

立法會

Legislative Council

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(These minutes have been seen
by the Administration and
cleared with the Chairman)

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Legislative Council Panel on Transport

Minutes of Meeting held on Thursday, 25 May 2000, at 10:45 am in the Chamber of the Legislative Council Building

Members present : Hon Mrs Miriam LAU Kin-ye, JP (Chairman)
Hon LAU Kong-wah (Deputy Chairman)
Hon Albert HO Chun-yan
Ir Dr Hon Raymond HO Chung-tai, JP
Hon LEE Wing-tat
Hon LEE Kai-ming, SBS, JP
Hon CHAN Wing-chan
Hon CHAN Kam-lam
Hon LAU Chin-shek, JP
Hon Andrew CHENG Kar-foo

Members absent : Hon Edward HO Sing-tin, SBS, JP
Hon Mrs Selina CHOW LIANG Shuk-ye, JP
Hon Andrew WONG Wang-fat, JP
Hon TAM Yiu-chung, GBS, JP
Hon FUNG Chi-kin
Dr Hon TANG Siu-tong, JP

**Public officers
attending** : **Item I**

Transport Bureau

Mr Kevin HO
Secretary for Transport (Atg.)
Mr M L WAN

Principal Assistant Secretary for Transport

Highways Department

Mr C K MAK

Principal Government Engineer/Railway Development

Mr Matthew P K HO

Chief Engineer/Railway Planning

Clerk in attendance : Mr Andy LAU
Chief Assistant Secretary (1)2

Staff in attendance : Ms Alice AU
Senior Assistant Secretary (1)5

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I Railway Development Strategy 2000

(Legislative Council Brief issued by the Transport Bureau (Ref: TBCR 16/1016/97) on 16 May 2000; and
LC Paper No. CB(1)1672/99-00(01) - Information paper provided by the Administration)

The Chairman said that following the announcement of the Railway Development Strategy 2000 (the 2000 Strategy) on 16 May 2000, the Administration had requested for the item to be included in the agenda for the meeting to be held on 26 May 2000. However, in view of time constraints and having regard to a member's suggestion that the 2000 Strategy should be thoroughly discussed before Members' consideration of the financial proposal on the Ma On Shan to Tai Wai Rail Link (MOS Rail) and the extension of the Kowloon-Canton Railway (KCR) from Hung Hom to Tsim Sha Tsui at the forthcoming Finance Committee meeting on 26 May 2000, a special meeting was thus arranged.

2. Mr Albert HO remarked that the scheduling of a special meeting at such a short notice had upset his work plan. Mr CHENG Kar-foo also felt dissatisfied that the Administration had put the funding proposal on the MOS Rail to the Finance Committee for consideration shortly after the announcement of the 2000 Strategy, necessitating the need to convene a special meeting at rush to discuss the subject matter. Under such circumstances, it was unfair to members as they did not have sufficient time to examine the 2000 Strategy in detail before voting on the MOS Rail project at the forthcoming Finance Committee meeting on 26 May 2000.

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3. The Chairman said that in view of the heavy work load of the Council in the run up to the close of the LegCo term, it was difficult to schedule a special meeting before the relevant Finance Committee meeting. The present time slot was indeed the only available slot that could be identified.

4. The Chairman expressed serious concern about the ways in which the Administration handled the subject matter. She pointed out that the Administration should consult the Panel well in advance before they formulated the 2000 Strategy. She also queried why the Administration had not made available the Report of the Second Railway Development Study (RDS-2) to the Panel which was completed in late 1999.

5. The Secretary for Transport (Acting) (S for T (Atg.)) said that an interim report which summarized the key findings of the RDS-2 relating to the rail network assessment, the role and functions of the potential new lines and the broad direction for future network development was already published in 1999. The Panel was also briefed on the subject matter. He then pointed out that the majority of the proposals contained in the 2000 Strategy were already set out in the interim report of the RDS-2 but the detailed construction and interconnection programme were not included therein.

