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**Report of the Subcommittee on Matters Relating to Railways
for submission to the Panel on Transport**

Purpose

This report gives an account of the work of the Subcommittee on Matters Relating to Railways (the Subcommittee) during the 2009-2010 legislative session.

The Subcommittee

2. The Panel on Transport (the Panel) decided at its first meeting in the current session on 15 October 2009 to form a subcommittee to oversee matters relating to railways. The terms of reference and membership list of the Subcommittee are at **Appendices I and II** respectively.

3. Under the chairmanship of Hon Miriam LAU, the Subcommittee has held 10 meetings with the Administration and the MTR Corporation Limited (MTRCL).

Major work

West Island Line (WIL)

4. WIL is an extension of the existing MTR Island Line, running from Sheung Wan to Kennedy Town with two intermediate stations at Sai Ying Pun and Hong Kong University. The construction of WIL has commenced in July 2009 and is expected to be completed in 2014.

5. The Administration and MTRCL briefed the Subcommittee at its meeting on 9 February 2010 on the progress of the WIL project. The Subcommittee urged the Administration to actively address the concerns raised by the local community, particularly the residents' objection to the construction of ventilation shafts at Hill Road and Bonham Road. MTRCL explained that the air coming from railway ventilation shafts did not contain any undesirable emissions, and all possible ways would be explored to minimize the size of the ventilation shafts in question. In particular, MTRCL had incorporated a requirement into the tender documents

requiring the tenderers to provide solutions for reducing the size and impact of the ventilation shafts. Some members, however, considered it inadequate to require the tenderers to only explore reducing the size of the ventilation shafts. These members opined that consideration should be given to entirely removing the proposed ventilation shafts at Hill Road and Bonham Road from the project scope. The Subcommittee further passed the following motion at the meeting on 9 February 2010 -

"That this Subcommittee strongly requests the Government and MTRCL to designate the option of not constructing ventilation shafts at Hill Road and Bonham Road as a preference in awarding works contracts for the Sai Ying Pun and University Stations of the West Island Line to the contractors."

6. The Administration advised that MTRCL was examining proposals received from tenderers on reducing the size and impact of the proposed ventilation shafts. In end of March 2010, members were pleased to note that MTRCL finally decided to cancel the plan to construct the Hill Road ventilation shaft.

7. The Subcommittee noted that the construction of most of the WIL sections would involve blasting. Members urged the Administration to make appropriate arrangements to notify the local residents of the date and time as well as location of the blasting operations before conducting the blasting works in order to avoid panic of residents concerned. In response to members' request, the Administration agreed to set up community liaison groups which would maintain close liaison with local residents to ensure smooth implementation of the blasting works.

8. Members also expressed concern about the compensation and rehousing arrangement in connection with the necessary land/strata resumption and temporary road closure under this project. As at February 2010, two private buildings had been resumed and reverted to the Government to facilitate tunnel construction works. Some members expressed concern about the arrangements for owners/occupiers who had not yet accepted the compensation offers. The Administration advised that as at mid-January 2010, about 23% of the affected owners/occupiers had accepted the compensation offers made to them. The rest had either accepted provisional payments or were still considering the offers. In parallel, the Housing Department was processing the rehousing of eligible owners/occupiers affected by the resumption.

Hong Kong Section (HKS) of the Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link (XRL)

9. XRL is an express rail of a total length of about 140 km linking up Hong Kong with Guangzhou via Futian and Longhua in Shenzhen and Humen in Dongguan. Its terminus in Guangzhou will be located at Shibi. HKS will be a 26-km long underground rail corridor from the boundary at Huanggang to the West Kowloon

Terminus (WKT).

10. On 20 October 2009, the Chief Executive-in-Council approved the implementation of the HKS of XRL project and the Administration's proposal to seek funding approval from the Finance Committee (FC). The Subcommittee subsequently held a series of meetings from end of October to mid-November 2009 to discuss HKS of XRL. The Subcommittee also received views from deputations including Choi Yuen Tsuen (CYT) villagers and affected residents in urban area, professional bodies, concern groups and various stakeholders. The funding applications for HKS of XRL were approved by FC at its meeting on 16 January 2010. The construction works for the project have started in January 2010 and are expected to be completed in 2015.

