

**For information  
14 May 2009**

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

**Progress of the Hong Kong Section of  
Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link**

**Introduction**

This paper briefs Members on the progress of the Hong Kong Section of Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link (XRL).

**Background**

2. In October 2008, the Chief Executive announced the proposed Hong Kong Section of the XRL as one of the Ten Major Infrastructure Projects. On 22 April 2008, the Chief Executive in Council decided to invite the MTR Corporation Limited (MTRCL) to proceed with the further planning and design of the Hong Kong Section of the XRL. We briefed the Subcommittee on Matters Relating to Railways on the Hong Kong Section of the XRL on 2 May 2008.

3. The Finance Committee of the Legislative Council approved the funding for the design and site investigation of the Hong Kong Section of the XRL on 8 July 2008. The railway scheme of the Hong Kong Section was gazetted under the Railways Ordinance on 28 November and 5 December 2008. Detailed design commenced in January 2009 and the progress-to-date is satisfactory. We plan to start construction of the Hong Kong Section of the XRL in end 2009 for completion in 2015/2016.

**XRL and its Strategic Importance**

4. The XRL is an express rail, which will link up Hong Kong, Shenzhen and Guangzhou. It will shorten the journey time between Hong Kong and Guangzhou significantly from about 100 minutes to 48 minutes. The journey

time from Hong Kong to Futian and Longhua in Shenzhen is about 14 and 23 minutes respectively. Through the Futian Station in Shenzhen, Shenzhen North Station (Longhua), Humen Station in Dongguan and its terminus at Shibi in Guangzhou, XRL passengers can interchange with various domestic, regional and national railway networks (see Annex I). Thus, the XRL, connecting Hong Kong with the whole country, is of great strategic importance.

5. The Hong Kong Section of the XRL will become part of the national rail network (see Annex II), connecting the Beijing-Guangzhou Passenger Line and Hangzhou-Fuzhou-Shenzhen Passenger Line. Journey time between Hong Kong and the Central and Southern Mainland and various major Mainland cities will be greatly shortened. For example, XRL passengers departing Hong Kong will take four hours to arrive Changsha, five hours to Wuhan, Xiamen and Fuzhou, and eight and ten hours to Shanghai and Beijing respectively. Through interchanging with the Pearl River Delta Rapid Transit System, the XRL will also connect Hong Kong with major cities of the Pearl River Delta. Thus, the XRL plays an important role in strengthening Hong Kong as one of the national transportation hubs and foster closer economic ties between Hong Kong and the Mainland, which will be very important for the future development of Hong Kong.

6. The Hong Kong Section of the XRL will be a 26-km long underground rail corridor. The Hong Kong Section will run from the terminus in West Kowloon, going north passing Yau Tsim Mong, Sham Shui Po, Kwai Tsing, Tsuen Wan, Yuen Long and the boundary at Huanggang, where it will connect to the XRL Mainland section. Along the whole tunnel alignment, there will be eight ventilation buildings and emergency access points. An emergency rescue station (ERS) and stabling sidings (SSS) will be located at Shek Kong of Yuen Long (see Annex III).

7. It is anticipated that the project can create 5,500 job opportunities during construction. This figure will further increase when the project development becomes more mature which reflects the economic growth and development potential to be brought about by the closer ties between Hong Kong and Mainland. Upon the commissioning of the XRL, it is anticipated that the project can create 10,000 job opportunities.

## **Public Consultation**

8. We consider that public's view and support are very important to the future development of the Hong Kong Section of the XRL. We therefore started public consultation in May 2008. Up to now, we have consulted seven relevant District Councils and/or their subcommittees, the Heung Yee Kuk, and

the relevant Rural Committees. Apart from these, we held public forums with the local communities. The Secretary of Transport and Housing also personally visited Choi Yuen Tsuen at Shek Kong, an area affected by land resumption and clearance, in January 2009 to inspect the site and better understand the concerns of the affected residents. Moreover, we also exchanged views in various informal meetings with members of Legislative Council, District Council and the relevant local communities.

