

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

**Follow-up action on MTR Kwun Tong Line
Overhead Power System Failure on 8 December 2008**

Purpose

At the meeting of the Subcommittee on Matters Relating to Railways (Subcommittee) on 16 December 2008 to discuss the MTR Kwun Tong Line overhead power system failure on 8 December 2008, Members requested for further information on follow up action taken by the Administration and MTR Corporation Limited (MTRCL). This paper reports the action taken by the Administration.

Follow up action

2. Taking into account the views expressed by Members at the meeting on 16 December 2008, the Administration has followed up with MTRCL on the details of the improvement measures relating to incident handling, dissemination of information, assistance to passengers and enhancement of equipment checking procedures. These have been set out in MTRCL's paper to the Subcommittee for this meeting.

The Administration's assessment

3. The Administration considers that the improvement measures to

be implemented by MTRCL regarding service and maintenance could strengthen the capability of the Corporation in incident management as well as reduce the chances of recurrence of similar incidents. Our assessment is set out in the following paragraphs.

Incident handling

4. MTRCL has taken note of the concerns expressed by the Administration that it has taken too long to identify the cause of the incident on 8 December 2008 albeit that the cause of that incident was unique. In order to improve passenger service, MTRCL agrees that more accurate assessment on the extent of service delays and timely communication with passengers are necessary. After discussion, MTRCL has agreed that in future they will advise passengers to consider taking other modes of transport not later than 20 minutes after the outbreak of an incident if the service disruption in its assessment cannot be recovered in the next 20 minutes.

Information dissemination to passengers

5. We have reminded MTRCL of the importance of the provision of updated and timely information to passengers when rail incidents occur. MTRCL has agreed to enhance public announcement on trains and at stations, especially at interchange stations. MTRCL has also agreed to make use of all available means to disseminate the information including Electronic Information Display System (EIDS), Passenger Information Display System (PIDS), station notices and alternative transport information leaflets to provide timely information.

Assistance to passengers

6. To address concerns raised by Members, MTRCL has agreed to the following -

(a) Detrainment of passengers

Having regard to Members' views about detrainment arrangement, MTRCL has agreed that in line with paragraph 4 above, a decision on the need for detrainment will be made no later than 20 minutes after the outbreak of the incident if a train is stalled in-between stations. Should detrainment be required, it would be arranged as quickly as possible to help minimise delays and discomfort caused to the passengers.

(b) Emergency bus deployment

To minimise inconvenience caused to passengers during serious service disruption, MTRCL has agreed that whenever a Red Alert¹ is issued, it will request emergency buses to standby to shorten the lead time.

(c) Enhancement of manpower backup

MTRCL has agreed to set up a manpower backup plan and arrange for emergency call out of part-time stations assistants to facilitate incident handling during major incidents. This will

¹ A "red alert" will be issued by railway corporations as a signal to indicate that a serious disruption has continued or is expected to continue for over 20 minutes, and emergency transport support services from other transport operators are required.

facilitate manpower deployment during emergency situations and will provide more assistance to passengers.

Enhanced equipment checking procedures

7. MTRCL has conducted a thorough check and confirmed that all similar isolators in the system are in the correct position. MTRCL has introduced a new checking procedure and labeling system to ensure that all isolators are in the correct position. At the request of the Electrical and Mechanical Services Department (EMSD), MTRCL is also examining the design of a remote monitoring system to monitor the status of isolators at critical locations. EMSD will follow up with the implementation with MTRCL to ensure that all critical locations will be covered. In addition, EMSD has followed up with MTRCL on a review on MTRCL's other major equipment which requires manual setting. The results of the review show that the manual settings of all major equipment are normal. With regard to enhancing the monitoring of such equipment, EMSD will continue to follow up and ensure that MTRCL will achieve this by using a suitable remote monitoring system or enhanced inspections where appropriate. These measures will help reduce the chances of recurrence of similar incidents. EMSD will continue to monitor the completion of these measures and provide necessary advice to MTRCL.

