

LCQ1: Mass transit systems in East Kowloon and Kai Tak

Following is a question by the Hon Yang Wing-kit and a reply by the Secretary for Transport and Logistics, Mr Lam Sai-hung, in the Legislative Council today (January 17):

Question:

In the Hong Kong Major Transport Infrastructure Development Blueprint (the Blueprint) promulgated last month, the Government recommends the construction of smart and green mass transit systems in East Kowloon and Kai Tak respectively, and they are expected to be commissioned between 2034 and 2038. However, it has been reported that the East Kowloon Line and the Kai Tak rapid transit, which the Government initially proposed to construct, were originally expected to be commissioned in 2025 and 2023 respectively. Some members of the public are disappointed that having waited for 10 years for the commissioning of the relevant projects, they have to wait for another 10 years. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) given that the aforesaid East Kowloon and Kai Tak projects are smart and green mass transit systems and proposed alignments are in place, of the reasons why they still need at least 10 years to be commissioned;

(2) whether it will accord priority to kick-starting the Kai Tak project, and expeditiously study the connection of its alignment to the MTR Yau Tong Station, so as to meet the transport demand of the Kai Tak Sports Park as early as possible; if so, of the details; if not, the ancillary transport facilities to be put in place to meet the relevant demand; and

(3) whether it will study a separate alignment covering Tsz Wan Shan and Chuk Yuen in the East Kowloon project, so as to respond to the transport aspirations of residents in the mid-levels of Wong Tai Sin; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

Having consulted the Highways Department, the Civil Engineering and Development Department and the Transport Department (TD), the reply to the question raised by the Hon Yang is as follows.

(1) In response to the public aspiration for an early commissioning of the smart and green mass transit systems in Kai Tak and East Kowloon, we have reviewed the required procedures and commenced the preparatory works on planning, investigation and design of the two projects proactively since the Chief Executive announced the proposed initiatives in 2023 Policy Address. Specific tasks comprise the consultation of relevant District Councils and tender invitation for engagement of the consultants for carrying out the

investigation and preliminary design in the first quarter of this year. We also plan to invite concerned suppliers and operators around the world to submit expressions of interest in the fourth quarter of this year in order to finalise the specific requirements and design of the systems and their associated infrastructure. Meanwhile, we will carry out the relevant statutory procedures, such as Environmental Impact Assessment, gazettal and authorisation of scheme, planning application for the proposed sites for the depots, etc concurrently. Moreover, since the systems will be commissioned in Hong Kong for the first time, we will also need to work out the related financial arrangement, operating requirements and regulatory framework. We will expedite the original work programme and strive to invite tenders for construction of the two projects in 2026 with an aim to award the contracts in 2027 respectively.

As mentioned above, it will be the first time for the proposed smart and green mass transit systems to be commissioned in Hong Kong. Apart from the procedures mentioned above, the project will also involve a number of technical challenges. The alignments of both systems will be subject to the existing or planned development along the corridors as well as the existing roads and underground utilities. Therefore, we need to sort out the spatial constraints of the proposed alignments, technical requirements and interfaces with the existing development. In particular, the East Kowloon project which is about 7 kilometres long will have a very extensive scope of works and will run along hilly terrains, leading to higher engineering complexities and more design uncertainties. Part of the alignment and stations will have to be constructed on carriageways with congested underground utilities. We also need to avoid affecting the existing heavily trafficked New Clear Water Bay Road and Clear Water Bay Road during construction. In addition, part of the corridor and depot will be constructed on steep slopes with more extensive site formation works required.

Notwithstanding the above, we will strive to carry out more advance studies and design works in parallel and continue to actively explore technical proposals to shorten the construction period. For example, we may explore starting the advance works as early as possible, bringing forward the commencement of part of the system testing as well as adoption of Design for Manufacturing and Assembly, Multi-trade Integrated Mechanical, Electrical and Plumbing, etc, to strive for earlier completion of the works.

(2) As mentioned in Part 1 of the reply, we endeavor to implement the smart and green mass transit system in Kai Tak as soon as possible. We have listened to opinions of local community for a wider coverage of the systems in Kai Tak and East Kowloon, including the one suggested by the Hon Yang to extend the project in Kai Tak to MTR Yau Tong Station as well as extending the East Kowloon system to cover areas around Tsz Wan Shan and Chuk Yuen. The Government has to further study the technical feasibility of the suggestions and the implications on the implementation programme and overall cost effectiveness of the projects. We will exchange views with the suppliers and operators on the feasibility to expand or adjust the alignments. We anticipate that upon completion of refining the studies of the projects, we will explore the feasibility of further expanding the projects in Kai Tak and

East Kowloon more extensively.

As regards the transport arrangement of Kai Tak Sports Park (KTSP), KTSP is in proximity to nearby MTR Kai Tak Station and Sung Wong Toi Station with about 10 minutes' walking distance from both stations. Apart from using the convenient railway network to and from KTSP, the public can take a number of bus routes at nearby bus stops, such as Shing Kai Road, to and from KTSP and different districts of Hong Kong Island, Kowloon and the New Territories. KTSP will also have facilities like taxi stands and public car parks, etc, to meet the travelling need of the public in different modes. When there are major events to be held at KTSP, depending on the scale of the events and the need of the participants, the TD will arrange special bus services to meet the additional transport need arising from the events.

(3) According to the preliminary technical feasibility study, no matter whether extending the East Kowloon system to Tsz Wan Shan or constructing an independent transit system to connect it to nearby railway stations, the space for constructing the elevated structures on narrow roads in Tsz Wan Shan area is very limited. Nevertheless, after we have received the expressions of interest from the concerned suppliers and operators, we will exchange views on the feasibility of expanding the system and again review the feasibility and the overall cost effectiveness of expanding the system to Tsz Wan Shan and Chuk Yuen areas.

At present, the major roads in Tsz Wan Shan and Chuk Yuen areas, such as Po Kong Village Road, Hammer Hill Road, Tsz Wan Shan Road and Chuk Yuen Road, etc have sufficient capacity to meet the road traffic demand in the areas. A number of franchised bus and green minibus services are available in Tsz Wan Shan and Chuk Yuen for bringing the public to and from nearby railway stations (including Wong Tai Sin Station, Diamond Hill Station and Lok Fu Station) and other areas. The current public transport services can generally meet the demand. The TD will continue to closely monitor the traffic situation and demand for public transport services in the areas. As mentioned above, we will further review if there is room for constructing a cost-effective smart and green mass transit system on top of the existing road infrastructure and public transportation services.

â€‹Thank you, President.