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Panel on Transport
Meeting on 17 July 2015

Background brief on transport services
at Northwest New Territories

Purpose

This paper provides background information on transport services at Northwest New Territories ("NWNT"). It also summarizes the major views and concerns expressed by Legislative Council ("LegCo") Members on the subject in the past discussions.

Background

2. In the light of the Chief Executive's announcement in the 2014 Policy Address of the target of providing a total of 470 000 public and private housing units over the next decade, the Government has adopted a multi-pronged approach to increase land supply in order to meet the housing production target. NWNT, covering Yuen Long and Tuen Mun, now being served by roads, Light Rail and the West Rail Line ("WRL"), plays a strategic role in providing land for housing.

3. According to the Administration in January 2015, there are 14 and 24 sites in Yuen Long and Tuen Mun respectively which have been identified as having the potential to be rezoned for public and private housing development. If they are rezoned as planned, these sites can be made available for housing development in the coming five years, providing about 42 000 and 40 700 residential units respectively. The Government has also been actively taking forward the West Rail property development projects and the successfully tendered projects will provide about 5 800 residential units. In addition, a number of development studies and land use reviews on various areas in NWNT, including Hung Shui Kiu ("HSK"), Kam Tin South, Pat Heung and Yuen Long

South, are being carried out. It is expected that a small number of residential units may be completed in these areas in the next decade. Population is expected to grow in NWNT.

4. According to the Administration, there were views that the West Rail was already congested and more public transportation support in the NWNT district would be required to support new developments. There was grave concern that the additional population would exacerbate the traffic problem. Some stressed that the HSK New Development Area ("NDA") should be well connected with the existing Tin Shui Wai, Tuen Mun and Yuen Long New Towns and there should be better east-west road connections within the district.

Major views of Members on transport services in NWNT in recent discussions

Motion on "Enhancing the railway service in NWNT"

5. Members have been concerned about the provision of transport services in NWNT. On 11 December 2013, a motion on "Enhancing the railway service in NWNT" was passed, urging the Administration to, for the purpose of dovetailing with the existing and future development needs and after completing the relevant public consultation, expeditiously implement the planning work for the Tuen Mun South Extension and the HSK Station, and conduct comprehensive studies and public consultation on the development plans for Northern Link ("NOL"), Coastal Railway between Tuen Mun and Tsuen Wan (Tuen Mun to Tsuen Wan Link) ("TMTWL") and the extension of the Light Rail line to Tuen Mun Area 54, so as to cope with the demand of the residents in NWNT for the railway service. The wording of the motion is in **Appendix I**.

6. At the Council meeting of 11 December 2013, the Secretary for Transport and Housing ("STH") responded that in view of the development and population growth in NWNT, the West Rail and the Light Rail networks had been expanding in recent years to meet the transport demand of residents. After the commissioning of the West Rail and Light Rail Tin Shui Wai Extension in 2003, as well as the Kowloon Southern Link of the West Rail in 2009, the distance between NWNT and the urban areas in Kowloon had been greatly shortened. To facilitate passengers travelling on the Light Rail, the MTR Corporation Limited ("MTRCL") provided feeder bus service at a number of Light Rail stations.

7. STH added that apart from railway service, there were some 70 bus routes in Yuen Long and Tuen Mun which run within the district as well as

across districts. The Tai Lam Tunnel Bus Interchange and the Tuen Mun Road Bus-Bus Interchange were also important transport facilities within Yuen Long and Tuen Mun districts, enabling passengers to enjoy interchange fare concessions and franchised bus service with wider coverage.

8. In respect of road network, STH advised that NWNT was linked up by a number of trunk roads including Tuen Mun Road, Yuen Long Highway, Castle Peak Road, Kam Tin Road, Tai Lam Tunnel, Tsing Long Highway and so on forming a rather comprehensive road network. The relevant government departments would closely monitor local development and the trend of transport demand, so as to implement timely road improvement projects and transport management initiatives to support the railway network and other public transport services to meet the overall transport demand in NWNT.

