

**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY**

**TLB035**

**(Question Serial No. 0961)**

Head: (60) Highways Department  
Subhead (No. & title): (000) Operational expenses  
Programme: (3) Railway Development  
Controlling Officer: Director of Highways (YAU Kwok-ting)  
Director of Bureau: Secretary for Transport and Logistics

Question:

The Highways Department (HyD) has recently promulgated the Hong Kong Railway Standards, with a view to driving the new railway projects of Hong Kong with enhanced speed and efficiency, and striving for shorter construction times and lower costs. In this connection, will the Government advise this Committee on the following:

- (a) Regarding the Hong Kong Railway Standards, what are the (i) cost of consultancy study and (ii) the respective manpower and expenditures on supervising the consultants by the HyD?
- (b) The Northern Link will reportedly be the first railway project in Hong Kong that adopts the Hong Kong Railway Standards. It is anticipated that 20% of construction cost can be saved and the completion of the spur line part can be accelerated by at least 2 years. Which works sequences are associated for the savings in cost and time? What new technologies are adopted respectively?
- (c) The HyD's planned target for Programme (3) "ensuring timely completion of Part 1 of Northern Link Project by 2034" for 2026 is 10%. What indicators (for example construction costs, volumes of soil involved in construction, working hours, or other factors) are this value based on? Given that the Government is striving to commission the Northern Link Main Line and Spur Line simultaneously in 2034, why didn't the HyD define the same types of indicators for the other parts of Northern Link Main Line and Spur Line?
- (d) Additional burden to the Tuen Ma Line, Kam Sheung Road Station in particular, would definitely be incurred upon the commissioning of the Northern Link. Will the Government take the opportunity of the promulgation of the Hong Kong Railway Standards to accelerate the commencement of the Central Rail Link? If yes, what is the schedule? If not, what are the reasons? And

- (e) Apart from formulating the Hong Kong Railway Standards on the technical aspects, does the Government have any measures for planning the cultivation and retention of railway talents? If yes, what is the resource allocation? If not, what are the reasons?

Asked by: Hon LAM Wai-kong (LegCo internal reference no.: 36)

Reply:

- (a) The consultancy fee for the formulation of the Hong Kong Railway Standards is approximately \$2.92 million. The Highways Department (HyD) undertook the formulation of the Hong Kong Railway Standards with existing manpower, therefore an itemised breakdown is not available.
- (b) The new Hong Kong Railway Standards promulgated by the HyD facilitate the use of a broader selection of advanced construction technologies, construction materials, equipment and railway systems for new railway projects according to individual circumstances and needs, provide clear technical specifications as the approval basis of the supervisory authorities, and also facilitate the development and optimisation of work processes by the industry, driving the new railway projects of Hong Kong with enhanced speed and efficiency. In particular, the Hong Kong Railway Standards encourage the adoption of innovative construction machinery, technologies and materials (such as larger-scale or wider scale of standardised modular integrated construction, high-strength steel, and ultra-high-performance concrete), as well as advanced equipment and construction specifications (such as the selection, design, construction and control of tunnel boring machines). The cost savings for individual projects will vary depending on actual circumstances including the nature, scale and site conditions of the project.

Regarding the Northern Link (NOL) project, the Government is currently reviewing the project estimate provided by the MTRCL. Based on our rough estimation, the adoption of the Hong Kong Railway Standards, coupled with the synergies generated by implementing the NOL Main Line and the NOL Spur Line together, the construction cost is expected to be reduced by about 20% for the NOL project. Moreover, the programme of the NOL Spur Line could be advanced by 2 years, enabling it to be commissioned together with the NOL Main Line by 2034 or earlier.

- (c) The expected completion percentage of the NOL project under Programme (3) is calculated based on the cumulative expenditure divided by the total project cost of the relevant project. As for NOL Spur Line and other parts of NOL Main Line, they fall within the scope of the part 2 of the NOL project, which the Government is currently negotiating with the MTRCL regarding the financial arrangement of the subject project agreement. The relevant targets of part 2 of NOL project will be formulated after the project agreement is executed.
- (d) The proposed Central Rail Link will connect Kam Tin to Kowloon Tong, strengthening the connectivity between the “Northern Metropolis” and urban areas in Hong Kong and Kowloon. We are preparing for the next stage of implementation for the proposed Central Rail Link, including formulating its implementation mode, financial arrangement, etc., during which the application of the Hong Kong Railway Standards will be taken into account.

- (e) The Hong Kong Railway Standards provides unified and clear technical basis and guidance for the design, construction, operation and maintenance of Hong Kong's railway construction. We anticipate that this new standard helps to attract more relevant professionals (such as engineering consultancy firms, contractors, etc.), who are qualified and acquainted with railway standards from Chinese Mainland and other parts of the world, to participate in Hong Kong's railway projects. Also, this new standard helps to promote the application and exchange of innovative technologies, thereby intensifying market competition and exerting a positive impact on fostering and retaining railway talent.

The HyD will continue to make the best use of internal resources to provide trainings on the professional knowledge of railway project development to relevant government professionals and technical staff. Furthermore, the MTRCL has established the MTR Academy to promote talent development and transfer of know-how, supporting Hong Kong's long-term railway development.

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