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Panel on Transport

Subcommittee on Matters Relating to Railways

**Updated background Brief on South Island Line
for meeting on 16 January 2009**

Purpose

This paper provides background information on the South Island Line (SIL) project and summarizes the major concerns expressed by Members and relevant stakeholders about the project.

Background

2. The Second Railway Development Study (RDS-2) completed in May 2000 recommended that the most effective configuration of SIL was a shuttle providing direct linkage from the main population centres of Wah Fu and Ap Lei Chau to Central Business District. RDS-2 suggested that without substantial business developments in the Southern District, SIL would not be commercially viable. SIL was therefore not included in the Preferred Railway Network under RDS-2.

3. In September 2001, the Panel received views from the public on the planning and implementation of the section of Route 4 between Kennedy Town and Aberdeen (formerly known as Route 7). There were divided views among the deputations on the development of road and rail infrastructure in the areas. A suggestion was made to replace the relevant section of Route 4 with railway. After discussion, the Administration was requested to investigate various possible alignments for Route 4 linking Kennedy Town to Aberdeen and the extent to which the project could be in tunnel. The Panel was of the view that roads and railways were complementary to each other and not mutually exclusive.

4. In June 2002, MTR Corporation Limited (MTRCL) submitted a preliminary proposal for a medium capacity SIL. MTRCL proposed a circuitous alignment for SIL, in the form of a monorail system looping from the proposed Belcher Station (subsequently renamed as University Station) of West Island Line (WIL) to Wanchai Station with intermediate stations at Cyberport, Wah Fu, South Horizons, Lei Tung, Wong Chuk Hang, Ocean Park and Happy Valley. MTRCL's view was that SIL would not be commercially viable without Government's funding support.

5. As a result of the reduction in forecast employment and uncertainty associated with Western District Development (WDD), the Executive Council (ExCo) decided on 21 January 2003 that MTRCL should be asked to –

- (a) modify the preliminary proposal of SIL to come up with a more cost effective scheme;
- (b) consider the development of SIL along with Route 4;
- (c) proceed with further planning on WIL Phase 1 from Sheung Wan to University with a possible link with SIL; and
- (d) plan for WIL Phase 2 from University to Kennedy Town should be held in abeyance until the way forward for the WDD reclamation was clear.

6. In July 2003, MTRCL undertook a feasibility study for SIL as well as the section of WIL from Sheung Wan to the University, which aimed at exploring possible options and recommending the best option for a new railway to serve the Southern and Western Districts.

7. In March 2004, MTRCL submitted the Project Proposal for SIL/WIL to the Administration, comprising the following key elements –

- (a) a proposed SIL from South Horizons to Admiralty;
- (b) a proposed depot at Wong Chuk Hang with property development above;
- (c) a proposed Island Line extension from Sheung Wan to Sai Ying Pun; and
- (d) 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 Administration to suspend the planning of SIL/WIL, pending a

review of the population growth in Southern and Western Districts, and the development of Southern District into a tourism/commercial centre. The Panel noted that the Administration was examining various options for promoting the development of Aberdeen as one of the major tourism nodes in Hong Kong. In this respect, the Ocean Park Board was formulating a strategic plan to redevelop and reposition the park. Wong Chuk Hang was also expected to undergo considerable redevelopment.

9. After taking into account the views expressed by various parties, 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 SIL and WIL. The revised scheme consisted of three major components –

- (a) the South Island Line (East) (SIL(E)): the proposed medium capacity rail running from Admiralty to South Horizons with three intermediate stations at Ocean Park, Wong Chuk Hang and Lei Tung;
- (b) the South Island Line (West) (SIL(W)): the proposed medium capacity rail line running from University to Wong Chuk Hang with three intermediate stations at Cyberport, Wah Fu and Aberdeen; and
- (c) WIL: the proposed extension of the MTR Island Line (heavy capacity rail) from Sheung Wan to Kennedy Town with two intermediate stations at Sai Ying Pun and University.

10. At its meeting on 25 February 2005, the Subcommittee passed three motions urging the Administration to implement SIL, WIL as well as Route 4 as soon as possible, to expedite the comprehensive implementation of tourism and commercial developments in Southern District, and to discuss with MTRCL the construction of a cost-effective SIL so as to ensure adequate transport facilities to support the development of Southern District.

