

LCQ10: Light Rail services

Following is a question by the Hon Wong Kwok-hing and a written reply by the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Ms Eva Cheng, at the Legislative Council meeting today (October 29):

Question:

Regarding the Light Rail (LR) services provided by the MTR Corporation Limited (MTRCL) in the North-west New Territories (NT), will the Government inform this Council:

(a) of the number of LR vehicles commissioned in each of the past three years and the LR network expansion during the period;

(b) of the current population of the North-west NT; and whether it has assessed if the existing LR services can meet the service demand; if it has, of the details; and

(c) whether MTRCL has plans to reorganise the existing LR service network; if so, of the details of such plans?

Reply:

President,

(a) Since the commissioning of Light Rail (LR) in September 1988, it has always been the major mode of transport for the residents of the North-west New Territories (NWNT). The LR network totalled about 23 km in length when commissioned. With the opening of the new Tin Shui Wai Extension in December 2003, the LR network has already extended by 57% to 36 km, further expanding the LR network to Tin Shui Wai North and connecting to the West Rail Line Tin Shui Wai Station to cater for the development of the Yuen Long, Tuen Mun and Tin Shui Wai new towns. Between 2005 and

2008, LR has a fleet of 119 Light Rail Vehicles (LRVs) providing passenger service in Tuen Mun, Tin Shui Wai and Yuen Long.

(b) According to the latest statistics released by the Census and Statistics Department in mid-2007, the population of Tuen Mun and Yuen Long are 480,000 and 530,000 respectively. At present, the MTR Corporation Limited (MTRCL) operates 12 LR routes and 15 MTR Bus routes in NWNT. LR, with a fleet of 119 LRVs, provides services 20 hours a day operating more than 2,700 train trips and as frequent as every 1.3 minutes during peak hours. MTR Bus has a fleet of 110 buses providing feeder services for West Rail Line (WRL) and LR passengers. As at August 2008, the average daily patronage of LR and MTR Bus was 446,000.

In 2007, the Government reviewed the role and service level of the LR transit system in the overall public transport services provided in NWNT. A paper on the review was submitted to the Subcommittee on Matters Relating to Railways under the Legislative Council Panel on Transport in September 2007. After conducting on-site surveys and assessment, the Transport Department (TD) considered that the current daily carrying capacity of LR could generally meet the daily passenger transport demand. The review also examined the future population growth in NWNT, and the expected increase in LR patronage after the commissioning of the Kowloon Southern Link (KSL), for the purpose of assessing future passenger demand. Since LR provides feeder services for WRL, it is expected that LR's patronage will increase due to WRL patronage growth following the commencement of KSL. In addition, the population in NWNT is expected to increase by about 3.5% by 2011 as compared with now. Based on the above two factors, pre-merger Kowloon-Canton Railway Corporation forecast that there would be an increase of around 20% in LR daily patronage and decided to purchase 22 LRVs to meet the patronage increase mentioned above. The new LRVs will come into operation by phases between 2009 and 2010.

(c) The present LR and MTR Bus network and the purchase of LRVs can generally meet the service demand of residents of Tuen Mun, Tin Shui Wai and Yuen Long. At this stage, MTRCL and TD have no plan to rationalise LR and MTR bus feeder service for the area.

To further enhance LR service, MTRCL will also carry out a modernisation programme for the 69 first-generation LRVs to further enhance the level of comfort and capacity. The programme will start in the fourth quarter of 2008 and is expected to be completed in 2011.

MTRCL will continue to closely monitor the demand of the residents for LR service in NWNT, with a view to optimising the use of resources and providing efficient services to passengers.

Ends/Wednesday, October 29, 2008