

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

**Progress Update and Commissioning Arrangement of  
the West Island Line**

**Introduction**

This paper aims to brief Members on the latest progress and commissioning arrangement of the West Island Line (WIL).

**Background**

2. The WIL is a three-kilometre long railway extension of the existing Island Line from Sheung Wan Station to Kennedy Town Station with two intermediate stations at Sai Ying Pun and the University of Hong Kong (the alignment is at **Annex I**).

3. Under the terms of the Operating Agreement between the Government and the MTR Corporation Limited (MTRCL) signed in 2007 upon implementation of the rail merger, the WIL, being the extension of the existing Island Line owned by the MTRCL, is an ‘ownership’ project. Under the ‘ownership’ approach, the MTRCL will be responsible for the financing, design, construction, operation and maintenance of the railway project and will own the railway. As the construction cost of railways is so enormous, the WIL is not considered financially viable based on its fare and non-fare revenues alone. Therefore, the Government, in 2009, decided to provide a non-recurrent capital grant of \$12,700 million (Net Present Value as at June 2009) as the funding support to bridge the funding gap<sup>1</sup> of the project. The non-recurrent capital grant also

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<sup>1</sup> A railway is considered not financially viable if the present value of all its projected revenues net of projected expenditures falls short of the expected return on capital. During the initial public offering (IPO) of the MTRCL in 2000, the Government acknowledged to investors through the IPO Prospectus that the return required by the MTRCL for any new railway project would ordinarily be between 1% and 3% above Weighted Average of Cost of Capital (WACC). This shortfall is known as the funding gap.

represents the maximum commitment of the Government in providing the funding support to the MTRCL for the WIL project. After the Government and the MTRCL signed the Project Agreement for the WIL in July 2009, the works of the WIL project commenced on 14 July 2009.

4. In order to cope with the commissioning of the WIL, the Government also entrusted the implementation of the associated 'Essential Public Infrastructure Works' (EPIW) to the MTRCL. These include construction and improvement of the pedestrian and linking facilities for providing safe, convenient and barrier-free access to the railway stations, such that the consequential social and economic benefits of the WIL can be fully realized. The EPIW, which are constructed in parallel with the railway works, include the construction of :-

- a covered pedestrian link at Sands Street, including a lift at the junction of Sands Street and Rock Hill Street with two sections of single-way escalators;
- a footbridge across Pok Fu Lam Road for connecting to the University of Hong Kong Centennial Campus; and
- a boarding and alighting area for green minibuses (GMBs) at Kennedy Town Station.

At present, the pedestrian link at Sands Street has already been opened. The progress of works for the footbridge across Pok Fu Lam Road and the boarding and alighting area for GMB at Kennedy Town Station is smooth and should be ready for use when the WIL is commissioned.

5. At the special meeting of this Subcommittee in June 2014, the MTRCL briefed Members on the progress of the WIL project and reported that there was a delay in the ground freezing works for the construction of the adit between the Ki Ling Lane entrance and the First Street and Second Street entrances of Sai Ying Pun Station (hereafter referred to "the adit at the Ki Ling Lane entrance"), thereby affecting the progress of the works for the Ki Ling Lane entrance. It was expected that the Ki Ling Lane entrance could only be ready for use in the second half of 2015. The MTRCL further pointed out that in addition to the Ki Ling Lane entrance, works for the First Street and Second Street

entrances were also affected by the slow progress of earlier excavation works and they were expected to be completed by the end of this year at the earliest. The MTRCL also pointed out at the meeting that given the tight time frame, should there be any delay in the works, the First Street and Second Street entrances would not be ready for use by the end of this year; under such circumstances, Sai Ying Pun Station could not be commissioned together with the HKU Station and Kennedy Town Station in view of passenger safety concerns.

6. At the meeting, the MTRCL said that a backup plan was devised for the situation where the First Street and Second Street entrances could not be completed as scheduled. The key component of the backup plan would be that if Sai Ying Pun Station could not be ready for use, trains of the Island Line would not stop at Sai Ying Pun Station. Trains will run straight to HKU Station after passing Sheung Wan Station and terminate at Kennedy Town Station. If the above backup plan cannot be implemented, the commissioning for the entire WIL will have to be deferred to the first quarter of 2015.

