

Government invites MTRCL to proceed with detailed planning and design of Northern Link project

The Chief Executive in Council has given approval for the Government to invite the MTR Corporation Limited (MTRCL) to proceed with the detailed planning and design of the Northern Link (NOL) project.

The NOL is one of the seven recommended railway schemes in the Railway Development Strategy 2014. The project comprises Kwu Tung (KTU) Station and construction of a 10.7-kilometre-long railway link between the existing Kam Sheung Road (KSR) Station of West Rail Line (WRL) and KTU Station. The MTRCL proposed that the construction of the NOL would be carried out in two phases. Phase 1 would be KTU Station on the Lok Ma Chau Spur Line; and Phase 2 would be the NOL Main Line between KSR Station and KTU Station, with three intermediate stations at San Tin, Ngau Tam Mei and Au Tau.

The primary function of KTU Station is to serve the transport need of the Kwu Tung North New Development Area which, upon full development, will accommodate a total population of 119 700 and 33 300 jobs. Upon its commissioning, KTU Station would facilitate residents in the area to use the rail-based transport system and reduce the time needed for a journey.

A spokesperson for the Transport and Housing Bureau said, "It is estimated that KTU Station will save the public a cumulative total of about 135 million hours over 50 years of operation. The economic benefits, including the said time saving, of KTU Station are estimated to be about \$14 billion in 2015 prices."

NOL Phase 2 connects the East Rail Line and the WRL, forming a loop of railway around the New Territories (NT) and Kowloon, thereby greatly improving the transport connectivity between NT East and NT West. The NOL Main Line will offer an alternative transport choice to the residents in the vicinity, reducing the travelling time for the existing population as well as the additional population arising from the developments along the alignment of the NOL in future.

The spokesperson said, "The NOL is crucial to unleashing the development potential of the largely underutilised areas along its alignment. The availability of the NOL can open up development opportunities with more efficient land uses for the areas along its alignment, realising the infrastructure-led, capacity creating planning approach as advocated by the current term of government. Not only will the increased transport capacity benefit key government projects under planning, it will also incentivise developers to advance their development plans with a larger housing yield."

In order to support the Government's land creation initiatives and

unleash the development potential of the sites along the railway alignment, the Government has invited the MTRCL to proceed with the detailed planning and design of NOL Phase 1 and Phase 2 at the same time. The Government will further negotiate with the MTRCL on the financing arrangement of the project.

It is expected that construction of NOL Phase 1 may commence in 2023 for completion in 2027. For NOL Phase 2, it is expected that the construction may commence in 2025 for completion in 2034.