

26 February 2009

Legislative Council Panel on Transport

Proposed Creation of One Permanent Principal Transport Officer Post in the Bus and Railway Branch of Transport Department

PURPOSE

This paper briefs Members on our proposal to create one permanent Principal Transport Officer (PTO) (D1) post in the Bus and Railway Branch (BRB) of the Transport Department (TD) to enhance its planning function and monitoring capability in respect of existing and new railway services, and to enhance its capability in public transport planning to cope with the increasing complexity of inter-modal coordination.

2. We plan to submit the proposal to the Establishment Subcommittee of the Finance Committee (FC) for consideration at its meeting on 28 April 2010 and for FC approval on 14 May 2010.

JUSTIFICATION

3. BRB is responsible for the policy, planning, development, regulation and monitoring of franchised bus, tram and non-franchised bus services; planning of public transport interchanges; public transport planning for new developments, service aspects of new railways and regulation of railway services.

4. BRB, headed by the Assistant Commissioner/Bus and Railway (AC/BR), comprises two teams, namely the Bus Development Division (BD) and the Railway Monitoring Division (RD). The current organisation chart of the BRB is at **Enclosure 1**. The two divisions are each headed by a PTO (D1). BD's work includes setting and coordinating bus policy and safety matters, scrutinising the service development applications and programmes of the three major franchised bus operators, processing applications for franchised bus fare adjustment, planning for franchised bus depots, assessment of public transport service demands for new developments, conducting public transport network

reviews and operator selection, coordinating the policy on Non-Franchised Bus (NFB), and management of the NFB trade. RD looks after the service readiness of new railway projects, sets service performance targets for new railways, monitors the railway service performance and the performance of other service-related operational aspects. RD's portfolio also includes duties similar to BD in connection with the three minor franchised bus networks and the tram services, and provision of new and upgrading of the environment of public transport interchanges.

Growing Complexities of Workload in Recent Years and in the Long Term

5. RD was originally set up in 2001 and charged with the responsibilities of handling public transport planning and coordination work associated with the commissioning of new railways and monitoring railway services. Over the years, the railway duties of RD have increased in quantity, complexity and political sensitivity with the implementation of projects recommended in the Railway Development Strategy 2000, which has resulted in the completion of a large number of new railways¹ and the relative importance of railway services, both in terms of patronage and its role in the public transport market. The merging of MTR Corporation Limited (MTRCL) and Kowloon Canton Railway Corporation (KCRC) systems since December 2007 has also made the monitoring work of RD more complicated and demanding. The anticipated commissioning of new railway projects in the next decade such as the Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link, Shatin to Central Link, West Island Line, Kwun Tong Line Extension, the South Island Line (East), etc., which entails substantial planning work, has aggravated the burden of RD further.

6. In addition to existing rail systems, RD has to closely monitor the performance of the newly completed railways and the coordination among different modes of transport in areas served by the new railways so as to ensure that the travelling public are well served while different modes of transport can have sustainable development. The new projects to be developed in the next 10 years include not only medium capacity regional lines, but also a strategic railway line running through multiple districts from the New Territories to the Hong Kong Island and a cross-boundary service connecting Hong Kong with the High Speed Railway network in the Mainland. The increase in the complexity of the railway network, its enhanced role in the overall transport service, its delicate relationship with other transport modes and political sensitivity associated with different needs and interests at both district and community level demand substantial input at the PTO level. The PTO in RD has to assist AC/BR in strategic planning, problem solving, balancing needs

¹ New railways completed in recent years include the Tseung Kwan O Line (2002), West Rail Line (2003), East Rail Line Extension to East Tsim Sha Tsui (2004), Ma On Shan Line (2004), Disneyland Resort Line (2005), Lok Ma Chau Spur Line (2007), Tseung Kwan O Extension (2009) and Kowloon Southern Link (2009).

and interests of different districts and modes of transport and conducting consultation with district leaders and senior management of various transport operators. The additional duties, growing complexity and political sensitivity of the work of the PTO in RD will be discussed in detail in the following paragraphs.