9. STH further said that the Government commenced in mid-2013 the construction of the Tuen Mun-Chek Lap Kok Link ("TM-CLKL") to support the future development of the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge ("HZMB") and nearby regions. Upon the commissioning of the northern connection of TM-CLKL¹, a direct passage would be provided to facilitate travelling from various parts in NWNT to the HZMB Hong Kong Boundary Crossing Facilities and Lantau Island, including the Hong Kong International Airport.

Capacity of WRL

10. When the Subcommittee on Matters Relating to Railways discussed the Railway Development Strategy 2014 ("RDS-2014")² at its meeting on 27 October 2014, some members were concerned that WRL would be overloaded after commissioning of the proposed railway lines, in particular NOL, the Tuen Mun South Extension and HSK Station. Some members suggested the Administration to construct a cross-harbour tunnel or a new railway line to meet the transport demand in NWNT. Some members urged the Administration to reconsider the development of TMTWL. At the Council

¹ TM-CLKL is divided into two (southern and northern) sections. Northern section is a road section linking Tuen Mun Area 40 and HZMB Hong Kong Boundary Crossing Facilities. Southern section is a road section linking HKBCF and the road network of North Lantau. At the Panel on Transport meeting on 19 April 2013, the Administration advised that it aimed to substantially complete the southern section of TM-CLKL by end of 2016 in tandem with the commissioning of HZMB and the completion of the northern section by end of 2018 to satisfy the local traffic demand timely. At the policy briefing given by STH on 16 January 2015, STH advised that according to the compilation and assessment of the latest works progress as of the third quarter of 2014, the Joint Works Committee ("JWC") of the Three Governments jointly set up by the three governments opined that it would be very difficult for the entire HZMB project to be completed at the same time by end 2016. JWC and the HZMB Authority would further conduct an in-depth and objective analysis on the programme with a view to coming up with a programme target.

² LC Paper No. CB(1)2012/13-14(01)

meeting of 3 December 2014, a question was also asked regarding the additional patronage that would be brought to WRL by the new railway projects.

11. The Administration advised that it had paid due regard to transport demand, cost-effectiveness, and the development needs of NDAs and other new developments when deciding to recommend the seven railway projects set out in RDS-2014. The development of TMTWL was excluded in RDS-2014 because no significant growth in population was expected within the coastline areas between Tuen Mun and Tsuen Wan. Taking into account the future new development plans for NWNT and North New Territories as well as Lantau, the Administration would examine the feasibility and desirability of new transport infrastructures for meeting the additional transport demand.

12. The Administration added that as short-term measures to address public dissatisfaction with the crowdedness inside trains of WRL, MTRCL had enhanced platform management and the service frequency. On medium-term measures, the construction of Shatin-Central Line ("SCL") provided a good opportunity for service enhancement. Through building new tracks, SCL would link up the Ma On Shan Line with WRL, routing through Tai Wai and Hung Hum to reach Tuen Mun, forming the East West Corridor ("EWC"). The number of train compartments of WRL would be gradually increased from the current seven to eight starting from late 2016. By then, the overall carrying capacity of WRL would be increased by at least 14%.

13. Nevertheless, the Administration advised that the consultant had estimated in RDS-2014 that, upon the completion of NOL, HSK Station and Tuen Mun South Station Extension, the loading of EWC along its busiest section would be increased. In the long run, WRL would eventually reach its maximum capacity at a certain point of time. The Government would monitor the increase in transport demand of WRL and to further look into the possibility of improving the service frequency of WRL.

Light rail service

14. In response to a question raised at the Council meeting of 28 January 2015 regarding the capacity of light rail to meet the transport needs of the population, STH replied that the Transport and Housing Bureau would carry out the Public Transport Strategy Study ("PTSS") to systematically review the respective roles and positioning of public transport services (including Light Rail) other than heavy rail.

15. STH advised that in the Role and Positioning Review of PTSS, the Administration would examine the long-term development of Light Rail.