11. The Subcommittee has discussed in detail various issues such as the project cost estimates, economic benefits and operational viability, arrangements for co-location of boundary control facilities, location of WKT and its supporting facilities, reprovisioning of CYT villagers and compensations for affected residents. The Subcommittee expressed grave concern about the high project cost estimate, which had risen from \$35.4 billion in April 2008 to \$53.7 billion in September 2009 for the railway works, and from \$4.1 billion to \$11.5 billion in the same period for the non-railway works. The Administration explained that construction prices had surged rapidly in the past three to four years. The latest estimate reflected an overall escalation of the project of some 42% between 2006 and 2009, which was in line with the relevant magnitude of 48% of the WIL project.

12. In view of the high project cost, some members expressed grave concern about the operational viability of the new express link and whether heavy government subsidies for the operation of HKS would be required. These members urged the Administration to consider alternative options to reduce the project cost, including a proposal from some members of the public to relocate the XRL terminus at Kam Sheung Road. The Subcommittee held a meeting to discuss the proposal on the Kam Sheung Road option, during which deputations from the engineering sector were also invited to give views. The Subcommittee noted that the professional bodies of the engineering sector generally supported the WKT option put forward by the Administration.

13. As regards the operational viability, the Administration's assessment was that the operation of HKS of XRL would not require heavy government subsidies in future. The Administration estimated that over 50 years of operation, the quantifiable economic benefits of HKS of XRL would amount to 87 billion in 2009 prices (4% discount rate per annum). Moreover, the construction of HKS was expected to create 11 000 job opportunities. In addition, the Government would receive from MTRCL a service concession payment of about \$28.1 billion for an operation period of 50 years. Upon the end of the service concession, MTRCL would have to return an operating

railway to the Government, the residual value of which was estimated to be around \$31 billion. The Administration advised that HKS of XRL would bring significant economic benefits to Hong Kong.

14. The Subcommittee also expressed grave concerns about the traffic impact brought about by the development of WKT, as the current capacities of several major road junctions in the West Kowloon area were already saturated. The Administration advised that with the implementation of local traffic management schemes and major road improvement works, the road and pedestrian connections in the area would be improved, so that the traffic pressure would be relieved, with reserve capacity at most junctions remaining at above 10%¹ at all times up to 2031.

15. The Subcommittee appreciated the CYT villagers' strong wish to preserve their village from demolition and requested the Administration to consider alternative site options for setting up the necessary railway facilities for HKS of XRL, thus sparing CYT from clearance. After studying all the alternatives sites, the Administration, however, considered that the proposed site location at CYT would affect the least households and was the best place for setting up the relevant facilities. The Subcommittee also examined the special ex-gratia rehousing package proposed for the CYT villagers and other affected parties. Members in general considered that the current package offered better compensation options to affected households than those available under the existing mechanism. Members requested the Administration to provide active assistance in finding suitable agricultural sites for those CYT villagers who wished to continue to farm and maintain their established community neighbourhood after the clearance of CYT.

16. To facilitate the Subcommittee's monitoring of the implementation progress of the HKS of XRL project, the Administration proposed to report the progress at six-monthly intervals. At the request of members, the Administration agreed that the progress reports would cover five major components, including railway tunnels, WKT, electrical and mechanical works, land clearance of CYT and impact on building structure in Tai Kwok Tsui district, as well as employment opportunities for local workers. The Subcommittee has scheduled a meeting in July 2010 to receive the first progress report covering the period between 16 January and 30 June 2010.

Kwun Tong Line Extension (KTE)

17. KTE is an extension of the existing MTR Kwun Tong Line from Yau Ma Tei to the proposed railway stations at Ho Man Tin and Whampoa. The station at Ho Man Tin will provide an interchange with the future Shatin to Central Link. The proposed railway scheme was gazetted under the Railways Ordinance (Cap. 519) in

¹ In general, when the reserve capacity is more than 5%, most vehicles will pass through the road junction without waiting for more than one signal cycle. The larger the reserve capacity, the more traffic flow the road junction will be able to cope with.

end 2009. The Administration is carrying out the detailed design, handling the objection cases under the Railways Ordinance and conducting the Environmental Impact Assessment for KTE. The Administration and MTRCL aim to complete the construction of KTE in 2015.

