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Panel on Transport

Subcommittee on Matters Relating to Railways Meeting on 5 June 2020

Updated background brief on enhancement of MTR facilities

Purpose

This paper provides updated background information on enhancement of MTR facilities. It also summarizes the major views and concerns expressed by members of the Subcommittee on Matters Relating to Railways ("the Subcommittee") during previous discussions on the subject.

Background

Enhancement of station and train facilities

2. Amongst the railway network of the MTR Corporation Limited ("MTRCL"), 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, MTRCL had been 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 platforms ¹ and beautifying ventilation shafts adjacent to stations.

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

- 3. MTRCL also planned to re-layout the concourse of certain stations with a view to easing the circulation of passengers. For example, in Kwun Tong Station, 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.. Tendering for the preliminary works has commenced and the whole project is expected to be completed in the fourth quarter of 2022.
- 4. To enhance passenger safety, MTRCL introduced the platform screen doors ("PSDs") retrofitting programme years ago. The retrofitting works at 30 underground stations on the Kwun Tong Line, Tsuen Wan Line and Island Line were completed in 2006. PSDs or automatic platform gates ("APGs") were also included as standard station facilities for new railway lines started operating since 1998. Due to the technical difficulties and challenges in retrofitting APGs along East Rail Line ("ERL"), i.e. safety risk associated with wide platform gaps, as well as limitations of platform structures, existing signalling system and trains, MTRCL decided to carry out the APG retrofitting works in tandem with the Shatin to Central Link ("SCL") project.² According to MTRCL, the retrofitting works of APGs in the stations of Ma On Shan Line were completed in December 2017.³
- 5. MTRCL has also introduced some enhanced facilities/services inside stations, including toilets for passengers in 10 interchange stations, new passenger lifts, refurbished escalators, baby-caring facilities, additional wide gates and Wi-Fi hotspots service, for greater convenience and comfort of passengers. A massive programme to replace 160 sets of chillers, which are used to adjust station temperature, at 37 stations and four depots would also be implemented in phases in six winters from 2017 to 2023.

Promotion of smart mobility

6. MTRCL has installed new LCD passenger information display

According to MTRCL, based on the latest works progress as at end December 2019, the target commissioning date of Tai Wai to Hung Hom Section of SCL would be deferred to the end of 2021 due to the series of Hung Hom Station incidents and associated investigation works; the target commissioning date of Hung Hom to Admiralty Section of SCL had to be deferred to the first quarter of 2022.

³ Annex 2 to LC Paper No. CB(4)538/17-18(07)

⁴ These are Mong Kok, Prince Edward, Admiralty, Tsim Sha Tsui, Yau Ma Tei, Lai King, Central, North Point, Yau Tong and Tiu Keng Leng stations.

system on station platforms to further strengthen communication by providing more timely information to passengers. Apart from providing real-time train information via its mobile app regarding Tung Chung Line, Airport Express Line, West Rail Line and Tseung Kwan O Line, MTRCL have opened up such real-time information for the mobile app of the Transport Department ("TD") "E-mobility" and TD's webpage "Hong Kong eTransport". These real-time data has been opened up via the government platform "data.gov.hk" for public use.

- 7. According to MTRCL, it has continuously improved the MTR Mobile App by offering new functions including "In-station Finder", "Fast Exit" and "Chatbot". MTRCL has launched a single mobile app by combining MTR Mobile and various MTR-related apps, integrating various incentive plans to achieve the vision of "Smart Mobility with One Mobile App". More functions to the MTR Mobile App would be introduced to facilitate passengers travelling and journey planning, including point-to-point traffic information, information about connecting buses or minibuses, alighting reminder, real-time arrival schedules for MTR buses, etc..
- 8. From December 2017, passengers can use mobile payments (Alipay or WeChat Pay) to purchase single journey tickets from designated ticket issuing machines at Lo Wu and Lok Ma Chau stations. QR code-based payment service at ticket gates will be available starting from mid-2020 to provide passengers with an additional payment option. At the same time, MTRCL will explore the feasibility of other payment methods such as credit cards to facilitate passengers.

