

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(1)1421/12-13(02)

Ref. : CB1/PS/1/12

Panel on Transport

Subcommittee on Matters Relating to Railways
Meeting on 5 July 2013

Updated background brief on railway service performance

Purpose

This paper provides background information on railway service performance. It also summarises major views and concerns expressed by Members of the Legislative Council ("LegCo") and members of the Subcommittee on Matters Relating to Railways ("the Subcommittee") about railway service performance, and the relevant measures taken by the Administration and the MTR Corporation Limited ("MTRCL").

Background

Role of the Administration

2. The Administration and MTRCL are both responsible for railway service performance and their respective roles are described in the following paragraphs. The Administration requires MTRCL to provide safe and reliable railway services at all times. The Transport and Housing Bureau is responsible for overseeing the overall policy on monitoring railway safety and regulating railway services. The Transport Department ("TD") and the Electrical and Mechanical Services Department ("EMSD") are responsible for monitoring the service and safety performance aspects of railway services provided by MTRCL respectively.

3. TD is responsible for monitoring the service performance of the various railway lines of MTRCL. In this regard, MTRCL is required to comply with the service standards stipulated by the Administration. There are currently three major criteria for measuring railway service

performance, namely, train service delivery (i.e. actual train trips), train punctuality (i.e. the percentage of trains completing their journeys on time) and passenger journeys on time (i.e. the percentage of the total number of passengers arriving at their destinations on time and without experiencing a delay of more than 5 minutes). These service standards are commonly adopted internationally. Other performance indicators include reliability of add value machine and ticket issuing machine, reliability of ticket gate, reliability of escalator and reliability of passenger lift. TD oversees whether MTRCL meets the requirements of the above service standards by examining the returns regularly submitted by MTRCL on its service performance, and investigates complaints received about railway service in order to monitor railway services. If MTRCL fails to meet any requirement, TD will require MTRCL to take remedial measures immediately.

4. In addition, TD examines regular reports submitted by MTRCL on its service performance. TD also conducts on-site investigations and inspections to ensure that railway service meets passenger demand. If necessary, TD will urge MTRCL to adjust its service arrangements based on changes in passenger demand within the constraints of the operational system (such as the signalling system and track available).

5. In case of railway incidents, TD and EMSD will follow up and request for an incident report from MTRCL. They will conduct investigations, provide advice to MTRCL on the preliminary identification of the cause of the incident and the immediate actions required. TD and EMSD will monitor the progress made by MTRCL in identifying the cause and implementing improvement measures.

Role of MTRCL

6. MTRCL's service performance is bound by the Mass Transit Railway ("MTR") Ordinance (Cap. 556). In case of a substantial or persistent failure to comply with Section 14 of Cap. 556 or the Operating Agreement, the Chief Executive in Council may impose financial penalty on MTRCL. In extreme cases, the Administration may suspend or even revoke the franchise of MTRCL. MTRCL should, therefore, be in compliance with the requirements of Cap. 556 and the Operating Agreement.

7. As MTR is a mass transit system, its design has to cope with the need of a large volume of passengers. MTRCL should set its service levels based on passenger travelling patterns and patronage in different areas in order to provide a level of service that meets the need of passengers. Moreover, MTRCL has to closely monitor the service level

of each railway line and will adjust its service where necessary to meet the overall passenger demand.

8. Besides, MTRCL is required to establish a set of Customer Service Pledges, and to develop appropriate arrangements for measuring customer satisfaction with its railway services and for handling passengers' complaints and suggestions. MTRCL is required to furnish a report to TD every year summarising the complaints and suggestions it has received during the report period in relation to its railway services, and any action it has taken. It also submits to the TD an annual report on its service performance. In addition, MTRCL provides information on its performance quarterly via production of leaflets and updates on its website.

Major safety concerns about railway service performance

9. Members have discussed railway service performance in the Subcommittee, and raised Council questions in the Fourth and Fifth LegCos. Members' major concerns about railway service performance include *train frequency*, *incident handling* and *penalty to MTRCL*. Members' major concerns and measures taken by the Administration and MTRCL are summarised in the ensuing paragraphs.

Train frequency

10. Members have expressed concerns over MTR's carrying capacity, in particular those for service along the MTR West Rail Line in Tuen Mun, Yuen Long and Tsuen Wan. They also showed concern over the crowding problem in stations along the Kwun Tong Line and the over-loading of the East Rail Line and Ma On Shan Line.

Measures taken by the Administration and MTRCL

11. According to the Administration, during the early stage of operations of the West Rail Line in 2003, trains ran at a frequency of 3.5 minutes during peak periods. Following the opening of the Kowloon Southern Link in 2009, which extended the West Rail Line from Nam Cheong Station to Hung Hom Station, train frequency has been enhanced to 3 minutes, raising the carrying capacity from 39,900 to 46,900 per hour in one direction in order to meet the anticipated passenger growth.