Major topics to be covered included the feasibility of increasing carrying capacity with the original design of the Light Rail system; the feasibility of upgrading the design of the existing Light Rail system to increase the carrying capacity; the long-term demand of NWNT for public transport services; and the development of various public transport services including Light Rail in meeting such demand. STH added that Light Rail, which currently carried nearly half a million passenger trips per day, was now taking on dual roles: on one hand, it provided feeder service for WRL; on the other hand, it served as an important public transport mode within NWNT. In this regard, the Government would not prematurely give up Light Rail. When contemplating the future development of Light Rail, the Administration should, at the same time, review the overall transport infrastructure of NWNT in a holistic manner.

Additional traffic demand brought by residential development projects

16. In respect of Members' concern about the sufficiency of transport services to cope with the additional traffic demand brought by residential development projects, the Administration advised at the Council meeting of 3 December 2014 that when taking forward NDAs or major projects, the Government would consider the economic benefits in the related transport planning if it would generate a large amount of traffic demand. When implementing individual projects, the responsible department would, in response to the findings in the traffic impact assessment reports submitted at various planning and design stages of the project, formulate and implement improvement and mitigation measures in a timely manner to meet the transport demand and development needs.

17. The Administration added that taking into account the future new development plans for NWNT and North New Territories as well as Lantau, the Administration would examine the feasibility and the desirability of new transport infrastructures (including railways and roads) or upgrading/improvement works to the existing ones for meeting the additional transport demand. Throughout the process, the Administration would make reference to the latest planning parameters, look into the actual traffic condition and listen to the views of local residents and experts.

Environmental-friendly transportation facilities

18. When the Panel on Development discussed the planning and engineering study for HSK NDA, some members noted that HSK NDA was a basin surrounded by hills and polluted air could not be easily dispersed and enquired whether consideration would be given to developing environmental-friendly

transportation facilities in the area³.

19. The Administration replied that planning and technical assessments on the environmental, traffic and air ventilation impacts of the recommended proposals were thoroughly carried out in the process of the planning and engineering study. To reduce carbon emission in HSK NDA, consideration would be given to the provision of cycle tracks as well as the deployment of an environmental-friendly transport system.

Relevant questions raised at Council meetings

20. During the 2014-2015 session, a total of three questions relating to the transport services in NWNT were raised at the Council meetings of 20 November and 3 December 2014, and 28 January 2015. The hyperlinks to the questions and the Administration's responses, together with other relevant papers, are in **Appendix II**.

Latest position

21. The Administration will report to the Panel on Transport the latest development of the transport infrastructure at NWNT, in view of the latest development initiatives in NWNT at the Panel meeting to be held on 17 July 2015.

Council Business Division 4
Legislative Council Secretariat
13 July 2015

³ LC Paper No. CB(1)987/14-15(08)

(Translation)

Motion on
“Enhancing the railway service in the Northwest New Territories”
moved by Hon LEUNG Che-cheung
at the Council meeting of 11 December 2013

Motion as amended by Dr Hon KWOK Ka-ki, Ir Dr Hon LO Wai-kwok,
Hon Frankie YICK, Hon SIN Chung-kai and Hon Albert CHAN

