

LCQ6: Enhancing transport services to and from boundary control points

Following is a question by Dr the Hon Tan Yueheng and a reply by the Secretary for Transport and Logistics, Mr Lam Sai-hung, in the Legislative Council today (March 20):

Question:

There are views that at present, the numbers of inbound and outbound passenger trips at Lok Ma Chau Spurline Control Point have increased as compared with those before the epidemic, but for the MTR East Rail Line (ERL), the frequency of trains plying to and from Lok Ma Chau Station is half of that plying to and from Lo Wu Station, which cannot effectively divert cross-boundary residents and tourists. On enhancing transport services to and from boundary control points, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it knows if the MTR Corporation Limited (MTRCL) will make appropriate arrangements according to actual patronages during public holidays or peak periods of cross-boundary travel, and flexibly adjust the frequency of trains plying to and from Lok Ma Chau Station on ERL, so as to meet the needs of passengers; if MTRCL will not, whether the Government knows the difficulties MTRCL faces;

(2) whether it will enhance public transport services such as bus and minibus services at Lok Ma Chau Spurline Control Point during public holidays or peak periods of cross-boundary travel, so as to effectively divert residents and tourists heading for the North District; and

(3) as there are views that with the westward shift of Shenzhen's development and the commissioning of the Shenzhen Metro line connecting Shenzhen Bay Port within this year, it is expected that the numbers of inbound and outbound passengers going through Lok Ma Chau Spurline Control Point, Lok Ma Chau Control Point and Shenzhen Bay Port will continue to increase in the future, how the Government will make proper complementary transport arrangements and what deployments are in place on the Hong Kong side?

Reply:

President,

There are currently a total of seven land boundary control points (BCPs) between Hong Kong and Shenzhen, including two rail-based BCPs (i.e. Lo Wu and Lok Ma Chau Spur Line) and five road-based BCPs (i.e. Shenzhen Bay, Lok Ma Chau, Man Kam To, Heung Yuen Wai and Sha Tau Kok). The Government will take into account the respective nature and positioning of the BCPs in planning the appropriate public transport connections. The Government and public transport operators will also closely monitor the changes in travel patterns and number of travellers, with a view to making timely adjustments to the

services as and when necessary, so as to facilitate the flow of people between the two places.

A case in point is the past Lunar New Year (LNY) holidays. To tie in with the operating hours of the Shenzhen Bay Port and Lo Wu Control Point under special boundary-crossing arrangements, the Government coordinated with the public transport operators to make corresponding service arrangements in order to meet the transport needs of cross-boundary travellers. Amongst others, the MTR Corporation Limited (MTRCL) enhanced the service of the East Rail Line (EAL) to/from Lo Wu Station and to/from Lok Ma Chau Station during the holidays. Service hours of trains to/from Lo Wu Station were also extended on LNY's eve and the evening of the second day of LNY. The Transport Department (TD) also coordinated with the public transport operators to introduce two additional special overnight bus routes and additional overnight cross-boundary coach service terminating at Shenzhen Bay Port to match the 24-hour passenger clearance arrangement during the holidays. Service of the "Yellow Bus" plying between Lok Ma Chau Control Point / Huanggang Port was also enhanced.

In consultation with the Security Bureau, the TD and the MTRCL, my reply to the question raised by Dr the Hon Tan Yueheng is as follows:

(1) Unlike Lo Wu Control Point, which is only connected by railway service, cross-boundary travellers can also travel to/from Lok Ma Chau Spur Line Control Point by franchised bus, green minibus and taxi. Therefore, in addition to considering the overall arrival and departure passenger traffic at Lok Ma Chau Spur Line Control Point, the Government and the MTRCL have been closely monitoring the patronage of railway service to/from the BCP with a view to making timely adjustments to the EAL service as and when necessary.

We noted a growing passenger demand for railway service to/from Lok Ma Chau Spur Line Control Point during the morning and evening hours on weekends and public holidays. The MTRCL has thus enhanced the train service to/from Lok Ma Chau Station during the morning and evening hours of weekends and public holidays since last Saturday (i.e. March 16), by enhancing the train service frequency from five trains per hour (i.e. at 12-minute intervals) to six trains per hour (i.e. at 10-minute intervals). Meanwhile, in view of the overall increase in the patronage of railway service to/from Lo Wu Control Point and to/from Lok Ma Chau Spur Line Control Point during the evening hours of weekends and public holidays, the MTRCL has also enhanced the train frequencies to/from Lo Wu Station, and to/from Lok Ma Chau Station on the same day to meet passenger demand.

The Government and the MTRCL will continue to closely monitor the passenger flow at Lo Wu Station and Lok Ma Chau Station, and review the service arrangements of the EAL in a timely manner with adjustments to be made as and when necessary.

(2) The MTR EAL has been providing convenient, fast and efficient public transport service to travellers between Northeast New Territories and Lo Wu Control Point and Lok Ma Chau Spur Line Control Point. Travellers going through Lok Ma Chau Spur Line Control Point can also take KMB Route No. B1

for travelling to/from Yuen Long and Tin Shui Wai. Currently, KMB Route No. B1 operates with a minimum frequency of eight-minute intervals during hours with high demand. In practice, during periods of particularly strong passenger demand such as weekends and public holidays, the KMB will flexibly enhance the service to operate more departures than scheduled. Apart from KMB Route No. B1, Green Minibus Route No. 75 also provides supplementary transport service between the Lok Ma Chau Spur Line Control Point and Yuen Long.

The Government has been working with public transport operators to draw up plans ahead of the peak periods of cross-boundary travel. For example, during the LNY holidays, the TD made advance preparations with the KMB for additional manpower and buses to enable arrangement of additional departures of Route No. B1 in a timely manner having regard to passenger needs. Simultaneous boarding of multiple buses were also arranged at Lok Ma Chau Spur Line Public Transport Interchange to facilitate quick dispersal of travellers.

(3) The Government has been closely monitoring the demand for clearance services at various land BCPs. On the basis of the 24-hour passenger clearance services currently provided at Lok Ma Chau Control Point and Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge Hong Kong Port, the Government will liaise with the Mainland authorities on extending the operating hours of the passenger clearance service at respective land BCPs as and when necessary to further facilitate the flow of people between the two places. The Government will closely monitor the clearance arrangements and flow of travellers at the BCPs, and maintain a close liaison with public transport operators with a view to increasing their service frequencies to meet passenger needs in a timely manner.

In order to further promote connectivity in the Greater Bay Area, the governments of Hong Kong and Shenzhen established in 2021 the Task Force for Hong Kong-Shenzhen Co-operation on Cross-Boundary Railway Infrastructure to take forward two cross-boundary railway projects, namely the Hong Kong-Shenzhen Western Rail Link (Hung Shui Kiu-Qianhai) (HSWRL) and the Northern Link (NOL) Spur Line. Specifically, we are currently undertaking the second stage of study of the HSWRL project, which is expected to be completed within this year. The proposed NOL Spur Line will also provide a direct railway connection to the new Huanggang Port in Shenzhen. Hong Kong and Shenzhen are now proactively taking forward the relevant planning work, with the target of commencing the detailed planning and design of the project within this year.

Thank you, President.