

立法會
Legislative Council

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Panel on Transport
Subcommittee on matters relating to railways

Minutes of meeting on
Tuesday, 25 February 2003, at 10:45 am
in Conference Room A of the Legislative Council Building

Members present : Hon Miriam LAU Kin-ye, JP (Chairman)
Dr Hon David CHU Yu-lin, JP
Ir Dr Hon Raymond HO Chung-tai, JP
Hon CHAN Kwok-keung
Hon LAU Kong-wah
Hon Andrew CHENG Kar-foo
Hon TAM Yiu-chung, GBS, JP
Hon Abraham SHEK Lai-him, JP
Hon Albert CHAN Wai-yip
Hon LEUNG Fu-wah, MH, JP
Hon WONG Sing-chi
Hon LAU Ping-cheung

Member absent : Hon Tommy CHEUNG Yu-yan, JP

Public Officers : **Agenda Item IV**
attending

Environment, Transport and Works Bureau

Mr Arthur HO
Deputy Secretary for the Environment, Transport and Works

Hong Kong Railway Inspectorate

Mr K M WOO
Chief Inspecting Officer (Railways)

Transport Department

Ms LUI Ying
Principal Transport Officer/Management

Agenda Item V

Environment, Transport and Works Bureau

Mrs Sharon YIP
Principal Assistant Secretary for the Environment,
Transport and Works

Hong Kong Railway Inspectorate

Mr K M WOO
Chief Inspecting Officer (Railways)

Transport Department

Ms Alice AU YEUNG
Principal Transport Officer/Bus and Railway (Ag)

**Attendance by
invitation**

: Agenda item IV

Kowloon-Canton Railway Corporation

Mr Michael TIEN
Chairman

Mr K Y YEUNG
Chief Executive Officer

Mr Jonathan YU
Director, Light Rail

Mr K K LEE
Director, East Rail Extensions

Mrs Irene YAU
General Manager, Corporate Affairs

Mr Leo MAK
General Manager, West Rail Railway Systems

Agenda item V

MTR Corporation Limited

Mr Eric HUI
Head of Operations

Miss Maggie SO
External Affairs Manager

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

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

Action

I Confirmation of minutes and matters arising

(LC Paper No. CB(1)839/02-03 - Minutes of meeting held on 27
November 2002; and
LC Paper No. CB(1)854/02-03 - Minutes of meeting held on 20
December 2002)

The minutes of meetings held on 27 November and 20 December 2002 were confirmed.

II Information papers issued since last meeting

2. Members noted that no information paper had been issued since last meeting.

III Items for discussion at the next meeting scheduled for 4 April 2003

(LC Paper No. CB(1)855/02-03(01) - List of railways and projects)

3. After deliberation, members agreed to discuss the following items at the next meeting scheduled for 4 April 2003:

- (a) Project update of the West Rail including testing activities; and
- (b) Reorganization of the public transport network in connection with the commissioning of West Rail.

Action

4. Referring to the recent announcement made by the Kowloon-Canton Railway Corporation (KCRC) on possible adjustments to the passenger fare structure of East Rail (ER), Mr Albert CHAN expressed dissatisfaction that no arrangements had been made by KCRC to brief the Subcommittee on such an important matter. While noting the member's concern, the Chairman advised that matters relating to fare adjustments of the two railway corporations fell outside the purview of the Subcommittee and should be taken up by the full Panel instead.

IV Review of the Light Rail Service and the incident that occurred on 18 December 2002

5. The Administration's paper and the investigation report prepared by KCRC were tabled at the meeting.

6. The Deputy Secretary for the Environment, Transport and Works (DS for ETW) briefly introduced the paper provided by the Administration on "Review of the Light Rail Service and the incident that occurred on 18 December 2002" (subsequently issued vide LC paper No. CB(1)990/02-03(01)). In particular, he drew members' attention to the actions taken by the Government after the incident. Based on the information provided by KCRC and the assessment of the Hong Kong Railway Inspectorate (HKRI), the Government considered that KCRC had correctly identified the cause of the derailment incident on 18 December 2002. The derailment was a rare and isolated case and the Light Rail Transit (LRT) had been operating to high safety standards. Following the investigation, immediate and long-term improvement measures had been identified. The Government would monitor the Corporation's implementation of the recommended remedial and improvement measures.