A) Planning Matters in Connection with New Railways and Service Readiness Monitoring

Public transport inputs to planning of new railways

7. To facilitate informed decision on the railway planning process, RD is required to provide detailed assessment on the impact of the new railway projects on other non-rail public transport modes during different stages of planning, having regard to the increasing competition in the public transport market; and to study the ways of inter-modal coordination to better serve the travelling public and make better use of the new railways. Its duties includes:-

- (a) At the very early stage of planning of a new railway, RD is responsible for providing professional input to facilitate assessment on the cost-effectiveness and viability of the proposed new railway, evaluation of options for alignments of the new railway, forecast of ridership, the need for associated transport infrastructure improvements, and the scope for better coordination of the different public transport modes.
- (b) When a new railway project is committed, RD is required to conduct preliminary assessment to ascertain the impact of the new railway on the existing non-rail transport services, and the extent of re-organisation of the non-rail public transport modes required to tie in with the opening of the new railway. The assessment findings will provide information to the public, during consultation on the design of the new rail line, on the scale of service change on the non-rail transport services to enable them to offer comments in a more informed manner. RD is also required to update and validate regularly the patronage forecasts and the transport plans, taking account of the latest socio-economic and traffic and transport data, for the Government to review a rail project from time to time.
- (c) During the railway construction stage, RD will conduct studies with the assistance of transport modeling to develop detailed service re-organisation proposals of the non-rail public transport modes. After the initial proposals have been formulated, RD will consult the relevant public transport operators and reach initial agreement with them on the re-organisation framework for detailed consultation with the public.

8. An officer at PTO level is required to provide steer to the studies

carried out at the three different stages, monitor the progress and tackle issues in a timely manner to ensure the study results are appropriate and available in time to assist in the decision making process and provide necessary output for consultation and agreement with relevant parties. The PTO would have to maintain close liaison and negotiate with the relevant public transport operators, in particular in the detailed study stage, to reach agreement on the reorganisation proposals and to consider measures that would facilitate the smooth implementation of the proposals. He would have to make early and suitable decision to adjust the plans as and when required. A PTO with professional knowledge, strategic thinking, good negotiation skills and high political sense would be needed to take up these duties.

Consultation on Inter-modal Coordination and Public Transport Service Re-organisation Plan

9. Following completion of the new railway lines in recent years, the public transport market has become highly competitive. The task of maintaining a balance between different transport modes to achieve healthy competition and coordination is becoming increasingly complex. RD needs to handle this delicate task with extra effort to address the concerns of various road-based transport trades, and to work out measures with them to maintain service viability. This includes service rationalisation, introduction of feeder services, redeployment of surplus resources to areas of new demand, provision of new interchange concessions, etc. The initial re-organisation proposals developed by RD during the planning stage of a new railway outlined in paragraph 7(c) above provide the basis for devising the public transport re-organisation plan for detailed consultation with affected public transport operators and the public.

10. When a new railway is ready for opening, RD will consult the Legislative Council, the Transport Advisory Committee and relevant District Councils on the proposed public transport service re-organisation plan. Often, this entails several rounds of consultation and negotiation, particularly with the District Councils and local organisations. With the feedback received, RD needs to adjust and refine the proposals as appropriate and repeat the consultation process before finalising the re-organisation plans. For new development areas, road transport services have to be provided pending the completion of a new railway, but they have to be rationalised after the new railway is opened. Inter-modal coordination both before and during construction of a new railway as well as after the new railway is open for operation are complex tasks involving changes to existing service operation and travelling pattern. Extensive consultation with both the affected transport trades and the travelling public is required.

11. An officer at PTO level is required to head the team to take up the above duties. He would have to develop appropriate consultation strategy in the consultation process, help resolve possible conflicts, and work out

reasonable solutions to balance the needs of all affected parties. He has to be conversant with the transport policy, legislation, operation of railway and non-rail transport modes, and has the capability to deal with district leaders, political parties and senior management of bus and railway companies. He needs to complete this highly complicated and politicised inter-modal coordination planning process in time to tie in with the commissioning of the new railways.

Facilitating Implementation of Committed Rail Projects

12. During the railway construction stage, RD needs to plan and manage traffic and transport diversions to facilitate construction works in close liaison with relevant works departments and public transport operators. Prior to the commissioning of a new rail line, the proposed PTO would have to assist AC/BR to convene a Service Readiness Task Group to ensure that the railway services are ready for operation. The proposed PTO has to monitor the satisfactory completion of all works, including station facilities, fare collection system, etc. and non-works matters such as staff recruitment and training. He also has to monitor and evaluate train performance during trial operations before recommending its service commissioning, provide guidance and steer on contingency transport planning, and agree with the rail operator on performance targets which will form the basis for future monitoring and evaluation.

