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**HIGHWAYS DEPARTMENT
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6 May 2009

Prof. Dr. Wanbil W. Lee
Action Group for the Pursuit of MTR in the Western District (Advisor)
Flat H, 22/F, Tower 1
The Belcher's
89 Pokfulam Road, Hong Kong

Dear Sir,

**Mass Transit Railway West Island Line (WIL)
Subcommittee on Matters Relating to Railway of Panel on Transport,
Legislative Council on 31 March 2009**

I refer to your letter of 31 March 2009 sent to the Secretary of the Subcommittee on Matters Relating to Railways Panel on Transport, Legislative Council stating your concern about the proposed railway works of WIL. The Transport and Housing Bureau has referred your letter to this Department to follow up.

We would like to respond to your concern as follows:

Passenger/Construction Tunnels underneath The Belcher's

The passenger/construction tunnels proposed by the MTR Corporation Limited (MTRCL) running underneath The Belcher's would be constructed deep under the rock head (greater than 10 meters below the rock head) and therefore will have minimal impact to the structure of the buildings. For the proposed station entrance adjacent to the Belcher's street and the Westwood, you and other residents of The Belcher's have proposed an alternative station entrance location at the slope opposite Sai Cheung Street and re-align the route of the passenger and construction tunnels in order to avoid the need to carry out construction work underneath The Belcher's. MTRCL has reviewed this alternative proposal and found that rerouting the tunnels for an entrance at Sai Cheung Street would result in the tunnels running under other private buildings. It would also introduce a bend in the construction tunnel which would significantly increase the difficulty in spoil removal. In addition, the alternative location at the slope opposite Sai Cheung Street would also substantially reduce the attractiveness and convenience to the targeted passenger catchments around Queen's Road West between Hill Road and Praya, Kennedy Town. Besides, construction of station entrance in the slope would require major permanent retaining walls, rehabilitation of the slope and long time temporary closure of the adjacent roads which would cause significant adverse impact to the traffic in the district.

We understand the concern of the residents of The Belcher's. MTRCL will minimize the nuisance to the community and inform the residents of the construction progress.

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Construction method

As most section of WIL tunnels and pedestrian tunnels (including the pedestrian tunnel underneath the buildings of The Belcher's) are deep in rock, it is expected that excavation in rock will be carried out by drill and blast method. The method and details of construction will be confirmed upon the appointment of contractors.

Drill and blast is one of the proven and efficient methods for excavation in rock widely adopted in Hong Kong and worldwide. MTRCL has very extensive experience in using controlled blasting method in the construction of many station caverns and rock tunnels in railway projects, namely, Quarry Bay Station, Taikoo Station, Fortress Hill Station, North Point Station and its modification under the Quarry Bay Relief project, as well as many tunnels on the Hong Kong Island and New Territories. Furthermore, the pedestrian subways linking the Times Square and the recently completed link between Admiralty Station and Pacific Place Phase 3 were also constructed by drill and blast method.

MTRCL will ensure strict compliance with the regulations of the Dangerous Goods Ordinance under the control of Mines Division of the Civil Engineering and Development Department, Fire Services Department and Hong Kong Police Force, and enforce stringent risk control and safety measures to ensure the delivery, use and storage of explosives are safely operated during the construction period. A Blasting Permit has to be obtained from the Mines Division for the use of explosives. Suitably qualified professionals will be employed for the blasting operation and a set of stringent control measures in accordance with the Buildings Ordinance and relevant statutory requirements will be adopted. MTRCL will install monitoring points to ensure adjacent building structures are not affected.

The construction works of WIL are subject to the control of the Buildings Ordinance. The Corporation has to carry out the detailed design of the drill and blast tunnels and carry out detailed assessment on effects on adjacent building structures in accordance with the statutory requirements and submit the proposals to the relevant Government departments, including Buildings Department, Geotechnical Engineering Office and Mines Division of the Civil and Engineering Development Department, for approval before works could be allowed to commence. In addition, nearby residents will be informed before the blasting.

EIA report and Quantitative Risk Assessment

The Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Study and the Quantitative Risk Assessment which has assessed the risks associated with the storage, transport and use of explosives for the WIL construction have been duly completed and approved by the Environmental Protection Department under the EIA Ordinance in December 2008, and the Environment Permit for WIL was issued in January 2009. The results showed that the risks are within the acceptable limit of the risk guideline. The EIA report, including the Quantitative Risk Assessment, was made available for public inspection and is available on the following website of Environmental Protection Department:

http://www.epd.gov.hk/eia/register/report/eiareport/eia_1532008/EIA-pdf/Appendix/appendix%20list.htm (Appendix 10.1).

Before the construction of WIL is started, a condition survey will be carried out to record the existing condition of the buildings in the proximity to the alignment of WIL.

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Communication with the local community

MTRCL has carried out extensive public consultation throughout the planning of the WIL scheme since the early planning stage of the project in 2003, with respect to the preliminary railway alignment, locations of station entrances, ventilation shaft locations, construction method and works areas etc. MTRCL has incorporated the views of the public as far as practicable through a multi-stage public consultation programme. The WIL project has been one of the standing items for discussion in the Central and Western District Council meetings since 2006. Moreover, MTRCL has attended a series of public forums and residents meetings organized by the District Council and local communities to discuss and listen to their views on the WIL project. The WIL scheme was well discussed in the community before it was gazetted in October 2007. While the design of the project proceeds, MTRCL has been making due effort to communicate with the local community as early as possible.

MTRCL will communicate and consult the District Council and local residents when the details of the construction are confirmed. MTRCL will also continue to communicate with the community, including the Belcher's, through community liaison groups regularly during the construction period of WIL.

Thank you for your views on WIL.

Yours faithfully,



(WONG Yat-kong)
for Chief Engineer/Railway Development I-1
Railway Development Office
Highways Department

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