

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(1)1835/02-03
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by the Administration)

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Panel on Transport
Subcommittee on matters relating to railways

Minutes of meeting on
Friday, 4 April 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 Tommy CHEUNG Yu-yan, JP
Hon Albert CHAN Wai-yip
Hon LEUNG Fu-wah, MH, JP
Hon WONG Sing-chi
Hon LAU Ping-cheung

Members absent : Hon TAM Yiu-chung, GBS, JP
Hon Abraham SHEK Lai-him, JP

Non-Subcommittee : Hon Albert HO Chun-yan
Members attending Dr Hon TANG Siu-tong, JP

Public Officers : **Agenda Item IV**
attending Environment, Transport and Works Bureau

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

Mr William SHIU
Principal Assistant Secretary for the Environment,
Transport and Works (T)4

Mr K M WOO
Chief Inspecting Officer (Railways), Hong Kong Railway
Inspectorate

Highways Department

Mr K K CHAN
Chief Engineer/West Rail

Transport Department

Ms Carolina YIP
Assistant Commissioner for Transport/Bus and railway

Mr Carey WONG
Principal Transport Officer/Special Duties

Agenda item V

Environment, Transport and Works Bureau

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

Mr William SHIU
Principal Assistant Secretary for the Environment,
Transport and Works (T)4

Mr Patrick HO
Principal Assistant Secretary for the Environment,
Transport and Works (T)1

Transport Department

Ms Carolina YIP
Assistant Commissioner for Transport/Bus and railway

Mr Carey WONG
Principal Transport Officer/Special Duties

**Attendance by
invitation**

: Agenda item IV

Kowloon-Canton Railway Corporation

Mr K Y YEUNG
Chief Executive Officer

Mr Jonathan YU
Director, Light Rail

Mr Ian THOMS
Director, West Rail

Mr Y T LI
Director, East Rail

Mr K K LEE
Director, East Rail Extensions

Mrs Irene YAU
General Manager, Corporate Affairs

Agenda item V

Kowloon-Canton Railway Corporation

Mr K Y YEUNG
Chief Executive Officer

Mr Jonathan YU
Director, Light Rail

Mrs Irene YAU
General Manager, Corporate Affairs

Mr W K TSUI
General Manager, Light Rail Operations

Mr Michael LAI
General Manager, Revenue

Clerk in attendance :

Mr Andy LAU
Chief Assistant Secretary (1)2

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

Miss Winnie CHENG
Legislative Assistant 5

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I Confirmation of minutes and matters arising
(LC Paper No. CB(1)1238/02-03 - Minutes of meeting held on 25 February 2003)

The minutes of meeting held on 25 February 2003 were confirmed.

II Information papers issued since last meeting

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

III Items for discussion at the next meeting scheduled for 6 June 2003
(LC Paper No. CB(1)1237/02-03(01) - List of railways and projects)

3. Members went through the list of railways and projects (LC Paper No. CB(1)1237/02-03(01), and agreed to discuss the item on Kowloon Southern Link at the next Subcommittee meeting scheduled to be held on 6 June 2003.

IV Project update of the West Rail
(LC Paper No. CB(1)1237/02-03(02) - Information paper provided by the Kowloon-Canton Railway Corporation)

4. With the aid of PowerPoint, Mr Ian THOMS, Director of West Rail (D/WR), briefed members on the progress of the West Rail (WR) project, as set out in the information paper provided by the Kowloon-Canton Railway Corporation (KCRC) (LC Paper No. CB(1)1237/02-03(02)). A set of presentation materials prepared by KCRC was tabled at the meeting and subsequently issued to members vide LC Paper No. CB(1)1387/02-03(01).

5. D/WR advised that as at the end of March 2003, WR was 95% complete in overall terms. All civil construction works were virtually complete and the focus was now on the timetable for completing statutory inspections, integration testing and full trial running prior to the opening of WR scheduled for the third quarter this year.