B) Monitoring of Rail Services

13. The implementation of the rail merger of MTRCL and KCRC in December 2007 has brought enhanced service performance requirements, which translate into additional monitoring work on the part of the RD of BRB. Typical examples are enhanced monitoring due to tightened notification and reporting requirements on incident handling, additional requirements in customer service, passenger environment, ticketing systems, etc. Additional monitoring work also includes monitoring of performance requirements in particular those relating to changes in the Light Rail Transit and feeder bus network.

14. With the recent completion of a large number of new rail lines and the significant increase of rail service in market share, railways are now the largest public transport carrier in Hong Kong. This has increased the burden of RD's monitoring work tremendously. In particular, RD has to closely monitor the performance of the newly completed lines to ensure they run smoothly as planned and meet the requirements. RD also needs to closely monitor whether the services provided by other modes of transport are well coordinated to serve the travelling public in the areas served by the new rail lines and the impact of the new rail lines on such modes of services. RD has to make appropriate adjustments to its service rationalization and reorganisation plans in the light of actual developments and needs of the travelling public. This

requires the input of a PTO with rich experience, strategic thinking, prompt response and high political sense.

15. The increasing demand from the public and LegCo for enhancement of Government's monitoring of the performance of railway services has further increased the volume, complexity and political sensitivity of RD's monitoring work. To meet increasing public expectation, RD has to strengthen its monitoring and regulatory procedures and internal set up as well as to conduct more frequent liaisons with the senior management of transport operators and district leaders. RD's current set up is unable to cope with the increased and increasing rail duties in both planning and monitoring as set out above. A dedicated PTO post is needed to enable TD to effectively fulfil its role as a regulator of the railway operation and meet increasing public aspirations in this respect, bearing in mind also the additional work due to the coming on stream of new railways and their integration into the overall railway network.

C) Public Transport Studies

16. BRB provides planning input from public transport perspectives to major transport studies. BRB also plays an important role at various stages of major district/area planning projects. Advance planning is required to facilitate the commissioning of these new development projects; this includes operational and management planning, legislative amendments as well as the provision of public transport interchanges, bus servicing sites and depots, and other related facilities.

17. In response to the increasing environmental concerns, a number of new planning projects, such as the Kai Tak Development, the West Kowloon Cultural District, and the North-east New Territories New Development Areas, have called for input on the feasibility study of introducing environmental friendly transport modes, assessing its impact on existing public transport services, the future regulatory regime, etc. As the findings of these feasibility studies would have significant and long-term implications for Hong Kong's public transport system, a directorate officer at PTO level with sufficient professional knowledge and experience is required to take up the new task of providing steer to RD in transport planning for these new planning projects.

Need for Additional Permanent PTO Post

18. The increase in volume and complexity of work as mentioned in paragraphs 7 to 17 above is beyond the capacity of the existing PTO post in RD. An additional officer pitched at PTO level is required in the BRB to share out the rail monitoring and planning duties which would have serious impact of majority of the population. The new PTO would be assigned duties relating to the new railway projects looking after the planning, design, construction and service readiness stages; inter-modal coordination planning, consultation and implementation duties; public transport planning for New Development Areas;

public transport studies; as well as study and assessment of new transport modes.

19. We have considered the possibility of creating a time-limited, rather than permanent, PTO post instead. However, some of the committed railway projects will likely take about 10 years to complete. The proposed PTO would be required to deal with the public transport planning aspects in relation to various new planning projects in Hong Kong and the New Development Areas which would have an even longer time frame for development. Another important on-going task of the PTO would be to undertake public transport studies to review and assess specific transport issues and examine the feasibility and impact of new public transport modes from time to time.

20. We consider an additional PTO post in BRB is needed on a permanent basis to handle all the aforesaid planning and study tasks in the long run. The detailed job description of the proposed PTO post is at **Enclosure 2**. Upon creation of the proposed PTO post, the existing PTO post in RD will be responsible for the day-to-day railway service monitoring, non-rail planning duties such as public transport planning matters for Lantau Island. The revised job descriptions of the existing PTO in RD are set out at **Enclosure 3**. The proposed organisation chart of BRB is at **Enclosure 4**.

