

**Legislative Council Panel on Transport
Subcommittee on matters relating to railways**

**Provision of Light Rail Transit Service
by Kowloon-Canton Railway Corporation**

Purpose

This paper sets out the Light Rail Transit service being provided by the Kowloon-Canton Railway Corporation (“KCRC”), and its role in the North-west New Territories (“NWNT”) region.

Background

2. KCRC is empowered under the Kowloon-Canton Railway Corporation Ordinance (the Ordinance) to construct and operate Light Rail and bus services within the Transit Service Area (“TSA”) in the North-west New Territories (“NWNT”). In exercising its powers, the Corporation is also required under the Ordinance to have regard to the reasonable requirements of the public transport system of Hong Kong, as well as the efficiency, economy and safety of the services and facilities provided.

3. The LRT service was commissioned in September 1988 and has since been playing a key role in providing transport service to residents of the NWNT. Over the years, the route length of Light Rail has been extended by 57% to cater for the development of the Yuen Long, Tuen Mun and Tin Shui Wai new towns.

4. As at September 2006, the daily average patronage of Light Rail and feeder buses is 474,000, which represents an over 23% increase as

compared with the patronage before the opening of the West Rail and the Light Rail Tin Shui Wan Extension in 2003. At the busiest section, Light Rail service is as frequent as every 1.3 minutes at peak hours. On a daily basis, it operates more than 2,700 train trips. Currently, KCRC operates a total of 12 Light Rail routes and 15 feeder bus routes in the TSA.

Regular reviews of LRT service arrangements

5. With a view to providing an efficient LRT service, KCRC closely monitors passenger demand and conduct regular reviews on LRT service arrangements.

6. For monitoring purpose, KCRC keeps daily statistics from its computerized fare collection system for analyzing the patronage, passengers travelling habit, travelling time and passenger movement pattern. KCRC also deploys staff to conduct daily observation on traffic condition at Light Rail stops. When congestion at stops and on the trains is observed, the Corporation would make immediate and appropriate train service adjustments such as enhancing the train headway to improve the situation.

7. In addition, KCRC regularly conducts passenger surveys including passenger interviews to gauge their views on services. There are many different channels of communication, including the KCRC Passenger Services Hotline, online opinion box, Customer Services Centre, Passenger Liaison Group meeting, KCRC Café etc for passengers to air their views to enable Light Rail to carry out service improvement.

8. In terms of LRT service review, KCRC will consider various factors including the existing service level, capacity of Light Rail stops, utilization of Light Rail vehicles and buses, operating costs, the competition of other public transport modes within the region, Light

Rail's role as a West Rail feeder, the statistics, passengers' and District Councils' opinions collected. If the review findings show that service improvements or changes are required, KCRC will examine how best to utilize its resources to the benefit of passengers. While re-deployment of resources may affect the travelling habit of a portion of passengers, KCRC will try its best to strike a balance after taking all the above factors into account.

9. The Transport Department ("TD") also maintains close liaison with KCRC to monitor the service performance of LRT. When the need arises or when inadequacy of services in the TSA is observed, TD will follow up with KCRC and provide suggestion or advice to KCRC on how to improve its services, such as changes to service arrangements and adjustments of frequency, with a view to meeting the transport demand of passengers. Indeed, KCRC is required under the Ordinance to submit a programme of its Light Rail and bus services within the TSA to TD annually.

Role of LRT in NWNT

10. Since its commissioning, LRT has been serving as the major mode of transport for internal travel within the TSA. Following the commissioning of West Rail in end 2003, LRT has also acted as a feeder service for West Rail as Light Rail passengers can interchange for West Rail at Yuen Long, Tin Shui Wai, Siu Hong and Tuen Mun stations. Passengers' travelling pattern has significantly changed as many passengers have switched to use West Rail for inter-region travel between Tuen Mun, Yuen Long and Tin Shui Wai. As a result, the demand for long distance travel by Light Rail has dropped significantly while demand for short distance travel internally within Tin Shui Wai and Tuen Mun has increased.

11. In line with our current transport strategy, LRT, being an

environmental friendly, efficient and reliable mass carrier, is the backbone of TSA's transport system. Within this framework, other transport modes including franchised buses and green minibus (GMB) will also have an important role to play to provide services to areas not conveniently served by Light Rail and where passenger demand exists. Following the lifting of the restriction on the alighting and boarding of passengers by franchised buses in the TSA in 1993, there are currently 64 franchised bus routes and 37 GMB routes providing services in the region. In addition, TD closely monitors the public transport services in NWNT with an aim to further improving the coordination of the public transport services to better match demand and minimizing wasteful competition and duplication of services.

Conclusion

12. LRT is and will continue to be the backbone of the public transport system in the TSA. Government will continue to closely monitor and coordinate the different modes of transport services in the region with a view to meeting the transport needs of residents of the NWNT.

Environment, Transport and Works Bureau
November 2006