

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

Progress update on enhancement of MTR facilities

Purpose

This paper briefs the Subcommittee on the MTR Corporation limited (“MTRCL”)’s efforts in enhancing station facilities and customers’ experience.

Background

2. The MTRCL will have served the public for 40 years by October 2019. As the railway network becomes busier with growing number of passengers, the MTRCL is committed to upgrading station facilities and enhancing passengers’ travelling experience in order to provide safe, reliable and efficient railway services to passengers. To this end, over the past few years, we have increased train frequency of specific railway lines and purchased new trains. We are also undertaking works to upgrade the signalling system as well as enhancing station facilities.

3. The ensuing paragraphs highlight the key efforts in these areas.

Enhancement of station & train facilities

Retrofitting stations of three urban lines

4. The railway network of the MTRCL comprises 11 heavy rails (including Airport Express) with 93 stations, 11 Light Rail lines with 68 stations, as well as the High Speed Rail and the Hong Kong West Kowloon Station, covering the whole Hong Kong. Amongst these railway lines, Kwun Tong Line, Island Line and Tsuen Wan Line were constructed in 1970s or 1980s and have been in service for quite a long time. To enhance the travelling experience of passengers, we are exploring ways to improve and retrofit some of the stations along those three lines as required. Such improvements may include installing additional escalators to connect the concourse to the street levels, improving concourse layout for better circulation, providing ventilation system on open section platforms¹ and beautifying ventilation shafts adjacent to stations.

¹ Examples of stations with open section platforms: Kwai Hing, Kwai Fong Stations.

5. In implementing any improvement works, it is a prerequisite that the daily operation of the stations must not be affected. Considering that Kwun Tong Line, Island Line and Tsuen Wan Line have a broad coverage, we are planning such works carefully by setting the priority of retrofitting relevant stations, the scope and timeline. Upon working out the detailed arrangements, we will communicate with relevant stakeholders, including District Councils as well as local communities.

6. Moreover, we plan to re-layout the concourse of certain stations with a view to easing the circulation of passengers. For example, in Kwun Tong Station, in addition to the installation of additional ticket gates and relocation of some ticket gates in some of the exits which were completed in late 2018, the MTRCL has been carrying out the station improvement works by phases, including constructing an additional escalator, relocating the lift connecting station concourse and platform, etc.. In doing so, we aim to ease the congestion at some spots inside the station and ease the passenger flow. Tendering for the preliminary works has commenced and the whole project is expected to be completed in the fourth quarter of 2022.

Enhancing station accessibility

7. At present, all MTR stations are equipped with barrier-free facilities of either passenger lifts, wheelchair aids, stair lifts or ramps to facilitate persons in need to enter and exit the stations. As far as practicable, the MTRCL aims to provide one passenger lift connecting the station concourse and street levels in every underground station. There are currently three stations without lifts connecting station concourse with the street level, i.e. Diamond Hill, Fortress Hill and Tin Hau Stations. For Fortress Hill and Tin Hau Stations, the MTRCL is actively carrying out the required preliminary work or retrofitting of such lifts; while the passenger lift in Diamond Hill Station will be made available in tandem with the commissioning of the Shatin-Central Link (SCL) project.

8. The MTRCL has been working to improve the accessibility of certain stations. In 2018, we announced the installation of an additional lift at Mei Foo Station connecting the underground station concourse and the street level. Furthermore, the MTRCL plans to build a new entrance and widen a staircase on the Hung Hom-bound platform at Sheung Shui Station in order to improve its passenger flow. The relevant works are now in progress. Please refer to Annex 1 for details.

Installing of Automatic Platform Gates (APGs) for East Rail Line (EAL) stations

9. Installing APGs on platforms at stations along EAL will help avoid passengers from entering the tracks, thereby further enhancing safety and preventing accidents from happening. The MTRCL understands the public concerns on the progress of the installation works. The required preliminary works including the strengthening works of EAL platform foundations and the installation of trackside equipment and facilities of the new signalling system have been completed. The installation of APGs would have to tie in with the commissioning of SCL project. As the future EAL will adopt a new signalling system and run by new nine-car trains, the position of the train doors will be different from that of the exiting 12-car trains. The installation of APGs must tie in with the door position of the new trains and thus such works can only be commenced after the switching to new nine-car trains is completed.

10. The MTRCL regards passenger safety as the top priority. Currently, various safety facilities and measures have been put in place, including putting warning signage on the platform to remind passengers to stay behind the yellow line. If necessary, we will also arrange station assistants, broadcast messages to remind passengers not to stand close to the platform edge for their own safety and not to enter the tracks without authorisation under any circumstances.

