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Panel on Transport

Subcommittee on Matters Relating to Railways
Meeting on 15 January 2021

Background brief on Northern Link (and Kwu Tung Station)

Purpose

This paper provides background information on Northern Link (and Kwu Tung Station) proposed under the Railway Development Strategy 2014 ("RDS-2014"). It also summarizes the major views and concerns expressed by Legislative Council Members during previous discussions relevant to this subject.

Background

2. Having regard to transport demand, cost-effectiveness and the development needs of New Development Areas and other new developments, seven railway projects are recommended to be taken forward under RDS-2014¹ in the planning horizon up to 2031.

¹ Based on the findings and final recommendations of the consultancy study and the views collected during a two-stage Public Engagement exercise, RDS-2014 was formulated to map out the development and planning blueprint of the heavy rail network up to 2031. RDS-2014 also reaffirmed the policy of using railway as the backbone of the public transport system in Hong Kong.

3. According to the RDS-2014 document on the Transport and Housing Bureau ("THB") website (<https://www.thb.gov.hk/eng/psp/publications/transport/publications/rds2014.pdf>), the Northern Link is a 10.7-kilometre long railway line between the Kam Sheung Road Station on the existing West Rail Line and a new station at Kwu Tung on the Lok Ma Chau Spur Line of East Rail Line. The preliminary conceptual scheme of the Northern Link (including Kwu Tung Station) is in **Appendix I**.

Major views and concerns of members

4. Members have expressed views and concerns on the new railway projects recommended in RDS-2014, including the Northern Link (and Kwu Tung Station), at the meetings of the Subcommittee on Matters Relating to Railways ("the Subcommittee"), the Panel on Transport, the Panel on Development and the Council meetings. The major views and concerns raised by members at these meetings are summarized in the ensuing paragraphs.

Implementation progress of the Railway Development Strategy 2014

5. Members were very concerned about the detailed proposals and the implementation timetables for the seven new railway projects recommended in RDS-2014 since they had been announced in 2014. Some members called on the Administration to take forward these new railway projects in a timely and orderly manner, so that they could be commissioned as scheduled to meet the pressing transport demand arising from growing population in new development areas.

6. The Administration advised that having regard to the indicative implementation window recommended in RDS-2014, THB had invited the MTR Corporation Limited ("MTRCL") to submit proposals for the implementation of the Tuen Mun South Extension, Northern Link (and Kwu Tung Station), East Kowloon Line, Tung Chung West Extension (and Tung Chung East Station) and North Island Line. MTRCL submitted proposals for these five railway projects to the Government in December 2016, March 2017, July 2017, January 2018 and July 2018 respectively. THB, the Highways Department and relevant bureaux/departments had evaluated the proposals and requested MTRCL to provide additional information and supplement details. The Administration further advised that in carrying out the evaluation, its main focus was to ensure that the proposals were practically feasible and could bring maximum benefits to the community. Due to the tight housing supply and the potential housing

supply that might be brought about by railway development, the Administration was also reviewing the proposals submitted by MTRCL in this light.

7. The Administration remarked that railway projects involve huge capital investment, and the Government had to plan in a prudent manner. The new railway projects proposed in RDS-2014 have different degrees of complexities. As clearly stated in RDS-2014, the taking forward of individual proposed railway projects set out in the Strategy would be subject to the outcome of detailed engineering, environmental and financial studies relating to each project, as well as updated demand assessment and availability of resources. Moreover, for railway projects which were mainly intended to complement new development areas and new housing developments, the implementation timetable for the development areas and new housing developments in question would be an important planning parameter for the railway projects. Therefore, the indicative implementation windows recommended in RDS-2014 may be adjusted having regard to any change in circumstances. Further, in line with established procedures, prior to the finalization of any new railway scheme, the Government would consult the public, including the legislative Council and the relevant District Councils, on the details of the scheme.

