

For information
16 July 2007

Legislative Council Panel on Transport
Subcommittee on Matters Relating to Railways

Progress of Shatin to Central Link Project

Introduction

This note briefs members on the latest progress of the planning of the Shatin to Central Link (SCL) project.

Background

2. The SCL is one of the priority railways recommended for implementation in the Railway Development Strategy 2000 (RDS-2000). As the SCL could be implemented and operated by either the MTR Corporation Limited (MTRCL) or the Kowloon-Canton Railway Corporation (KCRC), both railway corporations were invited to submit proposals for the project in January 2001. After a deliberated tender assessment, the KCRC was selected to proceed with further planning of the project in June 2002.

Development of KCRC Proposal

Conforming Proposal

3. The KCRC's proposal in its bid submission (conforming proposal) basically follows the configuration of the SCL scheme in the RDS-2000. It comprises an extension of the Ma On Shan Rail from Tai Wai across the harbour to Central, via Diamond Hill, South East Kowloon, and Hung Hom. There are totally ten stations, namely Tai Wai, Diamond Hill, Kai Tak, To Kwa Wan, Ma Tau Wai, Homantin, Hung Hom, Exhibition, Admiralty and Central West. A railway depot will be provided at Kai Tak.

Draft Final Proposal

4. When inviting the KCRC and the MTRCL to bid for the SCL project in 2001, the Government made it clear to the two corporations that

subsequent to the bidding, the Government may discuss aspects of any proposed changes and thereafter a Final Proposal should be developed by incorporating those additional or revised details submitted by the successful bidder and accepted by Government, together with revised details required by Government.

5. In light of the foregoing, Government and the KCRC have further considered how to refine and improve KCRC's conforming proposal. Subsequently, the KCRC suggested various new proposals including providing an automated people mover (APM) system at Tsz Wan Shan and Whampoa respectively, making provision for future construction of a station at Hin Keng, adding a new station at Causeway Bay North, relocating the SCL Admiralty Station to the immediate proximity of the MTR Admiralty Station, relocating the SCL Central West Station to some where near the Botanical Garden, and replacing the To Kwa Wan Station and the Ma Tau Wai Station by a single station at Ma Tau Kok.

6. The KCRC has also examined the idea of extending the East Rail across the harbour to form the cross harbour section of the SCL and extending the Ma On Shan Rail (MOSR) to Hung Hom to join the Kowloon Southern Link and the existing West Rail to Tuen Mun. Under this alternative scheme, the KCR network will provide a direct north-south railway corridor (north-south line) from the boundary to Central via the East Rail and also a direct east-west railway corridor (east-west line) from Ma On Shan to Tuen Mun via urban Kowloon. It will provide direct rail services and reduce the interchange movements at Hung Hom from a three-way interchange to a two-way interchange. The KCRC concluded that this alternative scheme would produce larger transport benefits than the original scheme of directly extending the Ma On Shan Rail across the harbour.

7. In February 2004, the KCRC put forward a SCL preferred proposal for consultation with the Legislative Council and the relevant District Councils. In response to the comments received from these fora, the KCRC incorporated further improvements to the preferred proposal including reducing the size of the SCL depot proposed to be located at Kai Tak to accommodate the planning initiative under the Kai Tak Planning Review. Subsequently, the KCRC submitted a Draft Final Proposal (DFP) to Government in September 2004. This Sub-Committee was briefed on the above developments on 16 February 2004, 3 June 2004, 4 March 2005 and 5 January 2007.

8. In summary, the SCL scheme in the KCRC's DFP comprises the east-west line and the north-south line, and ten stations, namely Tai Wai, Diamond Hill, Kai Tak, Ma Tau Kok, Homantin, Hung Hom, Causeway Bay North, Exhibition, Admiralty and Central South as well as two APM systems. The alignment of the DFP is shown on the left at **Annex A**.