Retrofitting new toilets and baby-caring facilities

11. Since 2015, the MTRCL has been retrofitting passenger toilets at 10 interchange stations² alongside major renovation works. To date, new toilets at five stations have already been retrofitted and opened for passengers' use. The MTRCL strives to complete the remaining programme by 2021 (see [Annex 2](#)). We will also refurbish the toilets at specific stations as required, amongst which the refurbishment works at University Station will be completed in 2019.

12. In addition, the MTRCL has committed to installing baby care rooms at seven interchange stations³. Of these, the baby care rooms at Tiu Keng Leng and Yau Tong stations have already been opened for passengers' use in mid-February and late May 2019 respectively. We strive to complete the remaining programme by 2021. Breastfeeding areas at the remaining 18 interchange stations will continue to open for passengers' use.

² Mong Kok, Prince Edward, Admiralty, Tiu Keng Leng, Yau Tong, Lai King, Central, Yau Ma Tei, North Point and Tsim Sha Tsui Stations.

³ Yau Tong, Tiu Keng Leng, Lai King, Central, Yau Ma Tei, North Point and Tsim Sha Tsui Stations.

Providing drinking water dispensers

13. In October 2018, the MTRCL has installed on a trial basis a drinking water dispenser in the unpaid area of the concourse at Tung Chung Station. We also installed such dispensers in Tsuen Wan and Prince Edward Stations in the first half of 2019, both of which have been put in service⁴. Given the initial positive feedback of the trial scheme, the MTRCL plans to install drinking water dispensers by phases in other stations which are technically feasible with appropriate locations for passengers' convenience.

Renewing Airport Express Line (AEL) train cabins

14. AEL has been providing services between the airport and urban area since 1998. The existing seat cushions, covers and carpet inside the train compartments have been in use since 2008-09. Starting from early 2020, we will replace the seat cushions, covers and carpet in the train compartments again for all the 11 trains and we expect to complete the works at the end of 2020, bringing a better experience to AEL passengers.

Strengthening crowd control measures at stations

15. Apart from the re-layout of concourse at specific stations as mentioned above, as regards to certain stations with high passenger flow during peak hours, we are actively exploring and implementing various mitigation measures:

- (a) Special short-haul trains: we have arranged empty trains along Kwun Tong Line, Tsuen Wan Line, West Rail Line and East Rail Line during morning and evening peaks to carry passengers at busy stations in order to ease the crowding situation. For example, we have arranged such trains from Central Station to Admiralty Station to carry passengers during the evening peak hour;
- (b) Enhanced information dissemination for passengers: Since late October 2018, we have been using real-time information to provide passengers with "Waiting Time Indicator" at Admiralty Station on the MTR Mobile app to enable them to better plan their journeys;

⁴ The water dispenser of Tsuen Wan Station has been installed for use on 30 April 2019, while the dispenser of Prince Edward Station has been installed for use on 31 May 2019.

- (c) Special Fare Promotion to provide incentive for diversion of traffic: The MTRCL launched the “Early Bird Discount Promotion” Programme⁵ in 2014. To encourage more diversion of passenger traffic during the morning peak, we have announced on 22 May that the discount will be enhanced from 25% to 35% and the eligible stations will be increased from 35 to 44⁶ with effect from October 2019. Please refer to the Legislative Council Transport Panel paper CB(4)916/18-19(01) for details.

Making use of IT to promote “Smart Mobility”

16. In line with the government’s direction on “Smart Mobility”, the MTRCL will introduce more innovative technology to further enhance services and passenger experience. Details are set out as follows:

- (a) According to the current plan, QR code-based payment service at ticket gates will be available starting from mid-2020 to provide passengers with an additional payment option. The MTRCL has started the procurement of new ticket gates and ticket-selling machines in that respect. At the same time, we will explore the feasibility of other payment methods such as credit cards to facilitate passengers;
- (b) This year we will launch a single mobile app by combining MTR Mobile⁷ and various MTR-related apps, integrating various incentive plans to achieve the vision of “Smart Mobility with One Mobile App”. We also plan to, with the consent of customers, analyse customer behaviors with a view to providing more personalised travel information and promotions. In June, we will introduce more functions to the MTR Mobile app to facilitate passengers travelling and journey planning. These new functions include point-to-point traffic information, information about connecting buses or minibuses, alighting reminder, real-time arrival schedules for MTR buses, etc.; and

⁵ Adult Octopus users can enjoy a 25% fare discount when they exit from any of the 35 core urban stations between 7:15 am and 8:15 am from Mondays to Fridays (except Public Holidays).

⁶ Nine additional stations cover along the Kwun Tong Line from Lok Fu Station to Yau Tong Station.

⁷ Currently, there are on average over 1.2 million mobile devices are using MTR Mobile app every month.

