

LCQ14: Ancillary transport facilities in new development areas

Following is a question by the Hon Alice Mak and a written reply by the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Mr Frank Chan Fan, in the Legislative Council today (December 9):

Question:

The Government is implementing the Kwu Tung North and Fanling North New Development Areas (NDAs) project, the development items of which will, upon completion, provide more than 70 000 residential flats, accommodating a population of over 190 000. Some members of the public have criticised the poor transport planning of NDAs. For example, the Northern Link (NL) connecting a new Kwu Tung station on the Lok Ma Chau Spur Line of the East Rail Line (ERL) to the Kam Sheung Road Station on the West Rail Line (WRL) has been proposed in as early as 2000 but the construction works of which have not yet commenced. They have pointed out that as passengers travelling between ERL and WRL currently need to interchange at Hung Hom Station but they may in future take trains heading in a direction opposite to the current one and interchange via NL, NL may even out the two-way passenger patronage of ERL and WRL, thereby relieving the loading of these two rail lines during peak hours. As such, they consider that the Government should expedite the construction of NL. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) of the latest anticipated (i) commencement date of works for NL, (ii) commissioning date of NL and (iii) passenger carrying capacity of NL, as well as the anticipated respective passenger volumes of ERL and WRL to be diverted by NL;
- (2) whether NL will operate under the concession approach; if so, of the details; if not, the approach to be adopted for operating NL;
- (3) of the details of the existing mechanism for monitoring railway works; given that railway construction works in recent years have often experienced serious cost overruns and delays, how the Government will step up the monitoring of the construction works for NL to be undertaken by the MTR Corporation Limited and its contractors;
- (4) whether, according to the latest estimation, NL can be completed concurrently with NDAs in 2031; whether it has formulated any plan to use other modes of public transport, before the completion of the new railway project, to cope with the additional transport needs arising from the progressive completion of the development items in NDAs; and
- (5) whether it has assessed if, under the circumstance that the construction of NL has not been implemented for a prolonged period of time, ERL and WRL

can cope with the additional transport needs arising from the newly increased population along the rail alignment; if it has assessed, of the outcome and the authorities' remedial measures?

Reply:

President,

My reply to the various parts of the Hon Alice Mak's question is as follows:

The Northern Link (NOL) is one of the seven recommended railway schemes in the Railway Development Strategy 2014 (RDS-2014). The NOL project comprises Kwu Tung (KTU) Station on the existing Lok Ma Chau Spur Line of East Rail Line (ERL) and construction of a 10.7-kilometre-long railway link between the existing Kam Sheung Road (KSR) Station of West Rail Line and KTU Station (i.e. NOL Main Line).

The MTR Corporation Limited (MTRCL) had submitted the project proposal of NOL to the Government in end March 2017, and subsequently submitted revised project proposals and other supplementary information taking into account the comments from Government departments. The Government is in the final stage of scrutinising the project proposals and other supplementary information submitted by MTRCL. As stated in the Chief Executive's 2020 Policy Address, the Government will expedite the implementation of the NOL railway project, with a view to commencing the detailed planning and design shortly. When the details of the proposed railway scheme, such as alignment, location of station(s), implementation timetable and mode of implementation, are available, the Government will consult the public, including the Legislative Council and relevant District Council(s), in line with established procedures.

When planning the NOL, we will ensure that the implementation of NOL will match with the timetable for the development of relevant New Development Areas (NDAs) (such as Kwu Tung North (KTN) NDA), and provide impetus for growth in the area covering San Tin, Ngau Tam Mei and Au Tau. Among others, our target is to commission the KTU Station to tie in with the first population intake of the public housing development in KTN NDA. In the planning process of NOL, MTRCL will also review the impact of the project to other traffic and transport modes, including the existing railway, and propose necessary mitigation measures. However, the Fanling North NDA is not located along the alignment of the aforesaid NOL Main Line, but closer to the existing Sheung Shui Station and Fanling Station of ERL.

As regards the monitoring and control of new railway projects, the Highways Department has commissioned a consultancy to review the experience in managing past railway projects in Hong Kong, and at the same time, make reference to the monitoring and control strategies adopted in large-scale railway projects overseas and propose recommendations on the Government's monitoring and control strategies. Our plan is to implement targeted measures in relation to safety, quality, programme, cost control, etc, to fully

address the recommendations by the Commission of Inquiry into the Construction Works at and near the Hung Hom Station Extension under the Shatin to Central Link Project. Measures under consideration include expanding the scope of the Government's monitoring and checking, strengthening early warning and risk assessment mechanisms in different project stages, enhancing internal and independent audit requirements for railway projects, as well as building-up of collaborative culture, etc. With the new railway projects under the RDS-2014 entering planning and design stage progressively, we will expedite the progress of the above work to ensure that the new monitoring and control strategies would be implemented before the new railway projects enter the construction stage, so as to enhance the public's confidence in the quality of railway projects.