18. The Subcommittee continued to closely monitor the progress of the KTE project and discussed the progress of work at its meetings on 17 September 2009 and 16 April 2010. The Subcommittee was concerned about the inconvenience posed by the remote location of the Ho Man Tin Station (HOM), which would be provided at the site of ex-Valley Road Estate, and the inadequate provision of station entrances for HOM and the Whampoa Station (WHA). Members requested provision of an additional station entrance at Fat Kwong Street to meet the needs of residents of Ho Man Tin Estate and areas nearby, and to further extend a proposed new footbridge at Chung Yee Street to the carpark in Oi Man Estate. Some members also suggested enhancing the pedestrian connections between WHA and its neighbouring housing estates and the Hung Hom old district with a view to facilitating residents nearby and revitalizing the vacant industrial buildings in the area.

19. The Subcommittee passed the following motion at the meeting on 16 April 2010 -

"That this Committee urges the Government and the MTRCL to increase the number of entrances at both Ho Man Tin Station and Whampoa Station for the convenience of local residents."

20. The Subcommittee further conducted a site visit to the proposed HOM and WHA on 17 May 2010 to examine the arrangements for the proposed station entrances and pedestrian link facilities. Members maintained the view that additional station entrances should be provided as far as possible and suggested various improvements to the pedestrian link facilities to cater for residents' needs, especially the aged residents in the vicinity. MTRCL explained that due to topographical constraints such as the risk posed by the existing water service reservoir at Fat Kwong Street, provision of a station entrance at Fat Kwong Street for HOM was not recommended. The Administration undertook that it would study in collaboration with MTRCL members' suggestions taking into account factors such as the existing pedestrian facilities, road traffic conditions, pedestrian flow forecast, technical viability and cost-effectiveness. The Subcommittee will hold a further meeting in early July 2010 to receive a progress report and follow up on the arrangements for the proposed station entrances and pedestrian link facilities.

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

21. SIL(E) will be a seven-kilometre long medium capacity railway, running between Admiralty and South Horizons with intermediate stations at Ocean Park,

Wong Chuk Hang and Lei Tung. The railway scheme was gazetted in July 2009 and MTRCL has commenced the detailed design of SIL(E). The construction works are expected to commence in 2011 for commissioning in 2015.

22. The Subcommittee discussed the progress of the SIL(E) project at its meetings on 17 September and 4 December 2009 as well as 9 February 2010. Members noted that the proposed railway viaduct section would run adjacent to the Tung Wah Group of Hospitals Jockey Club Rehabilitation Complex (JCRC) at Wong Chuk Hang, and that the management of and parents of occupants accommodated at JCRC had expressed concern about the potential impact on the centre brought about by the railway. Members requested the Administration to re-consider the feasibility of adopting a full tunnel option for SIL(E). MTRCL subsequently proposed amendments to the viaduct section, including erecting noise enclosures at the section adjacent to JCRC, moving the viaduct structure farther away from JCRC by at least 18 metres, and lowering the viaduct structure such that the top of the noise enclosure would be about the same as the ground level of JCRC. The Administration advised that these amendments would be able to address concerns of JCRC on the viaduct on the aspects of height, distance, noise and electromagnetic fields generation. The Administration and MTRCL also endeavoured to further discuss with JCRC and continue to explore the feasibility of moving the viaduct structure farther away from JCRC.

23. Members noted that local residents had also expressed grave concerns about the environmental and traffic impacts of the proposed temporary barging facilities at Tin Wan Praya Road, and the storage of explosives at Chung Hom Shan. The Subcommittee passed the following motion at the meeting on 17 September 2009 -

"That this Subcommittee requests the MTRCL and the Government to re-examine the locations of the following facilities and the alignment of the South Island Line (East) (SIL(E)), including -

1. the temporary Barging Point at Tin Wan Praya Road;
2. the temporary magazine at Chung Hom Shan;
3. the rail alignment for the section adjacent to the Tung Wah Group of Hospitals Jockey Club Rehabilitation Complex.

This Subcommittee also requests the MTRCL and the Government to consider adopting a full tunnel option for the construction of SIL(E), and expeditiously consult this Council and the public on the financing arrangements for SIL(E), including the property developments above the rail stations."

