

LCQ16: Tseung Kwan O Extension (Phase II)

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Following is a question by the Hon Chan Hak-kan and a written reply by the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Ms Eva Cheng, in the Legislative Council meeting today (June 2):

Question:

It has been approximately one year since the commissioning of the Tseung Kwan O Extension (Phase II) (TKOE II) of the MTR Corporation Limited (MTRCL) in July last year. Some Tseung Kwan O residents have relayed to me that although the residents have gradually got used to the "3+1" train service pattern (i.e. every one out of four trains will be running from North Point to LOHAS Park), they consider that the service has failed to meet the demand, particularly during peak hours when train compartments and platforms are very crowded. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(a) whether it knows the information as set out at the Annex about the relevant sections of the extension since the commissioning of TKOE II;

(b) given that Po Lam Station is of a single-platform design, whether it knows if it is technically feasible for MTRCL to further increase the train frequencies of the Tseung Kwan O Extension, so as to alleviate the crowded conditions in train compartments and on platforms; if it is feasible, of the details, including the train frequencies after the increase and extra number of passengers to be carried; if it is not feasible, what other measures MTRCL has to deal with the situation;

(c) whether it knows if MTRCL has plans to review the "3+1" train service pattern; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(d) given that the population in Tseung Kwan O district is increasing and the demand for transport service in the area will be growing, whether the Government will consider introducing additional bus or public light bus routes plying the vicinity of the LOHAS Park Station, so as to solve the problem that residents can only rely on MTR for travelling to and from the area; and

(e) whether it knows the service breakdown rates of the entire Tseung Kwan O Extension since the commissioning of TKOE II as compared with those in the previous three years; the nature of the breakdowns; and whether the commissioning of TKOE II has aggravated the aging of rail tracks and trains?

Reply:

President,

(a) Since the Tseung Kwan O Extension (Phase II) and LOHAS Park Station opened in July 2009, a new train service arrangement has been implemented on the Tseung Kwan O Line and operation of train service has been generally smooth to date. Under the new train service arrangement, the train service between Tseung Kwan O Station and North Point Station has been enhanced from the former 22 trains per hour to the current 24 trains per hour. This has increased the overall capacity of the Tseung Kwan O Line, benefitting most passengers from the Tseung Kwan O area.

Currently during peak hours, train schedules of the Tseung Kwan O Line are organised in groups of four, adopting a "3+1" service pattern : for every four trains departing North Point Station, the first three will terminate at Po Lam Station while the fourth will terminate at LOHAS Park Station. Similarly, for every four trains from Tseung Kwan O to North Point Station, the first three will run from Po Lam Station to North Point Station while the fourth will run from LOHAS

Park Station to North Point Station. As such, the headway of trains for Po Lam Station and Hang Hau Station is 2 minutes 30 seconds / 2 minutes 30 seconds / 5 minutes. For LOHAS Park Station, the train frequency is every 10 minutes per train during peak hours.

As the service between Tseung Kwan O Station and North Point Station has been enhanced and the "3+1" train arrangement applies to Po Lam Station, Hang Hau Station and LOHAS Park Station, we provide information relating to the capacity and patronage of the three stations in the following paragraphs.

With regard to the train service between Po Lam Station and North Point Station during the morning peak hours (the busiest period is from 8.15am to 9.15am), the train frequency between the Tseung Kwan O Station and North Point Station has been enhanced from every 2 minutes 40 seconds to 2 minutes 30 seconds. This is more frequent than the train service prior to the opening of LOHAS Park Station and is sufficient to cater for passenger demand.

The capacity from Po Lam Station to Tseung Kwan O Station during this time period is 45,000 passengers per hour. According to patronage figures of the first quarter of 2010, the average number of passengers entering Po Lam Station during that time period was 9,100; and the average number of North Point-bound passengers entering Hang Hau Station was 9,500. In total, the average number of passengers travelling from these two stations towards North Point Station was 18,600 or about 41% of the total capacity, which is able to meet the demand. The Transport Department (TD) has been closely monitoring the performance of the new train service arrangement since the opening of the Tseung Kwan O Extension (Phase II) and LOHAS Park Station. According to the observation of the MTR Corporation Ltd (MTRCL), North Point-bound trains that depart from Po Lam, Hang Hau and Tseung Kwan O Stations are able to accommodate all passengers

waiting on the platform during the morning peak and there have not been cases of passengers not being able to board the first arriving train due to crowding on trains or platforms.

For the service between LOHAS Park Station to North Point Station during the same time period, the average number of passengers entering LOHAS Park Station is 800. As the capacity of the trains from LOHAS Park Station to Tseung Kwan O Station is 15,000 passengers per hour, there is still ample capacity to accommodate passengers boarding at Tseung Kwan O, Tiu Keng Leng and Yau Tong Stations thus helping to alleviate the demand at Yau Tong Station where Kwun Tong Line passengers interchange to Tseung Kwan O Line for the Hong Kong Island.

During non-peak hours, the 4-minute train service frequency between Po Lam and North Point Stations before the opening of LOHAS Park Station has remained unchanged. As for LOHAS Park Station, a shuttle train service to and from Tiu Keng Leng Station is operated at 12-minute intervals. The train capacity is adequate for passenger needs during non-peak periods.

(b) Currently, even during the busiest period in the peak hours, trains that depart from Po Lam Station are able to accommodate all passengers waiting on the platform. There is no evidence of overcrowding as the average loading is only 20% during the busiest hour of the day.

Indeed, given the single-platform design at Po Lam Station, the highest train frequency for the section between Po Lam Station and Tseung Kwan O Station is 2 minutes 30 seconds. When the Tseung Kwan O Line was planned in the 1990s, overall development of the Tseung Kwan O area, including population growth and distribution forecast had been taken into account. The Tseung Kwan O Line north-south bifurcation alignment, stations and track facilities have been designed to meet the area's long-term transportation needs.

(c) Since the opening of LOHAS Park Station, MTRCL has been closely monitoring the service and performance of the Tseung Kwan O Line, including passenger flow and actual patronage. The train service arrangement now in place is operating smoothly and is sufficient to meet passenger demand. MTRCL has no plans to adjust the current train service arrangement on the Tseung Kwan O Line.

(d) TD keeps watch of the population development in the Tseung Kwan O area and will enhance public transport services to meet passenger demand as and when appropriate. For example, in the vicinity of LOHAS Park Station, there are already rail and franchised bus services currently. TD plans to extend the peak-hour service of bus route 98S (between Hang Hau (North) and Mei Foo) to LOHAS Park in the latter half of this year. The service will depart from LOHAS Park via Hang Hau for journeys to Mei Foo and vice versa.

(e) LOHAS Park Station commenced service on July 26, 2009. Currently, more than 240,000 train trips are operated on the Tseung Kwan O Line every year. For delays on the Tseung Kwan O Line of eight minutes or above, there were 2 cases in 2007, 11 cases in 2008, 15 cases in 2009 and 6 cases in the first quarter of 2010. More than half of the delays in each of these periods lasted only around 10 minutes.

The Tseung Kwan O Line is a relatively new railway line. Most sections came into operation in 2002 and the Phase II Extension just opened in July last year. It can be noted that the performance of the Tseung Kwan O Line, both before and after the opening of LOHAS Park Station, has remained steady with train punctuality at 99.9%.

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