

LCQ17: Railway service performance

Following is a question by the Hon Lee Wing-tat and a written reply by the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Ms Eva Cheng, at the Legislative Council meeting today (June 2):

Question:

Regarding the railway service and incidents of the MTR Corporation Limited (MTRCL), will the Government inform this Council:

(a) of the respective numbers of incidents of service being delayed for more than eight minutes, 30 minutes and one hour on various railway alignments since 2005, as well as the numbers of passengers affected, with a breakdown by cause of the those incidents of delays in service for over eight minutes to 30 minutes, over 30 minutes to one hour, and over one hour respectively, as set out in the attached table:

(b) whether the Government has any criteria and guideline for deciding the circumstances under which penalties may be imposed on MTRCL; if it has, of the details of the penalties imposed on MTRCL by the Government in the past five years; if not, the reasons for that;

(c) whether the Government has considered setting up a punitive demerit points system in connection with delays in railway service with a view to urging MTRCL to improve its quality of service; if it has, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(d) whether it knows the annual amounts allocated by MTRCL on measures to improve train service since the rail merger and the details of such improvement measures, and whether MTRCL has reviewed the efficacy of the relevant measures; if it has, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

The MTR Corporation Limited (MTRCL) has been consistently maintaining good service performance. MTRCL places great emphasis on providing a safe and reliable railway service for its passengers. In benchmarking studies of major railways around the world by the Community of Metros (CoMET) group, the MTRCL's performance is consistently amongst the best in safety, reliability and passenger journeys on time.

Since the rail merger on December 2, 2007, the MTRCL's train service performance has remained high, with 99.9% of passengers reaching their destinations within five minutes of their scheduled arrival times. Nonetheless, the railway network is made up of many different operating systems and hundreds of thousands of components which must work seamlessly together. Therefore, even with a reliability rate of over 99%, service delays can be still expected from time to time.

Replies to the questions raised are as follows:

(a) From 2005 to the first quarter of 2010, railway delays of respective MTR lines lasting between 8 and 30 minutes, more than 30 minutes to one hour and over one hour are set out at the Annex.

The total number of delays of 8 minutes or more in 2009 has reduced by about 20% when compared to that of 2005, amongst which, delays attributed to railway equipment and human factors have reduced by about 40%; while delays involving passenger action and external events have increased by about 30%.

In benchmarking studies of major railways around the

world by the CoMET, the MTRCL's train service performance is consistently amongst the best in safety, reliability and passenger journeys on time.

The MTRCL's train service performance has remained high, with performance meeting and even exceeding performance pledges. With regard to passenger journeys on time, more than 99.9% of passengers are able to reach their destinations within 5 minutes of their scheduled arrival times. After the rail merger:

(i) in 2008, of the 1,309 million passenger trips, only 0.08% did not reach their destinations within 5 minutes of their scheduled arrival times;

(ii) in 2009, of the 1,322 million passenger trips, only 0.06% did not reach their destinations within 5 minutes of their scheduled arrival times; and

(iii) in the first quarter of 2010, of the 341 million passenger trips, only 0.08% did not reach their destinations within 5 minutes of their scheduled arrival times.

Despite the occurrence of train service delays, MTRCL has handled each incident causing delay seriously and conducted investigations into the incidents with a view to enhancing improvements in passenger service and reliability.

(b) According to the Mass Transit Railway Ordinance (the Ordinance), in case of a substantial or persistent failure to comply with the Ordinance or the Operating Agreement, the Chief Executive in Council may impose financial penalty on MTRCL. In extreme cases, the Government may suspend or even revoke the franchise of MTRCL. MTRCL has been in compliance with the requirements of the Ordinance and the Operating Agreement.

(c) In early 2005, the Administration had thoroughly

considered the matter in consultation with the local experts. The considered view was that the existing Performance Requirements are commonly used international standards and that Hong Kong should not deviate from them to use other service indicators which are not proven or well tested. It is only through the international standard that we can measure Hong Kong's performance against other systems. Moreover, we also took into account that a demerit point system may create pressure on the railway front-line staff in incident recovery which would not enhance railway safety but could have an adverse effect.

(d) Since the rail merger, MTRCL has invested \$4 billion each year in the maintenance, repair and renewal of its railway assets in order to maintain high quality railway services and enhance service performance.

Apart from general maintenance work that is scheduled on a daily and regular basis, a large number of initiatives have also been implemented to continually upgrade facilities and enhance services. The main initiatives include:

- *10 new MTR trains will be delivered to Hong Kong between 2011 and 2012 to enhance train frequency on the existing lines.

- *6 new Light Rail Vehicles (LRVs) have been put into service by end April 2010. 16 more new LRVs are scheduled to be delivered in 2010 which will enhance the services of Light Rail.

- *Retrofitting of automatic platform gates at eight aboveground and elevated stations. The retrofitting works are expected to be completed by 2011.

- *Completion of installation of at least one wide gate at each station on the East Rail Line.

- *Purchased the state-of-the-art Ultrasonic Rail Test Machine

which measures and monitors the condition of Light Rail tracks;
and two larger Ultrasonic Testing Vehicles for use on the
heavy rail MTR lines.

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