Alternatives Considered

21. There are five existing PTOs in TD and we have critically examined the possibility of assigning the other four PTOs to share out the work of the existing PTO in RD but concluded that it is not feasible to do so for the following reasons:

a) Bus Development Division (BD)

The PTO in BD is fully committed to duties on policy matters of franchised and NFB, the planning, development and regulation of the services, financial performance and fare adjustments of the three major franchised bus companies, bus safety issues, as well as the management of the NFB trade and does not have any scope to take up additional responsibility from the PTO in RD.

b) Management Services Division

The PTO is fully committed to duties in relation to the tendering of management contracts of transport infrastructure and facilities, looking after the changeover of contractors, the monitoring and operation of transport infrastructure and facilities, and overseeing emergency transport coordination and contingency transport planning. The PTO is already heavily involved in these duties in that the officer cannot take over additional responsibility from the PTO in RD.

c) Regional Offices

The two PTOs in the regional offices, one looking after Urban Region and the other New Territories Region, are fully committed to their normal duties of monitoring public transport services, traffic administration, tackling illegal transport services, as well as planning and implementation of new transport facilities and services at boundary control points. The two PTOs are already heavily involved in these duties in that the officers cannot take over additional responsibility from the PTO in RD.

22. We have also explored the possibility of assigning the responsibilities to AC/BR and concluded that it is not feasible to do so. AC/BR is already fully committed to policy, strategic planning and regulation matters on franchised and non-franchised bus services, monitoring of railway services, studies on the impact of new railways on other public transport trades, as well as coordinating the various transport-related environmental initiatives.

23. In conclusion there is neither spare capacity nor scope of reprioritisation/delegation available for the above four PTOs and AC/BR to absorb the demanding portfolio of the proposed post. As the work of RD will continue to expand, many of the issues are of concern to the community and would have serious impact on a significant portion of the population in Hong Kong, they require high level attention and steering and cannot possibly be dealt with by staff below the PTO level. An additional officer at PTO (D1) level is required to deal with the range and complexity of new railway projects; otherwise, the railway planning and monitoring services may be hampered in the long run.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

24. The additional notional annual salary cost at mid-point of the proposal is \$1,245,600. The full annual average staff cost of the proposal, including salaries and staff on-costs, is \$1,920,912.

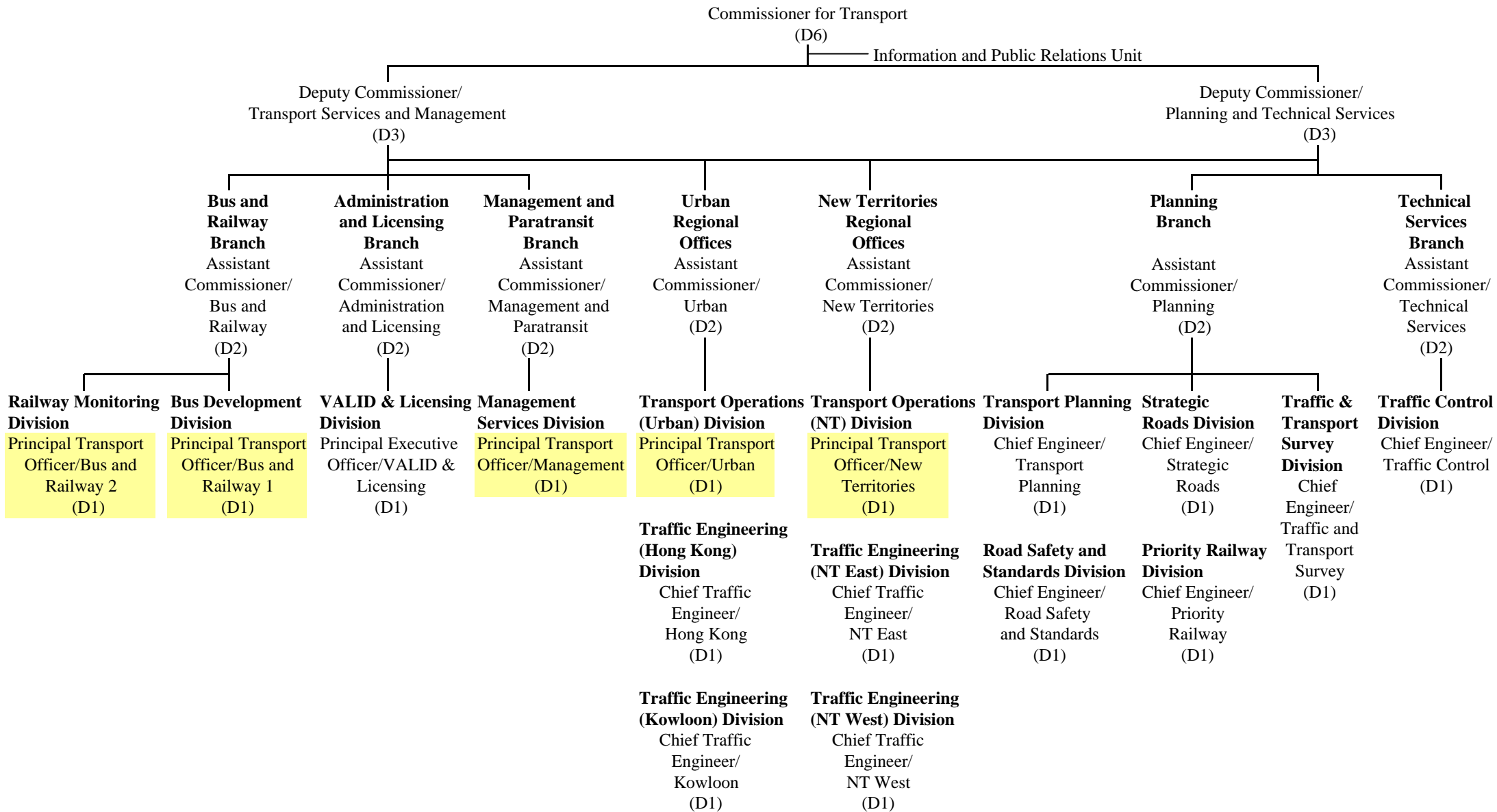
25. The additional resources required will be met by internal redeployment of existing resources within the Transport and Housing Bureau.

