

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

Manpower resources for railway services

Purpose

This paper provides information on the manpower resources that the MTR Corporation Limited (“MTRCL”) puts into railway services and the manpower training that MTRCL provides to its staff.

Manpower resources

2. The Rail Merger took place in 2007. The railway network continued to expand over the past 10 years¹ and the total route length of the MTR network grew from about 212 km in 2008 to about 231 km currently. Meanwhile, the total number of stations increased from 150 to 161². Total revenue car-km³ covering both heavy and light rail rose from about 270 million km per year to about 320 million km per year during the same period, an increase of about 17%.

3. The train reliability and punctuality of the MTR service are maintained at 99.9%. To provide safe, reliable and high-quality railway service, MTRCL has substantially increased its manpower in railway operations and maintenance. The number of full time operating staff (managerial and non-managerial) rose from 3 684 in 2008 to 4 686 in 2016, which saw an increase of about 27%. Operating staff primarily comprise staff members who work at the Operations Control Centre or for train and station operations. The number of part-time operating staff, meanwhile, grew from 1 121 in 2008 to 2 779 in 2016 – an increase of about 148%. These part-time staff are mainly responsible for managing passenger flow at stations and platforms, assisting passengers in boarding and alighting trains during peak hours or at busy stations, reminding passengers not to rush into trains when the doors are closing and pay

¹ The new railways commissioned in the past 10 years include LOHAS Park Station of Tseung Kwan O Line (2009), the Nam Cheong to Hung Hom Station section of West Rail Line (2009), Island Line extension to Western District (2014), extension of Kwun Tong Line (2016), and South Island Line (2016).

² The number of heavy rail stations increased from 82 to 93 while the number of Light Rail stops remains at 68.

³ “Revenue car-km” refers to the total distance travelled by train cars while carrying passengers (for example, if a train with 8 cars travels 100 km while carrying passengers, the total revenue car-km are 800 km).

attention to safety while they are on escalators, providing assistance to passengers when necessary, etc. Additional platform assistants will also be hired to provide information and assistance to passengers when there are specific projects at stations⁴.

4. The number of MTR staff responsible for maintenance of the railway system (managerial and non-managerial) grew from 3 724 in 2008 to 4 751 in 2016, an increase of about 28%. All maintenance works directly related to the smooth operation of the railway (such as repair and maintenance of major systems and components including trains, signalling system and overhead line) are being carried out by MTR staff. Under the premise that the smooth operation of the railway will always be maintained, MTRCL outsources the maintenance of some of the non-major systems and components to contractors, paying due regard to the nature of the works as well as the skills and time required, in order to increase cost efficiency. In 2016, 1 347 contractor staff were involved in the maintenance of non-major systems and components⁵, accounting for about 22% of the total number of maintenance staff. This is the lowest ratio since 2010. MTRCL adopts a stringent maintenance regime which was established in accordance with international standards. MTRCL's maintenance departments monitor and guide contractor staff to ensure that the quality of their service complies with established standards. It is also mandatory that contractor staff have the required qualification and certification to prove that they have sufficient skills and capability to perform their work. For specialised works such as those related to fire prevention equipment or repair of lifts and escalators at stations, there are statutory regulations that such works be carried out by registered contractors.

5. Railway safety has always been the top priority of MTRCL. MTRCL adopts prudent management principles and takes into account various factors, including ranks of staff, whether they are full time or part-time and the need for backup/alternate manpower, before making suitable deployment or adjustment to meet operational needs of the railway. Manpower deployment at a station, for example, will take into consideration the passenger volume at the station and the complexity of its operations (such as whether it is an interchange station). Part-time staff will be arranged to maintain order at stations during peak hours and

⁴ For example, the existing 4-car trains on Ma On Shan Line are gradually being replaced with 8-car trains and platform assistants will guide passengers to the 4-car and 8-car waiting zones during peak hours.

⁵ These include the passenger information display equipment, CCTV equipment, platform screen doors, lighting system at stations, fire prevention equipment, lifts and escalators at stations and baggage handling equipment for Airport Express, etc.

handle temporary surge in passenger volume during special festivals. In the event of service disruption, MTRCL will also flexibly deploy manpower including the Customer Service Support Team, which consists of staff from different departments, to offer assistance to affected passengers at stations.

