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Transport and
Housing Bureau
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Our Ref.: THB(T)L2/1/44
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12 December 2014

Clerk to Subcommittee
Subcommittee on Matters Relating to Railways
Legislative Council Secretariat
Legislative Council Complex
1 Legislative Council Road
Central
Hong Kong
(Attn: Ms Sophie Lau)
Fax No.: 2978 7569

Dear Ms LAU,

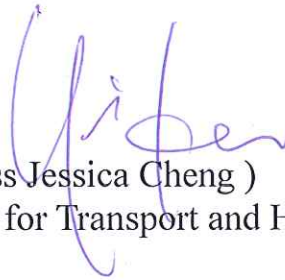
**Letters from Hon Gary FAN Kwok-wai, Dr Hon Elizabeth QUAT
and Hon TANG Ka-piu**

I refer to your letter dated 4 September 2014 enclosing letters from Hon Gary FAN Kwok-wai, Dr Hon Elizabeth QUAT and Hon TANG Ka-piu on the stray dog incident on East Rail Line tracks on 20 August 2014.

The MTR Corporation Limited ("MTRCL") has released its report on the said incident on 11 December 2014. It gives an account of the incident, investigation results and proposed improvement measures.

Attached please find MTRCL's press release and Executive Summary of the report, and Government's press release in response to the matter. Thank you.

Yours sincerely,



(Miss Jessica Cheng)
for Secretary for Transport and Housing

c.c. MTRCL	(Attn: Jeff Leung)
Transport Department	(Attn: Chapman Chan)

PR124/14
11 December 2014

MTR Implements Enhanced Procedures for Prevention and Handling of Dog-on-Track Incidents

The MTR Corporation has been implementing a package of measures to minimise track intrusion by dogs and enhance railway operating and response procedures when dog-on-track incidents occur in future.

Following the dog-on-track incident on 20 August 2014 at Sheung Shui and Fanling Stations on the East Rail Line, the Corporation appointed a task force to conduct a thorough review of the incident and make recommendations to prevent recurrence.

The task force interviewed the staff involved in the incident, reviewed relevant materials and sought professional advice from several animal welfare organisations. The report on the matter has been endorsed by the Corporation's management and submitted to the Transport Department.

Regarding the incident, the task force identified two gaps at the boundary fencing in the Lo Wu area where the dog might have entered the track area. It also found that there were areas for improvement in the handling of the incident. Subsequent to the findings, the task force made a number of recommendations including:

- the inspection and maintenance regime for fencing be enhanced to strengthen the boundary fencing so as to prevent intrusion into track areas by dogs;
- training and tools be arranged for staff for the safe and effective handling of dog-on-track incidents, in accordance with professional advice from animal welfare organisations;
- a more prudent approach be adopted when arranging train movements in the affected track section where a dog is present. Cautious speed should be considered for trains in the track section such they can be stopped quickly when required. During the period when cautious speed is applied, staff will conduct an extensive search. If the dog cannot be found or is seen to have left the track area on its own, trains will resume operating at normal speed. If the dog is located on the track, train movement within the affected section will be stopped immediately until the dog has left the track, whether it has been guided away by staff or left on its own accord.
- The Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) and the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA) will be asked to provide assistance when necessary.

(See Appendix for recommendations and corresponding implementation actions taken)

“MTR takes the safety of our passengers and staff as our top priority. We also care about animal safety. The August incident was largely due to our limited experience in handling dog-on-track incidents. We have already implemented enhancement measures to minimise dog intrusion into the track area. In addition, new guidelines and training for staff are being introduced to enable us to better handle similar events in future,” said Dr Jacob Kam, Operations Director of MTR Corporation.

“This review was initiated after the August incident. As such, recommendations in the report focused on the handling of dog-on-track cases. If other animals (such as cats) are found in track areas, the Task Force is of the view that the principles and practices of handling dog-on-track cases can be used as a reference. The handling of such cases should maintain a certain flexibility taking into consideration the characteristics of different animals and scenarios, so as to strike a balance between ensuring animal safety on track and maintaining a safe and reliable train service for the travelling public. The AFCD and the SPCA will also be asked to provide assistance when necessary. I would like to assure the community that we are committed to protect animals that stray into railway premises and to prevent a recurrence of the August incident,” Dr Kam added.

The executive summary of the report is available [here](#) for viewing.

- End -

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Task Force Recommendations and Follow-up Measures Implemented

Task Force Recommendations	Follow-up Measures Implemented
<p>Preventing Track Intrusion by Dogs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Task Force has recommended that the inspection and maintenance regime for fencing be enhanced to strengthen the boundary fencing so as to prevent intrusion by dogs into the track area. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ A comprehensive check of the boundary fencing along the East Rail Line was conducted with around 100 narrow gaps identified. ➤ These identified gaps have subsequently been sealed up.
<p>Procedures for Handling Dog-on-Track Incidents</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Task Force has recommended that training and tools be arranged for staff for safe and effective handling dog-on-track incidents, in accordance with professional advice from animal welfare organisations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Professional advice has been sought from the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department and animal welfare organisations including Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, Society for Abandoned Animals and Hong Kong Dog Rescue. ➤ In accordance with the professional advice from animal welfare organisations, a dark screen is being procured for staff for safe and effective handling of dog-on-track incidents. ➤ Initial staff training has commenced and will be further developed to become part of the regular refresher training for station staff.

