

**Extracts from the minutes of meeting between
Legislative Council Members and Sham Shui Po District
Council members on 7 June 2007**

Members present : Hon Andrew LEUNG Kwan-yuen, SBS, JP (Convenor)
Hon James TO Kun-sun
Hon Jasper TSANG Yok-sing, GBS, JP
Hon Frederick FUNG Kin-kee, JP
Hon WONG Ting-kwong, BBS

By invitation : **Sham Shui Po District Council**

Mr TAM Kwok-kiu, MH (Chairman)
Mr LEUNG Lai (Vice-chairman)
Mr CHEUNG Wing-sum, Ambrose, JP
Mr CHONG Chi-tat
Ms LAI Wai-lan, Tracy
Mr LAM Ka-fai, Aaron
Mr LEUNG Yau-fong
Mr LI Hon-hung, MH
Ms NG Mei, Carman
Mr TAM Kwok-hung
Mr WONG Kam-kuen, MH
Ms WONG Kwai-wan
Mr WONG Tak-chuen, Joe
Ms LAI Pui-fong, Fonna
Mr KWAN Kei-leung, Jover

Staff in attendance : Ms Erin TSANG
Chief Council Secretary (1)3

Ms Guy YIP
Council Secretary (1)1

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IV. Passenger access facilities at MTR stations

14. The Chairman of SSPDC pointed out that while it was the Administration's policy to adopt mass transport network as the backbone of our public transport system, the MTR access facilities failed to cater for the needs of the elderly in SSP, where ageing population was a serious problem for concern. SSPDC also noted that LegCo was now scrutinizing the Rail Merger Bill

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submitted by the Administration, which proposed the merging of the MTR Corporation (MTRC) and the Kowloon-Canton Railway Corporation (KCRC). He expected that services provided by other public transport operators (such as bus service) would be further affected after the merger and there would be a greater demand for railway service. To this end, he hoped that LegCo Members would, in scrutinizing the Bill, urge the Administration to press MTRC to improve access facilities at its stations.

15. Ms WONG Kwai-wan, SSPDC member recalled that at the SSPDC meeting held on 3 April 2007, SSPDC members voiced the view that MTRC neglected the needs of some passengers, such as the elderly and women with baby prams, by not providing lifts and escalators leading directly to the ground level at stations in SSP. At that meeting, SSPDC members unanimously passed a motion urging MTRC to improve the access facilities at its stations. Subsequent to the meeting, SSPDC also wrote to the Environment, Transport and Works Bureau, urging MTRC to seriously formulate a plan to implement the transport policy of providing barrier free access and to account for the failure for not providing such facilities at MTR stations in SSP. The issue would be followed up by the Working Group on Public Transport Services under the Traffic Committee of SSPDC. Ms WONG further said that while the Administration had all along been implementing a barrier free transport policy with the active support of DCs, facilities in MTR stations still needed improvement. For instance, she once saw a mobility-impaired elderly spending half an hour walking up to the ground level from the station concourse with the aid of a walking frame. Ms WONG remarked that although she was the Chairman of SSPDC's Working Group on Medical and Rehabilitation Service, she only learnt recently that MTRC would provide wheelchairs to those in need when traveling between MTR stations. In this connection, she opined that MTRC should step up publicity to inform passengers of the services available, such as the borrowing of wheelchairs. She also pointed out that with the advent of the 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing, many visitors might stop over in Hong Kong for sightseeing, MTRC should thus proactively improve its access facilities to boost Hong Kong's international image.

16. Mr Frederick FUNG opined that to avoid maintaining a bulk stock of service equipments, such as wheelchairs, MTRC might not want passengers to make use of its services extensively, hence its reluctance to launch wide publicity on its services. He remarked that MTRC should in fact actively consider acquiring service equipments (such as wheelchairs) to be used by mobility-impaired passengers traveling on MTR and facilitate those in need to reach the ground level directly from the station concourse. The Convenor shared the view that MTRC should expeditiously acquire more wheelchairs for passengers in need.