24. In response to concerns expressed by the Subcommittee, MTRCL subsequently explored co-using the barging facility at a work site of the Drainage Services Department at Telegraph Bay as a replacement to the Tin Wan Praya Road in Kellett Bay. The proposal, however, met strong objection from local residents, who were concerned about the impact of the facility on the environment and the local community. At the meeting on 9 February 2010, members urged the Administration to explore alternative locations and passed the following motion -

"That this Subcommittee strongly requests the Government and the MTRCL not to choose Telegraph Bay as the site for the temporary barging point, so as to avoid causing substantial adverse impact on the residents of Pok Fu Lam, including those living in Baguio Villa and Residence Bel-Air as well as the schools nearby."

25. The Administration advised that the route for transporting the excavated materials was being refined taking into consideration residents' concerns and local circumstances. Moreover, road improvement works would be carried out to cope with additional traffic so arising. At the request of members, the Administration had agreed to consider alternative locations, e.g. the Aberdeen Typhoon Shelter and Tai Shue Wan of Ocean Park. The Administration, however, subsequently advised that having explored the alternative locations, Telegraph Bay was considered the best option after balancing the views of all stakeholders. In response to members' concern, the Administration and MTRCL pledged to continue to consult the Southern District Council and explain to the stakeholders on the proposal of setting up the proposed barging point at Telegraph Bay.

26. Notwithstanding the Administration's advice that Chung Hom Shan was the most suitable location having considered various factors including the distance from residential area and access by vehicles, members considered that the Administration should re-consider setting up the temporary magazine at Shek O Quarry in order to minimize impact on local residents. The Subcommittee passed the following motion at the meeting on 9 February 2010 -

"That this Subcommittee strongly requests the Government and the MTRCL to abort the proposed setting up of a temporary magazine at Chung Hom Shan and to report other feasible alternatives to this Subcommittee as soon as possible."

27. In response to the above motion, the Administration and MTRCL had completed a quantitative risk assessment for the proposed temporary magazines at Chung Hom Shan and Shek O Quarry. The Administration advised in writing on 3 June 2010 that the quantitative risk assessment had revealed that the risks associated with the Shek O Quarry were significantly higher than those of the Chung Hom Shan site, and concluded that the latter was a suitable location for setting up a temporary

magazine site for SIL(E).

28. Members noted that, as a way of bridging the funding gap of the project, the Administration proposed to reserve the Wong Chuk Hang Estate site and the site to the north of the Ocean Park Station for depot/station and topside private housing development. At the request of the Subcommittee, the Administration undertook to further consult members on the relevant details once the funding arrangements were decided by the Government.

Railway incidents

29. The Subcommittee discussed several railway incidents which occurred between August 2009 and January 2010 affecting the Tseung Kwan O Line, the Tsuen Wan Line and the East Rail Line respectively. Members expressed grave concern about the frequency of railway incidents after the rail merger and the monitoring mechanism to ensure railway safety. Some members queried whether the recent railway incidents had been caused by manpower shortage and service outsourcing of MTRCL. In this connection, the Subcommittee requested MTRCL to provide detailed information on the Corporation's outsourced maintenance work and the relevant monitoring system. Some members urged MTRCL to cease service outsourcing as they considered that service outsourcing might have resulted in service standard decline.

30. MTRCL assured members that the Corporation had a well established monitoring system to ensure that its outsourced maintenance work met the required standards. The Corporation advised that it applied the same standards and requirements to maintenance tasks carried out by MTR in-house staff and contractor staff. In respect of infrastructure equipment, there was a team of dedicated engineering staff responsible for ensuring that the outsourced maintenance work met the performance levels set out in the contracts with the contractors.

31. Some members considered that the Administration had failed to monitor MTRCL's railway service performance and handling of railway incidents. They considered that the Administration should step up monitoring effort and impose financial penalty on MTRCL in case of substandard performance. The Administration advised that it attached great importance to the maintenance of safety and reliability of railway services and would ensure that all railway incidents were investigated to enhance improvements in passenger service and reliability. The Administration pointed out that the MTR's train service performance had remained high since the rail merger, with 99.9% of passengers reaching their destinations within five minutes of their scheduled arrival times. According to the Administration, MTRCL had invested \$4 billion each year in the maintenance, repair and renewal of its railway assets.