9. Subsequent to the gazettal of the XRL railway scheme, we received a total of about 120 objection cases, about 2000 submissions using similar forms expressing opposing views and some 20 enquiries. The main concerns expressed by the objectors included issues relating to the site selection for the ERS and SSS, underground strata resumption, land resumption and re-housing arrangement, provision of an intermediate station and environmental impact during construction.

10. The relevant government departments together with the MTRCL are now handling the objections. To address concerns expressed by members of the public and to incorporate design changes, amendments and corrections to the scheme were gazetted on 30 April 2009. Any person who wishes to object to the amendments to the scheme is required to lodge his objection in writing not later than 29 June 2009, describing his interest and the manner in which he alleges he will be affected by the amendments to the scheme.

## **Major Public Concerns and Follow-up Actions**

11. The major concerns expressed by the relevant District Councils, Rural Committees, and the local communities and organizations during the public consultation and objection handling period and our follow-up actions are as follows -

### **I. Rail Alignment**

12. During the consultation period, some opinions requested for revising the XRL alignment. In designing the tunnel alignment, the guiding principles are safety of train operation, minimizing impact on community and maximizing social benefits. Considerations include impact on the whole community and environment, topographical and geotechnical factors, connectivity with the Mainland section of XRL, associated railway facilities, impacts on infrastructures adjacent to the rail alignment, trains operation, rescue and fire precautionary measures, construction difficulties and risks, etc. After balancing all these factors, we consider that the current scheme has the least impact on the community and the best overall performance.

## II. Functions and Site Selection for ERS and SSS

13. We propose to construct the ERS and SSS at Shek Kong. It requires an area of about 27 hectares, with approximately 2km long and as wide as 150 metres. Some residents would like to know the functions and rationale of locating the ERS and SSS at Shek Kong.

14. The Hong Kong Section of the XRL will be a 26-km long tunnel running entirely underground. To cater for emergency rescue operations in case of incidents, there will be eight emergency access points and an ERS along the tunnel alignment to facilitate rescue operations. In addition, trains from different Mainland cities may operate along the Hong Kong Section of the XRL. Some of these trains will have to stable and need to have regular maintenance and cleaning in Hong Kong. Hence, we need to construct a SSS to accommodate these trains for overnight stabling and minor maintenance such as daily inspection and spare parts replacement. Other complicated maintenance activities which require large working space will be conducted in the Mainland. In fact, the land provision for the proposed SSS at Shek Kong has been squeezed to a minimum.

15. We propose to put the ERS and SSS together as this would reduce land resumption and minimise impact on the nearby residents and community. Under this arrangement, some common facilities and supporting infrastructures could be shared such as roads, accesses to facilities, emergency vehicular access, office and control centre, electrical and fire services equipment and facilities, etc.

16. In planning the location of the ERS, the extent of study areas covers the flat areas of the entire Kam Tin and Pat Heung (see Annex IV). Shek Kong is located approximately in the midway of the whole XRL alignment between West Kowloon and Futian in Mainland. Setting up an ERS at Shek Kong will effectively respond to incidents inside the tunnel at different locations. In addition, the proposed site is well served by major roads, low-lying, flat and extensive allowing rescue teams to reach the ERS conveniently and evacuation of train passengers. Thus, it is a suitable location for the construction of ERS.

17. However, there are many residents and houses located in Shek Kong. It is very difficult for us to identify a suitable place to accommodate the ERS and SSS that will cause minimal impact to the residents while keeping a reasonable rail alignment along the running direction of the Hong Kong Section. The proposed site location fulfills the above requirements. In addition, the site is well served by major roads (Kam Tin Road and Kam Sheung Road), satisfying rescue operation and evacuation needs.

### III. Other Suggested Sites for ERS and SSS

18. During the consultation period, we received a few proposals on the site locations of the ERS and SSS. In general, these proposals will make use of the existing open spaces, car parks or abandoned building sites at Shek Kong for constructing the concerned railway facilities so as to minimise the resumption of private land required for the Hong Kong Section.