### **Latest Progress of the Project**

7. Over the past few months, while the Government requested the MTRCL to recover the delay as far as possible for the commissioning of the entire WIL in December 2014, it was agreed that the MTRCL had to devise a backup plan for the commissioning arrangement of the WIL. At the same time, the Highways Department (HyD) closely monitored the progress of the WIL project while the Electrical and Mechanical Services Department (EMSD), the Fire Services Department (FSD) and other relevant Government departments also devoted their efforts in the safety inspection and approval of the WIL facilities.

8. The MTRCL has submitted a report on the latest progress and commissioning arrangement of the WIL at **Annex II**.

9. According to the report of the MTRCL, the works for Kennedy Town Station and HKU Station are near completion. A series of test

runs of trains is being conducted for the WIL. Subject to the completion of the required statutory inspections, the aforesaid two stations would be ready for use in late December 2014.

10. At present, ground freezing works for the construction of the adit at the Ki Ling Lane entrance of Sai Ying Pun Station are still underway, and the works for the entire Ki Ling Lane entrance are expected to be completed by the fourth quarter of 2015. As the works for the First Street and Second Street entrances are not progressing as planned, the MTRCL has estimated that the works would not be completed until the first quarter of 2015. The MTRCL has thus proposed to take forward the backup plan, that is, Sai Ying Pun Station will not be opened for passengers upon commissioning of the WIL in late December 2014 except for emergency evacuation. Trains on the Island Line will go direct from Sheung Wan Station to HKU Station and Kennedy Town Station.

11. Based on the monitoring and analyses of the HyD on the WIL project over the past few months, the MTRCL needs more time to complete the remaining works for the First Street and Second Street entrances of Sai Ying Pun Station and the associated tests and statutory inspections. As the proposed backup plan submitted by the MTRCL has been approved by the relevant Government departments such as the EMSD and FSD, we agree that the MTRCL should take forward the backup plan so that HKU Station and Kennedy Town Station of the WIL could be opened for use in late December 2014. The MTRCL will confirm the exact commissioning date of the WIL in early December 2014. As for Sai Ying Pun Station (except the Ki Ling Lane entrance), it is expected to be opened for use in the first quarter of 2015.

### **Pre-commissioning Preparations**

12. To ensure stability and reliability of the WIL service, the Transport Department (TD) has been working closely with the MTRCL on the pre-commissioning preparations. Staff of the TD has monitored test runs of trains to ensure that the WIL would only be in service when

its operations have met all relevant standards and requirements.

13. To ensure passenger safety, relevant Government departments such as the TD, EMSD, FSD and Hong Kong Police Force are examining the standing operational and contingency plans prepared for the WIL by the MTRCL. These plans cover various passenger access arrangements under different circumstances, related crowd control measures and emergency evacuation procedures at all WIL stations.

14. To ensure that the frontline staff of the MTRCL could effectively communicate and collaborate with the relevant Government departments when handling emergencies on the WIL in future, the Government departments concerned will participate in a series of pre-commissioning emergency drills run by the MTRCL. Prior to the commissioning of the WIL, the TD will check all passenger facilities, information and directional signage within each WIL station, as well as public transport ancillary facilities around each WIL station, to ensure easy rides on the WIL and convenient interchange with other modes of public transport.

### **Co-ordination of Public Transport Services**

15. To tie in with the commissioning of the WIL, the TD has devised a public transport re-organisation plan (PT Plan). Consultations with the Traffic and Transport Committees (T&TCs) of the relevant District Councils (DCs) have started since July 2013. Moreover, the TD also organised Area Consultative Forums between September and October 2014 in the Central and Western District and the Southern District to brief the local community direct on the details of the PT Plan and listen to their views. In parallel, the TD also consulted various stakeholders, including Legislative Councillors, District Councillors and relevant bodies on the PT Plan. Having collected valuable views from the local community, the TD revised the PT Plan as appropriate for further consultation with the T&TCs and local stakeholders. Eventually, the TD consolidated all the views and considerations to revise and summarise the PT Plan in July 2014 as follows:

- (i) to introduce a total of four franchised bus and GMB routes to provide feeder services to WIL stations with interchange concessions jointly offered by the MTRCL and the franchised bus/GMB operators concerned;
- (ii) to introduce sectional fares on two GMB routes;
- (iii) to re-organise 25 franchised bus routes, including the amalgamation of 11 routes;
- (iv) to adjust the routing of three franchised bus routes; and
- (v) to adjust the frequency of 28 franchised bus and GMB routes according to changes in ridership.

