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Ms Sophie LAU
Clerk to Subcommittee on Matters Relating to Railways
Panel on Transport
Legislative Council
Legislative Council Complex
1 Legislative Council Road
Central, Hong Kong
(Fax no.: 2840 0716)

31 October 2019

Dear Ms LAU,

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

Service disruption of four MTR lines on 16 October 2018

On 29 October 2018, the Government and the MTR Corporation Limited (“MTRCL”) briefed Members on the captioned subject. At the meeting, Members enquired about the review on the contingency and information dissemination arrangements during railway incidents and the relevant improvement measures. The replies of the Government and the MTRCL are provided below for Members’ reference.

2. The Government is concerned about the incident of signalling system failure on MTR Island Line (“ISL”), Kwun Tong Line (“KTL”), Tsuen Wan Line (“TWL”) and Tseung Kwan O Line (“TKL”) on 16 October last year and has requested the MTRCL to conduct in-depth investigation. The Executive Review Panel (“Panel”) on the incident set up by the MTRCL submitted a detailed report to the Government on 19 December. A press release and a report on the cause of the incident and improvement measures were also issued on the same day.

3. Currently, the Transport Department (“TD”) has drawn up contingency plans for various railway incidents, setting out the measures needed to be taken by the MTRCL, the notification mechanism, the arrangements for free shuttle buses

and information dissemination, etc. during any failure on the relevant lines. The contingency plans, which are drawn up after discussion among the TD, the MTRCL and the government departments concerned, will be reviewed and amended as necessary with a view to ensuring the effective implementation of the plans during incidents and minimising the impact on passengers. In the light of the signalling faults happened on the four MTR lines, the TD and the MTRCL have reviewed the existing contingency arrangements during railway incidents again. The review has been completed.

4. In order to minimise the impact of railways incidents on the public, in the future, when there is a serious service delay or limited train service on the entire line due to a railway incident happened during peak hours, apart from the existing free shuttle buses¹, the MTRCL will introduce additional free shuttle bus routes to other railway lines with normal operations (including railway stations with larger public transport interchanges) on a point-to-point basis where practicable, with a view to further diverting affected passengers. For instance, in the East Rail Line (“ERL”) incident happened on 17 September 2019, free shuttle buses were arranged by the MTRCL for taking passengers to and from Tai Wai Station and Diamond Hill Station to help divert affected ERL passengers and enable them to continue with their journeys by interchanging to KTL. In addition, the TD and the MTRCL have discussed with the non-franchised bus trade separately and put in place an arrangement for strengthening the deployment of shuttle buses² so as to enhance the operational efficiency of shuttle buses. The new arrangement has been included in the contingency plans for all railway lines and took effect in August 2019.

5. In addition, in the case of large-scale disruptions of railway services or public transportation, the Emergency Transport Coordination Centre under the TD will continue stepping up the coordination with other public transport service operators for provision of additional services and timely external dissemination of information during the incidents, with a view to minimising the impact on passengers. In response to the incidents, franchised bus companies will also arrange field staff to conduct on-site inspection as soon as possible and suitably enhance bus services where practicable to meet the additional passenger demand. However, it should be understood that shuttle bus service is an emergency supplementary measure with limited carrying capacity, and will be subject to factors such as road conditions, which can hardly replace normal train service.

6. Regarding the arrangement for information dissemination, the MTRCL has all along taken the initiative to disseminate information to passengers in a timely

¹ According to the existing arrangement for MTR free shuttle buses, shuttle buses will bring passengers to the nearest station outside the affected section of a railway line where service is disrupted to enable them to continue with their journeys. Shuttle buses will also stop at stations in the affected section to provide services to passengers.

² According to the original arrangement, when free MTR shuttle bus service is needed, together with stand-by buses that can be deployed by the MTRCL, about 10 buses can be deployed by the Public Omnibus Operators Association to provide service within 30 to 45 minutes after receiving the MTRCL’s notification. Under the new arrangement, the number of buses that can be deployed during the above period will increase to about 20 to enhance the operational efficiency of shuttle buses.

manner through various channels, including the MTR mobile app “Traffic News”, MTR website, announcements at MTR stations and on trains, passenger information displays at MTR stations and the media. Under the existing arrangement for information dissemination, the announced train frequency and the actual experience of passengers are often affected by prevailing environmental factors, e.g. the need for trains to run under manual mode at reduced speed, and the need for additional dwell times at station platforms due to operations of platform screen doors and conditions of waiting passenger flows. These have led to relevant discrepancy. In order to enhance the arrangement for information dissemination, after review, the MTRCL will disseminate more diversified information so that passengers can have a better grasp of specific information on train services.

7. In addition, the MTRCL has fully implemented other improvement measures³ proposed in the Panel report in order to avoid the recurrence of similar incidents.

Yours sincerely,

(Veronica TSE)
for Secretary for Transport and Housing

c.c.:

Transport Department
MTR Corporation Limited

(Attn.: Mr LEE Man-ho)
(Attn.: Mr Y C CHAN)

³ The improvement measures include conducting a review and implementing a maintenance programme to manually re-initialise all of the software counters in the railway systems, particularly the signalling systems, before they reach the triggering or ceiling figure; establishing a dedicated team with experts from the academia and the industries to enhance software integration and performance for future newly built and modification of critical railway systems; taking into account the challenges including additional platform dwell time during service disruption when providing information on train services, including the time for the first train and train service headway; and inviting passengers to participate in more drills and exercises to better understand passenger interaction during service disruption.