

LCQ17: Public transport services in Kowloon City District

Following is a question by the Hon Starry Lee and a written reply by the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Mr Frank Chan Fan, in the Legislative Council today (September 15):

Question:

The MTR Tuen Ma Line (TML) was fully commissioned on June 27 this year. The Democratic Alliance for the Betterment and Progress of Hong Kong conducted from late July to late August a survey targeted mainly at people travelling to and from Kowloon City District for work and attending schools. The results showed that 63.6 per cent of the respondents had used To Kwa Wan Station and Sung Wong Toi Station, whereas 36.4 per cent of the respondents had never used the two railway stations, reflecting that almost 40 per cent of the respondents still relied on other means of public transport for travelling since the commissioning of TML. The reasons cited by respondents for not taking TML included that: the stations are too far away from their homes, interchanging for trains of different lines is time-consuming, and MTR fares are relatively high. In addition, 31.6 per cent of the respondents opined that traffic congestion in Kowloon City District had not been ameliorated since the commissioning of TML. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) as the aforesaid survey has reflected that quite a number of members of the public still rely on buses and green minibuses (GMBs) for travelling, whether the Government will (i) undertake not to reduce at this stage the bus routes with catchment areas overlapping those of the railway stations concerned, and regularly monitor the patronage of such bus routes to assess the service demand, and (ii) introduce new GMB routes and enhance the existing GMB services in areas with service demand before deciding to reduce the GMB routes concerned in the future, so as to help the affected GMB operators to sustain their living; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(2) whether it will study the construction of additional pedestrian links connecting the entrances/exits of the aforesaid two railway stations; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(3) whether it will request the MTR Corporation Limited to expedite the resolution of the problem of "higher fares for shorter journeys" of TML, and formulate a relevant implementation timetable; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(4) whether it will consider installing "MTR Fare Savers" at easily accessible locations in Kowloon City District (such as Kowloon City Plaza, Kowloon City Market, To Kwa Wan Sports Centre and Jubilant Plaza); if so, of

the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(5) whether it will consider taking measures to facilitate the early commissioning of the Hung Hom to Admiralty Section of the Shatin to Central Link, with a view to easing the situation of congested traffic in Kowloon City District as soon as possible; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

The Tuen Ma Line (TML) was fully commissioned on June 27 this year, connecting the original Ma On Shan Line and West Rail Line. There are six interchange stations along TML connecting with other railway lines, providing passengers with more comprehensive and better connected transport services.

Having consulted the MTR Corporation Limited (MTRCL), the reply to various parts of the Hon Starry Lee's question is as follows:

(1) The Government has been coordinating various public transport service arrangements so as to enhance the efficiency of the overall transport network, avoid duplication of transport resources, relieve traffic congestion, and improve roadside air quality. With the full commissioning of TML, there may be changes in passengers' travel patterns and demand. For example, passengers who used to take franchised buses may switch to railway services. Hence, the Transport Department (TD) anticipated that there would be need and room for adjusting the bus services in relevant districts, so as to better utilise bus resources and improve quality of service. The TD will assess the operation efficiency and actual passenger demand of affected bus routes based on data collected, and suitably consider adjusting the service arrangement for relevant routes.

As for green minibus (GMB) services around the service area of TML, the TD has already formulated and implemented service enhancement measures together with relevant operators, including adjusting the service timetables and routings, so as to expand the customer base for these GMB routes and complement with the new railway services. The TD will continue to maintain communication with respective public transport operators to co-ordinate different public transport services.

(2) When designing the station entrances of To Kwa Wan Station and Sung Wong Toi Station, the MTRCL has considered a number of factors, including traffic conditions, existing pedestrian networks and facilities, pedestrian flow, geographical conditions, technical feasibility, impact of the works on surrounding area, and the overall benefits, etc. Except for the originally proposed pedestrian tunnel connecting Pak Tai Street and Sung Wong Toi Station which could not be constructed as planned due to the conservation plan of the archaeological remnants, all other station entrances were opened for public use upon the full commissioning of TML.

To reduce the walking distance between the vicinity of Pak Tai Street and Sung Wong Toi Station, the new pedestrian crossing at Tam Kung Road has been opened for public use. The MTRCL is also following up with the detailed design of the proposed footbridge connecting Pak Tai Street and Sung Wong Toi Station. The Government and the MTRCL will continue to monitor passengers' commuting pattern and passenger flow inside the station, and further facilitate passengers' access to the stations based on their needs and actual conditions.

(3) As in the case of other railway lines, fares of the TML are basically determined by distance, while taking into account other factors including market competitiveness, existing overall fare structure, etc.

The MTRCL has been carefully handling the fare anomalies. With the improved connectivity and increasing complexity of the railway network, adjustment of specific route fares of the TML must be handled carefully as it may impact on other railway lines and cause other anomalies, which in turn affect other passengers. Therefore, the MTRCL will resolve the fare anomalies in phases through the annual Fare Adjustment Mechanism. The Government will continue to urge the MTRCL to deal with the issue expediently, while providing various fare concessions so as to alleviate passengers' burden of travelling expenses.

(4) The MTRCL has been offering concessions to different groups of passengers through various fare concession and promotion schemes. Amongst others, the MTR Fare Savers promotion scheme encourages people to walk to the nearest MTR station to commute by rail. The MTRCL is actively following up on the suggestions of installing MTR Fare Savers in suitable locations in the Kowloon City District. Details will be announced in due course and implemented as soon as possible to benefit more passengers.

In addition to MTR Fare Savers, the MTRCL also offers other fare concessions. For example, the MTRCL is now offering a \$0.5 or \$1 fare discount for passengers travelling between TML Hin Keng Station, Kai Tak Station, Sung Wong Toi Station or To Kwa Wan Station and other MTR stations. The MTRCL will continue to offer various fare concessions to passengers where appropriate.

(5) The MTRCL is studying and implementing feasible progress recovery measures for the "Hung Hom to Admiralty section" of the Shatin to Central Link project. There has been six Sunday closures between Hung Hom and Mong Kok East stations from January to July this year, for critical track bifurcation works at the north of Hung Hom Station. The new 9-car trains are also being delivered to Hong Kong in batches and put into services progressively. The Government is closely monitoring the progress of works and the effectiveness of progress recovery measures carried out by the MTRCL, with a view to commissioning the service as soon as possible to benefit the passengers.