SCL Merger Scheme

9. Alongside with the planning for the SCL, the Government invited the MTRCL and the KCRC to discuss the rail merger in February 2004. One of the key issues for their merger discussion is the early resolution of the interchange arrangements for the SCL. Subsequently, the MTRCL and the KCRC jointly developed a SCL scheme (Merger Scheme) to be implemented under the merger scenario and submitted a project proposal on the Merger Scheme to Government in July 2005.

10. The KCRC's DFP and the Merger Scheme developed by the two railway corporations are broadly similar in terms of the railway alignment. Both schemes have adopted the proposal of extending the East Rail across the harbour to form the fourth rail harbour crossing of the SCL. Provision is also made for a future Hin Keng Station. There are certain differences between the two schemes. Under the Merger Scheme, -

- (a) fully integrated KCR/MTR interchange stations will be provided at Diamond Hill (DIH), Homantin (HMT)¹, Exhibition (EXH) and Admiralty (ADM);
- (b) it is suggested that the location of the Central South (CES) Station should be re-visited;
- (c) the Causeway Bay North (CBN) Station in the DFP will be deleted in view of the possible serious disruption to traffic in Causeway Bay area arising from the construction of the station and the low cost-effectiveness of providing the station under the merger scenario;
- (d) the single Ma Tau Kok (MTK) Station in the DFP will be replaced with two stations: To Kwa Wan (TKW) Station and Ma Tau Wai (MTW) Station with the purpose of further enhancing the railway

¹ Integrated interchange will be provided if the proposed Kwun Tong Line Extension is to be proceeded with.

service in the area, despite there is insufficient transport demand for providing two stations;

- (e) the Exhibition (EXH) Station in the DFP will be relocated from Harbour Road to the existing public transport interchange site in Wanchai North to better cope with the development in the area and provide better interchange with the future North Hong Kong Island Line;
- (f) it is suggested that alternative options to meet the transport demands in Tsz wan Shan area should be explored taking into account the existing public transport services and pedestrian facilities in the area; and
- (g) the Whampoa APM in the DFP will be deleted. Instead, the MTRCL proposed the Kwun Tong Line Extension to be implemented as a separate MTR project.

11. In summary, the Merger Scheme comprises the east-west line and the north-south line as in the DFP and ten stations, namely Tai Wai, Diamond Hill, Kai Tak, To Kwa Wan, Ma Tau Wai, Homantin, Hung Hom, Exhibition, Admiralty and Central South. The alignment of the Merger Scheme is shown on the right at **Annex A**.

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12. Further study of the Merger Scheme is required to develop the above proposals to a detailed level for railway scheme gazetting purpose.

Further Changes and Major Issues to be Addressed

Changes in Light of Planning Reviews at Kai Tak and Wan Chai

13. In light of the current Kai Tak Planning Review, the KCRC and MTRCL have undertaken a review on the railway tunnel alignment within the Kai Tak area and the location of the Kai Tak Station, and based on the public's views on the Kai Tak Planning, a study on the technical feasibility of relocating the SCL depot from Kai Tak to Diamond Hill. The study concluded that the proposed relocation would be technically feasible.

14. In connection with the Kai Tak planning, there are also requests from the public to consider alternative alignments and station locations for the

SCL in To Kwa Wan area. Currently, both DFP and Merger Scheme suggest that the SCL railway tunnel should run along To Kwa Wan Road with station(s) to be provided underneath the road. In light of the requests, the railway corporations have studied various options, including providing a station at Kowloon City Road, Tam Kung Road or Ma Tau Chung Road. The study concludes that the proposed alignment in the DFP and Merger Scheme would be the most desirable arrangement that could overcome the various constraints encountered in the area and avoid unnecessary private land resumption.

15. According to the original planning in 2002, the proposed population in the Kai Tak planning area is up to 260,000 but the current planning is about 80,000. This will affect the viability, from transport demand consideration, of providing both the To Kwa Wan Station and the Ma Tau Wai Station. It is sufficient to provide a single Ma Tau Kok Station along To Kwa Wan Road. However the Multi-purpose Stadium Complex (MPSC) at Kai Tak will also have an impact on the decision. Concern has been raised over crowd management problems if the station is too close. Further review of this issue will be required.