16. Upon the commissioning of the WIL in late December 2014, the TD will introduce new franchised bus and GMB routes for feeder services, together with related interchange concessions and sectional fares. Other items under the PT Plan will be implemented progressively in the light of the commissioning arrangement for the WIL. The TD will closely monitor changes in travel demand brought about by the WIL, and will adjust the implementation of the PT Plan according to actual situations to ensure that public transport services can meet passenger demand with effective utilisation of resources. The TD will also work closely with public transport operators and the relevant DCs to widely publicise the implementation arrangements for the PT Plan. It will also inform passengers of any changes in public transport services well in advance.

17. We will brief the Panel on Transport of Legislative Council on the fares of the WIL at its meeting on 21 November 2014. Please refer to the relevant Legislative Council paper for details.

## **Conclusion**

18. We will continue to closely monitor the progress of the WIL project and supervise the testing of various systems so that the WIL will be in service with HKU Station and Kennedy Town Station in late December 2014. The HyD will also follow up the progress of the works for the First Street and Second Street entrances and the adit at the Ki Ling Lane entrance of Sai Ying Pun Station to ensure that the works could be completed as scheduled.

**Transport and Housing Bureau  
Highways Department  
Transport Department  
November 2014**

圖例  
LEGEND

- 現有鐵路路線  
EXISTING RAIL LINE
- 西港島線  
WEST ISLAND LINE

附件一  
Annex I

維多利亞港  
VICTORIA HARBOUR



石塘咀  
SHEK TONG TSUI

上環  
SHEUNG WAN

堅尼地城  
KENNEDY TOWN

西營盤站  
SAI YING PUN STATION

香港大學站  
HKU STATION

堅尼地城站  
KENNEDY TOWN STATION

米 0 250 500 750 m

比例尺 1 : 15 000 SCALE BAR

西港島線  
WEST ISLAND LINE



**Legislative Council Panel on Transport**  
**Subcommittee on Matters Relating to Railways**  
**West Island Line Progress Update and Opening Arrangements**

This paper briefs Members on the latest progress and opening arrangements of the West Island Line (WIL) project, which is expected to commence passenger service at the end of December 2014. Initially, trains will not stop at Sai Ying Pun Station, but rather, run from Sheung Wan Station direct to HKU Station and terminate at Kennedy Town Station. It is expected that Sai Ying Pun Station (except Ki Ling Lane entrance) will open in the first quarter 2015.

**Background**

2. WIL is a 3km long extension of the existing Island Line stretching from Sheung Wan Station to Kennedy Town with two intermediate stations at Sai Ying Pun and HKU. It will not only extend efficient railway service to the densely populated Western District, but also provide a well-structured pedestrian network in tandem with barrier-free facilities in the vicinity of WIL stations, enabling commuters in the uphill and downhill areas to enjoy convenient access to the railway. Offering a seamless railway service from Sheung Wan to Kennedy Town in about 7 minutes, WIL has a carrying capacity of up to 85,000 passengers per hour per direction, the same as the existing Island Line.

**Operational Readiness**

3. To ensure smooth operation of the new extension, a series of trial operations and testing and commissioning activities are being conducted to minimise possible teething problems after opening. These include test runs of trains, and testing of the overhead line system,

traction power supply system, signalling system and platform screen door system during non-traffic hours.

### **HKU and Kennedy Town Stations**

4. As at the end of October, all major civil and electrical and mechanical (E&M) installation works at HKU and Kennedy Town stations have been completed. In September 2014, Kennedy Town Station entered pre-opening preparations stage. Trial operations of the station's operating systems and stress tests on passenger equipment are in full swing. HKU Station entered the testing and commissioning stage in October 2014. This will be followed by the pre-opening preparations in November 2014. The trial operation of train service, including the running of trains based on normal operating timetable along the whole length of the WIL extension, commenced in mid-October 2014.

5. When statutory inspections of the two new stations and all of their entrances are completed, Kennedy Town Station and HKU Station will be ready for passenger service. In other words, the two stations will be opened for service, together with WIL, at the end of December 2014.