19. After detailed investigation, we consider that these proposals are not feasible. The main reasons are as follows -

- the number of households affected are more than that in the current scheme;
- if the ERS and SSS are put together, the orientations of a few proposals significantly deviate from the general north-south direction of the XRL alignment. The Hong Kong and Mainland Sections of XRL would fail to connect ; and
- these proposals will increase the travelling distance of the Hong Kong Section of XRL. More ventilation buildings may be required causing further disturbance to the public.

### IV. Underground Strata Resumption

20. As the Hong Kong Section of XRL runs in tunnels, resumption of underground strata along the alignment will be required. The tunnels of the Hong Kong Section will be deeply underground. The strata to be resumed in Pat Heung, San Tin and Kam Tin will be ranging from 5 to 55 metres below ground. According to the assessment of the MTRCL, the tunnels of the XRL will in general not affect above-ground daily activities and agricultural uses since the strata to be resumed are at least 5 metres from the ground surface.

21. The Government understands residents' worry that the setting up of the railway protection area may complicate applications for building small houses. If the proposed building works are under the categories which require exemption certificates from the Director of Lands, the Lands Department will consult the MTRCL and the relevant government departments and will deal with applications swiftly. As the construction of small houses generally do not require deep foundations, the construction of small houses which does not require piling on the lots concerned will not pose impact on the tunnel of the XRL. Regarding the building works in the railway protection area that requires prior approvals and consents from the Building Authority, the Buildings Department will process the applications and consult the MTRCL for comments. The MTRCL will also deal with these applications promptly.

## V. Intermediate Station

22. There are views that the Hong Kong Section of the XRL should have an intermediate station in the New Territories. The maximum train speed of the Hong Kong Section of the XRL is 200km/hr, and the total journey time from West Kowloon to Futian in Shenzhen and Shibi of Guangzhou will be about 14 and 48 minutes. High-speed is one of the most important elements of the high-quality train services. Provision of an intermediate station in the New Territories will not only extend the journey time but also reduce the time duration during which the trains can maintain at high speed. It will greatly undermine the strategic value of the XRL. The expected economic benefits cannot be realized, thereby defeating the purpose of the Hong Kong Section of the XRL. Therefore, we do not recommend an intermediate station.

## VI. Shared Corridor Option

23. In addition, some people support the Shared Corridor Option and suggest that the Hong Kong Section of the XRL should share the corridor with the existing West Rail Line (WRL). In fact, several planning changes were made in the Mainland section of the XRL. These included a substantial increase in the possible long-haul train services, addition of a new XRL Station at Futian, and a new proposed Rapid Transit System rail line. As a result of these planning changes, there will be a significant increase in the patronage for the Hong Kong Section of the XRL.

24. If the Shared Corridor Option is adopted, the increase in the XRL patronage and train frequency will aggravate the loading on the shared section of the WRL corridor, and the corridor may even become saturated shortly after the opening of the XRL. In addition, the platforms of three existing WRL stations (Nam Cheong, Mei Foo and Tsuen Wan West) will need to be modified so as to meet the new national standard for high speed trains i.e. trains up to 3.4m-wide will be deployed for high-speed passenger rail services running to Hong Kong. However, the above WRL platforms at present can only accommodate 3.1m-wide trains. The modification works will involve essentially cutting back the platforms, setting back the platform screen doors and installation of mechanical gap fillers along these platforms. The whole exercise will take about three years to complete. These modification works would require closure of the affected platform for about six months for each platform affecting about 30,000 daily passengers.

## VII. Land Compensation and Rehousing Arrangements

25. Resumption of private land for the construction of new railways will be

carried out under the Railways Ordinance (Cap.519) (the Ordinance). Any person entitled to compensation under the Ordinance may serve on the Secretary a written claim.

26. Land and structures affected by the Hong Kong Section of the XRL are mainly in the New Territories, particularly Yuen Long. The Government may offer zonal ex-gratia compensation for the resumption of private land in the New Territories. If owners are dissatisfied with the ex-gratia compensation offered by Government, they may serve on the Secretary a written claim.