- (c) At present, the MTRCL provides real-time train information via its mobile app regarding Tung Chung Line, AEL, West Rail Line and Tseung Kwan O Line. Detailed information on service status will also be provided in times of long service delay. We have opened up such real-time information for the mobile app of the Transport Department (TD) “E-Mobility” in May 2019 and will also open them up to TD’s webpage “Hong Kong eTransport”. We will also open up these real-time data via the government platform “data.gov.hk” for public use. The data are expected to be available in the third quarter of this year.

Enhancing Light Rail operational safety

17. The MTRCL has introduced a number of measures to enhance the safety of Light Rail services:

- (a) An innovative “Integrated Speed and Position Supervision System” (iSPS) developed for Light Rail by MTR engineers was granted a patent by the Intellectual Property Department in 2017. The system has been put in use on a trial basis on Light Rail routes 705, 706, 751P in Tin Shui Wai area since 2018. With the installation of in-cabin Global Positioning System (GPS) receivers and Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) readers as well as tags along the tracks, the system captures the relevant information concerning train speed and locations. Such information will then be relayed to the Light Rail Operations Control Centre via mobile communications network in order to facilitate real-time monitoring of speed and position of each Light Rail vehicles (LRV). The iSPS has been put on trial with satisfactory results and is targeted to be rolled out to the whole Light Rail network in mid-2019; and
- (b) The MTRCL has also put in place additional safety measures in the Light Rail area, including:
 - (i) Installing zigzag barrier at pedestrian crossings to remind pedestrians to pay attention to approaching LRVs before crossing the tracks;
 - (ii) Installing smart pedestrian warning bollards with flashing light and “ding-ding” sound when LRVs approach the crossings to alert pedestrians;

- (iii) Installing full-length platform gap filler to minimize the gap between LRVs and platforms to prevent accidents;
- (iv) Installing inter-car barrier on platforms to prevent passengers from falling down from inter-car gaps between LRVs; and
- (v) Implementing red zone with rumble strips and castellated kerb at designated Light Rail junctions to prevent external vehicle intrusion and traffic incident.

Way forward

18. The MTRCL will continue to invest in enhancing station facilities and providing passengers with more convenient and comfortable services. The Corporation will also continue to gauge passenger views on MTR services and station facilities through various channels (such as customer surveys and online feedback forms) and communicate with various stakeholders, including locals and groups, with a view actively to making improvement.

19. As regards to other matters concerning MTR services, we have received opinions from passengers and the public and understand the various views of the public, including views on the consumption of food or beverage in paid area and inside train compartments, handling of oversized luggage, setting up of dedicated train compartments for specific purposes, further relaxation of the restrictions on the carriage of bicycles and animals on railway premises, etc.. While we will remain open-minded about the needs and requests of different segments of the community, we appeal to Members' understanding that MTR is a very busy railway system with an average patronage of over 5.9 million passenger trips per weekday. We are duty-bound to carefully consider such requests in order to strike a fine and appropriate balance between the safety and smooth operation of railway services and the needs of different passenger groups. The MTRCL will, as usual, continue to communicate with various stakeholders and listen to their opinions.

20. Members are invited to note the paper.

MTR Corporation Limited
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Enhancing Station Accessibility

<u>Station</u>	<u>Progress</u>
Diamond Hill	New passenger lifts at Entrance/Exit A2 & B will be put into service along with the commissioning of SCL project, connecting the station concourse and the street level.
Fortress Hill	Exploring with relevant Government departments the feasibility of integrating lift works with the “Braemar Hill Pedestrian Link” with a view to achieving synergy effect. Subject to the future arrangement, the lift tower of the pedestrian link will be extended downwards to the concourse of Fortress Hill Station.
Tin Hau	Retrofitting three escalators at Entrance/Exit A and a vertical platform lift at Entrance/Exit B connecting the station concourse and street level. Installation works has been commenced in the third quarter of 2018 and are targeted to be completed by 2021.
Mei Foo	New lift connecting the station concourse and street level at Entrance/Exit A to be constructed to provide additional barrier-free access. We strive to commence works in the second half of 2019 and it will take about three years to complete the works.
Sheung Shui	The advance works of new entrance and staircase widening on the Hung Hom-bound platform at Sheung Shui Station have been substantially completed. We strive to commence the main works of the new entrance in the coming months.

Progress of New Toilets at 10 Interchange Stations

<u>Station</u>	<u>Open for Public/ Completion of Works</u>
Mong Kok	Opened in 2015
Prince Edward	Opened in 2015
Admiralty	Opened in 2016
Tiu Keng Leng	Opened in mid-Feb 2019
Yau Tong	Opened in late May 2019
Lai King	Targeted to be completed by the second half of 2019
Central	Targeted to be completed by the second half of 2019
Yau Ma Tei	Targeted to be completed by the second half of 2020
North Point	Targeted to be completed by the second half of 2020
Tsim Sha Tsui	Targeted to be completed by the first half of 2021