

## Executive Council authorises Kwun Tong Line Extension Scheme

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The Chief Executive in Council today (November 30) authorised the Kwun Tong Line Extension (KTE) under the Railways Ordinance.

The KTE is an extension of the existing MTR Kwun Tong Line from Yau Ma Tei Station to Whampoa, with two new stations at Ho Man Tin and Whampoa. Passengers can interchange at the proposed Ho Man Tin Station for the future Shatin to Central Link. It will provide convenient and reliable means of public transport between Yau Ma Tei and Whampoa, and will enable residents in Ho Man Tin, Hung Hom and Whampoa area to have direct access to MTR service, saving time for interchange from road transport to the railway network. It will bring about visible economic benefits to the community.

A government spokesman said, "At present, traffic congestion from the Cross Harbour Tunnel seriously affects access to and from Hung Hom during peak hours with traffic tailing back from the Cross Harbour Tunnel to the road networks in Hung Hom and Yau Ma Tei. With the KTE, a journey from Whampoa to Mong Kok, which normally takes about 25 minutes by road during rush hours, could be slashed to about five minutes."

"The Government and the MTR Corporation Limited (MTRCL) have proactively engaged the local community, including the Kowloon City District Council, extensively in the last few years in formulating the railway scheme of the KTE," the spokesman said. "The KTE project has been thoroughly discussed in the community and people's views have been taken into account as far as practicable."

"It is the local residents' strong wish to bring in railway services to the Ho Man Tin and Hung Hom. They have voiced clear and loud calls for the early implementation of this project."

The KTE railway scheme was first gazetted on November 27, 2009 and amendments to the scheme were gazetted on June 25, 2010. Following receipt of objections, the Government and the MTRCL carefully studied the grounds of objections, met the objectors to explain the railway scheme and addressed their concerns. Hearing sessions were conducted by non-official members of Railway Objections Hearing Panel, on those objections not withdrawn. All unwithdrawn

objections were submitted to the Executive Council for consideration.

"To continue effective communication with the community, the MTRCL, in the course of implementing the KTE, will establish community liaison groups comprising representatives of the concerned and affected parties, including owners' corporations, management offices and local committees in the affected areas. The MTRCL will also have to comply with the conditions set out in the Environmental Permit issued by the Director of Environmental Protection to keep disturbances to the environment to acceptable levels," the spokesman said.

Implementation of the KTE will create 1,000 jobs during construction in the next few years and another 160 jobs during the operation stage.

"The KTE will be an extension of the existing MTR network and will be implemented as a MTRCL project under the ownership approach. The cost estimate of the KTE in 2007 prices was about \$4.2 billion and the project was considered as not financially viable. Construction prices have escalated by about 30 per cent from 2007 to 2009 due to the surge in construction material prices. Apart from this, refinement of the project details and amendments in the detailed design also account for the cost increase. According to the MTRCL's recent assessment in 2009 prices, the construction cost estimate of KTE ranges from \$5.3 billion to \$5.6 billion.

"The MTRCL is finalising its detailed design of the rail project which may entail final technical fine tuning. This may have minor impact on the project cost. We expect the final cost to be available in the first quarter of 2011. The Administration will continue close monitoring of the project expenditure and ensure MTRCL will exercise due diligence in budget control. We have also engaged an independent consultant to conduct an assessment of the project cost estimate and the funding gap," the spokesman added.

A site at the ex-Valley Road Estate will be available for the rail plus property development for the KTE. The spokesman said that the Administration will carefully consider and scrutinise the MTRCL's development proposal and have engaged an independent consultant for assistance.

"We will give due consideration to ensure that the funding support is fair and reasonable, without affecting the prudent commercial principle in railway operation," the spokesman said.

It is expected that the construction works of the KTE will start in mid-2011 for completion in 2015.

Ends/Tuesday, November 30, 2010

Issued at HKT 20:06