6. As to whether the railway proposals could be modified at this stage, S for T (Atg.) advised that the 2000 Strategy only set out the broad framework for implementation of railway projects. The actual alignments and the locations of stations had yet to be determined, pending detailed design of individual line. The Administration would welcome any views from the general public and the Panel.

7. The Principal Government Engineer/Railway Development (PGE/RD) briefed members on the essential features of the 2000 Strategy which envisaged six new passenger rail corridors and a potential Port Rail Line (PRL). The six new rail corridors were as follows :-

- (a) an east-west corridor from Chai Wan to Tung Chung formed by the MTR Island Line (ISL), the North Hong Kong Island Line (NIL) and the Tung Chung Line;
- (b) a second east-west corridor from the Tseung Kwan O to Kennedy Town formed by the MTR Tseung Kwan O (TKO) Extension, ISL and the West Hong Kong Island Line;
- (c) a north-south corridor which, depending on the operator, could either run direct from Tai Wai or Ma On Shan to Hong Kong Island via Southeast Kowloon;
- (d) a Kowloon Southern Link (KSL) that would provide convenient connection between the KCR East Rail and West Rail via the Kowloon peninsula;
- (e) a Northern Link (NOL) that would connect the KCR East Rail and West Rail at the northern part of the New Territories; and

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- (f) the Regional Express Line (REL) that would provide rapid rail transport between the Boundary and the Metro areas.

The potential PRL would be from Lo Wu to the Kwai Chung Port via either East Rail or West Rail.

8. Members welcomed the proposed railway developments which would provide rail service to strategic growth areas for housing and economic development, relieve bottlenecks in the existing railway systems, meet cross-boundary passenger and freight demands and help reduce potential environmental impact. However, they were concerned about the implementation programme which might not be able to catch up with the rapid development of the society and the needs of the travelling commuters. They therefore urged the Administration to speed up the delivery of the various projects. Discussions on individual line were summarized below.

MOS Rail

9. Mr CHENG Kar-foo opined that MOS Rail might be under-utilized without a direct connection to Diamond Hill, resulting in a waste of valuable railway resources. He was also worried that the existing KCR East Rail would not have any spare capacity to absorb the additional demand generated by MOS Rail, in particular, at the Tai Wai interchange. He urged the Administration to revise the project scope of MOS Rail to include the Tai Wai to Diamond Hill Link before putting the funding proposal to the Finance Committee for consideration.

10. S for T (Atg.) advised that MOS Rail would allow passengers to interchange at Tai Wai Station to KCR East Rail for onward journeys to the urban areas. Arrangements would be made to ensure that Tai Wai Station would have sufficient capacity to handle the additional passenger demand generated by MOS Rail. Regarding the proposed Tai Wai to Diamond Hill Link, S for T (Atg.) pointed out that it was already included in the 2000 Strategy. From a transport point of view, it was considered acceptable to split the railway development projects in phases so as to tie in with the projected increase in population and developments in the areas.

11. Mr CHENG Kar-foo indicated that he could not accept the Administration's reply that the Tai Wai to Diamond Hill Link was a newly identified railway project which would take another eight to ten years to complete. Indeed, the idea of extending the MOS Rail to the urban area had been conveyed to the Administration for consideration long ago. He also highlighted that if the Administration was determined to take up a particular project, it could be completed within a short time frame. The implementation of the Penny's Bay Rail Link was a good example.

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12. S for T (Atg.) said that the Administration could speed up the delivery of the Tai Wai to Diamond Hill Link if other projects were put in abeyance. However, there was a need to strike a proper balance, having regard to the transport needs of the general public. The Administration would monitor the capacity problem of the KCR East Rail and put in place additional rail links in a timely manner.

13. Mr LAU Kong-wah also queried the cost-effectiveness of the MOS Rail. He doubted if many residents in MOS would choose to take MOS Rail if the MOS Rail fare from Lee On to Tai Wai was pitched at \$8.2. He also requested the Administration to give a firm commitment to extend the MOS rail to the urban area by 2006.