Northern Link (and Kwu Tung Station)

8. Members asked about the factors considered by the Administration when evaluating the proposal for the Northern Link project submitted by MTRCL, as well as the timetable and roadmap for the works project of the Northern Link. Members urged the Administration to press ahead the implementation of Northern Link and Kwu Tung Station to timely serve the new population intake in the new development areas in Northeast New Territories from 2023. They worried that the overloading problem of the East Rail Line and the congestion of Tolo Highway would continue to worsen without the timely commissioning of the Northern Link.

9. The Administration advised that railway projects involved huge capital investment, and the Government had to plan in a prudent manner. The new railway projects proposed in the RDS-2014 had different degrees of complexities. In planning the Northern Link (and Kwu Tung Station), the Administration would assess in detail and mitigate the impact on ecologically-sensitive areas (such as Mai Po Nature Reserve, fishponds, wetlands, egretries and farmlands) along the railway alignment. Meanwhile, in light of the tight housing supply, the Government was reviewing the potential housing supply that may be brought about by the proposal for the Northern Link (and Kwu Tung Station), and would strive to undertake public consultation on the proposal as soon as possible.

10. The Administration further pointed out that in planning the Northern Link (and Kwu Tung Station), it would continue to monitor the development of the new development areas (such as Kwu Tung North New Development Area ("KTN NDA"), to ensure that the implementation of the Northern Link (and Kwu Tung Station) would match the timetable for the development of the new development areas. According to the Development Bureau, the first population intake of the public housing development in KTN NDA was anticipated in 2027. The Administration's target was to commission Kwu Tung Station in 2027 to tie in with the said programme.

Latest development

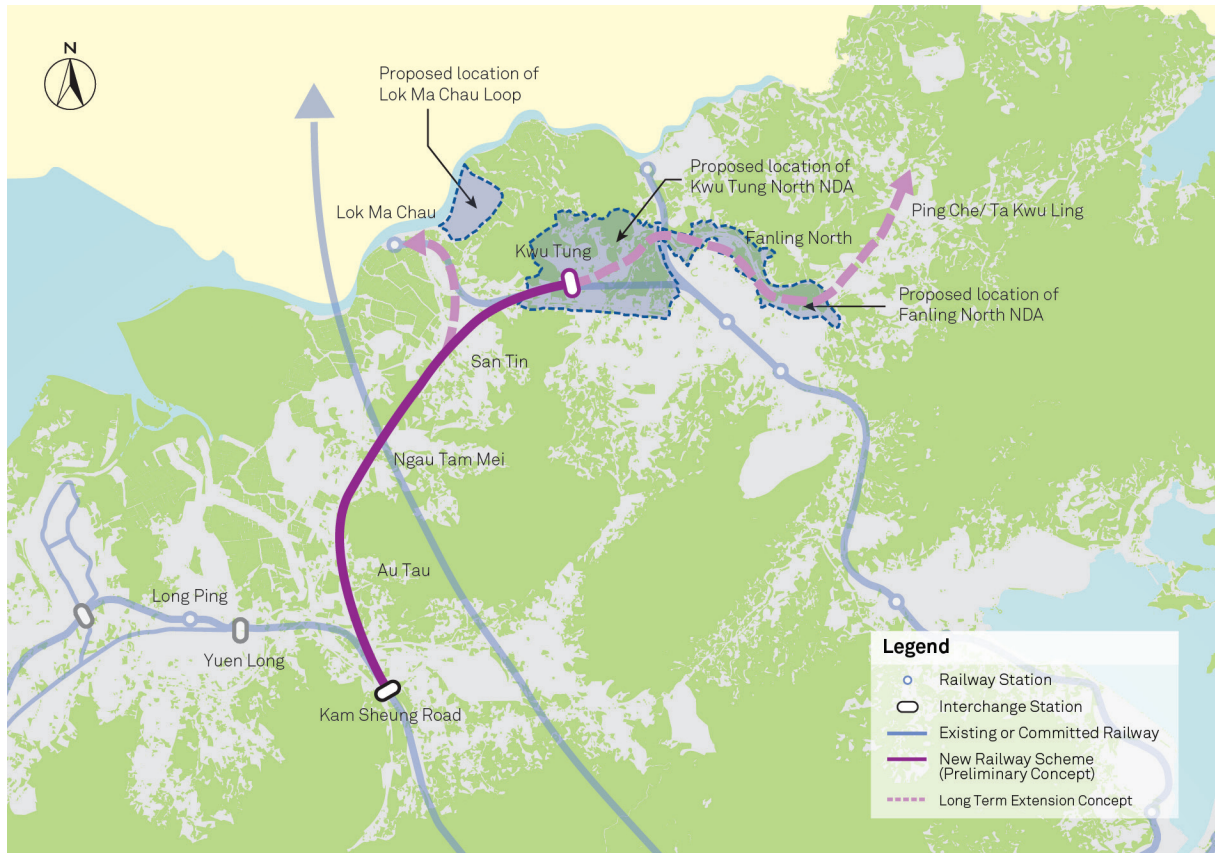
11. Members noted in the 2019 Policy Address that the Government would invite MTRCL to commence the detailed planning and design for three of the seven projects under RDS-2014, including Tung Chung Line Extension (i.e. Tung Chung West Extension and Tung Chung East Station), Tuen Mun South Extension and Northern Link (and Kwu Tung Station) in the coming year, so that work on these three railway projects could commence as early as possible. In this connection, the Subcommittee was already consulted on the proposed way forward of the Tung Chung Line Extension and Tuen Mun South Extension projects at its meetings on 5 May and 5 June 2020 respectively.

