

立法會 *Legislative Council*

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Panel on Transport

Subcommittee on Matters Relating to Railways Meeting on 10 April 2018

Updated background brief on manpower resources for railway services

Purpose

This paper provides background information on the manpower resources for railway services in Hong Kong. It also summarizes the major views and concerns expressed by the Legislative Council Members during previous discussions on the subject.

Background

Railway services

2. The Government has long adopted a public transport-oriented policy with railways as the backbone. Railways account for over 40% of all passenger trips made on public transport each day.

3. Hong Kong's railways are run by the MTR Corporation Limited ("MTRCL"), a publicly listed company of which the Government is the majority shareholder. For the month of January 2018, the daily average patronage figure for the domestic service of the ten lines, namely Kwun Tong Line, Tsuen Wan Line, Island Line, Tung Chung Line, Tseung Kwan O Line, East Rail Line (excluding Cross Boundary), West Rail Line, Ma On Shan Line, Disneyland Resort Line and South Island Line was about 4.83 million during weekday. Whereas the daily average patronage for cross boundary service was about 317 000. The total route length of these 10 lines reaches about 187 kilometres ("km"), with 93 stations in total.

4. MTRCL also operates the Airport Express Line ("AEL"), intercity passenger services and the Light Rail as well as feeder bus services. AEL,

which is about 35.2 km long, connects the urban areas to Hong Kong International Airport and AsiaWorld-Expo. For the month of January 2018, the daily average patronage figure for AEL was about 45 200. The Light Rail network which is about 36.2 km long, is a local transportation network in the northwest New Territories with 68 stops. For the month of January 2018, the daily average patronage figure for intercity passenger services, Light Rail and feeder bus services was about 640 000. The latest patronage updates and the historic patronage figures can be found at the website of MTRCL¹.

Manpower resources

5. Under the specific arrangements of the rail merger in December 2007, the staff and management (except the Chief Executive Officer and some administrative support staff totalling less than 10 employees) of the then Kowloon-Canton Railway Corporation ("KCRC"), their professional knowledge and experience, together with KCRC's assets, were all taken over by MTRCL. According to the Administration, the railway network managed by MTRCL, as well as its professional manpower, knowledge and experience have been enhanced after the merger.

6. According to the information provided by MTRCL in May 2017, its manpower in railway operations and maintenance has been substantially increased in order to provide safe, reliable and high-quality railway service. 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 and providing necessary assistance to passengers at stations and platforms.

7. 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 (such as passenger information display equipment and fire prevention equipment) to

¹ <http://www.mtr.com.hk/en/corporate/investor/patronage.php>

contractors. It is mandatory that contractor staff have the required qualification and certification to prove that they have sufficient skills and capability to perform their work. In 2016, 1 347 contractor staff were involved in the maintenance of non-major systems and components, accounting for about 22% of the total number of maintenance staff. This is the lowest ratio since 2010.

Training for staff

8. According to MTRCL, great importance has been placed on the training and development of its staff. About 7 000 occupational or management training courses were conducted in 2016 which offered an average of 7 training days for each MTRCL staff. All MTR frontline staff have received systemic training including induction and on-the-job training. In terms of professional skills, training programmes are offered under the Apprentice Training Scheme.

9. As an initiative to develop capable railway-related professionals, MTRCL has established the MTR Academy in 2016 to offer training programmes for MTRCL's staff in Hong Kong and its international business partners.

Major views and concerns of Members

Outsourcing of maintenance service

10. Members in general expressed concern that the outsourcing of maintenance service had adversely affected the standard of rail maintenance. At the Subcommittee meeting on 20 December 2013, members passed two motions² urging MTRCL to review or cease the outsourcing arrangements to improve the maintenance quality and avoid recurrence of railway incidents.

11. MTRCL explained that contractor staff were responsible for regular visual inspections, dye penetration tests, small scale preventive maintenance work and track cleaning, whereas tasks such as replacement of rails, ultrasonic testing and rail grinding were carried out by MTRCL's in-house staff. MTRCL supplemented that the same standards and requirements applied to outsourced and in-house maintenance works.

² In February 2014, the Administration provided a response to the questions and motions raised by members at the meeting held on 20 December 2013 under Annex C of the Administration's paper CB(1)980/13-14(05).

Manpower resource and training for staff

12. At the Subcommittee meeting held on 18 November 2016, a member urged the Administration and MTRCL to examine the demand and supply of manpower resources and train up relevant personnel required for the whole railway network in view of the implementation of a number of railway projects under planning.

Manpower resources deployed for railway businesses outside Hong Kong

13. At the Council meetings of 19 March 2014 and 3 February 2016, Members raised questions on whether the operation of railways outside the territory by MTRCL had distracted its attention away from local operations, resulting in negligence over operational problems of the railways in Hong Kong. They enquired about details on the manpower resources deployed to the development of railway businesses outside Hong Kong, including the number of Hong Kong employees who were dedicated to undertaking such businesses and the number of Hong Kong employees seconded from Hong Kong on a short-term basis.

14. According to the information provided by the Administration in February 2016, of the 17 100 staff employed by MTRCL in Hong Kong, about 80 were responsible for railway businesses outside Hong Kong. Some of them worked in Hong Kong, with the major responsibilities of coordinating mainland and overseas businesses, and budgeting, evaluating risks and formulating strategies for various projects. The rest were posted to a subsidiary or joint venture company on the Mainland or overseas to provide support for the construction, daily operation and maintenance of railways there.