Task Force Recommendations	Follow-up Measures Implemented
<p>Train Service Operating Procedures for Handling Dog-on-Track Incidents</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Task Force has recommended a more prudent approach be adopted when arranging train movements in the track section where a dog is present. Cautious speed should be considered for trains in the track section such that trains can be stopped quickly when required. During the period when cautious speed is applied, staff will conduct an extensive search. If the dog cannot be found or is seen to have left the track area on its own, train will resume operating at normal speed. When the dog is located on the track, train movement within the affected section will be stopped immediately until the dog has left the track, whether it has been guided away by staff or left on its own accord. The AFCD and the SPCA will be asked to provide assistance when necessary. • The Task Force is aware of the need to strike a balance between ensuring animal safety on track and maintaining a safe and reliable train service for the travelling public. The enhanced procedure is suggested to be put on trial for one year and then reviewed for further improvement if necessary. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ When a report of a dog in the track area is received <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cautious speed should be considered for trains in the track section such that the trains can be stopped quickly when required • During the period when cautious speed is applied, staff will conduct an extensive search ➤ When the dog is located on the track <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Train movement within the affected section will be stopped immediately. • Staff will be deployed to look out for the dog. • Taking the actual circumstance into consideration, staff will also guide the dog away. • The Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department and the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals will be asked to provide assistance when necessary. ➤ When the dog cannot be found or it is seen to have left the track area <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trains will resume operating at normal speed.

Photo Caption:

Training and tools are being arranged, such as a dark screen for staff for safe and effective handling of dog-on-track incidents, in accordance with expert advice from animal welfare organisations.



Report on Stray Dog Incident on MTR East Rail Line on 20 August 2014

Executive Summary

Background

An incident occurring on the East Rail Line (“EAL”) on 20 August 2014 in which a dog was found dead on the tracks raised concerns in the community.

2. The MTR Corporation Limited (“MTRCL”) set up a Task Force comprising members from various internal MTRCL departments and staff representatives to establish the facts of the incident occurrence, review the handling of dogs intruding onto tracks and make recommendations based on the investigation results in order to prevent similar recurrence in future. The Task Force comprises Operations Manager-West Rail Line & Light Rail (Chairman), Operations Performance Services Manager, Operating Departmental Joint Consultative Committee member, Public Relations Manager - Community Programmes, Human Resources Manager – Operations and Senior Safety Advisor.

The Occurrence

Sheung Shui Station (“SHS”)

3. At about 9:50am on 20 August 2014, a By-law Inspection Unit staff at the Lo Wu-bound platform of SHS spotted a dog on the tracks and immediately operated the Platform Emergency Plunger. All approaching trains within that section of tracks were stopped and held outside the station.

4. The dog lingered between the 6th and 8th car position of the platform on the Hung Hom-bound track. SHS staff on the platform tried to lure the dog up to the platform. In the process, the finger of a member of the By-law Inspection Unit was bitten by the dog when she leaned forward and tried to pull the dog up to the platform.

5. Two station staff members were then deployed to the track to guide the dog away from the track area but in vain. They then returned to the platform.

6. While the dog lingered in the area between the underside of the platform and the track, trains were instructed by the Operations Control Centre to move into the platform area at cautious speed and be ready to stop quickly. Train service gradually resumed at 9:58am.

7. While train services gradually resumed, Train Captains sounded the horn before entering into the platform area to alert passengers on the platform and to warn the dog to move away from the trains. Eventually, the dog found its way over to the Hung Hom-bound track between SHS and Fanling Station (“FAN”).

8. After performing platform duty at SHS, the Train Captain of a Hung Hom-bound train saw the dog in a bush on the trackside at a distance away from the main line.

Fanling Station (“FAN”)

9. At 10:08am, the dog was seen on the tracks within the platform area in FAN by a passenger on the Lo Wu-bound platform who alerted the staff at the Platform Supervisor Booth. The staff rushed out from the Platform Supervisor Booth and immediately displayed hand signal to urgently stop an approaching Intercity Mainland Through Train.

10. Upon seeing the hand signal displayed by the Platform Supervisor Booth staff, the Intercity Mainland Through Train from Tai Wo Station approaching the Lo Wu-bound platform of FAN was braked to stop at a two-car distance from the front end of the platform.

11. The Platform Supervisor Booth staff looked for the dog from the platform but could not see it. After the Intercity Mainland Through Train moved away from the platform, the dog was found dead on the track at a three-car distance from the front end of the platform. The dog carcass was subsequently removed from the track by station staff.