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Testing and commissioning activities

6. Mr K Y YEUNG, the Chief Executive Officer of KCRC (CEO of KCRC), advised that the Corporation had put in place a comprehensive system of testing and commissioning to ensure the standard of all systems installed. The first two stages of testing and commissioning, i.e. "Partial Acceptance Test" and "System Acceptance Test" had been conducted to test the individual systems. KCRC was now gradually entering the stage of "Tests On Completion" for testing system integration. Upon completion of final testing, full trial running would follow for three months, during which the trains would run according to the proposed WR timetable for public service but with no passengers.
7. Ir Dr Raymond HO opined that apart from testing with empty despatches, KCRC should conduct half or full load testing on WR to test its actual operability including the adequacy of contingency procedures. Such testing could also help the travelling public get familiarized with the operation of WR and its station facilities. Expressing similar concern, Dr TANG Siu-tong asked whether any particular problem had been encountered during the completed stages of testing.
8. D/WR responded that so far, no major problem having passenger interface impact had been identified during the testing stages. Taking into account the experience of East Rail (ER) and WR's special circumstances, the Corporation had established a comprehensive safety management system for WR.
9. Acknowledging the importance of full testing before commissioning, CEO of KCRC explained that the full trial run was intended to achieve the following purposes:
 - (a) enable the staff to gain hands-on experience in operating the railway during normal operation and in handling mishaps and equipment failures through simulated events;
 - (b) validate the effectiveness of various rules and procedures;
 - (c) spot and resolve teething problems before opening to the public; and
 - (d) confirm that consistent punctuality of train service had achieved the desired target prior to public service.

With a three-month full trial run, the Corporation was confident that WR would operate safely and efficiently right from the start of operation. He further said that the Corporation would organize station open days to let the travelling public get familiarized with all aspects of the system.

10. Citing the problems encountered by the MTR Corporation Limited (MTRCL) during the initial operation of the Tseung Kwan O Line (TKL), Mr Albert CHAN called on the Administration to coordinate with relevant parties so that KCRC could

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learn from the experience. In response, the Deputy Secretary for the Environment, Transport and Works (DS for ETW) advised that the Administration was reviewing the case of TKL's opening. Any information considered useful would be imparted to KCRC for reference.

Public transport interchanges (PTIs)

11. Dr TANG Siu-tong was concerned about the adequate provision of public transport interchange facilities at the PTIs and their interface with WR stations. Mr Jonathan YU, Director of Light Rail (D/LR), said that the matter was being co-ordinated by the Environment, Transport and Works Bureau. The Corporation would conduct joint exercises with other public transport operators before WR's opening.

12. Mr Tommy CHEUNG expressed concern about the air quality inside the PTIs serving WR, particularly in light of the unsatisfactory situation at the PTIs serving TKL. The Assistant Commissioner for Transport/Bus and railway (AC for T/B&R) replied that adequate ventilation would be provided to maintain the air quality inside the new PTIs to within the requirements recommended by the Director of Environmental Protection. She further said that the situation at the PTIs serving TKL had been improved after adjusting the operating schedule of the ventilation systems.

Merger of Light Rail (LR) and WR Divisions

13. Mr CHENG Kar-foo referred to the way the LR's Senior Management handled the recent LR derailment incident, and expressed grave concern about the proposal to merge the LR and WR Divisions. Without a new management culture, he was worried that the new Division would not be able to ensure the safe and efficient operation of the integrated WR/LR network.

14. In response, CEO of KCRC said that LR had been operating to a good safety record. It would not be fair to ignore the past efforts made by LR Division simply on account of one, in fact the only one, derailment incident in its history. Regarding the proposal to merge LR and WR Divisions, he explained that with WR's commissioning, LR would assume a different and more important role as the major feeder service for WR. The two systems together would form a more comprehensive and complete public transportation network in the North West New Territories (NWNT). To ensure better integration of WR and LR services as well as the maximum benefits for the passengers, the West Rail Division (Operations) was established in April 2003 to manage WR, LR and the Corporation's feeder bus services.

15. CEO of KCRC further said that the new Division would have about 2 000 staff, representing a synergy saving of about 600 staff as compared with the original projection of operating WR as an independent division. Of the 2 000 staff, one-third would be re-deployed from the existing ER Division so that their expertise in the operation and maintenance of heavy rail could be transferred to the new WR Division. At the Senior Management level, Mr Y T LI, the Director of East Rail (D/ER) and Mr

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K K LEE, the Director of East Rail Extensions (D/ERE) were also members of the Operational Readiness Steering Committee to give advice on operational and maintenance matters. In reply to Mr CHENG Kar-foo, CEO of KCRC said that the Managing Board would make a final decision on the appointment of the Director of the new Division before WR's opening.