14. S for T (Atg.) advised that the Kowloon-Canton Railway Corporation (KCRC) was operating in accordance with prudent commercial principles. In setting its fare, KCRC would certainly take into account the fares offered by other transport operators. Any unreasonable fares set by KCRC would render its service unattractive and would be against the interest of the Corporation as well.

Shatin to Central Link

15. Mr LAU Chin-shek was concerned about the congestion problem along the corridor of the East Kowloon Line (EKL) and the existing rail harbour crossings. He enquired about the implementation programme of the Shatin to Central Link which comprised the Tai Wai to Diamond Hill Link, the EKL and the Fourth Rail Harbour Crossing (FHC).

16. S for T (Atg.) advised that the Administration aimed at completing the Shatin to Central Link project between 2008 and 2011. However, a detailed implementation programme was not available at this stage. Regarding the FHC, he said that the development of the FHC would depend on the availability of the Wanchai Reclamation which was scheduled for completion in 2008. The Administration was presently working on the project and would invite the railway corporations to submit detailed proposals by the end of the year.

17. The Chairman opined that with the completion of the MTR TKO Extension and the KCR West Rail in 2002 and 2003 respectively, they would attract more passengers and lead to excessive overcrowding of the MTR Tsuen Wan Line (TWL) and ISL. She therefore queried why the implementation of the NIL would be delayed until 2008.

18. PGE/RD advised that as part and parcel of the MTR TKO Extension, new interchange facilities would be provided at North Point. For KCR West Rail, passengers might switch to the MTR TWL at Mei Foo Station for onward journeys to Hong Kong Island. The Administration was aware that there would be congestion at MTR TWL and ISL shortly after the opening of the committed

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rail lines in 2002 and 2003. The implementation of the NIL would provide the necessary capacity to relieve the anticipated bottlenecks in the railway systems.

19. The Chairman commented that due to the anticipated bottlenecks as highlighted by the Administration, the implementation of the NIL should be advanced to 2006 or before so as to provide the necessary relief. She enquired whether better co-ordination between the Central and Wanchai Reclamation and the NIL project could be made.

20. S for T (Atg.) advised that arrangements had already been made to conduct parallel works as far as possible and the Administration would make every effort to speed up the delivery of the NIL project. On the projected congestion at the MTR Nathan Road corridor and the ISL in 2006, S for T (Atg.) advised that since the Tung Chung Line was not operating at capacity, arrangements could be made to divert passengers on the KCR West Rail to the Tung Chung Line to cross the harbour, if necessary. There were also other road-based transport facilities which would help relieve the bottlenecks at the critical railway corridors.

21. Dr Raymond HO opined that the Shatin to Central Link should be implemented in stages so as to shorten the delivery time of individual links. S for T (Atg.) said that he would not rule out the possibility of phased implementation. However, the actual implementation programme would be subject to further examination pending detailed proposals from the railway companies. The Administration would examine how the project could be fast-tracked.

22. Noting the Administration's reply, Dr Raymond HO opined that the decision to implement the project in phases should be determined by the Administration rather than the railway companies. Indeed, it was technically feasible to construct the rail tunnel along side with the Central and Wanchai Reclamation so as to speed up the delivery of the FHC.

23. S for T (Atg.) said that in order to promote healthy competition, different railway companies would be invited to bid for the Shatin to Central Link, which was not a natural extension of an existing line. As regards the interface arrangements between the construction of rail tunnel for the FHC and the Central and Wanchai reclamation, he reiterated that arrangements would be made to integrate the related works as far as possible so as to shorten the time required for the implementation of the project. He added that the proposed timeframe for the implementation of the Shatin to Central Link was in line with other railway projects which took eight to ten years to complete.