12. The Administration plans to consult members on the proposed way forward of the Northern Link project at the Subcommittee meeting to be held on 15 January 2021.

Relevant papers

13. A list of relevant papers is at **Appendix II**.

Preliminary Conceptual Scheme of the Northern Link (including Kwu Tung Station)



Source: LC Paper No. CB(1)2012/13-14(01)

Northern Link (and Kwu Tung Station)

List of relevant papers

Date of meeting	Committee	Minutes/Paper	LC Paper No.
4.11.2010	Subcommittee on Matters Relating to Railways	Administration's paper on review and update of the Railway Development Strategy 2000	CB(1)256/10-11(03) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr10-11/english/panels/tp/tp_rdp/papers/tp_rdp1104cb1-256-3-e.pdf
		Minutes of meeting	CB(1)1068/10-11 http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr10-11/english/panels/tp/tp_rdp/minutes/rdp20101104.pdf
14.1.2011	Finance Committee	Head 60 – Highways Department; Subhead 700 General non-recurrent; New Item "Review and Update of the Railway Development Strategy 2000"	FCR(2010-11)53 http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr10-11/english/fc/fc/papers/f10-53e.pdf
		Minutes of meeting	FC116/10-11 http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr10-11/english/fc/fc/minutes/fc20110114.pdf

Date of meeting	Committee	Minutes/Paper	LC Paper No.
22.5.2012	Subcommittee on Matters Relating to Railways	Administration's paper on "Our Future Railway Stage 1 Public Engagement exercise"	CB(1)1832/11-12(02) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr11-12/english/panels/tp/tp_rdp/papers/tp_rdp0522cb1-1832-2-e.pdf
		Minutes of meeting	CB(1)2542/11-12 http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr11-12/english/panels/tp/tp_rdp/minutes/rdp20120522.pdf
7.11.2012	Council meeting	Hon Christopher CHUNG Shu-kun raised a question on study on the construction of the MTR Siu Sai Wan extension	http://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/201211/07/P201211070229.htm
18.1.2013	Panel on Transport	Administration's paper on transport-related policy initiatives of the Transport and Housing Bureau under the 2013 Policy Address	CB(1)409/12-13(03) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr12-13/english/panels/tp/papers/tp0118cb1-409-3-e.pdf
		Minutes of meeting	CB(1)839/12-13 http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr12-13/english/panels/tp/minutes/tp20130118.pdf

