

# LCQ18: Measures to facilitate travel on Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link

Following is a question by Dr the Hon Dennis Lam and a written reply by the Acting Secretary for Transport and Logistics, Mr Liu Chun-san, in the Legislative Council today (April 10):

Question:

It has been reported that the utilization of train service of the Hong Kong Section of the Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link (XRL) has risen sharply as compared with the situation before the epidemic, and its trains are often full on major festivals. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it knows (i) the annual carrying capacity and (ii) the carrying capacities on major festivals of the XRL Hong Kong Section in the past year;

(2) given the special boundary-crossing arrangements made by the Government at two boundary control points during the Lunar New Year just passed, whether the authorities will consider extending the opening hours of the XRL West Kowloon Immigration Control Point to 3am as well as increasing the train service frequency of the XRL Hong Kong Section on major festivals, so as to facilitate Hong Kong people and Mainland visitors in entering and leaving Hong Kong; and

(3) whether it will consider implementing the clearance mode of "collaborative inspection and joint clearance" at the XRL West Kowloon Immigration Control Point?

Reply:

President,

The Hong Kong Section of the Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link (XRL) connects with the over 40 000 kilometres long national high speed rail (HSR) network. It is a key component of the highly accessible transport network and economic circle of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, and consolidates Hong Kong's position as a regional transport hub. In 2023, service of the XRL Hong Kong Section was extended with the addition of four new short-haul destinations (Dongguannan, Dongguan, Guangzhoudong and Changping) and 12 new long-haul destinations (including Chengdudong and Zhanjiangxi lines), making it a more comprehensive network. The daily train service frequency has also increased from 166 train trips before the epidemic, to the current level of 188 train trips, providing passengers with more frequent service.

In consultation with the Security Bureau and the MTR Corporation Limited (MTRCL), my reply to the question raised by Dr the Hon Dennis Lam is as follows:

(1) Train service of the XRL Hong Kong Section has resumed progressively since January 2023, starting with short haul destinations and destinations within the Guangdong Province. Long-haul train service has also resumed in full since April 2023, and patronage has been on a steady increase.

During the Labour Day holidays in 2023, the West Kowloon Control Point recorded a daily average passenger traffic of nearly 90 000 passenger trips; while over 70 000 passenger trips were recorded during the following summer holiday (i.e. July to August); as for the National Day and Christmas holidays in 2023, as well as the New Year and Lunar New Year holidays in 2024, a daily average of over 100 000 passenger trips were recorded.

In 2023, the yearly total of passenger traffic at the West Kowloon Control Point reached about 19.65 million passenger trips, a record high since the commissioning of the XRL Hong Kong Section. The daily patronage also set a new record on 23 December 2023 (the first day of the Christmas long weekend) with over 120 000 passenger trips. In the first two months of 2024, a total passenger traffic of about 4.42 million passenger trips were recorded at the West Kowloon Control Point.

(2) The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government, the MTRCL and the relevant Mainland authorities have been in close communication, and closely monitor the patronage of the XRL Hong Kong section, as well as the travel patterns and needs of passengers, with a view to offering passengers a more convenient and comfortable travelling experience.

To meet the travel needs of passengers during festive season, the MTRCL will discuss with the relevant Mainland railway authorities the train service arrangement in advance before the festivals, with a view to enhancing the service of the XRL Hong Kong Section based on demand. For example, during the Easter and Ching Ming festival holidays, railway operators of both places enhanced the train service between West Kowloon Station (WEK) and Futian Station in response to passenger demand. Over 120 train trips were running between WEK and Futian, and a total of over 200 train trips were running between WEK and various Mainland destinations per day during the holidays.

Regarding the suggestion of extending the operating hours of various control points during festive season, the arrangement involves various considerations, such as passenger demand, the operating arrangements and manpower deployment of the control points of both sides, public transport service arrangements, etc. Arrangements for the XRL service will also require particular consideration on the national HSR train scheduling and the repair and maintenance of the railway during non-traffic hours. The HKSAR Government will maintain close communication with the relevant Mainland authorities and railway authorities, and consider different measures to further enhance the service of the XRL Hong Kong Section in light of the actual circumstances.

(3) In planning for the redevelopment of existing boundary control points (BCPs) and the development of new BCPs in the future, the HKSAR Government will actively explore the adoption of new clearance mode to enhance passenger clearance efficiency, including implementing the "collaborative inspection and joint clearance" mode in new land BCPs projects. Issues involved in changing the clearance mode of existing BCPs (including the one at HSR WEK commissioned in 2018) are much more complicated than implementing new clearance mode at new BCPs, and the related works must be carried out on the premise that the BCPs' existing operations will not be affected. It is therefore necessary for the HKSAR Government and relevant Mainland authorities to make careful planning to ensure that the port design, boundary arrangements, facilities layout, passenger flow, and other ancillary facilities can accommodate the operation of the new clearance mode before its implementation could be considered.