7. Mr K Y YEUNG, Chief Executive Officer of KCRC (CEO of KCRC), expressed regret for the inconvenience caused by the derailment incident for LR passengers. He pledged that the Corporation would make every effort to prevent similar incident from happening. Acknowledging the serious nature of any derailment incident, the Management had set up a reviewing committee headed by Mr K K LEE, Director of East Rail Extensions (D/ERE), to review the findings of the Committee of Enquiry (the Technical Committee). The investigation findings as well as recommendations of the Technical Committee were endorsed by the reviewing team. The Corporation accepted unreservedly the findings and recommendations of the Technical Committee. More particularly, the recommendations of the Technical Committee had been or would be implemented as a matter of urgency.

8. As far as accountability was concerned, CEO of KCRC stated that he had authorized the setting up of a further committee (the Accountability Enquiry Committee) to determine the accountability of the staff concerned in this incident and, if found necessary, to put forward recommendations on the need for disciplinary action. Its conclusion was that eight LR staff members including some senior staff had failed to perform their duties to the full extent expected of them. Disciplinary action,

Action

ranging from verbal and written warnings to demotion and suspension without pay, had also been recommended.

9. Mr Michael TIEN, Chairman of KCRC, added that in general, disciplinary matters were the responsibility of the Management. However, in view of the seriousness of the present case, the Board had been informed about the disciplinary actions to be taken by the Management. The staff concerned could also appeal to the Board if they did not accept the Management's decision. So far, no appeal was received by the Board and appropriate disciplinary actions had been taken against the staff concerned as recommended by the Management.

10. With the aid of PowerPoint, D/ERE briefed members on the findings and recommendations set out in the "Final Report of the Investigation into the Light Rail Vehicle Derailment Incident that Occurred on 18 December 2002 at Siu Hong Stop" (the Final Report) which was attached to the paper provided by KCRC (subsequently issued vide LC Paper No. CB(1)990/02-03(02) and its Annex B). He said that at 0747 hours on 18 December 2002, the front bogie of light rail vehicle (no. 1100) on Route 505 northbound went off the track before entering platform 6 of LR Siu Hong Stop. Following the incident, the Corporation had set up the Technical Committee to identify the cause of the incident, to examine incident handling, to determine if there was any failure on the part of systems or personnel, and to make recommendations.

11. D/ERE said that in brief, the Technical Committee concluded that the most possible major factors leading to the derailment were as follows:

- (a) The two left-turning turnouts in close proximity to one another had resulted in a high rate of wear of both the tongue rail and the stock rail. A groove had also been worn in the tongue blade by the wear resulting from the centrifugal force of the light rail vehicle.
- (b) The high rate of wear of the left-turning tongue blade was attributable to a temporary re-routing of Route 505 since 15 September 2002 to facilitate the construction works at the West Rail (WR)/LR interchange station at Siu Hong. The re-routing led to a substantial increase in the frequency of LR vehicles running over this section of tracks.
- (c) Although the unusually high rate of wear had resulted in the inspection by the Senior Supervisor on 9 November 2002, and had been noted by the Maintenance Officer, no further action had been taken. The undesirable combined profiles of the tongue blade and stock rail head had not been noted or reported by either the Senior Supervisor or the patrolman. As a result, preventive maintenance had not been effected which might have prevented the derailment.

Incident handling

Action

12. Ir Dr Raymond HO said that in case of rail emergencies, the Corporation should not rely on its LRT buses and ER feeder buses as their original service schedule might be disrupted. Instead, the Corporation should promptly alert other public transport operators so that adequate and speedy emergency services could be provided to the stranded passengers.

13. Mr Jonathan YU, Director of Light Rail (D/LR), responded that in case of any service disruption, the Corporation had an established procedure for notifying the Transport Department (TD) and liaising with other public transport operators according to the Amber/Red Alert System. For the purpose of providing early relief to the passengers, the Corporation would mobilize its own bus fleet in the first instance. Depending on the actual circumstances on the ground, other public transport services would be engaged to provide emergency transport support services.

14. To supplement, the Principal Transport Officer/Management said that upon receipt of an "Amber Alert" or "Red Alert" message, TD would keep in close touch with the source operator to see if appropriate and adequate relief transport services were provided, and to liaise with other departments and bus operators to provide assistance if necessary.

