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**HIGHWAYS DEPARTMENT
RAILWAY DEVELOPMENT OFFICE**

1st FLOOR, HO MAN TIN GOVERNMENT OFFICES
88 CHUNG HAU STREET, HOMANTIN, KOWLOON, HONG KONG
Web site: <http://www.hyd.gov.hk>

路政署

鐵路拓展處

香港九龍何文田忠孝街八十八號
何文田政府合署一樓

網址: <http://www.hyd.gov.hk>

本署檔案 Our Ref. : (2J32) in RD 6/5/8/4
來函檔號 Your Ref. :
電 話 Tel. : 2762 4084
圖文傳真 Fax : 2761 1508

7 May 2009

Chairman
Parents Teachers Association
Bonham Road Government Primary School
9A, Bohnam Road
Hong Kong

(Attn: Mr. William FOK)

Dear Mr. FOK,

**West Island Line (WIL)
The Proposed Ventilaton Shaft
at David Trench Rehabilitation Centre (DTRC)**

I refer to your letter to the Subcommittee on Matters Relating to Railway of Panel on Transport, Legislative Council on 31 March 2009 providing your views on the above subject. The Transport and Housing Bureau has transferred your letter to this office for follow-up actions. Our response is as follows:

Air Quality at Ventilation Shaft

We note your concern about the effect of the ventilation shaft on the health of the students and teachers. However, the function of the ventilation shaft is to enable air exchange between the inside of station and tunnel with external air. As the West Island Line (WIL) is an electric railway, there is no combustion of fossil fuels and hence no toxic gases will be emitted from the ventilation shaft. Furthermore, the track and the tunnels will be cleaned regularly in order to keep the cleanliness of the running tunnels.

As advised by the MTR Corporation Limited (MTRCL), the distance between the louvre of the proposed ventilation shaft and the façade of the school building will be about 20m. The MTRCL will endeavour to orient the exhaust louvre opening of the ventilation shaft away from the school as far as possible.



The only source of CO₂ is from the breathing of the passengers and staff working in the station. All CO₂ exhaled by passengers/staff would be sufficiently diluted by the fresh air intake before discharged through the normal air exchange. The air quality inside the railway facilities is in full compliance to the Level 1 standard of the "Practice Note for Managing Air Quality in Air-conditioned Public Transport Facilities - Railways" issued by Environmental Protection Department (EPD). This indicates that the air quality inside the railway facilities will meet the required standard for good air quality of a comfortable railway facility.

The MTRCL also conducted air quality tests by setting up a monitoring point at an existing ventilation shaft of the Central Station. The figures of the dust level obtained from the monitoring point is very close to those readings obtained from a nearby roadside air quality station set up by EPD. This demonstrated that air from the ventilation shaft does not cause any adverse impacts on the air quality of the surrounding areas.

We are very concerned about the health of the public, and definitely including that of the students. The government and MTRCL would ensure that the design, construction and operation of the WIL would comply with the current environmental legislations.

To conclude, the ventilation shaft will not pollute the air or affect the health of public.

Alternative Ventilation Shaft Locations

We appreciate your effort to identify alternative sites for the ventilation shaft. It is difficult to find locations within a densely populated area in Western District for station entrances, ventilation shafts, railway facilities and works areas for the WIL project. Locations of ventilation shafts are also constrained by the design and alignment of the railway as well as the availability of land. Therefore, the MTRCL proposes to demolish David Trench Rehabilitation Centre (DTRC) to make way for a station entrance and railway facilities of the Sai Ying Pun (SYP) Station of the project. Nevertheless, the MTRCL has reviewed other ventilation shaft locations for the SYP Station. However, the results showed that the current design with all related facilities at the DTRC site is more preferable. Please refer to the assessment for the alternative locations at Appendix 1.

Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment

Your concern about the heritage preservation is noted. The impact of the works on heritage buildings is one of the subjects that have been studied in the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) study for the project. All the concerned heritage sites including the Bonham Road Government Primary School (BRGPS), the Eastern Street Methadone Clinic, the Sai Ying Pun Community Complex, etc. impacted by the construction and/or operation of the WIL scheme are covered by the cultural heritage impact assessment in the EIA report for the WIL scheme. The MTRCL's EIA study has indicated that with the implementation of recommended mitigation measures, no adverse landscape and visual impacts to the identified built heritage are expected. The Director of Environmental Protection has approved the EIA report with conditions in December 2008 and issued the Environmental Permit in January 2009. The MTRCL will adopt greening and aesthetic design for the ventilation shaft as far as possible in order to reduce its visual impact.

Impact during Construction Stage

With regards to the traffic impact during the construction of WIL, the main entrance and vehicular access of the school concerned is located on Eastern Street, while the vehicular access of the DTRC construction site will mainly be located on Bonham Road. As such, the entry and exit of the school buses from and to the school concerned would not be affected.

