

**Legislative Council Panel on Transport  
Subcommittee on Matters Relating to Railways**

**Provision of Public Toilets in MTR Railway Stations**

**Purpose**

This paper serves to provide information, as requested by the Legislative Council Panel on Transport Subcommittee on Matters Relating to Railways, on the feasibility of providing public toilets in MTR stations.

**Background**

2. Most MTR stations were built in the 1970s and 1980s. In view of the short travelling time and availability of public toilets in most commercial buildings or shopping arcades in the surrounding urban areas, public toilets were not a built-in feature for those MTR stations.

3. However, where toilets are readily available in the shopping centres and commercial buildings near the MTR stations, including public toilets provided by the Government, the MTR Corporation (“Corporation”) has made use of the station location maps and information leaflets to provide such information on toilet facilities to MTR passengers.

4. Moreover, when passengers ask for the use of toilet facilities, station staff will direct them to the nearby public toilets or extend the use of staff toilets in MTR stations to those with urgent needs.

**Public Toilets Currently Provided in MTR System**

5. With continual expansion of the MTR system and taking into account feedback received from the public, the Corporation has reviewed

from time to time the feasibility of providing toilet facilities at new stations for passengers. In this regard, the Corporation has identified appropriate locations, after consulting the relevant Government departments, for building public toilets at street level near some of the new stations. These include toilet facilities built by the Corporation at Public Transport Interchanges at Hang Hau, Tiu Keng Leng and Tseung Kwan O stations of the Tseung Kwan O Line.

6. As regards the Airport Express Line, in view of the long journey for international travellers with luggage, public toilets were designed as a built-in feature at Hong Kong, Kowloon and Tsing Yi stations.

7. Similarly, for Disneyland Resort Line, in view of the fact that the Theme Park's visitors would mostly be families with children, public toilets were designed as a built-in feature at both Sunny Bay and Disneyland Resort stations.

### **Study on the Feasibility of Provision of Public Toilets at MTR Stations**

8. At previous meetings of the Bills Committee on Rail Merger Bill, some LegCo members requested the Corporation to consider providing public toilets at all existing MTR stations. Accordingly, the Corporation has examined the possibilities of retrofitting toilets at existing MTR stations. The technical difficulties identified by the Corporation are set out in paragraphs 9 to 12 below.

#### *Capacity of the sewage system*

9. The current station sewage capacities were designed for low usage. Substantial modifications would be needed to meet a comparatively larger volume of foul sewage if public toilets were to be provided. For underground stations, such modifications would be even more difficult as there are only three types of possible connections between the underground station box and the ground level, namely station entrances, vent shafts and service manhole for drainage. Installing sewage pipes through station entrances is not desirable due to possible

unpleasant smell and appearance. There is also limited ceiling space for installing such pipes all the way leading to the vent shafts. As for service manhole and sewage pipes, modifications to increase their capacity may cause serious impact on road traffic given that these facilities are usually located beneath the surface of busy roads.

#### *Proximity of high voltage equipment*

10. Stations are laid with electric and telecommunication cables. Toilet drains should not be located in the vicinity of the cables, particularly high voltage power supply equipment or overhead line equipment, in order to minimise the risk of their possible impact on railway operation and to avoid corrosion or electrical insulation breakdown that may lead to disruption of railway service. In most underground stations, the concourse level is located above the platform level where overhead line wires are located on top of the running tracks with a lot of electrical installations at both platform ends. Hence, it is difficult to identify suitable locations for retrofitting public toilets at the concourse level of underground stations.

#### *Separate ventilation system*

11. To maintain a hygienic and pleasant travelling environment, an efficient ventilation system is necessary for all railway stations. If public toilets were to be provided in the stations, a separate ventilation system from the station main ventilation system would be required. For underground stations, there is little room left for building a separate ventilation system as most of the station areas are already fully occupied. The long path of the ventilation system would need to go through the busy areas filled with cables, piping and ducting before reaching the vent shaft. The impact brought by the external ventilation exhausts of the toilet facilities on the nearby areas would also need to be carefully considered.

#### *Spatial criteria for passenger flow*

12. The spatial requirement for station passenger facilities such as staircases, escalators, entry/exit gates, platform supervision booths, and

customer service centres, and the requirement of adequate room for passenger flow and emergency evacuation impose substantial constraints in finding suitable locations for retrofitting toilets.

## **Way Forward**

13. With the abovementioned considerations, the Corporation considers that, as explained at the previous meetings of the Bills Committee on Rail Merger Bill, retrofitting toilets in underground stations is not feasible. However, the Corporation will, in consultation with the relevant Government departments, explore the feasibility of identifying appropriate locations for building public toilets on the street level in the vicinity of underground stations.

14. As for existing aboveground/at-grade stations, the Corporation will continue to examine the feasibility of retrofitting toilets at or in the vicinity of such stations. This study is expected to be completed by the end of 2007.

15. For future new lines and extensions, the Corporation will include the provision of public toilets within, or adjacent to, stations in the overall design parameters, e.g. the West Island Line. The provision will be subject to geographical constraints, comments raised by the local communities with regard to the proposed locations at street level, locations of the proposed external ventilation exhausts, and the necessary regulatory approval.

16. In addition, the Corporation has reviewed the signage in stations which provide information to passengers on the availability of public toilets nearby. To provide better customer service, notices will be put up at station platforms and concourses to inform passengers that those with urgent needs could ask for staff assistance. This will be completed by the end of July 2007.