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7 January 2008

Mr Andy Lau
Clerk to Subcommittee
Subcommittee on Matters Relating to Railways
Panel on Transport
Legislative Council Secretariat
[Fax: 2121 0420]

Dear Andy,

**Panel on Transport
Subcommittee on Matters Relating to Railways**

Your letter of 9 November 2007 received. Enclosed please find the following information notes on matters relating to the rail merger for Members' information -

- (a) A paper on the "Progress of the Shatin to Central Link Project" from the Administration (**Annex 1**);
- (b) A paper on measures to enhance in-train dissemination of information to passengers, improve the air flow at platforms of non-enclosed railway stations and provision of public toilets at railway stations" from the MTR Corporation Limited (**Annex 2**).

As regards the follow up to “review of the role of Light Rail in the overall public transport service market within the North-west Transit Service Area, and introduction of suitable improvement measures to enhance the transport services in the area at reasonable fares”, we have already issued an information paper CB(1)2230/06-07(01) to the Subcommittee in September 2007 setting out the outcome of the Administration’s review on the role and service level of Light Rail in the overall public transport service in the North-west Transit Service Area, and the decision of the Kowloon-Canton Railway Corporation to purchase 22 new Light Rail vehicles. The contract for the purchase of 22 Light Rail vehicles was awarded in December 2007. It is expected that the new vehicles will be put into service by stages by end 2009.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Ida Lee', written in a cursive style.

(Miss Ida Lee)

for Secretary for Transport and Housing

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

Progress of Shatin to Central Link Project

Introduction

This note briefs Members on the latest progress of the planning of the Shatin to Central Link (SCL) project.

Background

2. On 16 July 2007, we briefed Members on the SCL scheme jointly developed by the KCRC and the MTRCL during the merger discussion (M-scheme). The M-Scheme comprises ten stations, namely Tai Wai, Diamond Hill, Kai Tak, To Kwa Wan, Ma Tau Wai, Homantin, Hung Hom, Exhibition, Admiralty and Central South. We also advised Members various changes to the SCL scheme in light of the planning reviews at Kai Tak and Wan Chai, such as the addition of the To Kwa Wan Station and the revised method of construction for the Exhibition Station. We pointed out that there were issues that still needed to be addressed. Some of these issues are the provision of the SCL depot at Diamond Hill, the connection to the SCL for residents in Tsz Wan Shan, the railway service for Whampoa, the reprovisioning of the International Mail Centre, and the funding approach for the project.

Latest Development

3. During the past months, we have continued our study into the location for the SCL Depot and consider that the Diamond Hill site would be the most suitable site for the depot. At the meeting of the Legislative Council on 31 October 2007, in response to a question raised on the depot, we explained to Members that the railway corporations have reviewed the existing depot facilities of the merged corporation and concluded that a new depot at Diamond Hill is required. Measures will be put in place to minimize the environmental impact that may be caused by the proposed depot.

4. We are looking at various options for the connection to the SCL for Tsz Wan Shan residents. We have also identified a site in Kowloon Bay for the reprovisioning of the International Mail Centre. The details are being discussed among Government departments. We are also examining at whether the ownership or the concession approach should be adopted in

the financial arrangements for the SCL.

5. We have been staying in touch with the District Councils and members of the local communities concerned on the above issues.

Way Forward

6. We are at the final stage of the assessment of the M-scheme and the options for the financial arrangements. We will submit the SCL scheme to the Executive Council for consideration as soon as possible. Subject to the decision of the Executive Council, further planning and design of the SCL and the railway service for Whampoa can proceed. We shall brief this Subcommittee further. We will also continue to consult the districts concerned on the implementation details of the projects.

7. Members are invited to note the contents of this paper.

Transport and Housing Bureau
January 2008

Legislative Council Panel on Transport
Subcommittee on Matters relating to Railways
Follow up on matters raised by Bills Committee on Rail Merger

Purpose

This paper informs members about progress made by the Corporation on the following matters raised by the Bills Committee on Rail Merger which require follow up action –

- (a) Enhancing in-train dissemination of information to passengers;
- (b) Improving the air flow at platforms of non-enclosed stations; and
- (c) Providing public toilets at railway stations.

This paper also provides an update to Members on the latest progress of the feasibility study undertaken by the Corporation on the retrofitting of Automatic Platform Gates (APG) at at-grade and aboveground stations.