27. Regarding occupants of squatter structures affected by clearance, we shall arrange to rehouse the eligible applicants to public rental housing or Interim Housing in accordance with the prevailing policies. For the permitted occupiers of a licensed domestic structure/ domestic squatter structure covered by the 1982 Survey and registered in the 1984/85 Squatter Occupancy Survey, if they meet the other eligibility criteria for public rental housing but fail the Comprehensive Means Test, they can choose either living in Interim Housing for not more than one year upon payment of market license fees or the ex-gratia allowance for permitted occupiers of licensed domestic structures and surveyed domestic squatter structures. Residents receiving this ex-gratia allowance will not be eligible for any other ex-gratia allowances (including Domestic Removal Allowance) in respect of their structures and will also be ineligible for any form of public housing or similar ex-gratia allowance for the subsequent two years.

28. For rehousing arrangement, clearee households will generally be offered local rehousing in the original district. We shall arrange to rehouse them to public rental housing or Interim Housing in accordance with the prevailing rehousing policies. Those affected by clearance but ineligible for public rental housing/Interim Housing can request for temporary accommodation in transit centre if they have short-term housing need. Those with special medical or social reasons for rehousing to public rental housing may also apply to the Social Welfare Department for Compassionate Rehousing.

29. For persons who are eligible for public rental housing, they may choose to apply for the Green Form Certificates on application from the Housing Department, for purchasing the Home Ownership Scheme (HOS) flats under the Secondary Market Scheme or the Sale Programme of Surplus HOS Flats, provided that they meet the HOS eligibility criteria concerned and the sale programme is available for application.

30. If the persons concerned are genuine residents of a structure which was surveyed as a domestic one in the 1982 Squatter Structure Survey and they do not own any private properties, they may be eligible to receive an ex-gratia

domestic removal allowance to help them meet the basic cost of domestic removal, no matter whether they would be rehoused to the public housing or not.

31. In addition, eligible single persons and two-person families may, in lieu of rehousing, opt for cash allowance from the Housing Department. Recipients of this allowance are not eligible for further payments of the allowance or any form of public housing for the subsequent two years.

32. Clearees who are eligible for public housing will be offered advanced rehousing under the “Anticipatory Housing Scheme”. If clearees accept refurbished flats, they will be offered one-grade-up in the choices of district from the New Territories to the Extended Urban Area or from the Extended Urban Area to the Urban Area. For clearees who are ineligible for public housing but with special reasons such as serious illness, disability or other social problems with genuine and imminent housing need, they may apply for “Compassionate Rehousing” through the Social Welfare Department for suitable housing assistance.

33. Farmers who are affected by clearances may apply for ‘agricultural resite’ to continue their farming. Applicants shall acquire a piece of suitable private land which is accepted by the Government. Applicants have to obtain confirmation from the Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation that they are genuine farmers. Eligible farmers will be issued a Short Term Waiver for their private land and granted Ex-gratia Rehabilitation Allowance to assist them to rebuild temporary domestic structures. If agricultural resite is approved by Lands Department for the farmers to continue farming, no rehousing will be offered. Such applications will be assessed by the Lands Department based on their own merits in accordance with the above criteria.

34. For crops, and farm installations/fixtures, e.g., irrigation pipes and wells etc. affected by land resumption and clearance, the Government will offer ex-gratia allowance to genuine cultivators in accordance with the prevailing policy. Moreover, the Government will grant ex-gratia allowance for affected qualified farm structures on private agricultural land.

35. We understand that the XRL project will affect some residents along the alignment. We will make every endeavour to handle the compensation and re-housing applications in accordance with the prevailing policies and provide suitable assistance to the affected residents.



## VIII. Support of Social Works Services

36. During the public consultation, some people expressed their wishes that the Government would offer the social work services to the affected residents. In this connection, we have engaged the Pok Oi Hospital Social Services Office providing social work services to the residents. In addition, the Social Welfare Department will provide relevant services to the affected households.

