

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(1)177/07-08

Ref. : CB1/PL/TP

Panel on Transport

Subcommittee on Matters Relating to Railways

**Background Brief on
Mass Transit Railway – West Island Line**

Purpose

This paper sets out the background to the planning and implementation of the West Island Line (WIL) and summarizes the major views and concerns expressed by local bodies, transport trades and Members regarding the WIL project.

Background

2. The Island Line Extensions (ILE), which comprises the North Hong Kong Island Line (NIL) and WIL, is one of the six rail projects short-listed for implementation in the Railway Development Strategy 2000.

3. In response to the request of Administration, the MTR Corporation Limited (MTRCL) submitted a project proposal for the ILE (i.e. NIL & WIL) on 16 July 2001.

4. Subsequently in April 2002, the MTRCL submitted a revised proposal for the ILE taking into account, amongst other things, the change in population forecast, the change of land use for the Comprehensive Development Area Site near the proposed Exhibition station and the options for delinking part of WIL from Western District Development (WDD).

5. As a result of the reduction in forecast employment and uncertainty associated with WDD, the Executive Council decided on 21 January 2003 and the Panel on Transport was briefed on 24 January 2003, among other things, that:

- (a) MTRCL should be asked to proceed with further planning on the

WIL Phase I from Sheung Wan to Belcher with a possible link with the South Island Line (SIL); and

- (b) planning for WIL Phase 2 from Belcher to Kennedy Town should be held in abeyance until the way forward for the WDD reclamation is clear.

6. In July 2003, MTRCL appointed a consultant to undertake a feasibility study for SIL as well as the section of WIL from Sheung Wan to Belcher. It was to explore possible options and recommend the best option for a new railway to serve the Western and Southern Districts.

7. In March 2004, MTRCL submitted the Project Proposal for WIL/SIL to the Administration. The WIL/SIL scheme, recommended in the March 2004 Proposal, comprises the following key elements:

- (a) a proposed Island Line extension from Sheung Wan to Sai Ying Pun; and
- (b) a proposed WIL from Sai Ying Pun to Wong Chuk Hang.

8. At its meeting on 28 May 2004, the Panel on Transport passed a motion urging the Government to suspend the planning of the WIL/SIL, pending a review of the population growth in Western and Southern Districts, and the development of Southern District into a tourism/commercial centre.

9. After taking into account the views expressed by various parties, the MTRCL subsequently refined the railway scheme and undertook further studies on the feasibility of phased implementation of the projects. In February 2005, MTRCL submitted to the Administration a revised proposal for Phased Implementation of the WIL and SIL. The revised scheme proposed that, among other things, the WIL should be an extension of the MTR Island Line from Sheung Wan to Kennedy Town, with two intermediate stations at Sai Ying Pun and University ("Belcher" has been replaced with "University").

10. At its meeting on 25 February 2005, the Panel on Transport passed three motions (see **Annex**) and the two relating to the WIL urge the Administration to proceed with the construction of the WIL between Sheung Wan and Kennedy Town as soon as possible (the third one concerns the SIL).

11. At the meeting of the Executive council on 28 June 2005, the Council decided that the MTRCL should be asked to proceed with the preliminary planning and design of the proposed WIL, involving the extension of the heavy rail MTR Island Line from Sheung Wan to Kennedy Town with two intermediate stations at Sai Ying Pun and University; and that the Administration should commence negotiations with the MTRCL on the

detailed scope, cost and implementation programme for the WIL. In August 2006, the MTRCL submitted the WIL Revised Project Proposal to the Administration.

Financial implications of the WIL

12. The estimated project cost of the WIL is 8.9 billion. According to the MTRCL's assessment, the WIL will not be financially viable without Government's financial support. The Government is discussing the financial arrangements with the MTRCL.

Public Views

13. Residents in Western District have long been demanding the western extension of the MTR Island Line from Sheung Wan ever since the commissioning of the MTR Island Line in 1985. As such, the local community would generally welcome and look forward to the WIL.

Impact on other transport modes

14. The transport trade however has expressed concern over the impact of the WIL on their business. The Administration has advised that the impact on road-based public transport modes can be mitigated by reorganizing the public transport network within the railway catchment areas to ensure an efficient and well-coordinated public transport network with railways as the backbone while maintaining a viable network of bus and green minibus services after the commissioning of the WIL. The Administration's assessment is that, with the reorganization of the existing public transport network, e.g. enhancing the feeder role of green minibus to connect to the WIL, the concern of the road-based transport trade may be addressed.

Concerns expressed by members regarding the construction of the WIL

15. At the Subcommittee meeting on 30 March 2007, members expressed the following concerns about the construction of the WIL:

- (a) the potential hazard and risks arising from the storage, handling and use of explosives on nearby residents during construction;
- (b) the impacts of blasting operations on nearby buildings and residents;

- (c) the locations of the vent shafts of the WIL, and the associated noise and environmental impacts on nearby residents; and
 - (d) the financial arrangements, in particular the amount of Government funding support, for building the WIL.
16. Members requested that the Administration should:
- (a) consider carrying out a comprehensive survey on the buildings in the vicinity before the commencement of the construction works, and appointing an independent surveyor to assess any claims for damages arising from blasting operations and construction of the WIL from nearby residents;
 - (b) conduct public consultation regarding the storage, handling and use of explosives for the construction of the WIL;
 - (c) provide details about the funding arrangements for the WIL before the project proposal is gazetted;
 - (d) consider providing more entrances at the Kennedy Town station;
 - (e) provide justifications for the provision of three railway stations for the WIL, given the relatively small population of Western District and vis-à-vis the number of railway stations provided to other districts like Tin Sui Wai and Tung Chung;
 - (f) expedite the WIL project in order to improve the traffic condition in Western District; and
 - (g) provide detailed information on the criteria for provision of railway lines and stations in a district.

Way forward

17. The Administration will consult the Subcommittee before seeking funding approval for the construction of the WIL.

Annex

Three Motions passed by the Legislative Council Panel on Transport at the Meeting held on 25 February 2005 in Discussing Route 4/WIL and SIL

"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."

"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."

"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."