Operational safety

15. Citing the failure of the senior staff in the maintenance team to properly follow up on the unusually high rate of wear of the tongue blade noted during the inspection on 9 November 2002 and the heavy reliance on visual track inspections by patrolmen, Mr LAU Kong-wah expressed grave concern as to whether the Corporation's maintenance management system was of a sufficiently high standard to ensure the safe operation of its railway lines, particularly when they might be showing signs of aging. In this connection, he asked whether the same maintenance management system was adopted for ER.

16. Expressing concern about the aging of LRT and its enhanced feeder role after the commissioning of WR, Mr TAM Yiu-chung stressed the importance for both the Corporation and its staff to learn from this incident and enhance preventive maintenance for LRT. The sanctions taken against the staff concerned in this incident could serve to remind all the responsible staff to be more vigilant in their work. In this connection, he asked whether LRT's maintenance standards might in any way be affected by its recurrent financial losses. Mr TAM also suggested that the Corporation should seek to brief the Tuen Mun District Council on the findings of the Final Report.

17. In reply, CEO of KCRC stressed that the Corporation was always mindful of the importance to maintain the safe and efficient operation of its railway lines. He confirmed that different maintenance management systems were developed for different railway lines according to their operational and design requirements. D/ERE supplemented that unlike LRT, ER was a heavy rail system. As a result of

Action

different design, ER tracks were subject to less wear and tear than LR's.

18. Regarding LRT's track maintenance work, CEO of KCRC explained that there were six levels in the inspection procedure. Apart from routine daily visual inspections carried out by patrolmen, different levels of staff ranging from Ganger to Senior Supervisor were also involved in taking track measurements and carrying out inspections with the aid of instruments. Their findings would be reported to the Maintenance Officer and the Senior Maintenance Officer who would decide whether any repair or replacement was required.

19. Speaking in his capacity as the chairman of the Technical Committee, Mr Leo MAK, General Manager of West Rail Railway Systems, added that one of the Committee's recommendations was that the inspection staff should pay special attention to tongue blade wear and tear. Moreover, specialized but simple gauges and instruments could be developed to assist the patrolmen to measure and monitor tongue blade and stock rail profiles more effectively.

20. Addressing some members' concern about possible aging of LRT, D/LR said that railway operation was a long-term investment with typical asset lives of at least thirty to forty years. Hence, LRT was not an aging system by any standard. Notwithstanding the increasing pressure to control cost and increase productivity, the Corporation had maintained its investment on safety and maintenance of LRT. The Technical Committee also confirmed that there had not been any sign of aging of LRT which was well maintained with regular inspections, servicing and design improvements.

21. D/LR further said that track inspection and maintenance was an important part of LRT's maintenance programme, and there was no complacency on the part of the Management. In the past five years, there had been no service delays of three minutes or more that was caused by track problems. Following the derailment incident, the Corporation had also completed a system-wide check on the condition of all the track turnouts in the network, the condition of the wheels of all light rail vehicles, and the automatic point machines and the associated signalling system. Through this inspection, KCRC had confirmed that LRT was in good condition and was operating safely.

22. Notwithstanding KCRC's assurance about LRT's operating condition, Mr CHENG Kar-foo enquired about the role of HKRI in ensuring the safe operation of LRT. Worrying that the increasing number of railway incidents in Hong Kong might be attributed to the aging of railways, he considered that it might be an opportune moment to strengthen HKRI's role and functions in the monitoring of railway safety and operation of the railway corporations.

Action

23. In response, the Chief Inspecting Officer (Railways) (CIO/R) elaborated on HKRI's responsibilities in respect of monitoring railway safety, right from the planning, design and construction of a new railway, and up to its operational stage. In case of any railway incident, HKRI would also undertake enquiry or investigations. Moreover, HKRI would monitor the implementation of any remedial and improvement measures.

24. Addressing members' concern about the potential safety implications of aging railways, CIO/R said that this factor would be considered under the risk management system adopted by the railway corporations to identify, evaluate and control potential safety hazards. DS for ETW added that a pro-active role had been taken by HKRI in monitoring railway safety matters. Having reviewed the derailment incident, HKRI had also suggested that KCRC should engage an external expert to review their maintenance management system, including benchmarking maintenance practices with other light rail operators.

