LCQ3: Environmentally Friendly Linkage System for Kowloon East

Following is a question by the Hon Wilson Or and a reply by the Secretary for Development, Mr Michael Wong, in the Legislative Council today (March 20):

Question:

The Environmentally Friendly Linkage System for Kowloon East (EFLS) proposed by the Government is an elevated monorail which will start and end respectively at the Kowloon Bay Station and the Kwun Tong Station of the MTR Kwun Tong Line, run through the Kai Tak Development Area and connect the Kai Tak Station of the Shatin to Central Link. The Government is currently conducting the second-stage detailed feasibility study for EFLS. As the passenger throughput of the Kwun Tong Line during peak hours has reached the maximum capacity at present, some members of the public are worried that the Kwun Tong Line can hardly cope with the additional patronage to be brought about by EFLS upon its commissioning. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it knows the estimated passenger throughput and passenger loading of the Kwun Tong Line during the peak hours between 2019 and 2021; whether it has requested the MTR Corporation Limited to conduct a study on increasing the carrying capacity of the Kwun Tong Line; if so, of the details of the study;

(2) whether the study for the next stage to be conducted for EFLS will comprise simulation tests for estimating the capabilities of Kowloon Bay Station, Kai Tak Station and Kwun Tong Station in coping with additional passenger flows; and

(3) of the respective expected dates for the completion of the study for the next stage, confirmation of the final proposal, works commencement and commissioning for EFLS; when it will submit the relevant funding applications to the Finance Committee of this Council?

Reply:

President,

The Kai Tak Development (KTD) is a mega-scale project in the urban area. The Government has been taking forward the implementation of various infrastructure projects in phases to cope with the new population intake and various development needs in the district. We have also incorporated an indicative alignment of the Environmentally Friendly Linkage System (EFLS) within the KTD in the approved Kai Tak Outline Zoning Plan.

In 2009, the Civil Engineering and Development Department conducted a preliminary feasibility study on the EFLS. Public consultation on the

proposed initial scheme of elevated monorail system was conducted between 2012 and 2014. While general support to implementation of the EFLS was received, there were concerns about its impacts on the existing facilities and environment during the construction and operation periods, as well as the relevant financial burden.

To address public concerns, we commenced in 2015 a two-staged Detailed Feasibility Study (DFS) for the proposed EFLS with a view to formulating a scheme that could meet the relevant statutory and technical requirements, as well as coming up with a cost-effective scheme generally acceptable to the stakeholders.

In mid-2017, we conducted the interim public consultation on the findings of the first stage of the DFS to solicit public views on the proposal of adopting elevated modes for developing the EFLS. We had also consulted the relevant District Councils and obtained their general support. Some members expressed concern over the development and operation costs involved in the said system. Some members also suggested the Government to evaluate whether other modes of environmentally friendly transport, such as electric buses, travellators, etc., could be adopted.

In the course of conducting the DFS, we encountered more-than-expected complicated challenges, thus requiring more time to review and explore feasible solutions. For example, how the proposed system could be efficiently constructed and operated under the constraints of limited road space and urban environment overcrowded with people and vehicles in the areas; and how the tracks and associated structures of the EFLS could be planned and constructed. Besides, we also need to consider how a balance could be struck, within the limits of practicality, on the multi-faceted opinions and aspirations of the public and stakeholders over the recommended alignment and site selection for various stations of the proposed EFLS. Currently, we are conducting the second stage of the DFS for the proposed system, including its coverage, alignment and station locations, etc. We will also make reference to the latest development and experiences in the environmentally friendly transportation technology at home and abroad, with the associated technical and financial assessments being carried out concurrently, so as to ascertain the feasibility of the proposed EFLS. Upon completion of the Study, the Government will formulate the way forward for the proposed EFLS project.

Regarding the passenger carrying capacity and passenger carrying rate of the MTR Kwun Tong Line (KTL), the Government and the MTR Corporation Limited (MTRCL) have been monitoring closely the situation. In this regard, the MTRCL is carrying out signal upgrading works of the MTR KTL, and will carry out improvement works to specific stations, in order to allow smooth passenger flow within stations. On the question of the possible implication of the proposed EFLS in the Kowloon East (KE) on the concerned MTR stations, we will conduct assessment as situation demands in the next phase of the study.

Our response to the questions raised by the Hon Wilson Or, having taken into account the inputs of relevant policy bureau and departments, are as follows:

(1) According to the MTRCL, the average loading during morning peak hours for critical link (Shek Kip Mei to Prince Edward) of the KTL in 2018 was 51 200 people. Making reference to the design carrying capacity of train compartment, i.e. an average accommodation of up to six persons (standing) per square metre (ppsm), the loading of the KTL was 72 per cent. If the actual loading of each train is calculated on the basis of four ppsm, the KTL was considered fully loaded during morning peak hours.

The MTRCL is currently upgrading the signalling system of the KTL with a view to enhancing the overall passenger capacity. The upgrading works for the KTL is expected to be completed by 2020. Furthermore, to smoothen passenger flow at stations of the KTL which are particularly busy, the MTRCL will improve station facilities, enhance management on platforms, and improve train door devices.

The patronage and loading of the KTL during 2019-2021, as asked, would be affected by various factors, including increased frequency of trains after signalling system upgrade, and change in patronage by community developments along the KTL, which would affect its passenger loading. The Government and the MTRCL will continue to closely monitor the situation.

(2) As mentioned above, we are conducting the second stage of the DFS for the proposed EFLS in KE, including its network coverage, alignment and station locations, etc. We will also make reference to the latest development and experiences in the field of environmentally friendly transportation technology at home and abroad, with the associated technical and financial assessments being carried out concurrently, so as to ascertain the feasibility of the EFLS.

On the question of the possible implication of the proposed EFLS on the concerned MTR stations, we will conduct assessment as situation demands in the next phase of the Study.

(3) The DFS of the proposed EFLS is under way. Upon completion of the Study, we will formulate the way forward for the proposed EFLS project. The precise implementation programme is not available at this stage.