Major views and concerns of Members

9. Members of the Subcommittee were previously briefed on the on-going enhancement of MTR facilities at its meetings. Members also raised Council questions on relevant matters. Their major views and concerns are summarized in the ensuing paragraphs.

Barrier-free access facilities

10. Members urged MTRCL to review and increase the number of lifts and escalators as well as continuously improve the barrier-free facilities at MTR stations. According to the information provided by MTRCL,⁵ at present, there was at least one barrier-free access to facilitate

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⁵ LC Paper No. CB(4)538/17-18(03)

physically-challenged persons to enter or leave stations. practicable, MTRCL aimed to provide one passenger lift connecting the street level with station concourse in every station. Amongst the 93 MTR stations, 56 stations were installed with passenger lifts, whilst installation of lifts was not necessary for the other 34 stations because they were either at-grade, equipped with ramps for wheelchair access, or passengers could get access to the MTR stations through nearby facilities (e.g. shopping malls). For the remaining three stations (i.e. Diamond Hill, Fortress Hill and Tin Hau stations), the passenger lift in Diamond Hill Station has been made available in tandem with the commissioning of the SCL project, while for Fortress Hill and Tin Hau stations, MTRCL is actively carrying out the required preliminary work or retrofitting of such lifts. Besides, MTRCL has been working to improve the accessibility of certain stations including Mei Foo and Sheung Shui stations. Details of the above works provided by MTRCL in June 2019 were set out in **Appendix I**.

- 11. Members were concerned that there was only one external lift connecting the station concourse of Admiralty Station with street-level and the podium of Harcourt Garden. They considered that this was definitely inadequate for facilitating access by people with disabilities. They further pointed out that the train floors did not align with the level of the platforms of South Island Line (East) at Admiralty Station, causing difficulties for wheelchair users to board and alight trains. They urged MTRCL to enhance barrier-free facilities at Admiralty Station. In response, MTRCL advised that due to geographical constraint, only one external lift could be retrofitted at Admiralty Station. Paying due regard to passengers with special needs, MTRCL had encouraged passengers to let the needy to use the lift first and would make enhancements to barrier-free access facilities based on views collected. Upon commissioning of SCL, more barrier-free access facilities would be available at Admiralty Station and the current situation would be improved.
- 12. A member urged MTRCL to further improve station facilities for visually impaired passengers. According to MTRCL, the Corporation had been conducting half-yearly communication meetings with disabled groups for many years to thoroughly understand their needs for station facilities and services. MTRCL undertook to take into account member's suggestions in its subsequent liaison with the relevant groups on the provision of facilities for visually impaired passengers.

Retrofitting of platform screen doors/automatic platform gates

13. Subcommittee members in general expressed strong dissatisfaction with the long lead time to retrofit APGs along ERL. In this connection, members urged MTRCL to introduce additional safety measures until

completion of the retrofitting project in tandem with the commissioning of SCL to prevent passengers from falling onto the rail track, and employ additional platform assistants to maintain platform order at ERL stations.

- 14. In reply, MTRCL advised that it had been making public announcements and conducting publicity at stations to call on passengers to stand clear of the platform edges out of safety concern. For cases of passengers entering the track area, the Operations Control Centre had a set of established procedures and guidelines to handle such cases, with due emphasis on protection of passenger safety as a priority consideration. Train service would be adjusted and staff would be deployed to help the passenger concerned to return to the safe area on the platform as soon as possible.
- 15. As regards retrofitting of APGs along ERL, MTRCL advised that the required preliminary works including the strengthening works of ERL platform foundations and the installation of trackside equipment and facilities of the new signalling system had been completed. To tie in with the full commissioning of SCL, the existing 12-car trains on the ERL would be replaced with 9-car trains. As the future ERL would adopt a new signalling system and run by new 9-car trains, the position of the train doors would be different from that of the existing 12-car trains. In order to align the APGs along ERL with the train doors, the APG retrofitting works would commence only after the ERL was entirely operated by new trains. In view of the public concerns about the adoption of new trains and the carrying capacity, the MTRCL was considering replacing the ERL trains gradually after the Tai Wai to Hung Hom Section of SCL was commissioned and the diversion of passengers was achieved.