## IX. Environmental Impact Assessment

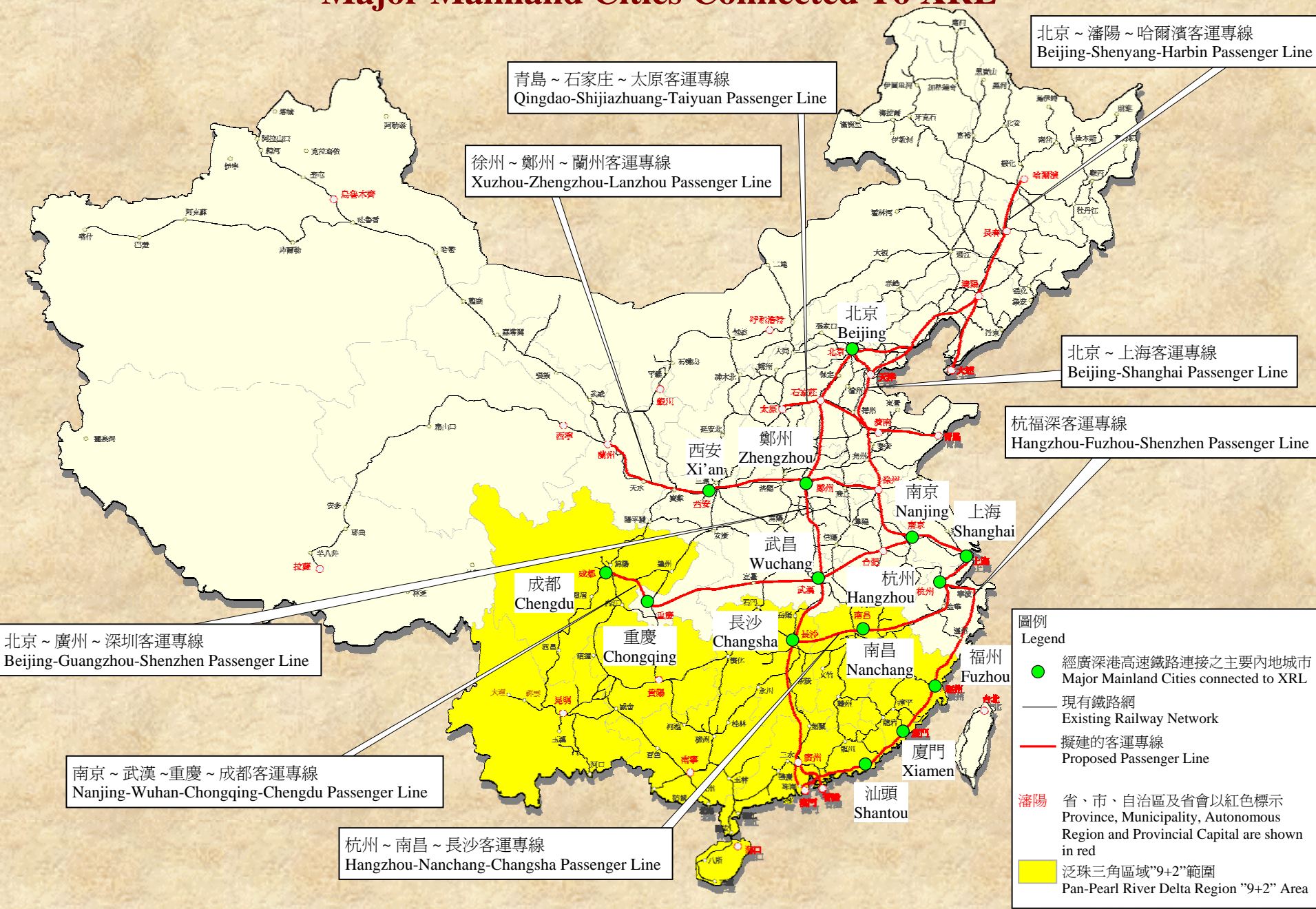
37. The Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) report for the Hong Kong Section of the XRL is now under preparation and, upon completion, will be made available for public inspection and comments in mid 2009. The MTRCL will then present the EIA report to the concerned District Councils and Rural Committees.

## **The Way Forward**

38. The concerned government departments will continue to work with the MTRCL on the detailed design of XRL, and will timely consult the Legislative Council, the concerned District Councils and Rural Committees. We will also maintain close liaison with the local communities to solicit their views. Meanwhile, we are now dealing with objections lodged by the public. We plan to seek funding approval from the Finance Committee of the Legislative Council for the construction of the Hong Kong Section of the XRL in the last quarter of 2009.