8. To further reduce the chance of human error, MTRCL has established a Human Factors Management Committee and several working groups to deal with human factors issues for Operation Control Centre staff, stations staff, train operation staff and engineering staff. The committee and working groups will proactively identify and analyze

possible human error cases with a view to reducing occurrence of human error. EMSD has advised MTRCL to take into account the experience learned from the recent incident and enhance the work of the committee and the working groups to reduce human error. As human factor is a relatively new and developing management concept in the railway industry, EMSD has advised MTRCL to keep close contact with overseas railway organizations for experience sharing.

Notification of railway incidents

9. At the Subcommittee meeting on 16 December 2008, Members asked about the mechanism to deal with incidents involving delays of less than 8 minutes which had aroused public concern because of involvement of safety issues. The existing notification system and our discussion with MTRCL to address Members' concerns are set out below.

The existing notification system

10. MTRCL is required to notify EMSD of railway incidents. Under Mass Transit Railway Regulations (the Regulations), railway incidents are classified into "accidents" and "occurrences", as follows-

(a) for accidents² that occurred on the railway, railway

² Under Regulation 2 of the Mass Transit Railway Regulations (Cap. 556A), an accident is notifiable if it occurs on a part of the railway which has commenced operation for public use and-

- (a) as a result thereof any person dies or suffers serious injury; or
- (b) it involves a train (i) colliding with, or striking against, another train or any other object; or (ii) leaving the rails, and doing so either on a line used for the carriage of passengers or goods or in circumstances where the normal operation of such a line is affected.

corporations should immediately after the occurrence of the accident make a verbal report to Government; and

- (b) apart from accidents, the Schedule to the regulations sets out notifiable occurrences, which cover seven types of occurrences “directly affecting persons” and 12 types of occurrences “affecting railway premises, plant and equipment”. MTRCL should as soon as practicable after the occurrence complete and deliver a written report on the occurrence to Government.

11. Apart from the above requirement under the legislation, MTRCL also notifies Government of incidents which are of “public concern and media interest”. This is to facilitate explanations to address public concerns about the safety-related incidents and to initiate follow-up actions where necessary.

12. We have put in place an alert system which applies to all public transport operators including MTRCL. Under this system, MTRCL (as well as other public transport operators) issues an “Amber Alert” as an early warning in respect of an incident which could lead to a serious disruption of service; and a “Red Alert” is issued as a signal to indicate that a serious disruption has continued or is expected to continue for over 20 minutes, and emergency transport support services from other operators are required. In addition, MTRCL is required to notify Transport Department (TD) within 8 minutes on any service disruption

incident³ that has occurred for 8 minutes or is expected to last for 8 minutes or more. Upon receiving notification, TD would liaise closely with the railway corporation and to provide assistance as necessary.

13. MTRCL is required to carefully consider the need to notify the media of railway incidents. In accordance with the Operating Agreement between the Government and the MTRCL, if and after MTRCL has made a report to TD and the Police Department of any serious service disruptions or emergencies, it will notify the media of the incident if MTRCL considers that such notification will be of assistance to passengers likely to be affected and will not adversely affect the safe and efficient operation of the railway.

Enhancement to the existing system

14. The system has been working well. However, in the light of Members' concern about incidents involving delays of less than 8 minutes which have aroused public concern because of involvement of safety issues, we have followed up with MTRCL on how to enhance the existing system with regard to notifying the media. MTRCL has agreed that, in addition to paragraph 13 above, the Corporation will also notify the media of those incidents that are related to train operation and are of public concern and which has resulted in or could potentially result in injuries or deaths.

³ The train service disruption incidents refer to those incidents that lead to a stoppage of service at a railway station or a stop (in respect of Light Rail), or on a section of a railway line, or an extension in end-to-end journey time on a railway line of 8 minutes or more.

Conclusion

15. The Administration has followed up with the MTRCL to ensure improvement measures will be introduced to address Members' concerns. The Administration will continue to monitor the implementation of the measures by MTRCL.

Transport and Housing Bureau

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