16. Government departments are also in discussion with the KCRC/MTRCL regarding the Wan Chai Development Phase II (WDII) Review, in particular, the interface issues with the proposed planning in the area and the Central-Wan Chai Bypass, the construction of the SCL Exhibition Station in conjunction with the reprovisioning of the Wan Chai North Public Transport Interchange, and the Harbour Road Indoor Game Hall and Training Pool.

Other Major Issues to be Addressed

17. The major issues that need to be addressed, including -

(i) Provision of the SCL Depot

18. The railway corporations' study indicates that shifting the SCL depot to Diamond Hill would be technically feasible. However, further work would be required to examine its impact on the nearby developments and facilities, including environmental, traffic, air ventilation and visual aspects, and to propose any mitigation measures. According to the KCRC, a depot in the urban area is essential for the effective operation of the SCL. Currently, the proposed Diamond Hill site for the SCL depot is zoned as Comprehensive Development Area. The relevant bureau has agreed that the SCL depot can be

developed in conjunction with the future developments in the area. The railway corporations will also study using a 'semi-submerged' design for the SCL depot with an aim to further alleviating its impact to the surroundings.

(ii) Provision of the South Ventilation Building

19. In light of the reduced reclamation in the WDII project, the KCRC proposed integrating the South Ventilation Building for the cross-harbour section of the SCL with the proposed Causeway Bay North Station. There are views from the public expressing reservation to this station. If it is not to be provided, alternative site for the ventilation building will have to be identified.

(iii) Reprovisioning of the International Mail Centre

20. The existing International Mail Centre (IMC) at Hung Hom is situated along the proposed alignment of the SCL. Work is in hand to see if the IMC has to be relocated and, if yes, possible site for such relocation has to be identified.

(iv) Funding Approach

21. According to the rail merger proposal, the Government would have the discretion in deciding whether to adopt the ownership approach or the concession approach for implementing new railway projects, including the SCL, which are not natural MTR-extensions. Under the ownership approach, the post merger corporation (MergeCo) would fund, plan, construct and operate the SCL. Subject to the predicted financial viability of the project, Government would provide funding support in some forms to the MergeCo. On the other hand, under the concession approach, Government would fund the construction of the new railway and MergeCo would be granted a service concession to operate the new railway based on financial terms to be determined according to a pre-agreed mechanism.

Implementation Programme

22. The implementation programme for the SCL will be dependent on the progress of the Kai Tak Planning Review in finalizing the development plan for Kai Tak and the Wan Chai Development Phase II Review in finalizing the scheme for the Central–Wan Chai Bypass, and the progress of the rail merger. As for now, the amendments to the Outline Zoning Plans (OZP) for Kai Tak and Wan Chai North were gazetted. It is anticipated that approval of the OZP for

Kai Tak under the Town Planning Ordinance can be obtained by the end of 2007. For Wan Chai North, approval of the OZP will be sought in early 2008. As regards the rail merger, the Merger Bill has received third reading on 8 June 2007. The whole legislative process will be completed if approval to the proposed amendments to the By-law and Regulations is given in July 2007.

Way Forward

23. The SCL remains a committed project for implementation. We will closely monitor the latest development of the Kai Tak Planning Review and the Wan Chai Development Phase II Review, and continue to stay in touch with the LegCo, District Councils concerned and the local communities in finalising the implementation details for the SCL project. We would further discuss with the railway corporations on the funding and implementation details and consider under which approach the project should be taken forward. The Administration has promised to make a decision on the way forward, including the scheme and timetable for the SCL within six months after the completion of the legislative process for the rail merger.

24. Members are invited to note the contents of this paper.

Transport and Housing Bureau
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Notes: CESI station needs to be reviewed (中環南站需作檢討)