15. Besides, a small number of Hong Kong management or technical staff might be seconded by MTRCL to different cities on a short-term basis as necessary from time to time. Such staff were responsible for providing professional advice for the MTRCL subsidiaries or joint venture companies on such matters as the construction, daily operation and maintenance of railways in these cities. Through the secondment, they could also gain useful overseas experiences. The total number of such staff stood at about 30.

Latest development

16. In the 2016-2017 legislative session, the Administration planned to brief members on the manpower resources for railway services at the Subcommittee meeting to be held on 2 June 2017. However, due to insufficient meeting time, the discussion of this item is re-scheduled to the meeting to be held on 10 April 2018.

Relevant papers

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

Council Business Division 4
Legislative Council Secretariat
3 April 2018

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

List of relevant papers on manpower resources for railway services

| Date of meeting | Committee | Minutes/Paper | LC Paper No. |
|------------------------|--|---|---|
| 20.12.2013 | Subcommittee on Matters Relating to Railways | Administration's paper on Tseung Kwan O Line service disruption on 16 December 2013 | CB(1)595/13-14(01) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr13-14/chinese/panels/tp/tp_rdp/papers/tp_rdp1220cb1-595-1-c.pdf |
| | | Minutes of meeting | CB(1)1011/13-14 http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr13-14/english/panels/tp/tp_rdp/minutes/rdp20131220.pdf |
| 3.1.2014 | Subcommittee on Matters Relating to Railways | MTR Corporation Limited's paper on rail inspection: advanced ultrasonic testing vehicle | CB(1)637/13-14(07) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr13-14/english/panels/tp/tp_rdp/papers/tp_rdp0103cb1-637-7-e.pdf |
| | | Administration's follow-up paper | CB(4)520/14-15(01) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr13-14/chinese/panels/tp/tp_rdp/papers/tp_rdp4-520-1-c.pdf |
| | | Minutes of meeting | CB(1)1339/13-14 http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr13-14/english/panels/tp/tp_rdp/minutes/rdp20140103.pdf |

| Date of meeting | Committee | Minutes/Paper | LC Paper No. |
|----------------------|--|--|---|
| 28.2.2014 | Subcommittee on Matters Relating to Railways | Administration's paper on follow-ups on the service suspension of Tseung Kwan O Line and part of Kwun Tong Line on 16 December 2013, and report on subsequent major incidents on East Rail Line and Light Rail | CB(1)980/13-14(05) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr13-14/english/panels/tp/tp_rdp/papers/tp_rdp0228cb1-980-5-e.pdf |
| | | Administration's follow-up paper | CB(4)520/14-15(01) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr13-14/chinese/panels/tp/tp_rdp/papers/tp_rdp4-520-1-c.pdf |
| | | Minutes of meeting | CB(1)1928/13-14 http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr13-14/english/panels/tp/tp_rdp/minutes/rdp20140228.pdf |
| 19.3.2014 | Council meeting | Dr Hon LAU Wong-fat raised a question on MTR services | http://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/201403/19/P201403190438.htm |
| 2.1.2015 6.3.2015 | Subcommittee on Matters Relating to Railways | MTR Corporation Limited's paper on the outcome of the independent expert's review on MTR overhead line system as a result of the insulator incidents in February 2014 | CB(4)287/14-15(05) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr14-15/english/panels/tp/tp_rdp/papers/tp_rdp20150102cb4-287-5-e.pdf |
| | | Paper on the outcome of the independent expert review of the MTR Corporation Limited's overhead line system as a result of the insulator | CB(4)287/14-15(06) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr14-15/english/panels/tp/tp_rdp/papers/tp_rdp2015010 |

| Date of meeting | Committee | Minutes/Paper | LC Paper No. |
|-----------------|--|---|---|
| | | incidents in February 2014 prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat (background brief) | 2cb4-287-6-e.pdf |
| | | Administration's follow-up paper | CB(4)98/15-16(02) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr13-14/chinese/panels/tp/tp_rdp/papers/tp_rdp0228cb4-98-2-c.pdf |
| | | Minutes of meetings | CB(4)623/14-15 http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr14-15/english/panels/tp/tp_rdp/minutes/rdp20150102.pdf CB(4)1108/14-15 http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr14-15/english/panels/tp/tp_rdp/minutes/rdp20150306.pdf |
| 3.2.2016 | Council meeting | Hon Mrs Regina IP LAU Suk-yea raised a question on the MTR Corporation Limited's railway businesses | http://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/201602/03/P201602030607.htm |
| 18.11.2016 | Subcommittee on Matters Relating to Railways | Minutes of meeting | CB(4)240/16-17 http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr16-17/english/panels/tp/tp_rdp/minutes/rdp20161118.pdf |
| 2.6.2017 | Subcommittee on Matters Relating to Railways | MTR Corporation Limited's paper on manpower resources for railway services | CB(4)1099/16-17(07) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr16- |

| Date of meeting | Committee | Minutes/Paper | LC Paper No. |
|------------------------|------------------|---|--|
| | | | 17/english/panels/tp/tp_rdp/papers/tp_rdp20170602cb4-1099-7-e.pdf |
| | | Paper on manpower resources for railway services prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat (background brief) | CB(4)1099/16-17(08) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr16-17/english/panels/tp/tp_rdp/papers/tp_rdp20170602cb4-1099-8-e.pdf |

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