17. Mr LEUNG Yau-fong, SSPDC member opined that even if wheelchairs were available in MTR stations, it would only facilitate people with disabilities (PwDs) accessing the stations, other people in need of help, such as the elderly

and women with baby prams, would not be benefited. He pointed out that in SSP, many of those living along MTR stations were elderly people, with the percentage as high as 40%, more than that in other districts on average. Citing the case of Cheung Sha Wan Station as an example, he pointed out that there was no escalator for those in need, such as mobility-impaired elderly, to travel directly to the ground level. Therefore, he held the view that MTRC should actively consider providing access facilities leading directly to the ground level for people in need, such as the elderly. Detailed discussions could be held with SSPDC regarding the specific locations for such facilities.

18. In this connection, the Convenor informed the meeting of the written reply provided by MTRC, stating that MTRC had installed barrier free facilities at each station. Nevertheless, the Convenor commented that MTRC should step up publicity so that the public could make better use of such facilities. Mr LEUNG Yau-fong, SSPDC member remarked that barrier free facilities (i.e. wheelchair stair lifts) were especially provided for PwDs. Although there was a wheelchair stair lift at each MTR station, the road surface where these stair lifts led to might be far away from the destinations of PwDs. In his view, such barrier free facilities in fact could not really cater for those in need or provide the greatest convenience for them to access the MTR stations.

19. According to MTRC's written reply, among the seven MTR stations in SSP District (i.e. Sham Shui Po Station, Mei Foo Station, Cheung Sha Wan Station, Lai Chi Kok Station, Shek Kip Mei Station, Kowloon Tong Station and Nam Cheong Station), three stations, namely Mei Foo Station, Kowloon Tong Station and Nam Cheong Station, had been installed with lifts. Mr Frederick FUNG said that of these three stations, Kowloon Tong Station was in Kowloon Tong and should not be counted as a station within the SSP District, and Nam Cheong Station was basically an interchange station for the West Rail, hence Mei Foo Station was actually the only station with lifts in SSP District. The remaining four stations (i.e. Sham Shui Po Station, Cheung Sha Wan Station, Lai Chi Kok Station and Shek Kip Mei Station) did not have any lifts, let alone escalators leading directly to the ground level.

20. Mr TAM Kwok-hung, SSPDC member remarked that while there were lifts at some exits of Mei Foo Station, they might not be in close proximity to the destinations of the passengers. Hence, they served little real purpose. He pointed out that Mei Foo residents had strived for the provision of escalators at Exit A of Mei Foo Station. Although the space there was wide enough for such facility, MTRC failed to respond positively to the residents' request. He further pointed out that with the impending occupation of a new housing estate nearby, the population in that area would be increased by tens of thousands. Therefore, he considered that MTRC should accede to the residents' request and install escalators at Exit A of Mei Foo Station without delay.

21. Mr WONG Kam-kuen, SSPDC member supplemented that even if there were escalators in MTR stations, passengers could only use them to travel

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directly from the station concourse to the ground level. He opined that MTRC should increase the number of escalators to facilitate those in need to travel from the ground level directly to the station concourse. He was of the view that the improvement of access facilities would not only bring convenience to passengers in need, but also provide a better business environment, thereby attracting investors to rent the shop premises inside the MTR stations. The Chairman of SSPDC also said that it was really a potential danger for the elderly, people with baby prams and people with mobility impairment but not using wheelchairs, to walk up and down the stairs inside MTR stations. Hence, apart from improving the business environment, the enhancement of MTR facilities could better safeguard the safety of passengers.

22. Mr WONG Ting-kwong shared the views of SSPDC members that MTRC should cater for the needs of PwDs, the elderly, passengers carrying luggage and others in need by providing access facilities leading directly to the ground level. He pointed out that while MTRC had carried out improvement works to station facilities over the years, such as the installation of lifts and escalators at Central Station to facilitate the passengers, the overall progress of the improvement works was rather slow, leaving room for improvement in access facilities at individual MTR stations. As such, he proposed that the above concerns and suggestions of SSPDC be referred to the LegCo Panel on Transport to follow up with MTRC regarding the provision of barrier free access and other related issues.

