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(Attn: Mr. Paul Zimmerman)

Dear Sir,

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

South Island Line (East) (SIL(E))

Thank you for your presentation on 15 May 2009 to the Secretary of the Subcommittee on Matters Relating to Railway under the Panel on Transport, Legislative Council expressing your view on the South Island Line (East) project. The Transport and Housing Bureau has authorized me to provide a reply.

We note the concern expressed by some locals over the design of the SIL(E) project, particularly the proposed viaduct section between the toll plaza of the Aberdeen Tunnel and Ap Lei Chau. SIL(E) will provide a fast, efficient and environmental friendly railways to the sustainable development of the Southern District. In this regard, the Government and the MTR Corporation Limited (MTRCL) have held meetings separately with district councilors, residents and representatives of organisations of the Southern District for in-depth discussions. MTRCL has considered tunnel options and found that the viaduct design is the most practicable option based on the following implications and drawbacks associated with the change to a tunnel arrangement,-

- (i) The depot located in Wong Chuk Hang would need to be lowered by about 14 metres involving excavation of an additional one million cubic metres of hard rock inside the depot site. The extra excavation works will lead to about three to four years' delay in the completion of the railway.
- (ii) About two-thirds of the Aberdeen Channel will have to be closed for three years to facilitate the construction of tunnel, leaving only a 35-metre fairway for marine traffic during the period, which may not be acceptable.
- (iii) The construction of the ventilation buildings and the floodgate for the tunnel section crossing the Aberdeen Channel will require the clearance of some shipyards on the north shore of the Channel.
- (iv) The two stations of Ocean Park and Wong Chuk Hang will have to be located underground. The level difference between the station platform and station entrances



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will become comparatively larger, making traveling time longer and therefore more inconvenient for passengers accessibility.

- (v) Approximately 16,000 square metres of land inside the Hong Kong Police College will be required temporarily for tunnel construction for at least 3 years; and the Tactical Training Complex Building will have to be demolished, which will affect the operation of the Police College.

After the public consultation, MTRCL has reduced the viaduct section near the toll plaza of the Aberdeen Tunnel and turned the viaduct in the vicinity of Sham Wan Towers underground. Site visits were also conducted for the stakeholders to better understand the design, alignment and operation of the railways on viaducts, and the drawbacks associated with the change to a tunnel section. Since SIL (E) is a designated project under the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Ordinance, MTRCL has engaged an independent consultant to conduct the Environmental Impact Assessment. In the detailed design stage, MTRCL will study various mitigation measures, improve the viaduct design and continue to consult the Southern District Council. Besides, MTRCL will spare no effort in finding an aesthetically acceptable viaduct structural form in harmony with the surrounding areas near Aberdeen Toll Plaza and Wong Chuk Hang. MTRCL will make reference to overseas examples and improve the viaduct structural form to enhance the visual appearance. The Government will consult the Advisory Committee on Appearance of Bridges and Associated Structures and the Southern District Council during MTRCL's design development of the viaduct.

We also understand some residents' concern about the impact of the SIL(E) on the ecology of Wong Chuk Hang nullah, especially the potential threat to the egrets in the area. Based on preliminary information, the area of the nullah proposed to be decked is not the downstream mouth of the nullah frequented by egrets, and that the nullah along Heung Yip Road is neither a breeding ground of egrets. MTRCL will draw up appropriate mitigation measures to ensure the construction and operation of SIL(E) will not give rise to unacceptable impact on the environment and ecology of the neighbouring areas.

On behalf of the Transport and Housing Bureau, I would like to thank you for your suggestions in relation to the development of the SIL(E).

Yours faithfully,



(Vitus NG)

for Principal Government Engineer/Railway Development
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c.c.

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