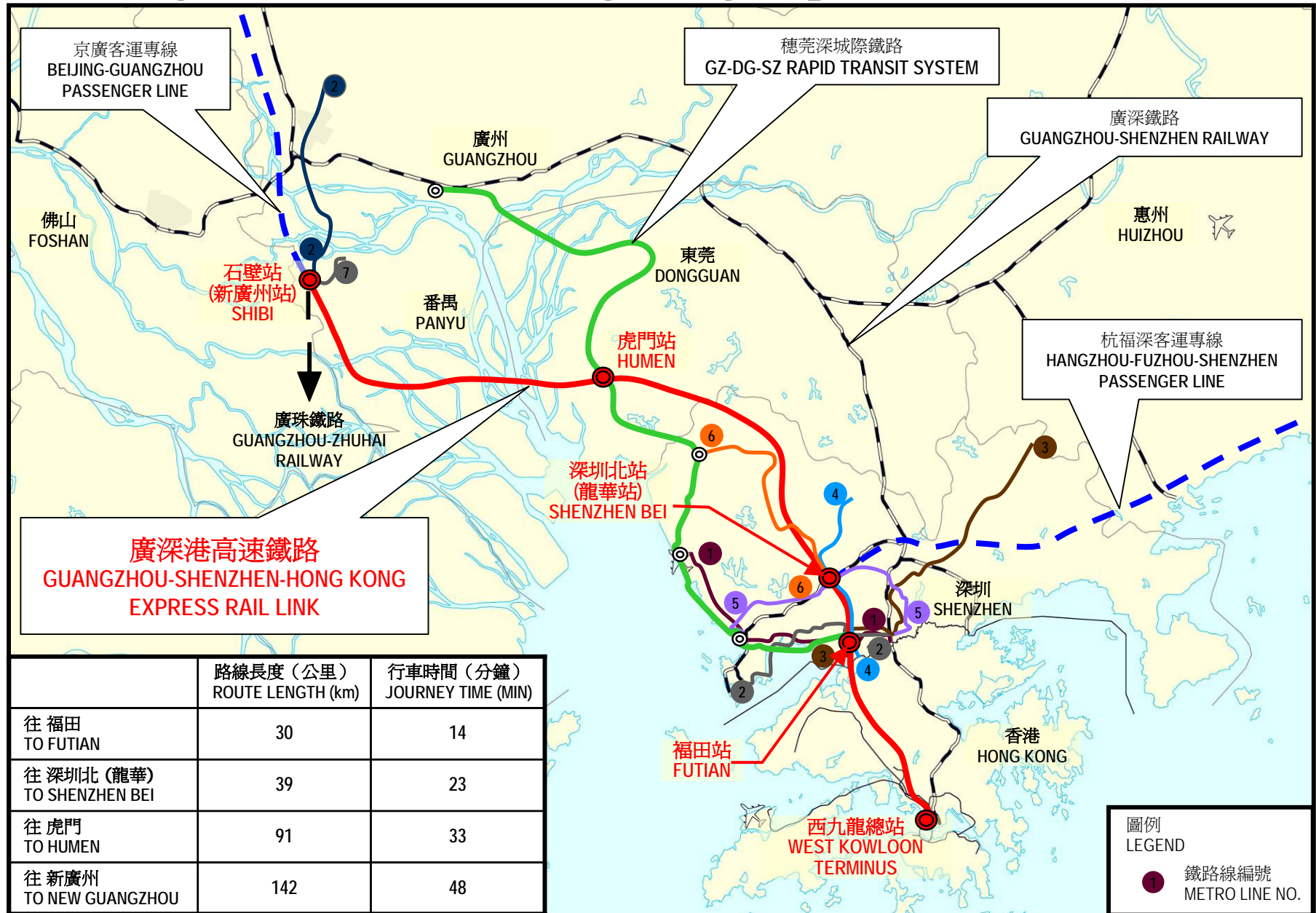
**Transport and Housing Bureau**  
**May 2009**