11. At its meeting on 28 June 2005, ExCo decided, among other things, that MTRCL's proposed SIL(E) and SIL(W) projects should be kept under review, and their way forward considered in the light of the results of the review on the planning of tourism and commercial developments in the Southern District and consideration of the Ocean Park's redevelopment proposal.

12. In October 2005, the Administration briefed the Panel on Economic Services (subsequently renamed as Panel on Economic Development) on an initial concept plan for the Aberdeen Tourism Project to complement Ocean Park's redevelopment plan. The concept plan comprised three thematic

clusters –

- (a) the traditional fishing harbour along the Aberdeen and Ap Lei Chau Promenade;
- (b) Fisherman's Wharf at Tai Shue Wan proposed for development by Ocean Park; and
- (c) the existing leisure and dining node off the coast of Sham Wan as the linkage.

13. On 16 December 2005, the Finance Committee approved a funding proposal for implementing the Redevelopment Plan of Ocean Park. Construction works would be completed in phases from 2007 to 2012-2013. As it was projected that the number of visitors to Ocean Park would increase from 3.4 million in 2007-2008 to over 5 million by 2010-2011 and over 7 million by 2021-2022, members called on the Administration to speed up the delivery of SIL.

14. At the Council meeting on 11 January 2006, the following motion urging the Administration to expedite the construction SIL for commissioning by 2012 was passed –

"That, given the successive completion of the Ocean Park's Redevelopment Plans from 2008 onwards and that works on the new tourism projects will be launched in Southern District, which are expected to further aggravate the already very heavy traffic in the district, to alleviate traffic congestion, complement tourism development and give impetus to the local economy, this Council urges the Government to expedite the construction of the MTR South Island Line for commissioning in or before 2012, but should study in parallel how vicious competition of the new line with other public transport such as minibuses or buses can be avoided, thereby protecting the public's right to choose and their interests."

Announcement of implementation of SIL(E)

15. In June 2007, MTRCL submitted to the Administration for consideration the Revised Project Proposal for SIL(E). In his 2007-2008 Policy Address, the Chief Executive announced that the Government would undertake ten major infrastructure projects, including SIL(E), to boost economic growth and improve the living environment.

16. At its meeting on 18 December 2007, ExCo decided, among other things, that MTRCL should be asked to proceed with the preliminary planning and design of the 7-km SIL(E), which would run from Admiralty to South Horizons,

with three intermediate stations at Ocean Park, Wong Chuk Hang and Lei Tung Estate.

17. When the Administration briefed the Subcommittee on 11 January 2008 on the decision of ExCo, members called on the Administration and MTRCL to also explore the feasibility of various options in providing a station in Happy Valley.

Provision of a station in Happy Valley

18. In response to the Subcommittee's request, the Administration submitted a progress report on SIL for consideration at its meeting on 2 May 2008. Members noted that MTRCL had conducted a study on four options of providing a station in Happy Valley. The results of the study revealed that all the options had considerable implications for the SIL(E) project in terms of cost and construction time. It was estimated that as the population catchment involved was only about 19 000, a station in Happy Valley would attract less than 10 000 passengers daily. The Administration considered it necessary to further discuss with parties concerned whether a station in Happy Valley should be provided in the light of the findings of the study.

Public concerns on the SIL(E) project

19. The local community has been demanding the extension of the MTR to Southern District. Green groups have also expressed preference for SIL rather than implementing Route 4. The transport trades, however, are concerned about the impact of SIL on their business. The Administration is of the view 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 after the commissioning of SIL.

20. At the meeting of the Transport Panel on 14 October 2008, Hon Mrs Regina IP raised that residents had been concerned about the design of the section of SIL(E) from Aberdeen Tunnel to Ap Lei Chau, which might take the form of a viaduct instead of a tunnel. Residents were concerned that such a design would create visual and noise impacts and adversely affect the environment of the Southern District.

Latest developments

21. The Administration intends to brief the Subcommittee at its next meeting scheduled for 16 January 2009 on the progress of the SIL(E) project, including the Administration's considerations on the provision of a Happy

Valley station and its response to public concern about the noise and visual impacts of the section between Aberdeen Tunnel and Ap Lei Chau in paragraph 20 above.