23. Mr Aaron LAM, SSPDC member pointed out that although SSPDC often discussed matters relating to MTR, MTRC seldom sent representatives to attend these meetings and in most cases, it only provided written response to questions raised by SSPDC members. He thought that MTRC should change its corporate culture and policy, and enhance the communication with SSPDC to further improve its service quality. The Chairman of SSPDC also remarked that as the Government was the major shareholder of MTRC, the relevant bureaux should actively enhance the communication with SSPDC to seek cooperation at the policy level.

24. In concluding the discussion on the issue, the Convenor indicated that the concerns and suggestions raised by SSPDC members would be referred to the Administration for consideration and response. The Administration would also be requested to accord priority to the provision of additional barrier free facilities at MTR stations in districts with serious ageing problems, and provide a list of barrier free facilities as well as other facilities for those in need at MTR stations and West Rail stations in SSP for SSPDC's reference. Moreover, the concerns and suggestions of SSPDC members would also be referred to the LegCo Panel on Transport and Panel on Welfare Services for information. He also suggested that SSPDC should consider setting up a joint working group with the Administration, MTRC and KCRC, with a view to following up the provision of barrier free access facilities at MTR stations and West Rail stations in SSP. The Chairman of SSPDC agreed to the Convenor's suggestion and commented that the joint

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working group would provide a platform whereby local views could be reflected to MTRC/KCRC for improvements.

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7 September 2007

Secretary General
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Dear Ms Yip,

**Meeting between Legislative Council Members
and Sham Shui Po District Council Members on 7 June 2007**

Passengers Facilities at MTR Station Entrances/Exits

Thank you for your letter of 17 August 2007 relaying suggestions and concerns raised by Legislative Council Members and Sham Shui Po District Council (SSPDC) about the facilities provided at MTR station entrances/exits in the Sham Shui Po District (SSP). We have followed up with MTR Corporation Limited (MTRCL) in this regard and would like to provide our reply as follows.

Provision of MTR station entrances/exit facilities leading directly to the ground level

There are seven MTR stations in SSP, namely Sham Shui Po Station, Cheung Sha Wan Station, Lai Chi Kok Station, Mei Foo Station, Shek Kip Mei Station, Kowloon Tong Station and Nam Cheong Station. MTRCL understands that there are suggestions from locals and Councillors on how to improve the entrance/exit facilities for passengers in need to use MTR service conveniently. In the light of these suggestions, the Corporation has also examined the feasibility of retrofitting lifts and escalators for connecting the stations with the ground level at different entrances/exits of stations in the district.

Since most of these stations were built in the early years, the spatial, geographical and technical constraints have limited the feasibility of carrying out modification and retrofitting works for entrance/exit facilities. Installation of escalators at certain entrances/exits will reduce the widths of sidewalks causing inconvenience to pedestrians; and underground utilities such as high voltage electric cables, gas mains and trunk sewers may also be affected. In considering whether escalators connecting MTR stations with the ground level should be installed, MTRCL will also need to take into account requirements for smooth passenger flow in the stations, fire service legislation, safety standards and evacuation etc.

It is not possible to install escalators leading directly to the ground level at every entrance/exit of MTR SSP stations. However, in order to enable passengers in need to access the stations more conveniently, MTRCL has already designated one barrier free access in every station in the district to provide barrier free railway services for those in need. MTR stations in SSP have fulfilled the requirements regarding barrier free access.