12. Besides, since 24 March 2012, MTRCL has provided an additional 368 train trips per week on the three busiest rail lines, namely Tsuen Wan Line, Kwun Tong Line and Island Line. Those trips carrying an additional 800,000 passengers help alleviate the overcrowding in train

compartments and reduce passengers' waiting time.

13. On the other hand, because the East Rail Line is limited by its signalling system, and that it also has to cater for the Guangdong-Kowloon Through Train, it is unable to increase train frequency. Immediate procurement of new trains would have little help, as the current train frequency of East Rail Line has almost reached the limit of the signalling system. When the Shatin to Central Link ("SCL") Tai Wai to Hung Hom Section is in service in 2018, it is estimated that approximately 23% (about 74,000 passengers per day) of the southbound passengers from the New Territories will switch to use SCL to travel to urban areas, thus diverting passenger flow. The signalling system of East Rail Line will be upgraded in 2020 under SCL project to enable an increase in train frequency. The overall carrying capacity will further increase by about 12,000 passengers per day when SCL Hung Hom to Admiralty Section is in operation.

Incident handling

14. In response to service disruption incidents, members of the Subcommittee requested that MTRCL should have disseminated information to passengers in a timely manner to facilitate their consideration of taking other modes of transport. MTRCL should review its arrangements of information dissemination. Furthermore, there was room for improvement in deployment of emergency feeder bus service in the light of the incidents.

15. In addition, at the meeting on 4 November 2010, members of the Subcommittee passed the motion: "That, as quite a number of serious incidents and disruptions have occurred on the railway systems of MTRCL over the past several years and there has been no improvement in the measures it has adopted in response to these incidents and the way it has handled them; its performance in handling the recent incidents has been more than disappointing and has aroused concern about and dissatisfaction with its railway operations among members of the public; this Subcommittee demands that MTRCL withholds the bonus payments for this year to its Chief Executive Officer and other management staff concerned as a punishment."

Measures taken by the Administration and MTRCL

16. With regard to the alert system, MTRCL is required by TD to issue an Amber or Red Alert message to TD and other public transport operators in accordance with the seriousness of the railway incident. MTRCL is also required to notify TD within 8 minutes on any service disruption incident that has occurred for 8 minutes or is expected to last for 8 minutes

or more. Besides, according to MTR Regulations, MTRCL should report to EMSD any incident that occurred at any part of the entire railway premises which has a direct bearing on the safe operation of the railway.

17. In case of a major incident, MTRCL will activate the Incident Control Post to deal with the incident together with Administration departments including Fire Services Department, Police and TD in accordance with established procedures of contingency plans so as to expedite safe evacuation of passengers. In case the power supply to MTRCL is affected, a backup system on board of the trains will be activated to supply electricity to major facilities on trains, including some of the lighting, ventilation and communication systems. Moreover, staff will be swiftly deployed to assist with passenger detrainment.

18. Furthermore, MTRCL has installed LCD screens at conspicuous locations of station entry gates at 20 interchange stations to provide train service information and other important notices during service suspensions or major disruptions. All stations will have LCD screens installed by the end of 2013.

Penalty to MTRCL

19. At a Subcommittee meeting on 4 December 2009, members considered that the Administration failed to monitor MTRCL's effectiveness in its handling of railway incidents. They suggested that the Administration should step up monitoring effort and impose a penalty system on MTRCL, such as issuing warning letters to or imposing fines on MTRCL in case of substandard performance. On 28 June 2012, the Subcommittee members expressed concerns on railway service performance. They suggested that MTRCL should introduce a mechanism for the offer of compensations to passengers affected in railway incidents, and the Administration should consider apportioning blame for railway incidents or introducing a penalising mechanism.

Measures taken by the Administration and MTRCL

20. The Administration completed the review of the Fare Adjustment Mechanism ("FAM") of MTRCL in April 2013 and under the revised FAM, there will be a service performance arrangement whereby a fine, ranging from \$1 million to \$15 million, will be imposed on MTRCL for serious service disruptions, defined as disruptions of 31 minutes or above. The Administration agrees with the argument advanced by MTRCL that disruptions of a shorter duration should not be counted for this purpose in order not to put undue pressure on MTRCL's frontline staff who otherwise might be tempted or pressured into rushing their repair works to avoid the

penalty, putting quality or safety at risk. It should also be noted that disruptions caused by factors outside MTRCL's control such as passengers' behaviours and bad weather, will not be counted either. The proposed arrangement is similar to some practices adopted overseas, such as in Singapore and Melbourne. Any fine imposed will be credited to a fare concession account for fare concessions through the time-limited "10% Same Day Second Trip Discount" scheme.

Recent Development

21. The Administration plans to brief the Subcommittee on MTRCL's service performance at the meeting to be held on 5 July 2013.