16. Noting the re-deployment of front-line staff from the ER Division to the new WR Division, Mr CHENG Kar-foo queried whether such an arrangement would have any adverse impact on the operation of ER. CEO of KCRC explained that ER Division had been recruiting and training staff in anticipation of the opening of the new East Rail Extensions. D/ER supplemented that currently, the ER Division had about 2 000 staff and the plan was to transfer about 5% of its staff to the new Division. This arrangement would not have any adverse impact on the daily operation of ER.

17. Citing LR's dominant market share of internal public transport in NWNT, Mr Albert HO expressed grave concern that under the merger proposal, LR's important function as a local commuter service provider would be seriously undermined after WR's opening. He was particularly worried about the situation in Tuen Mun as the area was not served by local franchised bus services.

18. In reply, CEO of KCRC affirmed that LR would maintain its primary function as a local commuter service provider after WR's opening. The service provided by LR could adequately meet the demand of local transport in Tuen Mun. Addressing the member's concern, DS for ETW said that the Administration would finalize the details of the proposed public transport service plan (PT plan) to tie in with the opening of WR taking into account the views obtained from local consultation. One of the concerns raised by local residents was whether LR could maintain an adequate level of local commuter service after its reorganization. The Administration would carefully monitor the level of LR service in Tuen Mun after WR's opening.

Fare level of WR

19. Mr Albert CHAN said that as the project estimates of WR had been reduced by 30%, there was significant room for KCRC to reduce WR fares. Mr CHENG Kar-foo opined that the Administration should make greater effort in bringing about the co-operation between KCRC and MTRCL in the offer of fare discounts to interchange passengers.

20. CEO of KCRC responded that while the Managing Board had yet to determine the detailed fares, consideration would be given to relevant factors such as prevailing market conditions and competition from other transport modes. Taking into account the need for interchange service, due regard would also be given to the overall transport costs to be paid by WR passengers, particularly in comparison with franchised bus fares. In this respect, he referred to the Corporation's plan to introduce an integrated fare structure for WR and LR so that a discount would be offered to the passengers who interchanged between these two modes.

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V Reorganization of the public transport network in connection with the commissioning of West Rail

- (LC Paper No. CB(1)1237/02-03(03) - Information paper provided by the Administration; and
LC Paper No. CB(1)1237/02-03(04) - Information paper provided by the Kowloon-Canton Railway Corporation)

21. With the aid of PowerPoint, D/LR briefed members on the progress of the consultation on reorganization of LR service to tie in with the opening of WR. Taking into account key concerns raised in the public consultations, the Corporation had revised its original LR reorganization proposal. Details were set out in the paper provided by KCRC (LC Paper No. CB(1)1237/02-03(04)).

(Post-meeting note: A set of presentation materials prepared by KCRC was tabled at the meeting and subsequently issued to members vide LC Paper No. CB(1)1387/02-03(02).)

22. DS for ETW introduced the information paper provided by the Administration (LC Paper No. CB(1)1237/02-03(03)) on the latest development of public consultation about the proposed PT plan to tie in with WR's opening.

23. AC for T(B&R) informed members that the first round of public consultation on the proposed PT plan was completed recently. While the local community welcomed the provision of feeder connections to WR stations, there were also considerable concerns about the choice as well as fare levels of alternative services. There were also suggestions that the major service rationalization measures should be implemented progressively after commissioning of WR taking into account actual changes in passenger demand. Such views were being analyzed in detail so that appropriate modifications could be made. When the proposals for modifications had been firmed up, another round of public consultation would be held around mid April onwards. The target was to finalize the PT plan in mid-2003 so that adequate publicity could be mounted before opening of WR.

Reorganization of LR

24. Reiterating his concern about inadequate local transportation services in Tuen Mun after LR's reorganization, Mr Albert HO said that local residents were also worried that if there were major changes to the existing franchised bus service after WR's opening, they would be forced to use the more expensive WR for such journeys. As public acceptance to LR's reorganization as well as the proposed PT plan would very much depend on the level of WR fares, he called on the Corporation to finalize its decision on WR fare as soon as possible. Other concerns raised by local residents on the LR service reorganization plan included:

- (a) With the new LR route structure, some journeys would require more

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transfers and hence incur a longer journey time for the passengers.

- (b) With the reduction of long-distance LR routes, the remaining ones providing inter-town service, such as Route 610, might be overloaded.
- (c) Without a corresponding increase in the fleet size, LR's network extension to the new development area in Tin Shui Wai might affect the standard of existing LR service.

