Hong Kong Government Transport Branch

Railway Development Strategy

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INTRODUCTION

Background

1.1 This is the first comprehensive railway development strategy to be prepared for the territory. It provides a framework for planning the future expansion of Hong Kong's railway network.

1.2 The strategy is based on the findings of the Government commissioned Railway Development Study (RDS), and takes account of views on the Study proposals expressed during the public consultation period. Decisions to build particular railways will be dependent on the outcome of detailed engineering and financial studies. Consultation with the Chinese side of the Joint Liaison Group will also be needed, since most expenditure will occur after 1997.

Policy on railway development

1.3 Hong Kong's railways now account for more than a quarter of daily internal travel, 90% of cross border passenger trips and 10% of the total freight movement between Hong Kong and China. Railways are therefore a vital part of Hong Kong's transport network and are essential to the Territory's continued economic, social and land development.

1.4 The White Paper on Transport Policy recognized the important role of railways in our transport system. As off-road mass carriers, railways reduce pressure on the road network, stimulate land development, and cause no air pollution. They are a reliable, comfortable and high speed transport mode. However, they are also very expensive to build, less flexible in their operation than bus services and financially viable only if they serve densely populated areas.

1.5 As part of the development of a balanced transport infrastructure, we seek to extend the rail system to major population centres so as to relieve congestion of the existing transport network. To this end, the Second Comprehensive Transport Study (CTS-2) recommended the development of three railway projects, namely a third harbour railcrossing, a North West New Territories/urban rail link and a Mass Transit Railway extension to Tseung Kwan O.

1.6 Following Government's decision in 1989 to build a major new passenger line (the Airport Railway) to serve the replacement airport at Chek Lap Kok, the timing and priority of the railway projects recommended by CTS-2 had to be re-assessed. With increased economic interaction between Hong Kong and China, future cross border freight and passenger rail requirements also needed to be reconsidered. It was against this background that the Railway Development Study was commissioned.
Railway Development Study (RDS)

2.1 The RDS, carried out by Government appointed consultants, had three objectives:
   (a) to establish an optimal railway network for the Territory compatible with overall
       transport and land use requirements;
   (b) to establish a priority list of recommended railway projects; and
   (c) to determine the preferred alignments of the selected railways for defining the
       extent of route protection.

2.2 The Study assessed over 90 railway schemes, including some previously proposed by the
private sector. The schemes were subjected to a comprehensive screening and evaluation
process to see how well they performed in transport, planning, operational, environmental,
economic and financial terms. It was assumed in the Study that the Airport Railway would
be opened at about the same time as the new airport.

2.3 The evaluation placed the proposals that performed best into a coherent network which
comprised two strategic railway corridors - a new Western Corridor through the North West
New Territories and an enhanced Eastern Corridor using the existing KCR line as the
backbone. In addition, a number of longer term railway projects were identified. The RDS
proposals shown in Figure 1 are summarized below.
The Western Corridor

2.4 The Western Corridor, proposed for completion by 2001, would provide a new arterial link to the border. It would accommodate three services: a long distance freight service (the Port Rail Line), a cross border passenger service and a sub-regional passenger link between the North West New Territories and the urban area. The whole alignment would run from the border via Yuen Long, Kam Tin, Tsuen Wan and Kwai Chung to West Kowloon. Details of the three proposed services are given below.

Port Rail Line

The provision of a Port Rail Line from the border to the container port is an important component of our future freight transport strategy. The RDS proposed that this railway be used to move standard containers by rail direct from China into the port, thus relieving the road system. The forecast volume of traffic from China using the Port Rail Line is 1,450 TEUs (twenty foot equivalent units) per day in 2001 rising to over 2,500 per day in 2006. The proposed line would enhance Hong Kong’s role as an entrepot. It would also complement China’s new north-south rail corridor, the Jing-Ju Line, and their plans to expand the use of standard containers. As part of the project, a Port Rail Terminal (PRT) would be built, probably in the Kwai Chung Container Terminal No. 8 backup area.

