

## LCQ11: New railway projects

Following is a question by Dr Hon Lo Wai-kwok and a written reply by the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Mr Frank Chan Fan, in the Legislative Council today (March 24):

Question:

â€‹The Railway Development Strategy 2014, which was released in September 2014, recommends that the Government implement the projects of (i) the Tuen Mun South Extension of the West Rail and (ii) the Northern Link and Kwu Tung Station from 2019 to 2022 and from 2018 to 2023 respectively. Nevertheless, according to a paper recently submitted to this Council by the Government, the works of the two railway projects are not expected to commence until 2023. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the reasons for the delay in the implementation dates of the aforesaid two railway projects, and the measures to be put in place to prevent the occurrence of similar situations in other railway projects;

(2) of the latest details of the two railway projects, including the estimated costs and the completion dates of the works;

(3) given that the intake of residents of the housing development projects in the Kwu Tung North New Development Area is expected to commence in 2026, but the works of the Kwu Tung Station are expected to be completed by 2027 at the earliest, of the Government's measures to ensure that adequate public transport services are available to meet the demand of those residents who have moved into units of the development projects concerned before the commissioning of the Kwu Tung Station; and

(4) of the latest progress of the implementation of the proposal for establishing the Railways Department under the Transport and Housing Bureau?

Reply:

President,

Our reply to various parts of Dr Hon Lo Wai-kwok's question is as follows:

(1) Railway projects involve huge capital investment, and the Government has to plan in a prudent manner. The new railway projects proposed in the Railway Development Strategy 2014 (RDS-2014) have different degrees of complexities. As clearly stated in the RDS-2014, the taking forward of individual proposed railway projects set out in the Strategy will be subject to the outcome of detailed engineering, environmental and financial studies relating to each project, as well as updated demand assessment and other factors. Moreover, for railway projects which are mainly intended to complement new development areas and new housing developments, the implementation timetable for the

development areas and new housing developments in question will be an important planning parameter for the railway projects. Therefore, the indicative implementation windows recommended in the RDS-2014 may be adjusted having regard to any change in circumstances.

(2) According to the Project Proposals submitted by the MTR Corporation Limited (MTRCL), the estimated capital cost of the Tuen Mun South (TMS) Extension is about \$11.4 billion (in December 2015 prices), while the estimated capital costs of the Northern Link (NOL) Phase 1 and Phase 2 are about \$3.5 billion and \$58.5 billion (in December 2015 prices) respectively. The Transport and Housing Bureau invited MTRCL to commence the detailed planning and design for TMS Extension and NOL respectively last year. The Government will further ascertain the cost estimates having regard to MTRCL's detailed planning and design. Having considered the time required for the detailed planning and design of the projects, the construction of TMS Extension may commence in 2023 for completion in 2030; the construction of NOL Phase 1 (i.e. Kwu Tung (KTU) Station on the Lok Ma Chau Spur Line) may commence in 2023 for completion in 2027 to support the first substantial population intake of the public housing in Kwu Tung North (KTN) New Development Area (NDA), while the construction of NOL Phase 2 (i.e. the Main Line connecting Kam Sheung Road Station with KTU Station) may commence in 2025 for completion in 2034 to provide impetus for growth in the area, covering San Tin, Ngau Tam Mei and Au Tau.

(3) The sites along the NOL are in different stages of development. NOL Phase 1 (i.e. KTU Station) mainly serves the residents of about 43 600 housing units (including about 28 000 public housing units) in the KTN NDA, thereby meeting their transport demands. According to the plan, the population intake of public housing units in the NDA would commence progressively from 2026 onwards. By the time when KTU Station is expected to be commissioned in 2027, about one quarter of the public housing units (i.e. about 7 400) will have been completed. The Government will continue to follow up with the MTRCL to ensure that it will closely monitor the works progress, with a view to completing the project for providing services as soon as possible. Before the commissioning of KTU Station, relevant departments will coordinate to ensure that adequate public transport services will be provided according to the transport demand of the residents who will have moved into KTN NDA.

(4) As pointed out in the paper provided by the Government to the Panel on Transport Subcommittee on Matters Relating to Railways of the Legislative Council (LegCo) in February this year, having regard to the current financial situation of the Government and the Chief Executive's general directive in her 2020 Policy Address, we propose to seek the approval of the Finance Committee of LegCo in the 2021-22 legislative session to establish the Railways Department in the 2022-23 financial year, so that the required manpower would be in place to fully implement the enhanced monitoring and control strategies before the projects under the RDS-2014 enter the construction stage progressively from 2023 onwards. In view of the complexity of the establishment of a new department, we will set up a preparation team in the Railway Development Office of the Highways Department in the second

half of 2021 to make necessary arrangements for the new department.

Thank you, President.