### **Sai Ying Pun Station**

6. For Sai Ying Pun Station, as the MTRCL highlighted in May this year, the progress of construction works is behind schedule due to the difficulties of the ground freezing works in the underground passageway connecting to Ki Ling Lane entrance, and the difficult excavation work, because of complicated ground conditions, at the entrance of First Street and Second Street. In view of the current situation, the entrance construction works at First Street and Second Street are estimated to be completed in the first quarter 2015. With the underground passageway

nearby still undergoing ground freezing works, the Ki Ling Lane entrance will be completed in the fourth quarter of 2015. Given that only 3 out of the total 6 entrances, viz. the Queen's Road West, the Des Vouex Road West and Bonham Road entrances will be completed when WIL is ready to commence service at the end of 2014, Sai Ying Pun Station will therefore not be opened for passenger service at the initial stage of train operations. However, the necessary facilities at Sai Ying Pun Station will be ready by the end of December for emergency evacuation if required.

7. The structural works of First Street and Second Street entrances is largely completed. With the testing and commissioning work at Sai Ying Pun Station is expected to be completed at the beginning of the first quarter 2015, the Station is targeted for opening in the first quarter 2015. Meanwhile, a wall inside the station has been installed to separate the continuing construction activities at First Street and Second Street entrances from the rest of the station.

8. With the complexity of the works on the WIL as well as delayed progress, the project cost estimate (excluding capitalised interest) has been updated from an original estimate of HK\$17.2 billion to approximately HK\$18.5 billion. Since WIL is an "Ownership" project, in accordance with the "ownership approach", MTRCL will bear the relevant additional cost.

### **Passenger Service**

9. Operating staff have been on duty in the WIL stations since September 2014 to prepare the stations for operation and to undergo relevant training. In the initial operation stage of WIL, passengers will be served by mobile service teams deployed to the concourses, the platforms and major walkways in HKU and Kennedy Town stations. The teams will be familiarized with different aspects of the community nearby, so as to

facilitate them to help passengers with direction and other information search.

10. Operating a safe railway is MTRCL's top priority. In this regard, a series of service drills have been held to train staff on how to handle different situations and to coordinate with relevant government services.

11. To ensure smooth passenger arrangements in the event of a train service suspension, contingency plans, including the provision of Free MTR Shuttle Buses and pick-up/drop-off points, station crowd management plans, and dissemination of service information via station and train broadcasts, station information panels and the Traffic News information platform of the MTR Mobile App, have been put in place.

12. Railway operation procedures, contingency plans and service procedures for the new extension will be the same as that of the existing Island Line. Given the geographical layout of HKU Station and Sai Ying Pun Station, fire evacuation procedures for lift-only entrances with the aid of dedicated lifts for evacuation, station broadcasts and station signage have been tailor-made for these two stations.

### **Train Service**

13. In the initial stage of WIL train operation, trains will initially bypass Sai Ying Pun Station and run directly from Sheung Wan Station to HKU Station and terminate at Kennedy Town Station.

14. As WIL is an extension of the Island Line, the frequency of trains between Sheung Wan Station and Kennedy Town Station will be the same as that of the existing Island Line, that is, about 2 minutes a train during peak periods and about 4 minutes a train during weekday

non-peak periods.

### **Station Facilities**

15. With the aim of providing passengers with smooth and enjoyable travel experiences supported by modernised and customer-centric services, the new stations feature a number of new distinctive passenger-centric facilities.

16. The distinctive facilities include open-type Customer Service Centres, 3-in-1 Ticket Machines which integrate Octopus add-value, transaction checking and single journey ticket purchasing functions, newly designed exit and entry gates, additional wide gates and ‘help line’ machines provided near the ticket machines and long adits to allow for effective communication between passengers and station staff.

17. Addressing the hilly terrain around the stations, a total of 20 external station lifts have been installed at the entrances of Sai Ying Pun Station and HKU Station. The station lifts will be put into service when the stations open. Each lift can carry a maximum of 24 or 28 passengers, shuttling them between the station concourse and ground level in approximately 20-30 seconds.

18. To provide convenient connection with other public transport, a dedicated Green Mini Bus (GMB) Boarding and Alighting Area is available at Kennedy Town Station.

### **Publicity and Promotion**

19. A series of publicity and promotional programmes is underway to familiarise the community and passengers with the new rail

extension and, station and surrounding environment. These programmes include regular project updates through social media, visits and talks for local groups, students and residents, a HKU youth ambassador programme, production of short films, station open days and an advertisement campaign.

## **Conclusion**

20. Members are invited to note the WIL service as set out in this paper.

**MTR Corporation Limited**  
**November 2014**