Cross Border Passenger Service

There has been substantial growth in cross border rail travel in the past ten years. In 1993, over 40 million cross border rail trips were recorded and the number is forecast to double by 2011. To cope with this demand, the RDS recommended a second rail connection to the border, via the proposed Western Corridor. The line would connect to Lo Wu and possibly to a new border crossing point proposed at Lok Ma Chau. It would provide relief for the existing KCR line and the Lo Wu station, reduce travel times through faster train services, and provide easier access to the western part of the Shenzhen Special Economic Zone. The service would require a new passenger rail terminal in the urban area, and a possible site was identified on the West Kowloon Reclamation.

Sub-Regional Passenger Service

The population of the Western New Territories is expected to rise to about 900,000 by the year 2001, generating some 600,000 public transport trips per day to and from the urban areas. To meet this growing demand, the RDS recommended a new rail link between Yuen Long/Tin Shui Wai and the urban area, utilizing the proposed Western Corridor. The new line would place Yuen Long within 30 minutes travelling time of Central, and Tuen Mun within 50 minutes using the LRT as a feeder service.
The Eastern Corridor

2.5 The existing KCR provides a domestic rail service in the eastern New Territories and also carries cross border passenger and freight traffic. The RDS recommendations for the Eastern Corridor comprised an MTR extension from Lam Tin to Tseung Kwan O, a new East Kowloon Route to meet demands arising from development of South East Kowloon reclamation and improvements to existing KCR stations to increase passenger handling capacity. Details of these RDS proposals are set out below.

MTR Tseung Kwan O Extension

The RDS established that an MTR extension from Lam Tin to Tseung Kwan O would be necessary from the transport viewpoint and economically viable when the new town population reached 340,000. It recommended that the MTR extension should be in place when the population reached 250,000. The land use development programme indicates that the Tseung Kwan O new town population would reach this threshold by 2001.

East Kowloon Route

The RDS noted that a number of alternative options for the proposed East Kowloon Route needed further investigation. One option was to connect Ma On Shan via an interchange with the KCR at Tai Wai and then to link up with the MTR at Diamond Hill. From there, a new MTR line would run through South East Kowloon, to interchange with the KCR at Hung Hom, the MTR Tsuen Wan Line at Tsim Sha Tsui and eventually with the Airport Railway at West Kowloon. The catchment area for the route is unlikely to be densely populated, resulting in a comparatively low patronage. The line would be very expensive to build (about $29B in 1994 prices) and would require substantial financial assistance. The RDS concluded that the form and alignment of this proposed railway would require further study.

Improvements to KCR stations

The RDS recommended improvements to passenger circulation in KCR stations, additional entrance/exit points and extra escalators to solve the capacity problems now experienced during peak hours, notably at the Kowloon Tong interchange between the KCR and the MTR.
Proposals for Hong Kong Island

2.6 The densely developed north shore of Hong Kong Island is presently served by the MTR Island Line and Hong Kong Tramways. The RDS proposed a railway to connect the northern and southern parts of Hong Kong Island (South HK Island Line), an east-west link on the planned Central and Wanchai reclamation (North HK Island Line), and an extension of the MTR Island Line from Sheung Wan to the proposed Green Island reclamation (West HK Island Line). Details of these proposals are set out below.

South HK Island Line

An intermediate capacity system (ICS) was proposed linking Aberdeen, Ap Lei Chau, Telegraph Bay, Wah Fu and Wong Chuk Hang with Admiralty. The recommended priority for this link was low because the planned road network should have the capacity to cater for forecast traffic demands, and the railway would not be financially viable on a stand alone basis.

North HK Island Line

Under current plans, the transport demand on the future Central and Wanchai Reclamation could justify an ICS, possibly linking the MTR’s Airport Railway station in Central with Tin Hau. It could also interchange with the proposed South HK Island Line at Admiralty. The timing would depend on plans for the reclamation and its development.

West HK Island Line

There may be a need to extend the MTR Island Line from Sheung Wan via Kennedy Town to the Green Island Reclamation in the longer term, depending on the population level of developments on the proposed reclamation. An extension to Kennedy Town alone is not essential on transport grounds nor is it financially viable.