ADVICE SOUGHT

26. Members are invited to give their views on this paper and indicate support for the staffing proposal.

**Transport and Housing Bureau
February 2010**

Existing Organisation Chart of Transport Department



**Proposed Job Description for
Principal Transport Officer/ Railway Planning
and Service Readiness**

Rank : Principal Transport Officer (D1)

Responsible to : Assistant Commissioner for Transport/Bus and
Railway (D2)

Main Duties and Responsibilities -

1. To provide steer to the studies at different stages of the railway planning process, including provision of public transport planning inputs to a new railway project under planning; setting up and maintaining public transport planning models to facilitate assessment of a committed new project's impact on other public transport modes, and formulation of the re-organisation plan for relevant public transport modes for public consultation prior to the commissioning of the new railway.
2. To revalidate and update public transport planning inputs and public transport re-organisation plans in relation to existing railways on a regular basis to facilitate the evaluation of new railway projects.
3. To vet and manage temporary public transport arrangements during the construction of new railways.
4. To plan public transport interchange facilities in station development.
5. To evaluate and confirm the service readiness of new railways before their commissioning.
6. To deal with inter-modal co-ordination issues in relation to the commissioning of new railways, including the formulation of strategy in the consultation process, maintaining close liaison and negotiation with relevant public transport operators to reach agreement on the

re-organisation proposals and considering measures to facilitate the smooth implementation of the proposals.

7. To provide public transport planning inputs to major development projects, district planning studies, and transport studies and to provide input and assessment on new public transport modes.
8. To undertake ad hoc public transport studies.

**Revised Job Description for
Principal Transport Officer/ Bus and Railway 2**

Rank : Principal Transport Officer (D1)

Responsible to : Assistant Commissioner for Transport/Bus and
Railway (D2)

Main Duties and Responsibilities -

Railway Operations

1. To monitor the MTRCL service according to the provisions in the amended Mass Transit Railway Ordinance and the Integrated Operating Agreement.
2. To conduct annual review on the performance requirements and standards of MTRCL service.
3. To examine the fare and promotional arrangements proposed for MTRCL service and its impact on other public transport modes.

Non-railway Planning

4. To oversee all public transport planning issues of the Hong Kong Tramways, and on Lantau Island, including the Airport and Tung Chung New Town,
5. To regulate, develop, and monitor the operation of franchised bus services provided by Long Win, Citybus (Airport Network), and New Lantao bus companies.
6. To implement the Fare Adjustment Arrangements endorsed by ExCo in early 2006 for the franchised bus networks serving Lantau and the Airport.

Environment

7. To review and develop planning and management guidelines for public transport interchanges with a view to achieving overall cost efficiency in the provision of such infrastructure.
8. To improve the physical environment of existing and planned public transport interchanges to enhance their attractiveness to passengers.

Proposed Organisation Chart of Transport Department