During the construction of the stations and entrances, appropriate temporary traffic arrangement with clear temporary traffic and directional signs will be adopted in order to minimize the impact to the pedestrian and road traffic. Such measures will be evaluated and approved by a Site Liaison Group comprising Transport Department, Hong Kong Police Force, Fire Services Department, Highways Department, etc. The Site Liaison Group will ensure that the access for the school buses from the Eastern Street will be maintained. Student safety on streets will be a special topic for the Site Liaison Group as well.

Safety Measures during Construction Stage

The design and construction of the WIL will be supervised by competent persons employed by the MTRCL and subject to compliance with the safety standards and requirements under the Building Ordinance and related regulations.

Besides, the MTRCL will provide adequate safety measures, such as temporary hoarding and lighting for work sites, to safeguard the public.

Safety Measures during Operation Stage

Safety is the prime concern of both the Government and the MTRCL. According to the Fire Services Department (FSD) requirement, the ventilation shaft is required to be more than 5 metres away from any opening at the adjacent building. The distance between the ventilation shaft at Bonham Road and the façade of the BRGPS building is approximately 20 metres. In addition, the MTRCL has comprehensive procedures and contingency plans for handling different scenarios of railway incidents. Regular drills and exercises with relevant Government departments including the FSD, the Hong Kong Police Force and other emergency services will also be held.

Concern on Loss of a Meeting Place Outside DTRC

The concern of permanent loss of a gathering place for parents outside the existing DTRC building is noted. In fact, on completion of the station entrance, the public area outside the station entrance could continue to serve as the gathering venue for the parents waiting for the release of their children from school.

The proposed station entrance to be constructed at the DTRC site on Bonham Road will provide four lifts to overcome the marked level difference between street level and station concourse. The existing roadside lay-by of the DTRC will be reconfigured and the adjacent footpath will be widened to provide a spacious forecourt on street level, which also serves as an open space and a meeting place for the community. The existing Old and Valuable Trees and

other large trees in close proximity to the DTRC will be preserved during and after construction. The surrounding area will be landscaped resulting in a much improved condition upon completion of the station construction works.

Conclusion

The government is very concerned about the health of the public, particularly of that of the students. The government and MTRCL would ensure that the design, construction and operation of the WIL would comply with the current environmental legislations.

The timely completion of WIL is of paramount importance to provide a fast and convenient rail link to the Western District. Every effort will be made by the Government and MTRCL to minimize the impact on the community as far as practicable.

Yours faithfully,



(Matthew P. K. HO)
Chief Engineer/Railway Development 1-1
Railway Development Office
Highways Department

c.c. Secretary for Transport and Housing (Attn: Mr. Henry CHAN)
Legislative Council Secretariat

Fax 2868 5261
Fax 2521 7518

Appendix 1

West Island Line
Assessment on Alternative Locations of Ventilation Shaft

Alternative Location	Assessment
<p>King George V (KGV) Memorial Park Basketball Court</p>	<p>At early planning stage of WIL, the MTRCL had proposed to place the ventilation shaft at the basketball court at the King George V Memorial Park for providing ventilation for the section of the tunnels between the Sai Ying Pun (SYP) Station and the Sheung Wan Station. Views collected during the public consultations were that occupation of public open space should be minimized as above-ground railway facilities such as entrances would have occupied a lot of public open space in the district.</p> <p>The purpose of the proposed ventilation shaft at the David Trench Rehabilitation Centre (DTRC) is for providing ventilation for the section of the tunnels between the SYP Station and the University Station. Since the distance from the western end of the SYP Station to the suggested alternative location will be much greater than that to the location at the DTRC site, the ventilation effect will be limited.</p> <p>Regarding the suggestion to relocate the basketball court of the KGV Memorial Park to the roof top of the Bonham Road Entrance of the SYP Station, the MTRCL confirms that the roof top space is not enough for a basketball field.</p>

KGV Memorial Park adjacent to High Street	Apart from occupying the space in the park and less efficient ventilation due to greater distance to the western end of the SYP Station, the ventilation shaft would block the front façade of a Grade I historical building, Sai Ying Pun Community Complex, which is unfavourable from cultural heritage conservation viewpoint. In addition, this location is close to a nursery inside the KGV Memorial Park.
KGV Memorial Park near junction of Hospital Road and Eastern Street	Apart from occupying the space in the park and less efficient ventilation due to greater distance to the western end of the SYP Station, the construction of ventilation shafts would affect the large wall trees growing on the slope. Moreover, this location is in vicinity to other hospital facilities along Hospital Road and is close to other residential buildings on the opposite side of Eastern Street.