Long Term Schemes

2.7 The Long Term Schemes proposed by RDS comprised rail links to connect Tin Shui Wai, Tuen Mun, Yamba and Green Island. These links would collectively form an “Outer” Western Corridor. Other schemes for longer term development included a second Port Rail Line to the Lantau Port. These schemes are related to long term reclamation proposals and future land and port development. No dates for construction were proposed but in view of their strategic importance, the RDS recommended that their route alignments should be protected.
Public Views

2.8 In view of the importance and far reaching implications of the RDS proposals, a public consultation exercise was conducted. In the course of the consultation, some forty meetings were held with various committees and organisations, including the LegCo Transport Panel, District Boards, political parties, the port operators and various commercial bodies. In addition, thirty-nine written submissions were received. There was also a LegCo motion debate on the subject.

2.9 The study proposals were generally welcomed by the public, and many urged a faster implementation programme. Specific comments on the RDS proposed network are summarised below:

(a) The Western Corridor

There was strong support for early provision of a new commuter rail service connecting Tuen Mun with the urban area. This was not provided for in the original RDS proposals. Many suggested a spur line from the proposed Western Corridor, to connect Tuen Mun with Yuen Long. Some favoured a coastal route from Tuen Mun to Tsuen Wan, while others considered that a Tuen Mun to Chek Lap Kok link should be built, connecting with the Airport Railway. The Port Rail Line and Cross Border Passenger Service proposals were well received, but with some comment on the locations proposed for the Port Rail Terminal and the new Cross Border Passenger Terminal. Some suggested giving priority to building a spur line from Sheung Shui to a second border crossing point proposed at Lok Ma Chau, so as to provide early relief for the Lo Wu crossing in advance of the construction of the remainder of the Western Corridor. Some noted that the proposed cross border railway would need to be compatible with land use and transport development in China.

(b) The Eastern Corridor

Some respondents considered that the East Kowloon Route (EKR) should be built early. There were differing views on the choice of alignment for the section from Ma On Shan, in particular whether this should connect to Diamond Hill or to Cheung Sha Wan (as had been proposed by a private developer).

(c) Proposals for Hong Kong Island

There was a suggestion to realign the proposed West HK Island Line on the Western Reclamation so as to reduce its cost and allow early construction of the section to Kennedy Town. There was also support for the early construction of the South HK Island line. Some suggested extending the existing MTR Island Line eastwards to Siu Sai Wan.

(d) Long Term Options

Fewer comments were received on the long term options. Some proposed early implementation of the second freight rail line to Lantau port, so as to stimulate port development on the island. Some supported the early construction of a rail link between Tuen Mun and Yam O.
Additional Studies

2.10 As a result of public comment on the RDS proposals, further studies were undertaken on the options for providing a rail link to Tuen Mun, the choice of terminal sites for the Cross Border Passenger Service and the Port Rail Line, some aspects of the railway proposals for Hong Kong Island and the preferred form and alignment for the East Kowloon Route. The results of these investigations are described below.

2.11 For the proposed rail link to Tuen Mun, the additional study investigated a number of options, including those put forward during the public consultation exercise. It revealed that it should be possible to construct a cost effective spur line from the proposed Western Corridor to Tuen Mun North. This rail link, costing about $1.5B (in 1994 prices), would provide a quicker service from Tuen Mun to the urban area, when compared with the original RDS proposal to terminate the line at Tin Shui Wai. Consideration could be given to extending the spur line to Tuen Mun Town Centre at a later stage.

2.12 The two other alternatives proposed for a Tuen Mun rail connection, viz. a coastal alignment to Tsuen Wan and a Chek Lap Kok link, were found to be much less cost effective than the proposed extension of the Western Corridor to Tuen Mun and it was recommended they should not be pursued. However, a long term option to connect Tuen Mun to Yam O on Lantau has been retained for future study in conjunction with the proposed provision of a port rail line to the planned Lantau Port.

