

LCQ4: Transport services for residents of Yat Tung Estate in Tung Chung

Following is a question by the Hon Wong Kwok-hing and a reply by the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Ms Eva Cheng, at the Legislative Council meeting today (February 18):

Question:

Some residents of Yat Tung Estate in Tung Chung have relayed to me that at first they accepted the allocation arrangement and moved into Yat Tung Estate, which was remotely located and had no convenient transport links, because staff of the Housing Department had stated that the MTR Corporation Limited ("MTRCL") would construct a Tung Chung West Station near Tat Tung Estate, and the web site of the Highways Department also indicated that a site had been reserved for the provision of a new station of the Tung Chung Line at Tung Chung West. Yet, the residents of Tat Tung Estate have already moved in for eight years so far, and the works concerned have not been implemented. The residents need to take feeder buses to the Tung Chung MT Station before they can change for trains to other districts, and this has also added to their burden of travelling expenses. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council whether:

(a) the Government has discussed with METRECAL the construction timetable for the Tung Chung West Station to respond to Tat Tung Estate residents' expectation for early commissioning of this station; if not, whether the Government will apologise to the residents of the Estate for the delay in constructing this station; and

(b) it knows if MTRCL will consider adopting, before the commissioning of the Tung Chung West Station, an arrangement similar to that made for other remote areas to provide free feeder bus services between Yat Tung Estate and the Tung Chung MTR Station; if not, what remedial measures the Government will implement to address the problems of the lack of convenient transport links and heavy burden of travelling expenses faced by residents of the Estate, including whether the Government will reduce the rents of public rental housing units according to the fares payable by the residents for the feeder bus services concerned, grant approval for red minibus and green minibus operators to provide feeder bus services, and offer monthly bus ticket concessions to the residents?

Reply:

President,

The Tung Chung New Town is one of the ten projects of the Airport Core Programme. In regard to the long-term planning of the new town, which has included a preliminary proposal for further reclamations for the expansion of the new town, an area in the proposed reclamation in the western part of Tung Chung has been reserved for use as railway station. If the new town were to be expanded towards the west, it would be possible to consider providing railway services.

Replies to the different parts of the question are as follows:

(a) In 2007, the Government announced the Revised Concept Plan for Lantau. Based on the Concept Plan, the Government has proceeded in phases with the feasibility study of proposed development in the different planning

zones, including the new town extension at the western part of Tung Chung.

The study, having regard to the engineering schemes of the Hong Kong Link Road and Hong Kong Boundary Crossing Facilities of the Hong Kong - Zhuhai - Macao Bridge near Tung Chung, will consider the extent and development of the westward expansion of the new town. As regards to whether the MTR Tung Chung Line should be extended westward, the Government will consider the future development and population growth, etc., of the Tung Chung new town. If it is economically and technically feasible, a rail link as an external transport connection for Tung Chung West should be a possible option. A decision or timetable for a new railway station at Tung Chung is not available for the time being. The Administration and the MTR Corporation Limited (MTRCL) will continue to look closely at the community planning and development of Tung Chung. We shall consider the means of transport connections at the appropriate time.

(b) For the convenience of residents of Yat Tung Estate in Tung Chung to access MTR services, the MTRCL provides interchange concession jointly with the New Lantao Bus Co. (1973) Ltd. (NLB) for franchised bus routes 38, 38P and N38 plying between Yat Tung Estate and Tung Chung Station as well as routes 37 and 37P plying between Yat Tung Estate and Tung Chung North. The passengers on the aforesaid bus routes interchange to MTR, or from MTR interchange to the buses, can have \$1 saving per trip. The concession has all along been popular among local residents. The MTRCL will continue to look for opportunities to collaborate with other public transport operators to facilitate interchange to MTR.

The Transport Department (TD) has always kept in mind the transport needs of residents in Yat Tung Estate.

On bus services, there are currently 14 bus routes serving the Estate, including two routes to Tsuen Wan and Homantin respectively; three routes operating special morning departures to Hung Hom (en route to Tsim Sha Tsui), Tin Shui Wai and Sha Tin; seven routes plying between Tung Chung areas and the airport; one overnight route to Tung Chung Town Centre; and one route providing late night services between Tsim Sha Tsui and the airport with an en route stop at Yat Tung Estate. In addition, with the bus-bus interchange schemes operating at the Lantau Link Toll Plaza, residents of Yat Tung Estate can make interchange to 14 other routes of the same bus company.

As regards the proposal of introducing public light bus services, it is our established policy to encourage the conversion of Red Minibuses to Scheduled Public Light Buses operation to ensure service quality. Under our policy, the primary function of Scheduled Public Light Buses (Green Minibuses) is to supplement and serve as feeders to mass transport carriers. At present, residents of Yat Tung Estate travelling to and from Tung Chung Station can choose among four routes within the district with en route stops at Tung Chung Station as well as routes 38 and 38P which provide frequent feeder services between Yat Tung Estate and Tung Chung Station.

The current schedules of routes 38 and 38P are very frequent, and the service basically can meet the transport demand of local residents travelling between Yat Tung Estate and Tung Chung Station. Furthermore, the bus company concerned and the MTRCL are offering interchange concession schemes to help lower the travelling expense and provide residents with convenient transport link to other districts.

Lastly, TD will continue to keep a close watch over the service level of various transport modes with a view

to providing efficient public transport services in collaboration with the transport operators. TD will also consider the introduction of other transport services to cater for the needs of residents if necessary.

Ends/Wednesday, February 18, 2009