

## Gazettal of Shatin to Central Link

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The Government published in the Gazette today (November 26) the railway scheme for the Shatin to Central Link (SCL) in accordance with the Railways Ordinance.

The SCL is one of the major infrastructure projects announced by the Chief Executive in his Policy Address in October 2007.

The SCL will be a 17-kilometre long railway with a total of 10 stations at Tai Wai, Hin Keng, Diamond Hill, Kai Tak, To Kwa Wan, Ma Tau Wai, Ho Man Tin, Hung Hom, northern Wan Chai and Admiralty. The railway will run mostly underground and consist of two parts, namely the Tai Wai to Hung Hom Section, which is an extension of the existing Ma On Shan Line from Tai Wai to the West Rail Line via East Kowloon, and the Hung Hom to Admiralty Section, which is an extension of the existing East Rail Line from Hung Hom across the Harbour to Hong Kong Island.

The spokesman indicated that the SCL project will not only increase the capacity of the existing railways that carry passengers from Shatin to Kowloon and across the Harbour, but will also provide railway service to the new developments in Southeast Kowloon. The spokesman said, "The proposed railway line will serve the purpose of linking up the existing railway lines through the provision of six interchange stations, thus allowing a faster and more convenient interchange arrangement. Passengers will be able to travel from Tai Wai to Diamond Hill within five minutes and from Hung Hom to Admiralty also in about five minutes, as compared with 17 minutes for either of these journeys by using the existing railway lines."

"The Government and the MTR Corporation Limited (MTRCL) have been conducting extensive public consultation since mid 2008. The concerned local stakeholders, including a total of 11 District Councils, were briefed on the proposed railway scheme. Roving exhibitions, public forums, school talks, and other public consultation activities have also been held to collect views and suggestions from the local communities. We have all along been striving to complete the design and statutory consultation process with an aim to commencing the construction works as soon as possible, and estimated at the time that the Tai Wai to Hung Hom Section and

the Hung Hom to Admiralty Section could be completed in 2015 and 2019 respectively."

The spokesman said, "since the SCL is large in scale and runs through a number of local communities, many issues of public concerns are involved. We have therefore taken a longer time than expected to listen to and consider the views and suggestions of the local communities. We have included, as far as possible, the feasible suggestions of the local communities in the railway scheme gazetted today and expect that the statutory consultation process can be completed by early 2012. We will then make a funding application for the railway proposal at the soonest possibility, targeting for commencement of construction works in 2012. Since underpinning works may need to be carried out for the Tai Wai to Hung Hom Section so as to avoid resumption of private buildings, the railway works are expected to take six years to construct for completion in 2018. To dovetail with a series of infrastructural projects such as Wanchai Development Phase II and Central-Wanchai Bypass, the Hung Hom to Admiralty Section is expected to complete by 2020. While complying with the statutory procedures, we will continue to press ahead with the project for early start of construction and completion."

The spokesman said, "based on the current assessment, the estimated cost for the entire SCL project will be over \$60 billion, which is higher than that of \$38.2 billion announced in 2007. The reasons for the cost increase are multi-fold. In the past few years, the significant rise in construction material prices has caused the construction cost of the SCL project to increase by about 30%. In addition, we have included, where appropriate, suggestions by the public into the proposed railway scheme, thereby resulting in additional works at about \$5 billion. Furthermore, in the course of the preliminary design, MTRCL had to revise the design to cope with the actual conditions such as ground investigation information, technical requirements and compliance with the existing fire safety requirements. The estimated cost for these modifications is about \$7 billion."

The spokesman continued to say, "there are still a number of uncertainties in the cost for the SCL. As the detailed design of the alignment, site investigations and statutory consultation process are in progress, further changes may be required in the alignment design and facilities of the SCL project, which may result in a further increase in the cost of the works. When the scheme of the SCL project is finalised by early 2012, we will have a more accurate cost estimate. To carefully monitor the cost estimate, we will conduct an independent review on the cost estimate of the SCL

project."

Once the proposed railway scheme is gazetted under the Railways Ordinance, the MTRCL will proceed with the detailed design and further planning of the project. The Government will continue to engage the public and will further explain to the District Councils and local communities on details of the proposed railway scheme. Under the Railways Ordinance, members of the public have the right to lodge objections to the railway scheme for the SCL from now until January 25, 2011. Any person who has a compensatable interest can claim compensation under the provisions of the Ordinance.

The scheme and the relevant plans are available for public inspection at the Public Enquiry Service Centres of the Central and Western, Wan Chai, Eastern, Southern, Yau Tsim Mong, Kowloon City, Wong Tai Sin, Kwun Tong, Sai Kung, Sha Tin, Tai Po, and North District offices, and the District Lands Offices of Hong Kong East, Hong Kong West and South, Kowloon East, Kowloon West, Sha Tin, Tai Po, North, and Sai Kung, during office hours.

A copy of the Scheme and the Plans may be purchased from the Railway Development Office of the Highways Department. Enquiries on purchasing details can be made to the Highways Department at telephone number 2762 3976. The electronic version of the Scheme and the Plans are viewable on the Highways Department's website ([www.hyd.gov.hk/eng/major/road/rail/index.htm](http://www.hyd.gov.hk/eng/major/road/rail/index.htm)).

Further enquiries regarding the scheme can be addressed to the Highways Department at telephone number 2762 4038 or to the Transport and Housing Bureau at telephone number 3904 1127 during office hours.

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