24. S for T (Atg.) further advised that if the development right of the Tai Wai to Diamond Hill Link were granted to KCRC along side with the MOS Rail at this stage, the remaining lines of the Shatin to Central Link (i.e. the EKL and the

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FHC) would have to be granted to KCRC as well, otherwise passengers in Shatin heading for Hong Kong Island would need to take an interchange at Diamond Hill. To avoid unnecessary interchange and in order to stick to the policy objective of promoting competition by inviting interested companies to bid for the project, the Administration considered it undesirable to split the Shatin to Central Link into various projects.

25. On the proposed alignment of the FHC, S for T (Atg.) advised that it started from Hung Hom on Kowloon side. On Hong Kong Island, the FHC could route directly to Central via Exhibition/Admiralty or via Victoria Park, Leighton Hill and Wanchai South. According to the present estimates, the former option was cheaper to build. The Administration would assess the detailed implementation methods put forward by various railway companies before making a final decision. Dr Raymond HO opined that in terms of network development, he preferred the routing of the FHC to via stations at Victoria Park, Leighton Hill, Wanchai South and Hong Kong Park.

26. Mr CHAN Kam-lam opined that in order to enhance competition, new operators other than MTR Corporation and KCRC should be invited to submit proposals to develop the new rail corridors. Mr LEE Kai-ming also enquired about the criteria for selection of operator for the Shatin to Central Link, given the respective competitive edge of the two railway companies. S for T (Atg.) shared Mr CHAN's view that the railway market should be open as far as possible but there was a need to ensure that the selected operator would be capable of operating the railway service in a safe, efficient and effective manner. In the course of selection, the Administration would take all relevant factors such as quality of service, safety, public interest, etc. into consideration and ensure that various operators were competing on a level playing field.

27. Mr CHAN Kam-lam urged the Administration to speed up the implementation of the EKL so as to cater for the South East Kowloon Development. S for T (Atg.) advised that the Administration would ensure that timely infrastructure would be provided to cater for the population intake. Mr CHAN remarked that since the EKL would also serve residents in Ma Tau Wai/Hung Hom, its early implementation would bring benefits to residents nearby.

KSL

28. Mr CHAN Kam-lam expressed concern about the viability of the KSL. S for T (Atg.) said that the KSL extended West Rail from Nam Cheong Street to Hung Hom, which would bring residents in the North West New Territories to Yau Ma Tei and Tsim Sha Tsui. According to RDS-2, the KSL should be financially viable.

PRL & REL

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29. Mr Albert HO pointed out that at one time, emphasis had been placed in the freight service particularly in the context of the West Rail project. However it seemed that the 2000 Strategy had adopted a different approach in the implementation of new freight rail connection. He therefore enquired about the role and demand of freight transport in the overall implementation programme of the railway network.

30. S for T (Atg.) advised that there were good prospects for freight transport in and out of the Mainland. As such, KCRC had revised its freight strategy with a view to providing a better service to compete with its counterparts in the Mainland. These included the construction of a PRL and the development of a freight storage, consolidation and distribution centre at Pinghu in the Mainland. On the latter proposal, S for T (Atg.) explained that having considered the sources of cargoes and the availability of land in Hong Kong, both the Administration and the KCRC took the view that it was more cost effective to provide the centre at Pinghu in the Mainland rather than Sheung Shui in Hong Kong. Regarding the way forward, the Administration would encourage KCRC to investigate into the viability and timing of the PRL and the possible route options of joining Lo Wu with the container port via either East Rail or West Rail. The route choice, timing and institutional structure for this project were subject to detailed planning.

31. Mr LAU Kong-wah opined that in order to maximize the utilization of the PRL and the REL, consideration should be given to providing additional railway stations at Lai King, Mei Foo and Sha Tau Kok to facilitate residents there. He also enquired whether the implementation of the REL which took 38 minutes to operate between Lo Wu and Hung Hom was intended to attract the general public to the Mainland.

32. S for T (Atg.) replied that under the present proposal, the PRL would operate via a long tunnel. For safety considerations, there was a need to carry out further examination so as to determine the suitability of allowing passenger service to operate along side with freight service as dangerous goods might be carried from time to time. However, the Administration was open in this regard and would request KCRC to conduct further examination taking into account the demand of passenger service and other relevant factors. Additional stations would be provided, if justified.