Enhancing in-train dissemination of information to passengers

Background

2. The MTR system (excluding pre-merger KCR lines) is already equipped with 3G facilities. Passengers using mobile phones with 3G technology can have access to updated information through their mobile phones both at these stations and inside train compartments. The Corporation has also made commercial arrangements with a WiFi service provider to provide WiFi at stations along the Island Line as well as Tsim Sha Tsui and Mongkok stations of the Tsuen Wan Line. In addition, the Corporation is exploring the feasibility of providing WiFi inside train compartments such that passengers on board could access the internet through WiFi-enabled devices.

3. MTR trains (except for Tung Chung Line and Disneyland Resort Line trains) are equipped with Electronic Information Display System (EIDS) to provide information such as local news and financial news to passengers on board. MTR trains of the Island Line, Tsuen Wan Line, Kwun Tong Line, Tseung Kwan O Line are equipped with dot matrix-type EIDS while trains of the

East Rail Line, West Rail Line and Ma On Shan Line are equipped with LCD-type EIDS. For Airport Express trains, the seat-back TV has been replaced by an in-train Multi-Media System with LCD-type display in 2007.

Enhancement of information dissemination

4. The Corporation has explored ways to adopt higher technology with a view to enhancing in-train dissemination of information, including the feasibility of replacing the existing dot matrix-type EIDS with LCD-type EIDS.

5. As an on-going improvement to service, dot-matrix-type EIDS in MTR trains will be progressively replaced by LCD-type EIDS by stages from 2013. The new system infrastructure will be fitted with WiFi and broadband provisions which can enable faster in-train dissemination of information inside train compartments. In the meantime, the Corporation will explore with the content provider for content enrichment and more frequent update on information.

6. Currently, EIDS is not available for Disneyland Resort Line (DRL) and Tung Chung Line (TCL) trains. Since DRL and TCL are required to undergo large-scale train refurbishment programme in 2013 and 2017 respectively, the Corporation is prepared to retrofit LCD-type information display system when the refurbishment is conducted. During the train refurbishment, depot facilities will be set aside to cope with the refurbishment works. Retrofitting EIDS at the same time could enable the refurbishment works to be carried out more efficiently.

Improving the air flow at platforms of non-enclosed stations

Background

7. The Corporation has been asked to examine measures to improve the airflow at platforms of non-enclosed stations.

Trial on ventilation fans

8. While most of the platforms of non-enclosed stations have already been equipped with electric fans, a trial at Kwai Fong has commenced in mid-November 2007 to test out two different types of ventilation fans. The trial

will need to last until August 2008 so that the effectiveness of the fans in summer time could be evaluated. During the trial, the Corporation will monitor the thermal comfort and air movement at platforms, and collect passengers' feedback on the effectiveness of the fans. Upon the completion of the trial in August 2008, the Corporation will then determine which ventilation method should be adopted.

9. Since the installation of ventilation fans will impact on platform ceiling structure and loading, the Corporation's plan is to include the installation as part of the Automatic Platform Gate (APG) retrofitting programme which is targeted for completion by 2012. In fact, ventilation is one of the important technical aspects which the Corporation needs to examine and improve as part and parcel of the APG retrofitting feasibility study. An integrated programme for installation of ventilation fans and retrofitting of APGs can also minimize disruption to operations and passenger service. Before this, the Corporation will continue to review whether further ventilation could be provided.

Providing public toilets at railway stations

Background

10. The Corporation explained at the Bills Committee and issued a paper to this Subcommittee in July 2007 (LC Paper No. CB(1)2058/06-07(02)) setting out the technical difficulties of retrofitting public toilets inside stations. These include the low capacity of the station sewage system, proximity of high voltage equipment, the need for a separate ventilation system, and the spatial requirement for passenger flow.

11. In the light of the abovementioned technical difficulties, the Corporation considers that retrofitting toilets in underground stations is not feasible. Instead, the Corporation has agreed to explore the feasibility of identifying appropriate locations for building public toilets on the street level in the vicinity of such underground stations. The feasibility of retrofitting toilets at or in the vicinity of existing aboveground/at-grade stations will also be examined. At the same time, the Corporation has agreed to include the provision of public toilets within, or adjacent to, stations in the overall design parameters for future new lines and extensions.

Toilets currently provided in the system

12. Amongst the 82 stations in the MTR system, public toilets are already available in 37 stations (including all stations of the Airport Express Line, Disneyland Resort Line, East Rail Line, West Rail Line and Ma On Shan Line, and some stations of the Tung Chung Line). Public toilets have also been built by the Corporation in the Public Transport Interchanges (PTI) connecting to Hang Hau, Tiu Keng Leng and Tseung Kwan O Stations. All these toilets are equipped with separate cubicles for people with disabilities (PwD).