Public toilets

16. Members urged MTRCL to expedite the installation of public toilets at major interchange MTR stations. They further suggested that public toilets should be made available at all stations in the near future. According to MTRCL, new toilets were planned to be provided in 10 interchange stations alongside major station enhancement works. The progress of new toilets retrofitting works provided by MTRCL in June 2019 was set out in **Appendix II**.

Baby-caring facilities

17. Some Subcommittee members suggested that breastfeeding rooms should be provided at stations, in particular for the new railway lines, to facilitate passengers in need. MTRCL advised that it would include baby care rooms at new stations when designing and planning for future new

railway lines. Both public toilets and baby care rooms would be provided at seven interchange stations ⁶ alongside with their respective major renovation works. The baby care rooms at Tiu Keng Leng and Yau Tong stations had already been opened for passengers' use in mid-February and late May 2019.

18. With the support from its staff, MTRCL has set aside some space for breastfeeding purpose at the staff rest rooms located in 20 interchange stations since December 2017. A member was dissatisfied with this arrangement and opined that MTRCL should vacate some MTR shops for breastfeeding purpose. MTRCL advised that as the provision of baby care rooms and other facilitates in existing stations would involve substantial alteration works, it would take time for design and implementation. Setting aside some space at staff rest rooms for breastfeeding purpose was an interim measure to provide convenience earlier to passengers in need.

Wi-Fi service

- 19. Subcommittee members welcomed the provision of free Wi-Fi hotspots service at all MTR stations since 7 July 2013. Nevertheless, they suggested extending the free Wi-Fi hotspots service up to 30 minutes. MTRCL explained that passengers would be able to enjoy the free Wi-Fi hotspots service at all MTR stations for 15 minutes each time and they might renew such service for each eligible device five times per day. MTRCL would review the usage of the free Wi-Fi hotspots at all MTR stations.
- 20. Some Subcommittee members were also concerned about the progress of the study conducted on the provision of free Wi-Fi service in all MTR trains. MTRCL responded that given the large volume of passengers of MTR, it was technically challenging to cope with the high loading demand if free Wi-Fi service was extended to all MTR trains. Further feasibility study in this regard would be carried out.

Water drinking facility

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⁶ These are Tsim Sha Tsui, Yau Ma Tei, Lai King, Central, North Point, Yau Tong and Tiu Keng Leng stations.

These are Kowloon Tong, Tsim Sha Tsui, Yau Ma Tei, Mong Kok, Prince Edward, Mei Foo, Lai King, Central, Admiralty, Quarry Bay, North Point, Yau Tong, Tiu Keng Leng, Hong Kong, Kowloon, Sunny Bay, Nam Cheong, Tsing Yi, Hung Hom and Tai Wai stations.

21. There were some suggestions of installing water drinking facility within MTR stations. According to the information provided by MTRCL in June 2019, drinking water disperser was installed on a trial basis at Tung Chung, Tsuen Wan and Prince Edward stations. Given the positive feedback of the trial scheme, MTRCL planned to install drinking water dispersers by phases in other stations which were technically feasible with appropriate locations for passengers' convenience.

Bicycle parking spaces

22. Responding to a member's enquiry regarding the provision of bicycle parking spaces next to MTR stations, MTRCL advised that such spaces were currently available in the vicinity of some MTR stations. When planning for the provision of bicycle parking spaces near MTR stations, it had to take into account a number of factors, including space and environment constraints and support from the Government.

Latest development

23. The Administration and MTRCL plan to brief members on the latest progress of enhancement of MTR facilities and customer experience at the Subcommittee meeting to be held on 5 June 2020.

Relevant papers

24. A list of relevant papers is at **Appendix III**.

Council Business Division 4
<u>Legislative Council Secretariat</u>
2 June 2020

Enhancing Station Accessibility

Station	<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 Aand 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.