That, in the consultation document entitled ‘Our Future Railway’ Stage 2 public engagement exercise released in February this year, the Government put forward local railway enhancement schemes such as the Tuen Mun South Extension and the Hung Shui Kiu Station, etc. to integrate into the existing railway network and dovetail with the development plan for the Hung Shui Kiu New Development Area; the population in the Northwest New Territories increases rapidly, and many residents in the district need to work across districts and thus rely heavily on the existing railway and transport link for commuting to and from urban areas; in this connection, this Council urges the Government to, for the purpose of dovetailing with the existing and future development needs and after completing the relevant public consultation, expeditiously implement the planning work for the Tuen Mun South Extension and the Hung Shui Kiu Station, and conduct comprehensive studies and public consultation on the development plans for the Northern Link, the Hong Kong-Shenzhen Western Express Line, the Coastal Railway between Tuen Mun and Tsuen Wan and the extension of the Light Rail line to Tuen Mun Area 54, so as to cope with the demand of the residents in the Northwest New Territories for the railway service; the Government should also request the MTR Corporation Limited to expeditiously adopt effective measures to comprehensively improve the existing West Rail and Light Rail services, including reducing fare, increasing service frequencies, increasing and procuring more train cars, improving station facilities, improving the ‘Monthly Pass Extra’ scheme, and enhancing the Light Rail system and other connecting transportation arrangements, etc.; at the same time, the Government should, by comprehensively considering factors such as Hong Kong’s long-term population development trends, land and housing supplies and overall urban infrastructure planning etc., and based on the findings of the public consultation on ‘Our Future Railway’, expeditiously review and formulate Hong Kong’s long-term railway development blueprint, and implement the planning concerned in a practical and orderly manner, so as to ensure Hong Kong’s sustainable development; the Government should also expeditiously launch the Fourth Comprehensive Transport Study to enable the expansion of railway network to dovetail with the clear positioning of various modes of public transport, so as to provide people with more comprehensive

transport network support; this Council also urges the Government based on the local enhancement schemes mentioned in the 'Our Future Railway' Stage 2 public engagement exercise to construct the North Island Line, Siu Sai Wan Line and South Island Line (West) etc., so as to improve the connection of the Northwest New Territories with other regions; this Council also urges the Government to expeditiously construct a railway between Tuen Mun and Chek Lap Kok, so that every 50 000 to 80 000 people in New Territories West may use one large-scale railway station, thus bringing the ratio of railway stations to population in New Territories West on a par with that in urban areas, and introduce bus interchange services at all large MTR stations and the entrances and exits of major highways, tunnels and flyovers.

Background brief on transport services at Northwest New Territories

List of relevant papers

Date of meeting	Meeting	Minutes/Paper	LC Paper No.
11.12.2013	Council meeting	Motion on "Enhancing the railway service in the Northwest New Territories"	http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr13-14/english/counmtg/motion/cm1211-m2-wordings-e.pdf
		Progress Report	http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr13-14/english/counmtg/motion/cm1211-m2-prpt-e.pdf
		Speaking note of the Secretary for Transport and Housing	http://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/201312/11/P201312110593.htm
27.10.2014	Subcommittee on Matters Relating to Railways	Administration's paper on Railway Development Strategy 2014	CB(1)2012/13-14(01) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr13-14/english/panels/tp/tp_rdp/papers/tp_rdpcb1-2012-1-e.pdf
		Background brief on railway development strategy prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat	CB(1)2012/13-14(02) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr13-14/english/panels/tp/tp_rdp/papers/tp_rdpcb1-2012-2-e.pdf
		Minutes of the meeting	CB(4)539/14-15 http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr14-15/english/panels/tp/tp_rdp/minutes/rdp20141027.pdf
20.11.2014	Council meeting	Dr Hon Kenneth CHAN raised a question on Railway Development Strategy 2014	http://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/201411/20/P201411200298.htm
3.12.2014	Council meeting	Hon CHAN Han-pan raised a question on Railway Development Strategy 2014	http://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/201412/03/P201412030566.htm

Date of meeting	Meeting	Minutes/Paper	LC Paper No.
28.1.2015	Council meeting	Hon LEUNG Che-cheung raised a question on Light Rail service	http://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/201501/28/P201501280459.htm
23.6.2015 and 22.7.2015	Panel on Development	Administration's paper on Hung Shui Kiu New Development Area Planning and Engineering Study - Recommended Outline Development Plan and Stage 3 Community Engagement	CB(1)987/14-15(07) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr14-15/english/panels/dev/papers/dev20150623cb1-987-7-e.pdf
		Updated background brief on the planning and engineering study for the Hung Shui Kiu new development area prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat	CB(1)987/14-15(08) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr14-15/english/panels/dev/papers/dev20150623cb1-987-8-e.pdf

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