6. Details of the manpower resources to support railway services are set out in Annex.

Training for staff

7. MTRCL places great importance on the training and development of talent. About 7 000 occupational or management training courses were conducted in 2016 which offered an average of 7 training days for each MTRCL staff.

8. All MTR frontline staff involved in supporting railway services have received systematic training including induction and on-the-job training. The form of training include classroom lecture, group discussion, practical sessions with simulator and real equipment, as well as having experienced and trained staff to guide new colleagues in their job. Operating staff also join refresher courses every 6 months to learn about or reinforce their knowledge of safety management and incident handling. MTRCL reviews and modifies its training materials on a regular basis. For example, additional fire safety training is provided to station staff following the arson case in February this year.

9. In terms of professional skills, the Mass Transit Railway Corporation (predecessor of MTRCL) launched the Apprentice Training Scheme when it was first established and the programme has already been running for 38 years. Trained apprentices go through a systematic on-the-job training programme, including classroom lectures and practical sessions, to gain technical knowledge and know-how from skilled personnel. They also receive coaching and guidance from trainers. MTRCL gives full sponsorship for craft and technician apprentices to attend designated Vocational Training Council programmes, so they can acquire recognised academic qualifications. MTRCL set up a two-year Technician Associate training scheme in 2011 which targets Higher Diploma graduates from engineering disciplines and provides them with a range of on-the-job and professional training relating to railway maintenance. MTRCL has been increasing the quota for the Apprentice Training Scheme in recent years. For example, 184

craft/technician apprentices and technician associates were hired in 2016. Currently, there are nearly 500 craft/technician apprentices and technician associates being trained and they will gradually join the maintenance team under the Operations Division between 2017 and 2020.

10. MTRCL established the MTR Academy (“MTRA”) in 2016 which leverages on its extensive railway experience and expertise from almost 40 years of railway operations to nurture railway professionals. MTRA currently offers the Advanced Diploma in Railway Engineering, which has been accredited by the Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications. The first batch of 32 students for this Diploma programme was admitted in January 2017 and about half of them are MTR staff. The knowledge gained at MTRA helps graduates’ career development in the railway industry. MTRA also offers short introductory and continuing professional development courses on railway operation, as well as corporate training programmes.

11. After MTRA was established, MTRCL has made suitable arrangement and manpower deployment to maintain the workload of trainers and staff at reasonable levels. The aim is to keep up the teaching quality of MTRA, while ensuring that existing training opportunities for frontline staff will not be affected and the quality of railway service will be maintained.

Future plans

12. MTRCL has all along put much emphasis on staff communication and has established mechanisms and various channels (including regular meetings with staff unions) to closely liaise and communicate with unions and staff on issues of concern.

13. In 2016, the turnover rates of operating and maintenance staff were at the low levels of 3.4% and 2.2% respectively. Nevertheless, MTRCL will continue to recruit suitable talent through various channels (such as community recruitment). To meet future operational needs, MTRCL has also increased the quota for its Apprentice and Technician Associate Training Programmes. MTRCL will also nurture more high-quality railway professionals through MTRA.

**Figures related to MTR Network and
Manpower Resources for Railway Services in 2008 and 2016**

	2008	2016	Change
MTR Network			
Total Route Length (km)	211.6	230.9	9% increase
Heavy Rail Station	82	93	13% increase
Light Rail Stop	68	68	Unchanged
Total of Heavy and Light Rail Revenue Car-km	274 731 000	322 256 000	17% increase
Manpower Resources			
Operating Staff Note 1	3 684	4 686	27% increase
Maintenance Staff Note 1	3 724	4 751	28% increase
Total of Operating and Maintenance Staff Note 1	7 408	9 437	27% increase
Part-Time Operating Staff Note 2	1 121	2 779	148% increase
Total of Full Time and Part-time Staff Related to Railway Services	8 529	12 216	43% increase
Contractor Maintenance Staff	1 182 ^{Note 3}	1 347	14% increase

Note 1 Includes managerial and non-managerial staff

Note 2 Mainly station and platform assistants

Note 3 2010 figure