Source: LC Paper No. CB(4)975/18-19(03)

Progress of New Toilets at 10 Interchange Stations

<u>Station</u>	Open for Public/ Completion of Works	
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	

Source: LC Paper No. CB(4)975/18-19(03)

Enhancement of MTR facilities

List of relevant papers

Date of meeting	Committee	Minutes/Paper	LC Paper No.
19.1.2011	Council meeting	Hon WONG Sing-chi raised a question on MTR facilities and services	http://www.info.gov.hk/gia/gen eral/201101/19/P20110119013 3.htm
21.1.2011	Subcommittee on Matters Relating to Railways	The MTR Corporation Limited's paper on facilities and design of MTR train compartments	
		Minutes of meeting	CB(1)1916/10-11 http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr10-11/english/panels/tp/tp_rdp/mi nutes/rdp20110121.pdf
13.1.2012	Subcommittee on Matters Relating to Railways	The MTR Corporation Limited's paper on design of next generation of railway stations and update on retrofitting platform screen doors	CB(1)785/11-12(03) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr11- 12/english/panels/tp/tp_rdp/pa pers/tp_rdp0113cb1-785-3- e.pdf
		Minutes of meeting	CB(1)2461/11-12 http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr11- 12/english/panels/tp/tp_rdp/mi nutes/rdp20120113.pdf

Date of meeting	Committee	Minutes/Paper	LC Paper No.
2.3.2012	Subcommittee on Matters Relating to Railways	The MTR Corporation Limited's supplementary information on retrofitting automatic platform gates along the East Rail Line and Ma On Shan Line	CB(1)1154/11-12(05) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr11- 12/english/panels/tp/tp_rdp/pa pers/tp_rdp0302cb1-1154-5- e.pdf
		Minutes of meeting	CB(1)1772/11-12 http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr11-12/english/panels/tp/tp_rdp/mi nutes/rdp20120302.pdf
4.1.2013	Subcommittee on Matters Relating to Railways	The MTR Corporation Limited's paper on railway system for South Island Line (East)	
		Minutes of meeting	CB(1)522/12-13 http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr12-13/english/panels/tp/tp_rdp/minutes/rdp20130104.pdf
9.1.2013	Council meeting	Dr Hon KWOK Ka-ki raised a question on the footbridge connecting Tsuen Wan and Tsuen Wan West MTR stations	http://www.info.gov.hk/gia/gen eral/201301/09/P20130108042 9.htm
5.7.2013	Subcommittee on Matters Relating to Railways	The MTR Corporation Limited's paper on its service performance	CB(1)1421/12-13(01) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr12- 13/english/panels/tp/tp_rdp/pa pers/tp_rdp0705cb1-1421-1- e.pdf

Date of meeting	Committee	Minutes/Paper	LC Paper No.
		Minutes of meeting	CB(1)534/13-14 http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr12- 13/english/panels/tp/tp_rdp/mi nutes/rdp20130705.pdf
11.6.2014	Council meeting	Dr Hon CHIANG Lai- wan raised a question on MTR station facilities	http://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/201406/11/P20140611036 0.htm
2.7.2014	Council meeting	Hon TANG Ka-piu raised a question on facilities and services provided at MTR stations for persons with disabilities	http://www.info.gov.hk/gia/gen eral/201407/02/P20140702115 5.htm
3.7.2015	Subcommittee on Matters Relating to Railways	The MTR Corporation Limited's paper on the progress update on enhancement of MTR station facilities	CB(4)1228/14-15(03) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr14- 15/english/panels/tp/tp_rdp/pa pers/tp_rdp20150703cb4- 1228-3-e.pdf
		Minutes of meeting	CB(4)1491/14-15 http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr14- 15/english/panels/tp/tp_rdp/mi nutes/rdp20150703.pdf
22.2.2016	Subcommittee on Matters Relating to Railways	Administration's paper on the progress update of the construction of the Shatin to Central Link (as at 31 December 2015)	CB(4)610/15-16(05) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr15- 16/english/panels/tp/tp_rdp/pa pers/tp_rdp20160222cb4-610- 5-e.pdf