33. Regarding the provision of additional stations along the alignment of the REL, S for T (Atg.) explained that additional stations would no doubt bring benefits to residents nearby. It would however cause delay to cross boundary passengers. Under the present proposal, the REL would link Hung Hom to the boundary via Shek Kip Mei. It had two route options in the New Territories, an eastern one via Fanling South and a western one via Kam Sheung Road. Interchange facilities would be provided at these stations to MTR network and

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KCR East Rail and West Rail. The eastern option might incorporate a third rail boundary crossing but this would have to be co-ordinated with the planning intentions of the Shenzhen side.

34. S for T (Atg.) clarified that the implementation of railway projects would depend upon actual passenger demand. The Administration had no intention whatsoever of making use of railway development with a view to attracting the general public to the boundary.

South Island Line (SIL)

35. In response to Mr Albert HO, S for T (Atg.) advised that a number of alignments and schemes were considered for linking the relatively dispersed developments of South Hong Kong Island to the railways and commercial areas along the north foreshore of Hong Kong Island. Whilst generating reasonable benefits, the relatively poor financial performance of the SIL schemes investigated made implementation difficult.

NOL

36. Given that NOL provided a link between the West Rail corridor and the East Rail corridor and with the Boundary crossing stations at Lok Ma Chau and Lo Wu, Mr Albert HO opined that its early implementation would serve to improve accessibility of Western New Territories to the Boundary and facilitate strategic growth in the surrounding areas. S for T (Atg.) noted the member's comment and responded that the timing and priority of the NOL depended on the growth in Cross Boundary travel. The Administration would monitor the situation and make necessary arrangements. PGE/RD added that the Administration was already committed to implementing the Sheung Shui to Lok Ma Chau Spur Line to provide additional rail passenger crossing facilities between Hong Kong and Shenzhen to relieve the congestion at Lo Wu. An additional station would also be provided at Kwu Tung. For the West Rail, consideration would be given to providing an additional station at Hung Shui Kiu. All these served to relieve the congestion at Lo Wu station.

Mass Transportation Centre (MTC)

37. Mr Albert HO enquired about the reasons for designating Hung Hom instead of West Kowloon as the MTC as originally proposed. S for T (Atg.) advised that MTC differed from other public transport interchanges. It provided for terminal facilities for cross boundary inter-city services with the necessary customs and immigration facilities. The existing Hung Hom Terminal, which was centrally located in Hong Kong, was already functioning as an MTC with good capability for expansion. The Administration had considered other locations including West Kowloon but concluded that Hung Hom was the best location in terms of financial and transport considerations.

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38. Dr Raymond HO commented that the existing transport policy was not clear enough. Whilst agreeing that priority should be given to railways, he observed that empty buses were still operating in busy areas causing traffic disruption. S for T (Atg.) clarified that notwithstanding the fact that railways would form the backbone of Hong Kong's transport system, there was a need to maintain franchised bus services to provide commuters with choices. With the completion of the expanded railway network, rail boardings would increase by about 100%, boosting the rail share in the public transport system to 43%. For buses, boardings would also increase by about 50%. The Administration would strike a balance to ensure that the transport needs of the travelling commuters were adequately met.

39. Members noted that Hong Kong 2030: Planning Vision and Strategy was intended to provide a long-term land use-transport-environmental planning framework for the territory. S for T confirmed that the 2000 Strategy was in line with the contents of the Hong Kong 2030: Planning Vision and Strategy.

40. Mr LEE Kai-ming opined that new rail projects should be started immediately upon the completion of the existing ones such as MTR TKO and KCR West Rail projects so that resources deployed for the latter could be diverted to the new projects in an efficient and effective manner. S for T (Atg.) shared the view expressed by Mr LEE and said that arrangements would be made to co-ordinate the implementation of the various railway projects.

II Any other business

41. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 12:40 pm.