32. Notwithstanding MTRCL's advice that the total number of delays of eight minutes or more in 2009 had reduced by about 20% when compared to that of 2005, some members expressed concern whether the number of delays of 30 minutes or more had increased. They requested MTRCL to provide the respective numbers of incidents of service being delayed for more than eight minutes, 30 minutes and one hour since 2005, with a breakdown by cause of those delays for further deliberation by the Subcommittee.

Railway station design

33. The Subcommittee received a briefing by MTRCL on the development of the railway station design in reflecting the historic and cultural elements and the Corporation's plan to promote art in the MTR system. Members appreciated the meaningful purpose of such promotion work in enhancing opportunities for commuters to enjoy different art forms while travelling and for artists to showcase their masterpieces.

34. Members noted that the "art in mtr" concept was introduced in 1998 upon the opening of the Airport Express. Three art pieces with a theme of connecting Hong Kong with the world were put up at the In-town Check-in Hall of the Hong Kong Station, the subway links between Central Station and Hong Kong Station as well as the Airport Express Departure Hall of the Tsing Yi Station respectively. Thereafter, live performances, art exhibitions, display of artwork had gradually been introduced in the MTR system. Members expressed support for the Corporation's plan to incorporate art elements with local cultural and historical favour into MTR stations in new railway lines as well as existing lines during major renovation works. Some members suggested that MTRCL should devote more resources for the promotion work and enhance public participation in the selection of exhibits for display at MTR stations. MTRCL indicated that it would take into consideration members' suggestions and comments in launching new programmes on the development of the railway station design.

Other issues

35. The Subcommittee also discussed draft proposed amendments to the Mass Transit Railway Bylaws (Cap. 556B) and the Mass Transit Railway (North-West Railway) Bylaw (Cap. 556H) as well as a funding proposal on the protection works for Shatin to Central Link in Wan Chai Development Phase II.

Recommendation

36. The Panel is invited to note the work of the Subcommittee.

Panel on Transport

Subcommittee on Matters Relating to Railways

Terms of Reference

To follow up various issues relating to the planning and implementation of new railway projects, and the operation of existing railways as follows:

Planning and implementation of new railway projects

- (a) planning and financing of new railway projects;
- (b) environmental impact assessment of new railway projects;
- (c) resumption of land arising from the implementation of new railway projects under the Railways Ordinance (Cap. 519);
- (d) progress update on the implementation of new railway projects;
- (e) provision of supporting public infrastructure for new railway projects; and
- (f) co-ordination of public transport services arising from the commissioning of new railway lines.

Railway operation

- (a) performance of existing railway lines including train service performance and safety management;
- (b) maintenance programme; and
- (c) train service disruptions and breakdowns, and arrangements for handling emergency situations.

Matters relating to corporate governance of the post-merger corporation and fares should be dealt with by the Panel on Transport.

**Legislative Council
Panel on Transport**

Subcommittee on Matters Relating to Railways

Membership list for 2009-2010 session

Chairman	Hon Miriam LAU Kin-ye, GBS, JP
Members	Ir Dr Hon Raymond HO Chung-tai, SBS, S.B.St.J., JP Hon LAU Kong-wah, JP Hon Andrew CHENG Kar-foo Hon Abraham SHEK Lai-him, SBS, JP Hon LI Fung-ying, SBS, JP Hon WONG Kwok-hing, MH Hon LEE Wing-tat Hon Jeffrey LAM Kin-fung, SBS, JP Hon CHEUNG Hok-ming, GBS, JP Hon Ronny TONG Ka-wah, SC Hon KAM Nai-wai, MH Hon WONG Sing-chi Hon IP Wai-ming, MH Hon Mrs Regina IP LAU Suk-ye, GBS, JP Hon LEUNG Kwok-hung (up to 28 January 2010) (rejoined on 19 May 2010) Hon Albert CHAN Wai-yip (up to 28 January 2010) (rejoined on 27 May 2010)
	(Total: 17 members)
Clerk	Ms Joanne MAK
Legal Adviser	Mr Kelvin LEE
Date	2 July 2010