Date of meeting	Committee	Minutes/Paper	LC Paper No.
1.3.2013 3.5.2013	Subcommittee on Matters Relating to Railways	Administration's paper on "Our Future Railway" Stage 2 Public Engagement Exercise	CB(1)595/12-13(03) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr12-13/english/panels/tp/tp_rdp/papers/tp_rdp0301cb1-595-3-e.pdf
		Minutes of meeting	CB(1)1060/12-13 http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr12-13/english/panels/tp/tp_rdp/minutes/rdp20130301.pdf CB(1)628/13-14 http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr12-13/english/panels/tp/tp_rdp/minutes/rdp20130503.pdf
30.10.2013	Council meeting	Dr Hon Elizabeth QUAT raised a question on railway development plans	http://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/201310/30/P201310290548.htm
11.12.2013	Council meeting	Minutes of meeting	CB(3) 343/13-14 http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr13-14/english/counmtg/minutes/cm20131211.pdf

Date of meeting	Committee	Minutes/Paper	LC Paper No.
17.1.2014	Panel on Transport	Administration's paper on transport-related policy initiatives of the Transport and Housing Bureau under the 2014 Policy Address	CB(1)702/13-14(05) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr13-14/english/panels/tp/papers/tp0117cb1-702-5-e.pdf
		Minutes of meeting	CB(1)1105/13-14 http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr13-14/english/panels/tp/minutes/tp20140117.pdf
27.10.2014	Subcommittee on Matters Relating to Railways	Administration's paper on Railway Development Strategy 2014	CB(1)2012/13-14(01) https://www.legco.gov.hk/yr13-14/english/panels/tp/tp_rdp/papers/tp_rdpcb1-2012-1-e.pdf
		Administration's supplementary information on the railway development (follow-up paper)	CB(4)293/14-15(01) https://www.legco.gov.hk/yr14-15/english/panels/tp/tp_rdp/papers/tp_rdp20141027cb4-293-1-e.pdf
		Minutes of meeting	CB(4)539/14-15 https://www.legco.gov.hk/yr14-15/english/panels/tp/tp_rdp/minutes/rdp20141027.pdf

Date of meeting	Committee	Minutes/Paper	LC Paper No.
16.6.2017	Panel on Transport	Administration's paper on strategic studies on railways and major roads beyond 2030	CB(4)1176/16-17(07) https://www.legco.gov.hk/yr16-17/english/panels/tp/papers/tp20170616cb4-1176-7-e.pdf
		Administration's supplementary information on strategic studies on railways and major roads beyond 2030 (follow-up paper)	CB(4)1571/16-17(01) http://library.legco.gov.hk:1080/articles/1200688.298093/1.PDF (Chinese version only)
		Minutes of meeting	CB(4)177/17-18 https://www.legco.gov.hk/yr16-17/english/panels/tp/minutes/tp20170616.pdf
29.11.2017	Council meeting	Hon WU Chi-wai raised a question on traffic situation in Kowloon East	https://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/201711/29/P2017112800932.htm
16.5.2018	Council meeting	Hon Frankie YICK raised a question on railway services in Northwest New Territories	https://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/201805/16/P2018051600264.htm
24.10.2018	Council meeting	Ir Dr Hon LO Wai-kwok raised a question on new railway projects	https://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/201810/24/P2018102400502.htm
9.1.2019	Council meeting	Hon Andrew WAN raised a question on Tuen Mun South Extension and Northern Link (and Kwu Tung Station)	https://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/201901/09/P2019010900387.htm