Moreover, over the years, the Corporation has invested substantially in tens of stations built in early years to retrofit facilities to enable passengers with mobility difficulty to access MTR stations and use MTR services more conveniently, such as wheelchair aids, stair lifts, ramps at station exits, lifts and bi-directional wide gates. The barrier free access

facilities currently provided at MTR stations in SSP are as follows:

Stations	Facilities Connecting Station Concourse with the Ground Level
Sham Shui Po	Stair lift at Entrance/Exit A1
Cheung Sha Wan	Stair lift at Entrance/Exit A3
Lai Chi Kok	Wheelchair aids at Entrance/Exit C
Mei Foo	Passenger lift at Entrance/Exit C
Shek Kip Mei	Stair lift at Entrance/Exit C
Kowloon Tong	Passenger lift at Entrance/Exit E
Nam Cheong	Two passenger lifts at Entrances/Exits A & B respectively

Following the rail merger, some ticket gates and railings in the three MTR/KCR interchange stations in SSP (including Nam Cheong Station, Mei Foo Station and Kowloon Tong Station) will be removed to provide more convenient interchange services for passengers. Passengers will then be able to access the stations by using the 10 entrances/exits of these three West Rail or East Rail stations, which are equipped with lifts or escalators connecting the stations with the ground level, without the need to pass through the ticket gates.

Proposed improvements to Entrance/Exit A of Mei Foo Station

We note SSPDC's request for retrofitting escalator or lift at Entrance/Exit A of Mei Foo Station and have conveyed the request to MTRCL. The Corporation has examined the proposal and indicated that due to geographical and structural constraints, there are technical difficulties in retrofitting escalator or lift at Entrance/Exit A of Mei Foo Station. This is because Entrance/Exit A is adjacent to the busy Kwai Chung Road and is situated at a narrow sidewalk near Stage III of Mei Foo Sun Chuen; to retrofit an escalator would further narrow the width of the sidewalk causing inconvenience to pedestrians. The Corporation therefore has no plan to retrofit escalators at the said entrance/exit at this stage. We have already sought the professional advice from the Highways

Department, which has confirmed the validity of the technical difficulties indicated by MTRCL.

MTRCL expressed that it would continue to take into account transport demand of the area and closely monitor changes in passenger flow at every MTR station, so as to make appropriate improvements. The Corporation will also consider the feasibility of relevant suggestions in its overall station improvement programme. If there are any future new developments in the area which require MTRCL's co-ordination in improving station entrance/exit facilities, the Corporation will be pleased to examine the feasibility of such improvements with the developers/organizations concerned taking into account geographical and structural aspects etc.

Borrowing Wheelchairs at MTR Stations

According to MTRCL, at least one wheelchair is available at every station for emergency use (e.g. when ambulance crew needs to transit a passenger in need from the station to the ambulance) or to complement the use of wheelchair aids. To ensure that emergency situations can be catered for, wheelchairs at stations are not on loan to the general public. If passengers have emergency needs, they can seek assistance from station staff through the "Help Line" inside MTR stations or by calling the direct line. For passenger convenience, the Corporation has recently stepped up the promotion of the direct line by putting more labels at stations, including at locations near the ticket gates and the ticket issuing machines.

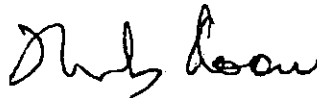
Follow Up on Issues Relating to the MTR Station Facilities in SSP

We understand that a Working Group on Public Transport Services has been set up under the Traffic Committee of SSPDC to follow up issues in relation to the service quality of various public transport modes. The Working Group has also discussed MTR services in the past. We believe that this Working Group, which includes representatives from the Transport Department, is an appropriate forum to follow up issues relating to MTR station facilities in SSP. MTRCL acknowledges the importance of communication with locals, and will actively participate in the said Working Group's discussion regarding station entrance/exit facilities, with a view to providing services which can better meet passenger needs. We will continue to encourage the Corporation to enhance communication with

the districts, in order to have a better understanding of views of Councillors and locals.

The Administration will continue to encourage transport operators, including MTRCL, to widen and deepen the breadth of "Transport for All", such that station facilities are appropriately enhanced for passengers, especially the elderly and those in need, to use MTR service conveniently.

Yours sincerely,



(Mrs Hedy Chu)

for Secretary for Transport and Housing

c.c.

MTRCL

(Attn: Ms Maggie So)

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