13. Apart from public toilets stated above, staff toilets are also provided in the 42 stations of the Island Line, Tsuen Wan Line, Kwun Tong Line, Tung Chung Line and Tseung Kwan O Line currently not equipped with public toilets. Each station provides toilet cubicles ranging from 4 to 14 in number, depending on the number of staff working at the station. The 42 stations mentioned above have a total of 275 staff toilet cubicles. Over 90% of the staff toilets have separate cubicle for PwD while the remaining ones will be retrofitted with separate cubicles by mid 2008. These toilets have always been made available for public use upon request. Recently, notices have been put up at station concourses and platforms to inform passengers that those with urgent need can ask for staff assistance. Passengers may also approach Customer Service Centre for assistance.

Feasibility of providing street-level toilets

14. MTR is an urban network with short travel distance and in most cases toilets are readily available in shopping malls surrounding/connecting the station. The locations of public toilets in the vicinity are shown in the street maps inside each station. Staff toilets inside stations have also been made available for public use upon request. In the light of these, the Corporation has conducted a survey to ascertain whether public toilets are available in the vicinity of stations within a reasonable walking distance and time such that the Corporation could examine the feasibility of providing street-level toilets at those stations that do not meet the above criteria. A walking distance of 200m (i.e. about a 4-minute walk) from the station as a yardstick has been adopted in the survey.

15. Through the survey, we have ascertained that public toilets are readily available within a 200m distance (or a 4-minute walk) of most MTR stations (including underground and aboveground/at-grade stations), with the exception

of three stations, namely Ngau Tau Kok, Prince Edward and Quarry Bay Stations.

16. For the said three stations which do not have public toilets inside the station and within 200m of the station, the Corporation is prepared to retrofit public toilets at the street levels (including separate cubicle for PwD) in the vicinity of these stations for the benefit of the traveling public. The Corporation will consult relevant Government departments on potential locations for building public toilets in the vicinity of the above three stations and commence the installation works after obtaining necessary approval. It would take around 12 months for the whole installation works to complete after approval has been obtained from all relevant government departments.

Retrofitting of APG

Background

17. There are 8 at-grade or aboveground stations in the pre-merger MTR system, which are provided with natural ventilation. The Corporation has previously undertaken that a feasibility study on the retrofitting of APGs at these eight stations will be completed by end 2007. The study is to examine three important technical aspects including platform edge loading, earthing protection, and ventilation.

Retrofitting APG in the pre-merger MTR system

18. The Corporation has completed most of the feasibility study. For platform edge loading and earthing protection, while substantial technical difficulties have been identified, the Corporation has confirmed that the technical issues could be resolved.

19. As regards ventilation, a trial to test out two different types of ventilation fans is being conducted (see paragraphs 8 and 9 above) and will last until August 2008. Upon the completion of the trial, the Corporation will confirm the ventilation method to be adopted in the APG retrofitting programme and work out details on cost and implementation programme.

20. Based on the outcome of the feasibility study, the Corporation has decided in principle to proceed with the retrofitting of APG at the 8 aboveground/at-grade stations in the pre-merger MTR system, namely Tsuen Wan, Kwai Fong, Kwai Hing, Heng Fa Chuen, Chai Wan, Kowloon Bay, Ngau Tau Kok and Kwun Tong Stations.

21. The Corporation also plans to adopt the same financial arrangement for the Platform Screen Door retrofitting programme at underground stations, i.e. half of the capital cost will be funded by 10 cents charged to each Octopus ride in the system. This will be achieved through the extension of the charging period under the existing scheme. The rest of the capital cost will be funded by internal resources of the Corporation.

Non-enclosed platforms at East Rail Line

22. Members have been informed that for the East Rail Line, MGFs have to be installed before retrofitting of APGs could be considered. This is because East Rail Line has been designed for the operations of trains of different widths. These trains include freight wagons, through trains and domestic passenger trains. As affected by geographical factors, some stations have curved platforms and wider platform gaps. Since such wide platform gaps may pose an additional risk to boarding and alighting passengers if APGs were provided, pre-merger KCRC has undertaken to first install Mechanical Gap Fillers (MGF) at platforms with wide gap.

23. A trial on MGF will commence at Lo Wu in February 2008, and is expected to complete by September 2008. Subject to the success of the trial, consideration will be given to retrofitting MGFs at other East Rail Line stations with curved platforms and wider platform gaps.

MTR Corporation Limited
January 2008