

**Submission to the
Subcommittee on Matters Relating to Railways,
LegCo Panel on Transport Concerning the
Hong Kong Section of Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link
on 14 May 2009**

1. In March 2008, The Professional Commons has published a research report concerning the potential arising from the Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link (hereafter GZ-SZ-HK ERL).¹ Special attention should be paid to the momentum that would add light on the economic and territorial development of Hong Kong, rather than simply interpreting it as an extra route connecting with the fast-growing Mainland.

Revamp of the Outdated Planning Strategies Based Upon Victoria Harbour

2. The GZ-SZ-HK ERL will boost up not only people flow but also capital flow between the two places, which will help bring enormous potential for the local economy. It is obvious that the proposed alignment of the rail link with its terminus in West Kowloon will intensify the development pressure of the metro core rather than maximizing the potential that the rail link could bring. In recent years, the business environment has been deteriorating due to high business operation costs arising from the scarcity of land in the urban metro core in light of the planning strategies based upon the Victoria Harbour. Hence, it would be important to rectify the outdated territorial development strategy in order to address not only the problem of spatial imbalance but also the high business costs through an ample supply of land.

Prepare for the New Era of Mainland-Hong Kong Co-operation

3. In light of the promulgation of the “Outline of the Plan for the Reform and Development of the Pearl River Delta (2008-2020)”, there will be a higher degree of co-operation with Guangdong and even the Mainland at large. On the other hand, the New Territories, which is adjacent to Shenzhen and being much larger than the metro core, is less developed and incapable to cater for a closer relationship with the Mainland. Hence, the Hong Kong SAR Government should

¹ The Professional Commons, “Reconstructing Urbanscape: Research Report on Development Strategies of the Hong Kong ‘Secondary City Centre’ and the Hong Kong Section of the Hi-speed National Rail Link,” March, 2008, <<http://www.procommons.org.hk>>.

revisit the role of the GZ-SZ-HK ERL from a strategic perspective, particularly in the development of a vibrant New Territories.

Powerhouse for City Development

4. Hong Kong should strive for putting one more station in the Hong Kong section of the GZ-SZ-HK ERL as there are two stations in Shenzhen at the Mainland section (i.e. Futian District and Longhua District). Shenzhen authorities insisted on the construction of two stations, instead of one, despite the drawback of adding an extra ten minutes of travelling time. Without doubt, Shenzhen believes that the benefit of boosting the development and economic vibrancy by the additional station far outweighs the drawback. The strategic thinking of Shenzhen is noteworthy and there should not be much controversy if Hong Kong follows suit.

From “One Hour Living Circle” to “Ten Hours Living Circle”

5. Instead of focusing on the “iron rule” for the achievement of the “one hour living circle”, Hong Kong should broaden the vision of the rail link to the creation of the “ten hours living circle”. Under the “ten hours living circle”, train travellers can be to and from Hong Kong and the following cities within ten hours: Beijing in the North, Shanghai to the East, Xian in the Northwest and Chongqing in the West. Hence, adding one station on the Hong Kong section which led to an extension of travelling time for ten minutes will be of minimal impact in comparison to the ten hours travelling time to those cities.

Additional “Hong Kong North” Station at Kam Sheung Road

6. The Professional Commons is of the view that there should be two stations on the Hong Kong section of GZ-SZ-HK ERL. To this end, an additional station namely “Hong Kong North” Station should be built, either adjacent to or linked up with the current Kam Sheung Road Station on the West Rail Line, in addition to the currently planned terminus at West Kowloon. The new station could serve as a major transport hub connecting the East and West of the New Territories, and between Hong Kong and the Mainland.

Creation of “Secondary City Centres” in the New Territories

7. According to our planning, the “Hong Kong North” Station in Kam Sheung Road will have good potential to develop into a multi-function community and possibly

become the “secondary city centre” of Hong Kong in the long term. The new city centre is expected to be “self-sufficient” in the sense that there would be ample commercial activities, community services, as well as cultural and entertainment facilities that would help create substantial amount of job opportunities for the residents of the New Territories as well. On one hand, the proposed alignment would be more user-friendly to train travellers, particularly local citizens living in the New Territories, with the locations of their origin/destination are in the New Territories. Hence, they would not be required to travel further south to West Kowloon first. On the other hand, both inbound visitors and local citizens would find it more convenient and comfortable, as there are a diverse range of amenities around the station area so that they could have more choices and also to benefit from the price differentiation between the urban area and the New Territories. Generally speaking, the Kam Sheung Road Station and its surrounding areas could perform the following functions:

- Regional Headquarters for the Government: Better serve the population in the New Territories and help boost the people flow and vibrancy at the early stage of development;
- Mainland-Hong Kong Business, Trade and Exhibition Centre: Provide another option for offices and business venues which are out of the urban metro core;
- Hotel Hub: Meet the needs of different types of visitors through the provision of various types of accommodation facilities;
- Residential Development: Bring about a balanced mix of high and low density residential development; and
- The provision of cultural and arts facilities.

Land Resumption

8. It would be advisable to acquire the brownfield sites currently used for temporary open storage purpose for the construction of the GZ-SZ-HK ERL (i.e. auxiliary facilities such as depots) rather than resuming extra agricultural land from rural villages. Such an arrangement can bring about the dual benefits of further preserving natural environment on one hand and rectifying the land being abused on the other hand.