

LCQ17: New railway projects and Tung Chung traffic

Following is a question by the Hon Holden Chow and a written reply by the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Mr Frank Chan Fan, in the Legislative Council today (April 17):

Question:

The Government recommended in the Railway Development Strategy 2014 that seven new railway projects, namely the Northern Link and Kwu Tung Station, Tuen Mun South Extension, East Kowloon Line, Tung Chung West Extension, Hung Shui Kiu Station, South Island Line (West) and North Island Line, be implemented in or before 2026. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the following updated information on the aforesaid new railway projects: (i) alignment, (ii) station locations, (iii) public consultation progress and (iv) works schedule;

(2) of the time generally needed for the various major items of work during the period between the Government inviting the MTR Corporation Limited (MTRCL) to submit proposals for the aforesaid railway projects and the commissioning of the railways concerned;

(3) as the Government indicated in reply to my question on November 28 last year that MTRCL had submitted to the Government a proposal for the Tung Chung Line Extension (including Tung Chung West Extension and Tung Chung East Station) railway project, and that the relevant bureaux and government departments were reviewing the content of the proposal, of the progress of the review; and

(4) of the new measures that the Government will implement, prior to the commissioning of the Tung Chung West Extension, to alleviate the increasingly serious traffic congestion problem in Tung Chung?

Reply:

President,

My reply to Hon Holden Chow's question is as follows:

(1) to (3) Having regard to the indicative implementation window recommended in the Railway Development Strategy 2014 (RDS-2014), the Transport and Housing Bureau (THB) had invited the MTR Corporation Limited (MTRCL) to submit proposals for the implementation of the Tuen Mun South Extension, Northern Link (and Kwu Tung Station), East Kowloon Line, Tung Chung West Extension (and Tung Chung East Station) and North Island Line. The MTRCL submitted proposals for these five railway projects to the Government in the end of December 2016, the end of March 2017, the end of July 2017, the end of

January 2018 and the end of July 2018 respectively. The THB, the Highways Department and relevant bureaux/departments have evaluated the proposals and requested the MTRCL to provide additional information and supplement details. In carrying out the evaluation, the Government's main focus is to ensure that the proposals are practically feasible and can bring maximum benefits to the community. Due to the tight housing supply and the potential housing supply that may be brought about by railway development, the Government is also reviewing the proposals submitted by the MTRCL in this light.

Railway projects involve huge capital investment, and the Government has to plan in a prudent manner. The new railway projects proposed in the RDS-2014 have different degrees of complexities, for example, the Tung Chung West Extension (and Tung Chung East Station) project requires coordination with the reclamation works under the Tung Chung New Town Extension project, and potentially requires modification to the track and signaling system of the existing Tung Chung Line and Airport Express. The Government also advocates to minimise the impacts of the project on the neighbouring domestic premises, environment and land, etc. As clearly stated in the RDS-2014, the taking forward of individual proposed railway projects set out in the strategy (including the Tung Chung West Extension (and Tung Chung East Station)) will be subject to the outcome of detailed engineering, environmental and financial studies relating to each project, as well as updated demand assessment and availability of resources. 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.

The implementation of individual railway projects encompasses a chain of activities before construction starts. These include preparation of a project proposal covering the detailed technical and financial estimates, scrutiny of the project proposal within the Government, consultation with the public and stakeholders and resolution of the comments received, pre-feasibility study, site investigation, project design and further public consultation, gazettal of railway scheme and handling of objections, Environmental Impact Assessment, seeking authorisation of railway schemes, as well as preparation and signing of related agreements with the company responsible for the construction. When the project proceeds to the construction stage, there may be a need for land resumption and liaison with local stakeholders to settle claims. In view of the uniqueness of each railway project, we cannot generalize the time required for the completion of advance works.

In line with established procedures, prior to the finalisation of any new railway scheme, the Government will consult the public, including the Legislative Council and the relevant District Councils, on the details of the scheme.

(4) The Transport Department (TD) has been closely monitoring the operation and quality of public transport services across the territory. It will also conduct timely review with public transport service operators on the relevant

service adjustment measures in response to passenger demand with a view to meeting districts' demand on public transport services. Moreover, the TD regularly reviews the utilisation of franchised bus service in different districts and works with the franchised bus companies to examine proposals for improving franchised bus service in districts under the annual Route Planning Programme (RPP) submitted by the companies. These include proposals on introduction of new routes, as well as proposals on adjustment of service frequency, hours and routeing. The Traffic and Transport Committees (TTCs) of the respective District Councils (DCs) will also be consulted on the proposals.

The TD is consulting the TTCs of the 18 DCs on the 2019-20 RPP, including the consultation with Islands DC TTC on March 18 this year. There were seven proposals on enhancing the franchised bus service in Tung Chung, including the proposed increase of service frequency of Citybus Route No. E11S (Tung Chung (Chung Mun Road) to Tin Hau), Route No. E21A (Ho Man Tin (Oi Man Estate) – Tung Chung (Yat Tung Estate Public Transport Terminus)) and Route No. E22S (Tung Chung (Chung Mun Road) – Tseung Kwan O (Po Lam)) in response to the population growth in Tung Chung Area 27.

As regards railway services, according to information provided by the MTRCL, at present, the Tung Chung Line train services are operating at a headway of about four minutes (Hong Kong to Tsing Yi) and six to eight minutes (Hong Kong to Tung Chung) on average during the morning peak hours. As advised by the MTRCL, the train services are operating smoothly and can meet passenger needs. At Tung Chung Station, the terminus of Tung Chung Line, passengers are usually able to board the first arriving train. As there is usually a large number of passengers at both Tsing Yi Station and Nam Cheong Station heading to Hong Kong Station, the MTRCL has deployed two additional special departures from Tsing Yi Station directly to Hong Kong Station during the morning peak hours since early 2018 to alleviate the crowdedness of Tung Chung Line trains. The MTRCL will continue to pay close attention to the services and passenger demand of Tung Chung Line, and will make appropriate adjustments where necessary.

Thank you, President.