the trade on how to select more appropriate reversing aids for their vehicles.

52. Ms LI Fung-ying was concerned about the Government's stance if the trade did not agree to introducing legislation which required the installation of RVDs on goods vehicles. She asked whether the Government would provide incentives to the vehicle owners for installation of the RVDs. Ms LI also enquired about the time for completion

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of the improvement works for the 71 road sections on which agreement had been reached with the relevant District Councils for improvement.

53. DS/T3 responded that so far the trade's response to measures to enhance safety for reversing vehicles had been positive. In respect of RVD, there were technical issues to be resolved. The Administration would report to the Panel on the progress of the discussion with the trade in due course. CE/HK supplemented that the improvement works on the 71 locations would be completed within the next few months.

54. The Chairman opined that whilst consultation with the trade was necessary, introduction of legislation on mandatory installation of RVDs on goods vehicles should not be delayed merely due to technical problems for installation of such devices on certain types of goods vehicles. The legislation could first require the goods vehicles which had no installation difficulty to install the RVDs so as to protect public safety. He suggested that the relevant Bill should be introduced into the Legislative Council in October this year. The Chairman was of the view that the reversing devices should generate human voices, e.g. in Cantonese, Putunghua and English, so as to enhance the awareness of pedestrians. The Chairman was concerned that out of the improvement works to 132 priority road sections, only 10 road sections had been completed. He requested that the safety enhancement projects should be expedited.

55. DS/T3 responded that the Government accorded high importance to the safety of reversing vehicles. However, the crucial factor to enhance safety was improving the attitude and behaviour of both drivers and pedestrians. Publicity and education programmes had been introduced to enhance the drivers and the public's awareness about the safety of reversing vehicles. The Administration would take into consideration the Chairman's suggestions in drawing up the relevant legislation. The Administration also took note of the suggestion for use of human voices in reversing devices. She stressed again that the Administration had to ensure that the relevant legislation would be clear, fair and enforceable. Regarding improvement works to priority road sections, she said that the Administration would speed up the related works as far as practicable.

56. Mr Jeffrey LAM opined that whilst it was essential to protect the public against accidents caused by reversing vehicles, it was necessary to solve the technical difficulties on the use of RVDs on goods vehicles or such installation would not produce the desirable effects but added to the financial burden of the trade. Due care should therefore be taken before drawing up any legislation on mandatory installation of RVDs. Meanwhile, the government should embark on publicity programmes about the safety of reversing vehicles, and improve the road safety installations at the problematic road junctions, e.g. installation of railings and warning signs.

57. As far as the drivers' attitude and behaviour were concerned, the Chairman took the view that the professional drivers could be required to attend annual or biennial refresher courses to enhance their awareness on road safety.

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58. DS/T3 responded that education and publicity played an important role in ensuring the safety of reversing vehicles and the Government planned to introduce legislation to require drivers who repeatedly committed traffic offences to attend road safety courses. CE/HK added that out of the 132 priority road sections, improvement works on 114 road sections would be completed within this year.

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59. The Chairman requested that the Administration should provide the following information to the Panel –

- (a) a monthly update on the completion of improvement work on the 132 priority road sections; and
- (b) the number of goods vehicles which had technical difficulties in installing RVDs and those which did not have such difficulties.

VI Any other business

60. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 1:05 pm.