25. Mr CHENG Kar-foo however considered that such systemic review should be conducted by HKRI. The Chairman also asked whether the Administration would consider requiring the Corporation to engage an independent expert to review its safety management system at a regular interval of not more than three years, as that required of the MTR Corporation Limited (MTRCL). In response, DS for ETW said that the Administration would further consider this suggestion.

Accountability

26. While noting the conclusion of KCRC and the Administration was basically that the problem might have been avoided if the staff concerned had been more vigilant, Mr CHENG Kar-foo did not agree that the front-line staff should take all the blame in this matter as the Senior Management should have the ultimate responsibility of ensuring the safe operation of the railway system through preventive maintenance. As illustrated in this incident, the Senior Management had failed to lead the Corporation towards this goal. He was gravely concerned that with the impending commissioning of WR, the Senior Management with its complacency would not be able to rise up to the challenge presented by its network expansion. In this connection, Mr CHENG enquired about the responsibility of the Senior Management in the derailment incident.

27. Mr Albert CHAN opined that CEO of KCRC should make a formal apology to the public for the derailment incident. Notwithstanding the responsibility of the eight staff members concerned, the Senior Management of the LR Division should bear the ultimate responsibility for failing to supervise the maintenance work properly. He considered that a comprehensive review on the operation of the LR Division was urgently required.

Action

28. While accepting the technical findings of the Final Report, Mr Abraham SHEK pointed out that although the staff concerned had carried out their duties according to the prescribed systems and standards, they were still penalized for failing to perform their duties to the full extent expected of them. To ensure the fairness of the system, the Corporation should review whether further improvements could be made to its maintenance and inspection procedures.

29. In response, CEO of KCRC said that the staff concerned ranged from the grade of General Manager to patrolman. He assured members that detailed investigation had been conducted by the Accountability Enquiry Committee and its recommendations were made taking all relevant factors into account, including the facts of the case as established by the technical investigation, relevant provisions in the Corporation's Human Resources Manual and operating procedures, the severity of the incident, disciplinary actions imposed in past cases, etc.

30. CEO of KCRC assured members that learning from this incident, the Corporation would implement the recommendations made by the Technical Committee and the Government as a matter of urgency. In particular, the Corporation would review the track inspection and maintenance procedures, including their frequency and standards. The staff would be required to pay extra attention to tongue blade wear and tear, condition monitoring and wear rate analysis for critical components, adverse rail profile development, and track differential settlement development. From a more comprehensive and scientific analysis of the information collected, more discriminating maintenance strategies would be developed accordingly. In this connection, staff training would also be enhanced.

31. The Chairman of KCRC also confirmed that disciplinary action was taken against both front-line and senior staff who were found responsible for the incident. Having thoroughly reviewed the case, the Managing Board was satisfied that the recommended disciplinary actions were commensurate with the respective duties and degree of responsibility of the staff concerned. He emphasized that as revealed in the present case, the problem did not arise because the staff concerned had failed to adhere to the prescribed systems and standards. Indeed the converse was perhaps true, in that there appeared to have been an over reliance on what was laid down in the manual rather than using common sense and initiative.

32. Acknowledging the utmost importance of ensuring the safe and efficient operation of KCRC's railway lines, the Chairman of KCRC said that looking into the future, the Board would aim at cultivating a more pro-active culture within the Corporation so that every staff member would be self-motivated at work. With the concerted effort from the Management led by CEO of KCRC, staff members at all levels would be encouraged to take ownership of their problems. This could ensure that any irregularities would be detected early for timely remedial actions.

Action

33. The Chairman of KCRC further said that with WR's impending commissioning, a new integrated LR/WR Division would be set up to manage WR, LR and the Corporation's bus services. In the coming months, the Managing Board would pay special attention to ensure WR's smooth operation from the day it opened to the public.

34. Conveying the dissatisfaction felt by the residents in the Northwest New Territories on LR services, Mr Albert CHAN raised serious doubts about the desirability of maintaining LR service. Citing the declining market share of LR, Mr LAU Kong-wah also expressed concern about the long-term financial position of LR, particularly when the system was starting to show signs of aging. Mr TAM Yiu-chung however pointed out that LR had an important role to play in addressing the internal transport need of local residents.

