

LCQ10: Platform gaps at Light Rail stations

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

Question:

The Government informed this Council in January last year that the Kowloon-Canton Railway Corporation (KCRC) had commenced works in 2005 to install plastic fillers at the edge of the platforms of 37 Light Rail (LR) stations with relatively wide gaps between the platforms and the trains, so as to narrow such gaps, and it was expected that the works would be completed before the first quarter of last year. However, many members of the public have relayed to me that the platform gaps at some LR stations are still too wide, rendering electrical wheelchairs unable to move in and out of the trains smoothly. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council whether it knows:

(a) the average reduction in the width of the platform gaps at the aforesaid LR stations after the installation of plastic fillers;

(b) the number of accidents in each of the past three years involving LR passengers who had tripped and sustained injuries when boarding or alighting from the trains and, among these accidents, of the number of those which took place at platforms where plastic fillers had already been installed;

(c) if KCRC and the MTR Corporation Limited ("MTRCL"),

which has taken over the operation of LR services since December 2, 2007, had conducted comprehensive tests in the past three years on whether the platform gaps at all LR stations allowed the smooth passage of electrical wheelchairs; if so, of the test results; if not, the reasons for that; and

(d) if MTRCL has studied measures to further mitigate the problem of wide platform gaps at LR stations (e.g. installing the Mechanical Gap Filler system at platforms); if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

(a) After considering the geographical environment and the practical operational needs of Light Rail stops, the pre-merger Kowloon-Canton Railway Corporation (pre-merger KCRC) decided to install platform gap fillers at platforms with gaps wider than about 140mm to reduce the gap width by 50mm so as to enhance passenger traveling environment. MTR Corporation Limited (MTRCL) carried on with the installation works involving 37 Light Rail stops totaling 62 platforms. The works were fully completed in February 2008. Moreover, MTRCL has implemented various measures to enable passengers to use Light Rail even more safely. These include:

(i) platform edges being painted with white lines to increase passenger awareness;

(ii) broadcast at platforms to remind passengers to stand behind the yellow line and beware of the platform gap; and

(iii) Station Assistants are deployed at busy stops to

offer assistance to passengers during peak hours.

(b) Over the past three years, there were 133 incidents relating to Light Rail platform gaps (2006: 32 cases, 2007: 50 cases, 2008: 51 cases). Most of the passengers involved were not injured. Out of these incidents, none of them involved wheelchair users, and only six cases happened at stops already installed with platform gap fillers. MTRCL will continue to strengthen passenger education to further enhance their safety awareness and remind passengers of the need to take care of children and the elderly.

(c) The design of the Light Rail system complies with international standards. During the installation process of platform gap fillers, the Corporation has liaised with passengers with disabilities with a view to collecting their opinions on Light Rail facilities. In April 2006, the pre-merger KCRC, via Transport Department, invited representatives of groups of person with disabilities, including manual and electric wheelchair users, to participate in a trial at Tin King stop. The purpose of the trial was to assess the boarding situation of passengers with disabilities with platform gap fillers installed. The result confirmed that they could board Light Rail trains more conveniently and safely.

(d) MTRCL considers that the platform gap fillers already reduce the width of the platform gaps. MTRCL will continue to carry out passenger education and safety campaigns to further enhance passengers' safety awareness when using railway services.

Ends/Wednesday, February 18, 2009