

政府總部
運輸及房屋局

運輸科
香港花園道美利大廈



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(No. of Pages : 4)

4 May 2011

Dear Sir/Madam,

South Island Line (East)

We received your e-mail of 21 April 2011 raising your concerns about the railway scheme of the South Island Line (East) (SIL(E)). Our response is as follows :

The Railway Viaduct

We note your views of building the SIL(E) entirely underground and concerns of visual impact brought about by the railway viaduct. The MTR Corporation Limited (MTRCL) has looked into various options and incorporated in the scheme the views collected in two rounds of public consultation, such as incorporating an additional section of tunnel adjacent to Sham Wan Towers and reducing the length of the viaduct along 'Nam Fung Section' by about 250 metres.

We consider that based on the prevailing site conditions, it is not the best choice to adopt the 'tunnel option' for the SIL(E). If the SIL(E) were to be built entirely underground, the railway depot at Wong Chuk Hang would have to be lowered by about 14 metres and excavation of an additional one million cubic metres of hard rock would be required, as compared with the 'viaduct option'. The project would be delayed by about 3 to 4 years. Besides, the stations near the Ocean Park and at Wong Chuk Hang would also have to be built underground. In this case, the level difference between the station platform and station entrance would become larger, making the travelling time longer and causing inconvenience to the passengers. Moreover, during the construction of the tunnel across the Aberdeen Channel, about two-thirds of the navigation channel would have to be temporarily closed. This

would leave only a 35-metre fairway for marine traffic, and several existing shipyards at the northern shore of Aberdeen channel would have to be resumed and cleared for the construction of ventilation buildings and floodgates. In addition, about 16,000 square metres of the land inside the Hong Kong Police College would be required temporarily for at least 3 years and the Tactical Training Complex Building would have to be demolished which would affect the operation of the College.

To avoid the nuisances caused by the open cut tunnel construction at Wong Chuk Hang and the construction of 'shallow' tunnel across the Aberdeen Channel, the railway tunnel will have to be built inside the bedrock and have to stay very deep under the Aberdeen Channel. This will require all stations and the depot to be built deep underground which will not fulfil the operational and fire safety requirements.

We have to strike a reasonable balance among various other factors, such as the programme implications to the community, the benefits and impacts, as well as relevant planning and environmental considerations. All things considered, the viaduct design is considered to be a more practical option.

Mitigation Measures for Viaduct Section

The SIL(E) is a designated project under the Environmental Impact Assessment Ordinance (EIAO) and the MTRCL has completed an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) report in accordance with the requirements of the EIA Study Brief and Technical Memorandum on the EIA Process under the EIAO. The EIA report which includes a Visual Impact Assessment of the viaduct was submitted to the Environmental Protection Department (EPD) and has been approved by the Director of Environmental Protection (DEP) with conditions. You may refer to the EIA Report and relevant conditions of approval on the web-page of the EPD (<http://www.epd.gov.hk/eia/english/register/aeiara/all.html>).

Subsequent to the approval of the EIA Report, the DEP issued the Environmental Permit (EP) on 8 December 2010. The MTRCL should ensure that the SIL(E) project will be designed, constructed and operated in accordance with the recommendations described in the EIA Report and the EP, including implementation of the proposed mitigation measures. The EP is available for inspection on the EPD's website (http://www.epd.gov.hk/eia/english/register/aep/all_2010.html) or at the EIA Ordinance Register Office.

Revitalizing Southern District and Wong Chuk Hang Nullah

The project will include the provision of a public transport interchange (PTI) under the proposed railway station at Wong Chuk Hang to facilitate passengers to interchange between railway and other modes of public transport. Improvement measures to existing road networks in Wong Chuk Hang are also included to cope with

the traffic growth with a view to improving the traffic conditions in the Southern District. Apart from transport benefits, the railway scheme will bring economic benefits to the vast travelling public and businesses to the area. Improved accessibility will enhance tourism and commercial activities; and further promote urban rejuvenation and redevelopment in the Southern District.

Decking of an upstream section of the Wong Chuk Hang nullah has been proposed to facilitate the construction of the PTI and the associated road works. The PTI will become the vital supporting facilities for the station at Wong Chuk Hang. There will also be landscaping works along the downstream of the nullah to bring a more pleasant environment to the area.

Happy Valley Station

The MTRCL had studied four options on the provision of a station at Happy Valley. Due considerations had been given on : (a) Happy Valley has scattered communes. In 2016, the estimated catchment population of the station is only around 19,000 and the projected patronage estimated will be less than 10,000; (b) if a station is to be provided, the 3-km tunnel section between the Admiralty and the Southern District would be increased by about 50% to 80% in length, inducing longer travelling time as well as increasing the construction costs by about 1.6 to 2.8 billion at 2006 price level. This would have significant impact on the transport and economic benefits of the SIL(E) scheme; (c) during construction, there would be serious traffic disruptions on roads within the vicinity of the tram terminus and the racecourse at Happy Valley; and (d) the longer tunnel would require additional excavation and would prolong the construction period by about 10 to 31 months. This will go against strong public expectations for early completion of the SIL(E). Besides, the public views on building a station at Happy Valley during the public consultations were divided. Having considered the programme implications, the benefits to and impacts on the community, the proposal for a station at Happy Valley had not been pursued.

Current Position of the SIL(E)

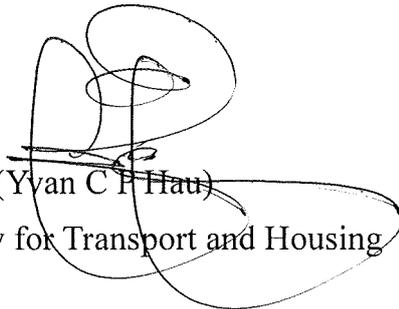
Pursuant to section 11 of the Railways Ordinance, the SIL(E) railway scheme had been submitted to the Chief Executive in Council for consideration and the railway scheme was authorized in November 2010. Notwithstanding this, this Bureau together with the government departments concerned and the MTRCL have taken and will continue to take into account your views in considering the mitigation measures to minimize the negative impact of the railway scheme.

Conclusion

Thank you very much for your suggestions and concerns on the SIL(E). The SIL(E) will extend the existing mass transit railway network from Admiralty Station to Ap Lei Chau. The project not only will enhance the existing railway service, but also further improve the traffic conditions in the Southern District. Apart from the transport benefits, the railway scheme will also bring huge economic benefits to the vast travelling public and promote further development in Hong Kong. I hope you will appreciate that early completion of the SIL(E) will greatly enhance the transport infrastructure for the south of Hong Kong Island. Every effort will be made to minimize the impacts on the community and environment.

In the meantime, if you have further views on the scheme, please feel free to contact us, quoting the above case reference.

Yours sincerely,



(Yan C P Hau)
for Secretary for Transport and Housing