Relevant papers

22. A list of relevant papers is at **Appendix**.

Council Business Division 1
Legislative Council Secretariat
13 January 2009

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

List of relevant papers

Date of meeting	Committee	Minutes/Paper	LC Paper No.
24.1.2003	Panel on Transport	Legislative Council Brief on Island Line Extensions, Route 7 and South Hong Kong Island Line provided by the Administration	File Ref.: ETWB(T)CR 11/1016/99 http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr02-03/english/panels/tp/papers/etwb(t)cr11_1016_99.pdf
		Minutes of the meeting	LC Paper No. CB(1)961/02-03 http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr02-03/english/panels/tp/minutes/tp030124.pdf
28.2.2003	Panel on Transport	Administration's paper on Island Line Extensions, Route 7 and South Hong Kong Island Line	LC Paper No. CB(1)954/02-03(03) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr02-03/english/panels/tp/papers/tp0228cb1-954-3e.pdf
		Administration's supplementary information paper on Island Line Extensions, Route 7 and South Hong Kong Island Line	LC Paper No. CB(1)1536/02-03(01) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr02-03/english/panels/tp/papers/tp0228cb1-1536-1e.pdf
		Minutes of the meeting	LC Paper No. CB(1)1449/02-03 http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr02-03/english/panels/tp/minutes/tp030228.pdf
28.5.2004	Panel on Transport	Information paper on West Island Line and South Island Line provided by the MTR Corporation Limited	LC Paper No. CB(1)1929/03-04(01) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr03-04/english/panels/tp/papers/tp0528cb1-1929-1e.pdf

Date of meeting	Committee	Minutes/Paper	LC Paper No.
		Information paper on West Hong Kong Island Line, South Hong Kong Island Line and Route 4 provided by the Administration	LC Paper No. CB(1)1912/03-04(25) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr03-04/english/panels/tp/papers/tp0528cb1-1912-25e.pdf
		Minutes of the meeting	LC Paper No. CB(1)2408/03-04 http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr03-04/english/panels/tp/minutes/tp040528.pdf
25.2.2005	Panel on Transport	Background brief on Route 4, South Hong Kong Island Line and West Hong Kong Island Line	LC Paper No. CB(1)952/04-05 http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr04-05/english/panels/tp/papers/tp0225cb1-952-e.pdf
		Administration's paper on Route 4, South Hong Kong Island Line and West Hong Kong Island Line	LC Paper No. CB(1)951/04-05(03) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr04-05/english/panels/tp/papers/tp0225cb1-951-3e.pdf
		Minutes of the meeting	LC Paper No. CB(1)1179/04-05 http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr04-05/english/panels/tp/minutes/tp050225.pdf
11.1.2006	Council	Members' motion on expediting the construction of the MTR South Island Line	Hansard (p. 115) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr05-06/chinese/counmtg/floor/cm0111ti-confirm-c.pdf
11.1.2008	Subcommittee on Matters Relating to Railways	Administration's paper on the Mass Transit Railway South Island Line	File Ref.: THB(T)CR 17/1016/99 http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr07-08/english/panels/tp/rdp/papers/tp_rdp-thbter17101699-e.pdf

Date of meeting	Committee	Minutes/Paper	LC Paper No.
		Administration's paper on land use planning in Southern District and projected patronage of South Island Line (East) and assessment of impact of South Island Line (East) on other public transport modes	LC Paper No. CB(1)520/07-08(03) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr07-08/english/panels/tp/tp_rdp/papers/tp_rdp0111cb1-520-3-e.pdf
		Background brief on Mass Transit Railway - South Island Line	LC Paper No. CB(1)521/07-08 http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr07-08/english/panels/tp/tp_rdp/papers/tp_rdp0111cb1-521-e.pdf
		Minutes of the meeting	LC Paper No. CB(1)954/07-08 http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr07-08/english/panels/tp/tp_rdp/minutes/rd080111.pdf
2.5.2008	Subcommittee on Matters Relating to Railways	Administration's paper on progress report on South Island Line	LC Paper No. CB(1)1376/07-08(02) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr07-08/english/panels/tp/tp_rdp/papers/tp_rdp0502cb1-1376-2-e.pdf
		Minutes of the meeting	LC Paper No. CB(1)1747/07-08 http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr07-08/english/panels/tp/tp_rdp/minutes/rd080502.pdf