

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

TLB026

(Question Serial No. 2647)

Head: (60) Highways Department

Subhead (No. & title): (-) Not Specified

Programme: (3) Railway Development

Controlling Officer: Director of Highways (YAU Kwok-ting)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Transport and Logistics

Question:

Regarding the railway development, please advise this Committee on the following:

1. Regarding the carrying out of the on-going remaining works of the Shatin to Central Link (SCL) project, what are the details and estimates of the remaining works?
2. The remaining railway schemes recommended under the Railway Development Strategy 2014 will be continued to take forward. Of this, why was the extension of the East Kowloon Line to connect Po Lam Station under the original proposal considered feasible by the study at that time? Why did the Government consider the original proposal technically infeasible in 2023? What are the expenditures involved in the study? Does the study still have any reference value?
3. Does the Government plan to make reference to the new technology of the Mainland to re-study the feasibility of extending the East Kowloon Line to connect Po Lam Station under the original proposal? If yes, what are the details? If not, what are the reasons?

Asked by: Hon LI Sai-wing, Stanley (LegCo internal reference no.: 28)

Reply:

1. The remaining works of Shatin to Central Link (SCL) project mainly include:
 - (a) the roadworks at Shatin Pass Road (near Lung Cheung Road eastbound);
 - (b) the re-provisioning works of Ma Chai Hang Recreation Ground;
 - (c) the pedestrian link connecting Pak Tai Street and Sung Wong Toi Station; and
 - (d) the retrofitting of automatic platform gates at the 13 stations of the East Rail Line between Mong Kok East Station and Lo Wu Station / Lok Ma Chau Station.

The total cost estimates for the three works items in (a), (b) and (c) above is approximately \$1.1 billion. MTR Corporation Limited is responsible for the expenditure of the works item in (d).

2. In formulating the Railway Development Strategy 2014 (the Strategy), the Government had considered various factors for the East Kowloon Line including transport demand, engineering and operational feasibility, environmental impact etc. As pointed out in the Strategy, the further taking forward of individual recommended railway projects would be subject to the outcome of the future detailed engineering, environmental and financial studies related to the projects, as well as the updated passenger transport demand assessment. The studies on the formulation of the Strategy covered the strategic planning of the overall railway network in Hong Kong and provided recommendations on the development of the railway system (including the East Kowloon Line). The total expenditure of the studies was \$37.50 million.

Owing to the hilly topography along the corridor of the original proposed East Kowloon Line and the limited climbing capability of the heavy rail system, some sections of the railway line needed to run deep underground. The transport and cost effectiveness were undesirable. Upon conducting a comprehensive review of the technical challenges and transport effectiveness of the project, we would implement the Smart and Green Mass Transit System in East Kowloon in lieu of the underground heavy rail system. When planning the Smart and Green Mass Transit System in East Kowloon, we had made reference to the alignment and the location of stations under the original proposal of the East Kowloon Line.

3. The Government plans to seek funding approval from the Public Works Subcommittee and the Finance Committee of the Legislative Council to appoint consultants for the investigation and design of the Smart and Green Mass Transit System in East Kowloon in the first half of 2024. Subject to funding approval, the relevant works will be commenced in mid-2024. Moreover, the Government plans to invite relevant suppliers and operators to submit expressions of interest within the second half of this year, with a view to finalising the specific requirements and design of the system and its infrastructures, as well as reviewing the feasibility of expanding the system (including the suggestion of extending the system to Po Lam).

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