Findings, Recommendations and Enhancement Measures

Access of the dog to the track

12. The boundary fencing of EAL is designed to prevent trespassers (human) from intruding onto the railway tracks. However, as the land level along EAL is uneven, there are small gaps at the bottom of the fencing which dogs can get through. During subsequent patrols, two such gaps were identified in the Lo Wu area as possible entry points for the dog.

13. The two gaps were immediately sealed up with wire fencing. A comprehensive check of the boundary fencing along EAL was conducted with around 100 narrow gaps identified (including the aforementioned two gaps) and subsequently sealed up.

14. The Task Force has recommended that the inspection and maintenance regime for fencing be enhanced to strengthen the boundary fencing so as to prevent intrusion into track area by dogs.

Attempted rescue of the stray dog from track

15. SHS staff had ensured passenger safety and public order on the platform during the rescue operation. In addition, they had tried every possible means to protect and guide the dog away from the track. However, the staff involved had no training in handling the intrusion by stray dogs onto tracks.

16. The Task Force has recommended that training and tools be arranged for staff for safe and effective handling of dog-on-track incidents, in accordance with expert advice from animal welfare organisations.

Operations Procedure for handling animal-on-track incident

17. During the review, the Task Force sought advice from the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (“AFCD”) and animal welfare organisations including Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (“SPCA”), Society for Abandoned Animals as well as Hong Kong Dog Rescue.

18. In addition, with reference to benchmarking results with other metro systems around the world, including the United States and Australia, in handling animals-on-track incidents, some railways have adopted a more prudent approach, e.g. reducing train speed during search, whilst others have no specific guidelines.

19. The Task Force has recommended a more prudent approach be adopted when arranging train movements in the affected track section where a dog is present. Cautious speed should be considered for trains in the track section such that trains can be stopped quickly if required. During the period when cautious speed is applied, staff will conduct extensive search. If the dog cannot be found or is seen to have left the track area on its own, train service will resume normal. No cautious speed is required. When the dog is located on the track, train movement within the affected section will be stopped immediately until the dog has left the track. Taking the actual circumstance into consideration, staff will also guide the dog away. The AFCD and the SPCA will be asked to provide assistance if necessary.

20. The Task Force is aware of the need to strike a balance between ensuring animal safety on track and maintaining a safe and reliable train service for the travelling public. The enhanced procedure is suggested to be put on trial for one year and then reviewed for further improvement if necessary.

21. This investigation was initiated arising from the incident in which a dog was found dead on the tracks. As such, recommendations in the investigation report focused on the future handling of dog-on-track cases. If there are other animals (such as cats) present on track areas, the Task Force is of the view that the principles and practices of handling dog-on-track cases can be drawn as a reference. The handling of such cases should maintain a certain flexibility taking into consideration of different animals and scenarios, so as to strike a balance between ensuring animal safety on track and maintaining a safe and reliable train service for the travelling public. The AFCD and the SPCA will also be asked to provide assistance if necessary.

Conclusion

22. As part of the MTR railway network is located in an outdoor environment, dogs do intrude onto railway tracks from time to time. In the incident, MTR staff had tried their best to rescue and protect the dog. With limited experience in handling dogs on track, the rescue efforts were not effective. Enhancements have been identified to prevent dogs from intruding into railway track areas and to provide operations procedure, training and tools for staff to better handle dog-on-track incidents.

23. The Task Force submitted the final investigation report to the MTRCL on 11 December 2014. The recommendations and enhancement measures have been endorsed by the MTRCL's management and implemented with immediate effect. The report was also submitted to the Transport Department on the same day.

- END -

Press Releases

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Government's response to MTRCL's report on stray dog incident on East Rail Line tracks on August 20, 2014


The Government notes and welcomes the release of the report on the stray dog incident on East Rail Line tracks on August 20, 2014, by the MTR Corporation Limited (MTRCL) today (December 11). The report gives an account of the incident, investigation results and the MTRCL's proposed improvement measures in consultation with the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) and animal welfare organisations.

The Government notes that the report mainly recommends three improvement measures, namely strengthening the boundary fencing along the railway line to prevent intrusion into the track area by dogs; enhancing training for front-line staff in handling intrusion by stray dogs into the track area; and adopting a more prudent approach when a dog is reported or confirmed to be found in the track area. Depending on the actual situation, train services of the affected section may operate at lowered speed or stop totally to facilitate appropriate follow-up actions. The MTRCL will also request the AFCD and the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals to provide assistance if necessary.

A government spokesman said, "We note that the MTRCL has introduced improvement measures and staff training which are believed to be conducive to better handling of similar situations in future. We hope that the MTRCL will give due consideration to the safety of animals intruding into the track area while maintaining a safe and reliable train service."

Ends/Thursday, December 11, 2014
Issued at HKT 17:10

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