35. In response, the Chairman of KCRC said that in anticipation of WR's operation, the Corporation had embarked on a \$2,300 million project that would enable LR to take on an expanded role as a feeder service for WR. He was confident that LR's integration with WR would be beneficial to the performance of both railways. CEO of KCRC also said that with the planned service improvements and network expansion, LRT would be revitalized. This would help improve the financial viability of both LR and WR.

V Performance of the new MTR trains from Korea

(LC Paper No. CB(1)855/02-03(03) - Information paper provided by MTR Corporation Limited)

36. Members noted the information paper provided by MTRCL on the performance of the new MTR trains from Korea (LC Paper No. CB(1)855/02-03(03)).

37. Members noted that with continuous fine-tuning, the performance of the new trains had been improved over the past few months. While hoping that such improvements could be sustained, Mr LAU Kong-wah asked whether any problem might arise when the 13 new Korean trains were introduced to other MTR lines.

38. In reply, Mr Eric HUI, Head of Operations of MTRCL (HO/MTRCL), said that the 13 new trains were still serving only on Kwun Tong Line. As these trains were acquired to meet the need for service expansion, they would be gradually introduced to other MTR lines. He did not envisage any problems with the operation of the new Korean trains once the inter-operability of the signalling systems of Tseung Kwan O Line (TKL) and Kwun Tong Line had been fully tested.

39. Relaying the complaints from passengers, Mr LAU Kong-wah enquired about the follow-up actions taken by the Corporation concerning noise disturbance inside the train compartments of TKL.

Action

MTRCL 40. In reply, HO/MTRCL said that MTRCL had received some complaints about excessive railway noise inside TKL train compartments. It had been found that the noise levels inside train compartments might be higher at some sections of TKL when the train was negotiating a curve. To address the problem, MTRCL had carried out additional rail grinding over the sections concerned as well as applying rail lubricant to the curved sections of the track. In addition, MTRCL had adjusted the computerized train run profile on the relevant sections of the railway so as to control the perceived excessive noise levels that might arise. The noise levels inside train cars had now been controlled to similar levels experienced on other MTR railway lines. MTRCL would continue to monitor the situation. Mr LAU Kong-wah requested MTRCL to provide information in respect of complaints received previously about noise disturbance inside TKL train compartments, including the concerned sections of TKL and their respective noise levels.

41. Referring to the grave public concern about railway emergencies in the aftermath of a recent arson case which happened in a subway train car in Taegu, South Korea, Mr CHENG Kar-foo sought information about the operation of the platform screen doors (PSDs) in case of such contingency. The Chairman also enquired about the operation of train doors and the design of the train cars in terms of fire-resistance. Expressing concern about smoke hazards, Mr LAU Ping-cheung suggested that the Corporation should review whether the existing safety facilities provided inside the train compartments could be further improved.

42. Concurring with members' concern about protection of passenger safety, HO/MTRCL said that MTRCL was gathering information about the incident with a view to seeing whether lessons could be learnt to further enhance public safety. He advised that in case of emergency, standby battery power was available for MTR trains to provide power for door control. PSDs were controlled by the power supply for the station and they could also be opened manually.

43. HO/MTRCL further said that MTR train cars were constructed with fire-resisting materials to international fire safety standards. The flooring on the train cars could withstand fire for 30 minutes. Miss Maggie SO, External Affairs Manager of MTRCL (EAM/MTRCL), added that each compartment was fitted with hopper windows which could be opened for ventilation in case of emergency. All concourses and platforms were also fitted with fire alarms, as well as fire detection and fire fighting systems. For those concourses and platforms located in enclosed structures, adequate ventilation and smoke extraction facilities were provided. In addition, trains were equipped with devices to facilitate swift detrainment in case of emergency.

44. Mr CHENG Kar-foo suggested that all relevant emergencies procedures and safety instructions should be widely publicized. EAM/MTRCL responded that information leaflets would be distributed to passengers at MTR stations.

Action

45. The Chairman suggested that such eventuality should be covered in the emergency drills. In response, HO/MTRCL said that each year, MTRCL would conduct at least six large-scale emergency drills jointly with all relevant government departments.

VI Any other business

46. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 1:00 pm.

Council Business Division 1
Legislative Council Secretariat
1 April 2003