

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

**Facilities and Design of MTR Train Compartments**

At the request of Members, this paper provides information on the additional multi-purpose areas on MTR trains and suggestions for female-only compartments on trains.

**(I) Additional Multi-purpose Areas on MTR Trains**

2. The Corporation previously provided one multi-purpose area in each of the eight compartments for trains on the MTR Island, Tsuen Wan, Kwun Tong, and Tseung Kwan O Lines for the convenience of passengers in wheelchair and those with baby prams or luggage. Each multi-purpose area could accommodate one wheelchair. With only one such space in each train compartment, passengers in wheelchair travelling together have to ride in separate train cars. Having studied ways to improve facilities for persons with disabilities, the Corporation decided to introduce more multi-purpose areas to these trains.

3. The Corporation is committed to providing all passengers, including persons with disabilities, with convenient and barrier-free railway service. It also continuously enhances its facilities, improves its travelling environment and upgrades its services to provide even more enjoyable journeys for passengers.

4. With an aim to providing more convenience to passengers in wheelchair and those travelling with baby prams and luggage, the Corporation launched a trial in May 2008 to introduce six additional multi-purpose areas on three trains on the Island Line. The increase in multi-purpose areas allows four passengers in wheelchair to travel together in the same train car.

5. After the launch of the trial, the Corporation interviewed about 360 passengers in July 2008 to gauge their views on the extended multi-purpose areas. 90% of the respondents were satisfied with the additional multi-purpose areas while 95% were of the view that the multi-purpose areas offered more convenience to passengers in wheelchair as well as those travelling with baby prams and luggage.

6. The Corporation announced at the end of 2008 that it would add three more multi-purpose areas in the middle four train compartments in each

of the 106 trains operating on the Island Line, Tsuen Wan Line, Kwun Tong Line and Tseung Kwan O Line. This would bring the total number of multi-purpose areas to 20 on each train.

7. In December 2009, the Corporation introduced fare concessions for recipients aged between 12 and 64 of the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance with 100% disability and Disability Allowance. The fare concessions encourage persons with disabilities to get out more and take part in outside activities, helping them to further integrate into the society. The extended multi-purpose areas bring added convenience to persons with disabilities travelling on the MTR.

8. When the installation of additional multi-purpose areas on Island Line trains was near completion in October 2010, the Corporation interviewed 584 passengers to collect their views on the new facility. The results showed that some 80% of the respondents were supportive of the increased multi-purpose areas and more than 80% indicated that they would like to see more multi-purpose areas installed.

9. The Corporation has been closely monitoring the use of the new multi-purpose areas and observed that they are able to meet the needs of passengers, with smooth passenger flow being maintained while passengers in wheelchair have found it easier to move around inside train compartment.

10. The Corporation will gradually introduce the additional multi-purpose areas to the trains on the Tsuen Wan, Kwun Tong and Tseung Kwan O Lines. The enhancement programme is expected to be completed within 2011. For the convenience of other passengers, leaning ledges and straphangers are also being retrofitted in the multi-purpose areas as part of the programme.

## **(II) Designated female-only compartments**

11. There have been suggestions from time to time that female-only compartments should be introduced on the MTR to protect female passengers from sexual assault. In fact, Hong Kong is one of the world's safest cities. The security of passengers travelling on the MTR is looked after by MTR staff and the Railway District of the Hong Kong Police Force (the Police). The number of crimes that happened in the railway accounts for about 1.3% of the total crime in Hong Kong in 2009, which is low taking into account that about 3.9 million passengers ride on the MTR each day.

12. MTR staff are trained to be on the alert for crime and they provide

close support and cooperation to the Police. Furthermore, the Police and the Corporation regularly hold joint anti-crime campaigns to raise passenger awareness on looking after their own safety as well as taking care of their belongings. The Corporation also puts up posters at MTR stations to encourage passengers not to remain silent but report incidents of indecent assault immediately to the Police or station staff should they encounter such occurrence.

13. The Corporation has looked into the suggestion, taking into consideration overseas experiences, challenges in enforcement, possible impact on train service as well as legal implications.

14. It is noted that female-only train compartments are not a feature in most of the world's major railways. Only a few jurisdictions such as Japan, Indonesia and Dubai offer them. Even then, female-only compartments are provided only during weekdays or during rush hours.

15. As most MTR trains are of an open design, introducing female-only compartments would reduce the flexibility of passenger movement between train compartments and affect evacuation arrangements. Staff will also have practical difficulties in controlling passengers from passing through train compartments.

16. Furthermore, the MTR offers one of the most frequent services amongst metros in the world. With trains calling in at platforms every two minutes or so during peak periods, it would be difficult for staff to physically stop male passengers from entering female-only compartments. Strict enforcement would also inevitably cause delay to train service.

17. Besides, the location of staircases, escalators and lifts on platforms vary from one station to another. If a train compartment is designated for female passengers only, it would affect smooth passenger flow to and from platforms. It is also uncertain whether such an arrangement would lead to longer waiting time for male passengers since the choice of train cars available for them would be reduced.

18. When considering whether to introduce female-only compartments, due consideration must be given to possible breach of the Sex Discrimination Ordinance. Questions such as why would male passengers be refused the equal services offered to female passengers and should male-only compartments be provided so as to ensure both sexes are treated equally would arise.

## Conclusion

19. The Corporation considers that introducing female-only compartments on trains is not a practicable solution in Hong Kong's MTR system, which is one of the busiest railways in the world.

20. There would be enormous challenges in enforcement as well as adverse impact on smooth and efficient train operations.

21. Owing to the above difficulties and the legal concern, the Corporation has no plan to introduce female-only compartments on any MTR line. The Corporation will continue to work closely with the Police to take all reasonable measures to prevent crime within the railway premises for the security of passengers.

MTR Corporation  
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