# 經廣深港高速鐵路連接之主要內地城市 Major Mainland Cities Connected To XRL



# 廣深港高速鐵路

## Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link

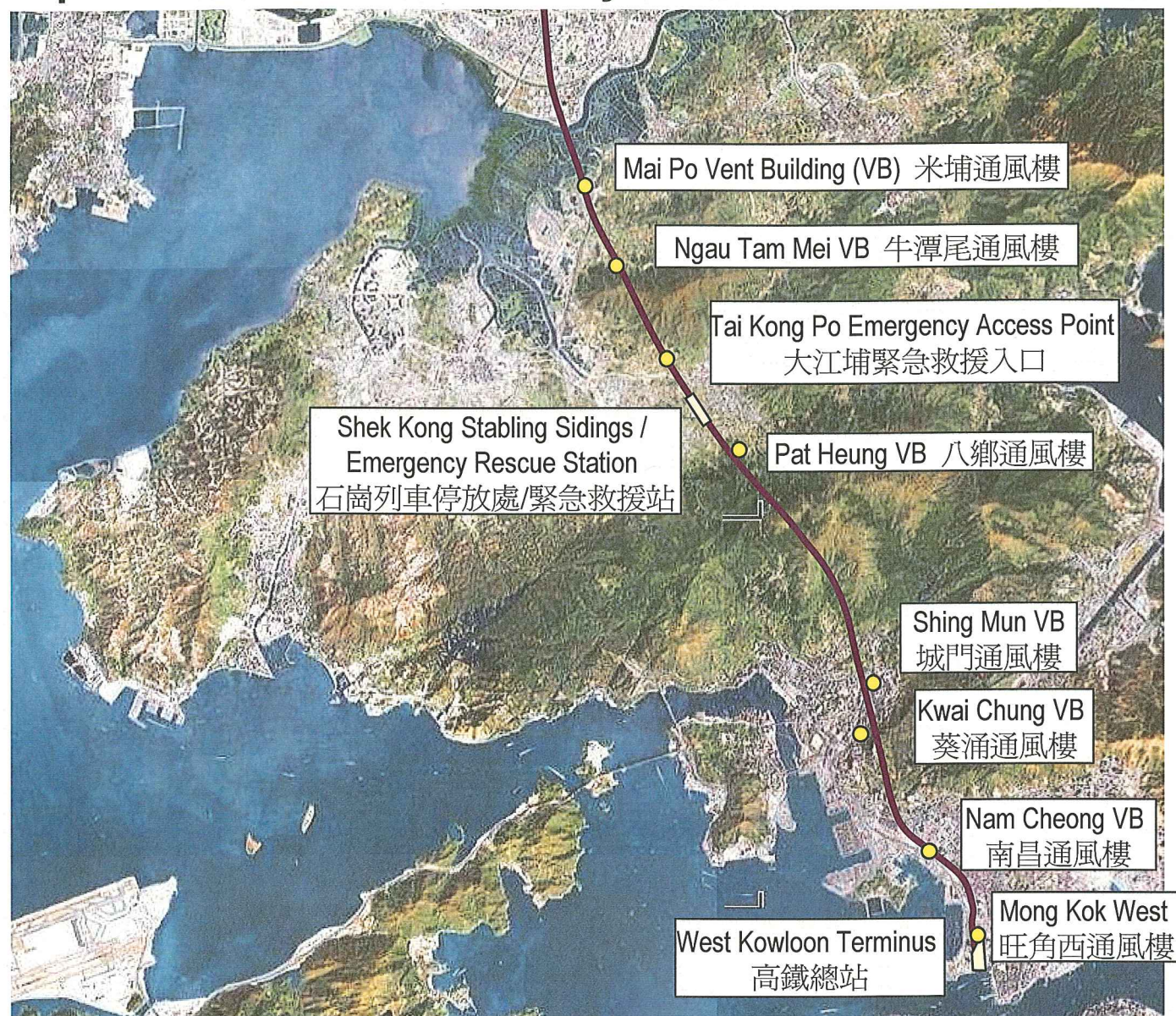




