

For information

16 January 2009

Legislative Council Panel on Transport
Subcommittee on Matters Relating to Railways

Progress Report on the South Island Line

Introduction

This paper briefs Members on the progress of the South Island Line (SIL) (East) project.

Background

2. The SIL (East) will be a seven-kilometre long medium capacity railway, running between Admiralty and South Horizons with intermediate stations at Ocean Park, Wong Chuk Hang and Lei Tung (alignment plan shown at **Annex 1**). Upon completion, the SIL (East) will enhance the railway network on the Hong Kong Island, save travelling time for the residents of the Southern District and facilitate tourism and commercial developments in the District.

Annex 1

3. We last briefed the Subcommittee on the SIL (East) project on 2 May 2008. We provided an update on the planning of the project vide Paper LC Paper No. CB(1)209/08-09(03) on 21 November 2008.

Current Position

4. The preliminary planning and design of the SIL (East) commenced in February 2008. The Government and the MTR Corporation Limited (MTRCL) conducted extensive public consultation from March 2008 to November 2008 in collaboration with the Southern District Council. The local community including the District Council was briefed on the proposed railway scheme. Roving exhibitions were held in community centres and shopping malls. The Government and the MTRCL also attended a number of forums organized by residents and exchanged views with them on the project.

Views of the Public

5. During the above-mentioned public consultation, we noted the views of the public and have made initial responses as follows:

- (a) In response to the request of the public for early completion and commencement of operation of the SIL (East), we will continue to strive for the completion of the project as soon as possible;
- (b) The MTRCL has noted the public's suggestions on the locations of entrances for stations at South Horizons and Lei Tung and will take these into consideration in the detailed design of the stations;
- (c) Members of the public were concerned about the noise and visual impacts of the proposed viaduct section between the toll plaza of the Aberdeen Tunnel and Lei Tung Estate. Some residents were worried that the viaduct section would affect the long-term development of the district and suggested that a tunnel be considered. In this connection, the MTRCL has looked into the tunnel option and provided further explanation to the public. To pursue the tunnel option, we anticipate the following implications and drawbacks to the community:
 - (i) The depot located in Wong Chuk Hang would need to be lowered by about 14 metres involving excavation of an additional one million cubic metres of hard rock inside the depot site. The extra excavation works will lead to about three to four years' delay in the completion of the railway;
 - (ii) About two-thirds of the Aberdeen Channel will have to be closed for three years to facilitate the construction of tunnel, leaving only a 35-metre fairway for marine traffic during the period, which may not be acceptable;
 - (iii) The construction of the ventilation buildings and the floodgate for the tunnel section crossing the Aberdeen Channel will require the clearance of some shipyards on the north shore of the Channel;
 - (iv) The two stations of Ocean Park and Wong Chuk Hang will have to be located underground. The level difference between the station platform and station entrances will become comparatively larger, making travelling time longer and therefore more inconvenient for passengers'

accessibility; and

- (v) Approximately 16,000 square meters of land inside the Hong Kong Police College will be required temporarily for tunnel construction for at least 3 years; and the Tactical Training Complex Building will have to be demolished, which will affect the operation of the Police College.

6. In view of the programme implications, the benefits and impacts to the district, as well as relevant planning and environmental considerations, the viaduct design is considered to be a practicable option. In addition, a significant amount of work has been done in addressing the concerns on the environmental impact of the viaducts. These will also be studied in the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) in conjunction with various mitigation measures.

7. We will continue to stay in close touch with the District Council, local concern groups and the public in developing the railway scheme. We expect that another round of public consultation will be conducted after the railway scheme is gazetted under the Railways Ordinance in mid-2009.

The MTRCL's Happy Valley Station Options Review Report

8. Early last year, the MTRCL explored the feasibility of providing a station in Happy Valley in the vicinity of the Racecourse. The MTRCL has conducted an option review and the results of the Study revealed that all the options have considerable implications for the SIL (East) project in terms of cost and programme. The summary is as follows:-

	Option	Additional cost over original proposal*	Additional length of tunnel section	Additional time for completion
1	Near Fung Fai Terrace	HK\$ 1.6 billion	1.5 km	10 months
2	At Happy Valley Tram Terminus	HK\$ 2.4 billion	2.4 km	23 months
3	Within the Racecourse	HK\$ 2.8 billion	2.5 km	11 months
4	Adjacent to the Grandstand of the HKJC	HK\$ 2.1 billion	1.5 km	31 months

(* in Jan 2006 prices)

9. After further review, we consider:
- (a) The catchment population of the station will only be around 19,000 in 2016 and the projected patronage is thus not high;
 - (b) Although the 4 options are technically feasible, there will be great difficulties in construction. During the construction stage, there will be serious traffic disruption in the vicinity of the tram terminus in Happy Valley;
 - (c) In order to provide a station in Happy Valley, the 3-km tunnel section between Admiralty and the Southern District will have to be increased in length by about 50% to 80%, resulting in substantially higher construction cost of the SIL (East) and, more importantly, much longer journey time. The latter will have significant impact on the transport and economic benefits of the project; and
 - (d) The much longer tunnel and the additional excavation will mean a longer construction period. This will go against the strong public expectations for early completion of the SIL (East).

We note that the views of the public over a station in Happy Valley have been divided. We have also taken into account the views of the Hong Kong Jockey Club. We should make it clear that the construction costs for such a station, and who should bear the costs have not been an issue in our decision on this matter. As mentioned above, adding a station in Happy Valley will have serious programme implications which will be contrary to the clear public wish to see the project completed as early as possible. On balance, we consider it not advisable to provide such a station.

10. We also note the heavy pedestrian traffic between Causeway Bay and Happy Valley on race days and public holidays, with a large number of pedestrians crossing Leighton Road in front of the Craigengower Cricket Club and Percival Street near the Times Square. In the light of the views of Members at the Subcommittee meeting on 2 May 2008, we shall look into the feasibility of the construction of a pedestrian subway linking the heart of Causeway Bay with the busy streets bordering Happy Valley. This was announced in the 2008-09 Policy Address. The Transport Department will soon commission a consultancy study on the above subway scheme. We will consult the District Councils concerned on the progress of the study in due course.

Works Programme

11. The MTRCL is finishing the preliminary design on the SIL (East) while taking into accounts of the comments collected from the public consultations. It is expected further discussions with the District Council and residents will follow before the railway scheme is gazetted under the Railways Ordinance in mid-2009. We plan to start the construction of the SIL (East) in 2011 for completion in no later than 2015.

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

**Transport and Housing Bureau
January 2009**

圖例
LEGEND

—— 現有鐵路路線
EXISTING RAIL LINE

—— 擬建南港島線（東段）
PROPOSED SOUTH ISLAND LINE (EAST)

附件一
Annex 1



南港島線（東段）
SOUTH ISLAND LINE (SIL) (EAST)