Date of meeting	Committee	Minutes/Paper	LC Paper No.
22.1.2019	Panel on Development	Minutes of meeting	CB(1)1331/18-19 https://www.legco.gov.hk/yr18-19/english/panels/dev/minutes/dev20190122.pdf
		Administration's paper on Kwu Tung North and Fanling North New Development Areas - Funding Applications for Main Works, Detailed Design and Special Ex-gratia Cash Allowance (Follow-up paper)	CB(1)603/18-19(01) https://www.legco.gov.hk/yr18-19/english/panels/dev/papers/dev20190122cb1-603-1-e.pdf
27.2.2019	Public Works Subcommittee	Minutes of meeting	PWSC192/18-19 https://www.legco.gov.hk/yr18-19/english/fc/pwsc/minutes/pwsc20190227.pdf
		Administration's response to the request made by members at the meeting on 27 February 2019 for supplementary information about PWSC(2018-19)41 - 747CL - Advance site formation and engineering infrastructure works at Kwu Tung North new development area and Fanling North new development area; 759CL - First stage of site formation and engineering infrastructure at Kwu Tung North new development area and Fanling North new	PWSC150/18-19(01) (Chinese version) https://www.legco.gov.hk/yr18-19/chinese/fc/pwsc/papers/pwsc20190318pwsc-150-1-c.pdf

Date of meeting	Committee	Minutes/Paper	LC Paper No.
		development area; 828CL - Remaining phase of site formation and engineering infrastructure works at Kwu Tung North new development area and Fanling North new development area; 793CL - Site formation and infrastructure works for Police facilities in Kong Nga Po; 388DS - Shek Wu Hui Effluent Polishing Plant; and 37CA - Special Ex-gratia Cash Allowance for the Kwu Tung North and Fanling North New Development Area	
17.4.2019	Council meeting	Hon Holden CHOW raised a question on implementation of Railway Development Strategy 2014	https://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/201904/17/P2019041700280.htm
23.10.2019	Council meeting	Hon LEUNG Che-cheung raised a question on Tuen Mun South Extension	https://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/201910/23/P2019102300360.htm
18.12.2019	Council meeting	Hon Holden CHOW raised a question on taking forward the Railway Development Strategy 2014	https://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/201912/18/P2019121800304.htm
25.10.2019	Panel on Transport	Administration's paper on transport-related policy initiatives in 2019 Policy Address	CB(4)13/19-20(01) https://www.legco.gov.hk/yr19-20/english/panels/tp/papers/tp20191025cb4-13-1-e.pdf

Date of meeting	Committee	Minutes/Paper	LC Paper No.
		Minutes of meeting	CB(4)280/19-20 https://www.legco.gov.hk/yr19-20/english/panels/tp/minutes/tp20191025.pdf
5.5.2020	Subcommittee on Matters Relating to Railways	Administration's paper on Tung Chung Line Extension	CB(4)438/19-20(03) https://www.legco.gov.hk/yr19-20/english/panels/tp/tp_rdp/papers/tp_rdp20200505cb4-438-3-e.pdf
		Minutes of meeting	CB(4)311/20-21 https://www.legco.gov.hk/yr19-20/english/panels/tp/tp_rdp/minutes/rdp20200505.pdf
5.6.2020	Subcommittee on Matters Relating to Railways	Administration's paper on Tuen Mun South Extension	CB(4)646/19-20(01) https://www.legco.gov.hk/yr19-20/english/panels/tp/tp_rdp/papers/tp_rdp20200605cb4-646-1-e.pdf
		Minutes of meeting	CB(4)191/20-21 https://www.legco.gov.hk/yr19-20/english/panels/tp/tp_rdp/minutes/rdp20200605.pdf
18.12.2020	Panel on Transport	Administration's paper on transport-related policy initiatives in 2020 Policy Address	CB(4)275/20-21(01) https://www.legco.gov.hk/yr20-21/english/panels/tp/papers/tp20201218cb4-275-1-e.pdf

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