Relevant papers

22. A list of relevant papers is at **Appendix**.

Council Business Division 1
Legislative Council Secretariat
3 July 2013

Updated background brief on railway service performance

List of relevant papers

Date of meeting	Meeting	Paper
16 December 2008	Subcommittee on Matters Relating to Railways	Agenda (Item I) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr08-09/english/panels/tp/tp_rdp/agenda/rdp20081216.htm Minutes (LC Paper No. CB(1)1786/08-09) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr08-09/english/panels/tp/tp_rdp/minutes/rdp20081216.pdf
16 January 2009	Subcommittee on Matters Relating to Railways	Agenda (Item VI) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr08-09/english/panels/tp/tp_rdp/agenda/rdp20090116.htm Minutes (LC Paper No. CB(1) 1146 /08-09) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr08-09/english/panels/tp/tp_rdp/minutes/rdp20090116.pdf
4 December 2009	Subcommittee on Matters Relating to Railways	Agenda (Item III) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr09-10/english/panels/tp/tp_rdp/agenda/rdp20091204.htm Minutes (LC Paper No. CB(1)1016/09-10) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr09-10/english/panels/tp/tp_rdp/minutes/rdp20091204.pdf
26 March 2010	Subcommittee on Matters Relating to Railways	Agenda (Item I) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr09-10/english/panels/tp/tp_rdp/agenda/rdp20100326.htm Minutes (LC Paper No. CB(1)2729/09-10) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr09-10/english/panels/tp/tp_rdp/minutes/rdp20100326.pdf
2 June 2010	Council Meeting	Question No. 17 – Railway service performance http://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/201006/02/P201006020193.htm

Date of meeting	Meeting	Paper
4 November 2010	Subcommittee on Matters Relating to Railways	<p>Agenda (Item IV) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr10-11/english/panels/tp/tp_rdp/agenda/rdp20101104.htm</p> <p>Minutes (LC Paper No. CB(1)1068/10-11) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr10-11/english/panels/tp/tp_rdp/minutes/rdp20101104.pdf</p>
12 January 2011	Council Meeting	<p>Question No 19 – MTR trains' carrying capacity and services http://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/201101/12/P201101120164.htm</p>
21 February 2011	Subcommittee on Matters Relating to Railways	<p>Agenda (Item I) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr10-11/english/panels/tp/tp_rdp/agenda/rdp20110221.htm</p> <p>Minutes (LC Paper No. CB(1)3029 /10-11) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr10-11/english/panels/tp/tp_rdp/minutes/rdp20110221.pdf</p>
9 March 2011	Council Meeting	<p>Question No. 12 – Railway safety http://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/201103/09/P201103090115.htm</p>
18 March 2011	Subcommittee on Matters Relating to Railways	<p>Agenda (Item IV) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr10-11/english/panels/tp/tp_rdp/agenda/rdp20110318.htm</p> <p>Minutes (LC Paper No. CB(1)2913/10-11) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr10-11/english/panels/tp/tp_rdp/minutes/rdp20110318.pdf</p>
11 May 2011	Council Meeting	<p>Question No. 8 – Service and safety of MTR West Rail Line http://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/201105/11/P201105110117.htm</p>
8 June 2011	Council Meeting	<p>Question No. 15 – Rail service and incidents of MTRCL http://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/201106/08/P201106080126.htm</p>

Date of meeting	Meeting	Paper
19 October 2011	Council Meeting	Question No. 8 – MTR train services and station facilities http://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/201110/19/P201110190155.htm
4 November 2011	Subcommittee on Matters Relating to Railways	Agenda (Item IV) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr11-12/english/panels/tp/tp_rdp/agenda/rdp20111104.htm Minutes (LC Paper No. CB(1)783/11-12) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr11-12/english/panels/tp/tp_rdp/minutes/rdp20111104.pdf
8 February 2012	Council Meeting	Question No. 3 – Contingency arrangements for railway incidents http://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/201202/08/P201202080250.htm
9 May 2012	Council Meeting	Question No. 20 – Crowd control in MTR stations http://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/201205/09/P201205090211.htm
28 June 2012	Subcommittee on Matters Relating to Railways	Agenda (Item I) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr11-12/english/panels/tp/tp_rdp/agenda/rdp20120628.htm Minutes (LC Paper No. CB(1)2626/11-12) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr11-12/english/panels/tp/tp_rdp/minutes/rdp20120628.pdf
20 February 2013	Council Meeting	Question No. 6 – Services of MTR East Rail Line and Ma On Shan Line and KMB in North District http://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/201302/20/P201302200464.htm
19 April 2013	Panel on Transport	Agenda (Item III) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr12-13/english/panels/tp/agenda/tp20130419.htm

Date of meeting	Meeting	Paper
24 May 2013	Subcommittee on Matters Relating to Railways	Agenda (Item V) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr12-13/english/panels/tp/tp_rdp/agenda/rdp20130524.htm

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