

Hong Kong SAR Government warmly welcomes introduction of sleeper trains for XRL service to/from Beijing and Shanghai

A Government spokesman said today (June 4) that the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government warmly welcomes the introduction of sleeper trains on the Hong Kong Section of the Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link (XRL). This new service between the Hong Kong West Kowloon Station and the Beijingxi Station/Shanghai Hongqiao Station will commence on June 15, with trains departing in the evenings and arriving the following mornings. The initiative marks another significant milestone in the over five-year operation of the XRL Hong Kong Section.

The HKSAR Government has long been maintaining close communication with relevant Mainland authorities as well as the railway operators of the two places. Various measures such as increasing the number of stations directly connected with the West Kowloon Station and train frequencies, as well as introducing the Same-day Flexi-trip Arrangement and multi-ride tickets, have facilitated the flow of people by the XRL between Hong Kong and the Mainland, giving full play to the advantages of interconnectivity between the XRL Hong Kong Section and the national high-speed rail network.

The China State Railway Group Co., Ltd (China Railway) announced this morning that the ordinary-speed train services between the Hong Kong Hung Hom Station and Beijing/Shanghai will be upgraded to XRL sleeper train services. The new sleeper trains to be introduced to the XRL Hong Kong Section will significantly reduce rail travel times, almost by half, between Hong Kong and Beijing from over 24 hours to about 12.5 hours and between Hong Kong and Shanghai from 19.5 hours to about 11 hours. With the number of passenger seats largely increased to 600, the comfortable XRL sleeper trains will take the cross-boundary rail service experience to a new level. The operation mode of evening departures and morning arrivals will allow passengers to arrive at their destinations after a comfortable overnight journey, enriching travel options for both leisure and business travellers as well as saving a night of hotel charges.

The Chief Executive, Mr John Lee, said, "I wish to express my gratitude for the Central Government's care for Hong Kong, as well as the strong support from China Railway and various Mainland authorities. The train service to be introduced is a high-speed rail train with sleeper berths, departing in the evenings and arriving in the mornings. It will be more comfortable and faster, reducing the travel time by about half, and will cover a wider range of destinations, including popular tourist attraction cities. The upgraded train service will further meet the travel demand of wide-ranging passengers for cross-boundary journeys. It carries great significance in facilitating the cross-boundary flow of people, solidifying

the people-to-people bonds between the Mainland and Hong Kong, and enabling Hong Kong to better integrate into the national development."

The launch of the XRL sleeper train service will further leverage the advantage of the "co-location arrangement" at the West Kowloon Station. In the past, the Intercity Through Train (ITT) service adopted the "separate-location arrangement" immigration clearance procedure, which limited the number of Mainland destinations that could be connected, constraining the development potential of the services. The new sleeper trains connecting the Hong Kong West Kowloon Station and the Beijingxi Station/Shanghai Hongqiao Station will fully capitalise on the advantage of the "co-location arrangement". The trains will also stop at intermediate stations including Shijiazhuang in Hebei and Hangzhou in Zhejiang, providing cross-boundary travellers a more comfortable long-haul experience and enhancing the economic and trade co-operation as well as people-to-people exchanges between Hong Kong and a wider range of provinces and cities on the Mainland.

The Secretary for Transport and Logistics, Mr Lam Sai-hung, said, "This is the second announcement on the enhancement of the XRL Hong Kong Section services within less than a week, which is truly heartening. Last Thursday (May 30), the MTR Corporation Limited (MTRCL), after discussion with China Railway, announced the commissioning of a new long-haul route to Hunan Province with six new destinations that directly connect to popular tourist destinations including Zhangjiajie and Fenghuanggucheng, adding impetus to the economic and tourism development of Hong Kong and Hunan. The new sleeper trains will operate from Fridays to Mondays, tailored to meet the passenger needs and provide them with a more convenient, comfortable and high-quality cross-boundary rail service, enhancing the travel experience for both business and leisure passengers."

The XRL Hong Kong Section connects to the 45 000-kilometre nationwide XRL network. The number of destinations directly connected to the XRL Hong Kong Section has progressively increased from 44 since its commissioning to 78 starting from June 15, including all stations covered by the ITT. With at least 200 XRL train trips running every day, passengers of Hong Kong and the Mainland are provided with a convenient and fast cross-boundary transport service.

The MTRCL will soon announce the details and ticketing arrangements of the XRL sleeper train service. The HKSAR Government will continue to work with the MTRCL to maintain close communication and co-ordination with the relevant Mainland authorities and railway operators to enhance the services of the XRL Hong Kong Section, so as to provide a more efficient, convenient and safe cross-boundary railway service for passengers and travellers of the two places. Committed to living up to the trust placed by the Central Government, the HKSAR Government will make comprehensive preparations and co-ordination on all fronts to ensure that through this new service, Hong Kong residents and visitors can fully experience the vast and superior XRL network of the Mainland through the connection of the XRL Hong Kong Section, and feel the importance and care that the Central Government attaches to Hong Kong.

Since the commissioning of the XRL Hong Kong Section in 2018, the cross-

boundary rail service between the Mainland and Hong Kong has entered a new era. The XRL Hong Kong Section, which connects to the nationwide high-speed rail network with convenient, efficient and comfortable services and the advantage of great efficiency of the "co-location arrangement" at the Hong Kong West Kowloon Station, has attracted a large number of passengers. It also plays an important role in the highly accessible transport network and economic circle in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area and strengthens Hong Kong's position as a regional transport hub.