25. CEO of KCRC said that the public would be consulted as soon as the Managing Board had formed a preliminary view on WR fares. To provide a real alternative for passengers, it was envisaged that WR fares within NWNT would be comparable to current LR fares.

26. Addressing Mr Albert HO's concern about LR's local service in Tuen Mun, D/LR said that the proposed service changes would benefit some passengers while causing inconvenience to others. Notwithstanding the need for more transfers on some routes, LR's efficiency would be enhanced by focusing resources on the shorter and more direct routes. As a result, more frequent train services could be provided and hence, bringing benefits to a greater proportion of the passengers. Moreover, with LR's reorganization and the increased capacity brought by WR for inter-town service, some trains running on the existing LR network could be redeployed to provide service on the Tin Shui Wai Extensions. D/LR further said that in order to reduce the impact of the service reorganization, the Corporation would introduce the changes in phases. During the initial operation of WR, most of the long-distance LR routes would be maintained.

27. Mr Albert CHAN referred to KCRC's proposal to restructure its bus routes in NWNT, and called on the Corporation to implement such changes progressively over a period of time after WR's opening. D/LR noted the member's view.

28. Dr TANG Siu-tong asked whether the Corporation would consider providing a circular route serving Tin Shui Wai and Wetland Park stations. D/LR said that upon consultation, many local residents in Tin Shui Wai had indicated their preference for long distance inter-town routes without the need for transfer at the Tin Shui Wai station.

PT plan

29. Ir Dr Raymond HO stressed the importance for the Administration to maintain competition among service providers in the market. As such, any applications from the franchised bus companies to reduce the fare of existing routes after WR's opening should be given favourable consideration by the Administration.

30. Relaying the concern of local residents, Mr Albert CHAN said that the Administration should not seek to suppress the level of existing public transport

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services including franchised buses, non-franchised buses and green mini-buses (GMBs) in NWNT in anticipation of WR's opening. The Administration should work together with the operators concerned when considering any route cancellation/modification proposals.

31. DS for ETW responded that it was the Government's transport strategy to place emphasis on rail transport and the co-ordination of public transport services. While priority would be given to the railways, franchised buses would continue to be major transport service providers in areas not conveniently served by the railways, and their role in providing feeders to the railways would be strengthened. On the other hand, the Administration was also mindful of the need for maintaining healthy competition among service providers to enable a reasonable choice for passengers. Hence, the Administration would consider any applications from franchised bus operators to reduce fare in a positive light.

32. To improve WR's connectivity, the Chairman, Mr Albert CHAN and Mr Albert HO considered that the Corporation should seek every opportunity to cooperate with other public transport operators in the offer of joint-operator or inter-modal fare discounts to WR passengers. In this connection, the Chairman enquired about the progress of discussions between KCRC and MTRCL/other public transport operators. Mr Albert CHAN opined that the Corporation should be prepared to adopt a flexible approaching when discussing the sharing of discounts with GMB operators.

33. D/LR replied that discussions were being held with GMB operators. CEO of KCRC supplemented that the Corporation had reached an agreement in principle with the franchised bus operator. Both sides were actively finalizing the details of bus-rail interchange schemes to tie in with WR's opening. The Corporation would also continue its discussion with MTRCL on the possibility of co-operative arrangements. DS for ETW said that the Administration would encourage the public transport operators to cooperate and introduce joint-operator or inter-modal fare discounts to the passengers.

34. Both the Chairman and Mr Albert HO expressed concern about the lack of information about park and ride schemes proposed for WR stations. CEO of KCRC responded that as a condition of land grant, the Corporation was required to provide parking spaces in some WR stations including Kam Tin, Tuen Mun, Nam Cheong and Tsuen Wan. Discussions were being held with the Administration to resolve the technical problems arising from the provision of such facilities.

35. Citing the benefits of park and ride schemes, the Chairman was dissatisfied that the Administration and the Corporation had not actively pursued the provision of park and ride facilities for WR stations. She requested the Administration for an update on its policy in this matter as well as the planning for park and ride schemes for WR stations.

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36. Members agreed that another meeting would be scheduled in July to receive updates from the Administration and KCRC on the detailed arrangements of the PT plan and the LR reorganization proposal.

VI Any other business

37. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 1:05 pm.

Council Business Division 1
Legislative Council Secretariat
3 June 2003