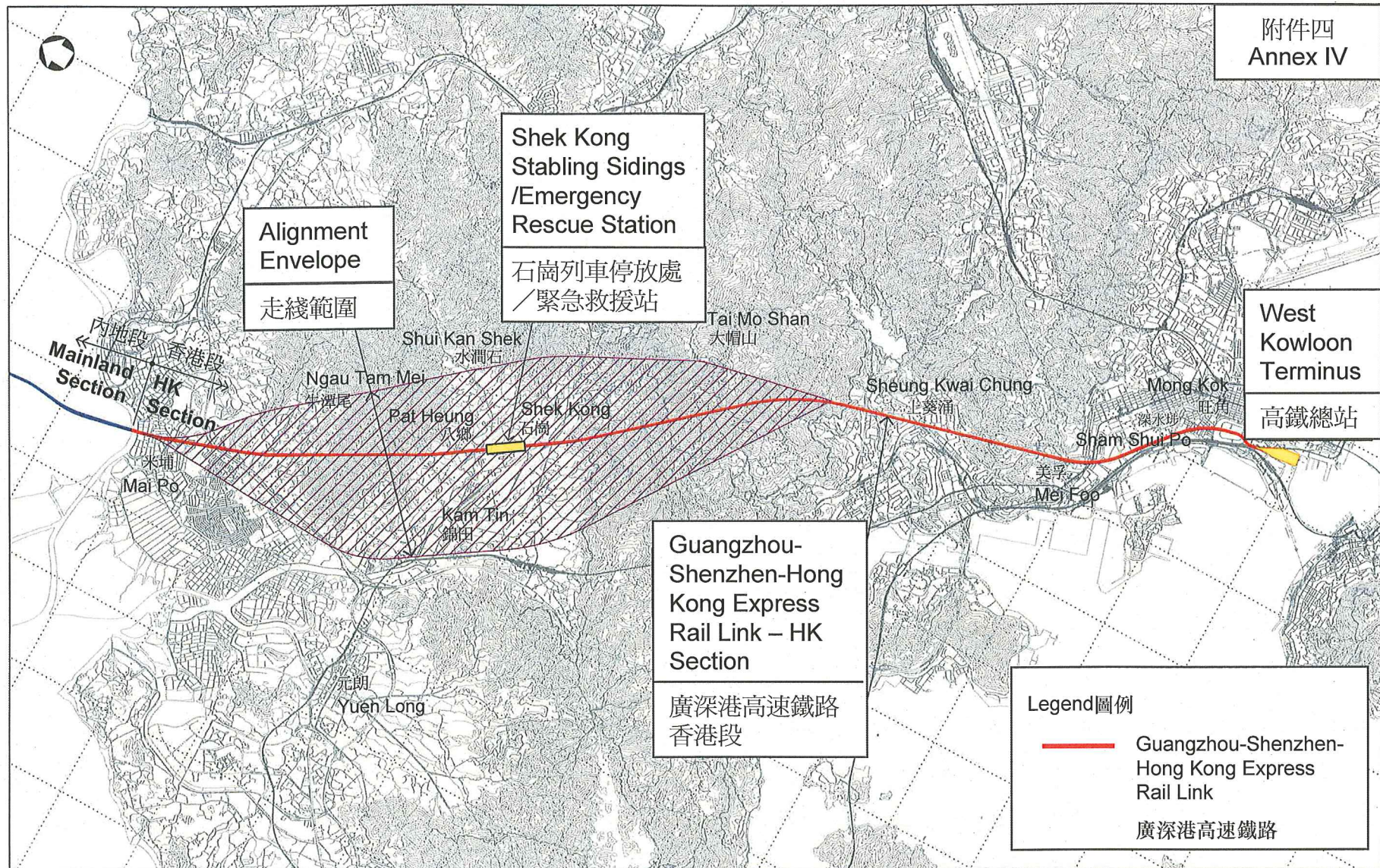
# 廣深港高速鐵路（香港段）—— 整體規劃

## Express Rail Link – General Layout

附件三  
Annex III







廣深港高速鐵路（香港段）——走綫範圍研究  
Express Rail Link – Alignment Envelope Studied