Date of meeting	Committee	Minutes/Paper	LC Paper No.
		Administration's supplementary information paper on the additional toilet facilities provided at the new concourses at the stations along the Shatin to Central Link and the original and latest estimates of the construction costs of the various on-going railway projects (Follow-up paper)	
		Minutes of meeting	CB(4)983/15-16 http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr15- 16/english/panels/tp/tp_rdp/mi nutes/rdp20160222.pdf
19.4.2016	Subcommittee on Matters Relating to Railways	The MTR Corporation Limited's paper on enhancement of MTR station facilities	CB(4)854/15-16(05) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr15- 16/english/panels/tp/tp_rdp/pa pers/tp_rdp20160419cb4-854- 5-e.pdf
		Minutes of meeting	CB(4)1282/15-16 http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr15-16/english/panels/tp/tp_rdp/minutes/rdp20160419.pdf
28.4.2017	Subcommittee on Matters Relating to Railways	MTR Corporation Limited's paper on the latest progress of enhancement of MTR station facilities	CB(4)890/16-17(05) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr16- 17/english/panels/tp/tp_rdp/pa pers/tp_rdp20170428cb4-890- 5-e.pdf

Date of meeting	Committee	Minutes/Paper	LC Paper No.
		Minutes of meeting	CB(4)119/17-18 http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr16- 17/english/panels/tp/tp_rdp/mi nutes/rdp20170428.pdf
15.11.2017	Council meeting	Hon Paul TSE raised a question on barrier-free facilities at MTR stations	https://www.info.gov.hk/gia/ge neral/201711/15/P2017111400 826.htm
2.2.2018	Subcommittee on Matters Relating to Railways	MTR Corporation Limited's paper on latest progress of enhancement of MTR station facilities	CB(4)538/17-18(03) https://www.legco.gov.hk/yr17 = 18/english/panels/tp/tp_rdp/pa pers/tp_rdp20180202cb4-538- 3-e.pdf
		Administration's supplementary information on the enhancement of MTR station facilities (follow-up paper)	CB(4)1417/17-18(01) https://www.legco.gov.hk/yr17 = 18/english/panels/tp/tp_rdp/pa pers/tp_rdp20180202cb4- 1417-1-e.pdf
		Minutes of meeting	CB(4)392/18-19 https://www.legco.gov.hk/yr17 = 18/english/panels/tp/tp_rdp/mi nutes/rdp20180202.pdf
11.7.2018	Council meeting	Hon Jeremy TAM raised a question on escalators in MTR Lam Tin Station	https://www.info.gov.hk/gia/ge neral/201807/11/P2018071100 346.htm

Date of meeting	Committee	Minutes/Paper	LC Paper No.
9.10.2018	Subcommittee on Matters Relating to Railways	Letter dated 9 October 2018 from the Administration on "Progress of MTR Railway Services"	CB(4)1612/17-18(01) https://www.legco.gov.hk/yr17 = 18/chinese/panels/tp/tp_rdp/pa pers/tp_rdpcb4-1612-1-c.pdf (Chinese version only)
6.6.2019*	Subcommittee on Matters Relating to Railways	Administration's paper on progress update on enhancement of MTR facilities	CB(4)975/18-19(03) https://www.legco.gov.hk/yr18 - 19/english/panels/tp/tp_rdp/pa pers/tp_rdpcb4-975-3-e.pdf
26.6.2019	Council meeting	Hon CHAN Kin-por raised a question on air quality in train compartments and railway stations	https://www.info.gov.hk/gia/ge neral/201906/26/P2019062600 326.htm
6.12.2019	Subcommittee on Matters Relating to Railways	Joint letter from Dr Hon Elizabeth QUAT and Dr Hon CHIANG Lai-wan on the introduction of train compartments designated for female/children and people with disabilities (Chinese version only) and the Administration's response	CB(4)941/18-19(01) https://www.legco.gov.hk/yr18 = 19/chinese/panels/tp/tp_rdp/pa pers/tp_rdpcb4-941-1-c.pdf CB(4)1133/18-19(01) https://www.legco.gov.hk/yr19 = 20/chinese/panels/tp/tp_rdp/pa pers/tp_rdp20191206cb4- 1133-1-c.pdf (English version to follow)

^{*}Issue date

Date of meeting	Committee	Minutes/Paper	LC Paper No.
		Letter from Dr Hon Elizabeth QUAT on the retrofitting of Automatic Platform Gates for the East Rail Line (Chinese version only) and the Administration's response	https://www.legco.gov.hk/yr18

Council Business Division 4
<u>Legislative Council Secretariat</u>
2 June 2020