2.13 For the Cross Border Passenger Service, the additional investigation recommended that the terminal should be located in West Kowloon adjacent to the proposed Airport Railway Kowloon Station. More detailed studies will be needed, however, to assess the traffic and planning implications, and to confirm the engineering feasibility before the terminal site is finally decided. The additional investigation confirmed the back up area of Kwai Chung Terminal No. 8 as the most suitable location for the Port Rail Terminal.
2.14 The options for the proposed East Kowloon Route were subjected to more detailed study, and the findings are as follows -

(a) the construction of the proposed Western Corridor, together with KCRC’s planned improvements to the existing line, would relieve the KCR to the extent that it would have capacity to meet travel demand in the Eastern NT at least until 2011;

(b) further relief for the MTR Nathan Road Corridor and the KCR/MTR Kowloon Tong Interchange could be provided by extending the KCR line underground from Hung Hom to Tsim Sha Tsui (to interchange with the MTR) and eventually to West Kowloon;

(c) usage of the KCR line could be enhanced through the construction of an ICS railway from Ma On Shan to Tai Wai, but only after the KCR line was extended to Tsim Sha Tsui, as suggested in (b) above, otherwise the Kowloon Tong interchange would be overloaded; and

(d) an ICS serving the future Southeast Kowloon reclamation and the former Kai Tak site (i.e. Diamond Hill to Hung Hom) could be considered later, depending on the scale and programme for land development in that area.

2.15 The further studies revealed that the East Kowloon Route proposed in the RDS would not be the most cost effective way to serve the identified transport needs. This is because it would be so expensive to build (about $29B in 1994 prices) and its provision would leave the KCR main line under-utilized. The proposals contained in para. 2.14 above, costing about $8.6B in 1994 prices, were considered preferable.
2.16 The review also investigated the private sector proposal to build a rail link from Ma On Shan to Cheung Sha Wan. It was found that the proposed line was not the best way of meeting identified transport needs. For example, it would add to congestion in the MTR Nathan Road Corridor, overload the MTR Cheung Sha Wan station and the MTR/KCR interchange at Kowloon Tong, and require substantial expenditure in providing an interchange station with the Airport Railway at Cheung Sha Wan.

2.17 The RDS proposals for Hong Kong Island were also re-examined and it was considered that their scope and timing remain appropriate. For the West HK Island Line, the alignment proposed in the RDS is the most cost-effective choice and changing it would not make the scheme cheaper. This railway would be very expensive, even for a shorter section from Sheung Wan to Sai Ying Pun, and could not be justified on transport grounds. Its implementation could only be considered in the context of the future development of the proposed Green Island Reclamation, which could add significantly to the population of the area. Regarding the proposed South HK Island Line, this could be reconsidered if and when it becomes justified on transport grounds, notwithstanding the planned road improvement schemes. For the proposed North HK Island Line, the additional study suggested that the type of system to be provided should be left open at this stage, for consideration later once the scale of development on the reclamation was decided. As regards the suggestion to extend the MTR Island Line to Siu Sai Wan, the additional study revealed that such an extension would require a 2.8 km tunnel, costing about $2.3 billion (in 1994 prices), and would not be viable.
THE RAILWAY DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

3.1 The Railway Development Strategy derives from the RDS and the results of additional studies undertaken following the public consultation exercise (as described in Section 2 above). In formulating this strategy, account has been taken of a wide range of issues, including transport needs, land use planning and environmental, operational and resource aspects.

The Strategy - the railway network

3.2 The various components of the network are described in the following paragraphs and are illustrated in Figure 2.
Figure 2  The Recommended Railway Network
The Western Corridor

3.3 The Western Corridor would be a new north-south railway running from the border via Kam Tin to the urban area. It would accommodate three rail services, as set out below -

(a) A *Port Rail Line (Figure 3-1)*, from the border via Kam Tin and Tsuen Wan to a Port Rail Terminal probably located in the back up area of Container Terminal No. 8 at Kwai Chung. A possible site for train marshalling and freight handling has been identified near Fanling.

(b) A *Cross Border Passenger Service (Figure 3-2)*, from the border to a terminal at West Kowloon. The proposed location for the terminal is adjacent to the Airport Railway's West Kowloon station. In order to provide early relief for the Lo Wu crossing, a branch line from the existing KCR line at Sheung Shui to a new passenger crossing point possibly at Lok Ma Chau could form the first phase of the project, subject to agreement with the Chinese side.
A Sub-regional Passenger Service (Figure 3-3), which would provide a high speed rail link connecting the urban area with the North West New Territories, via Kam Tin, Yuen Long and Tin Shui Wai before terminating at Tuen Mun North. Consideration could be given to extending the link to Tuen Mun Town Centre at a later date. The LRT system would provide a feeder service to this new rail link. In the urban area, the Sub-regional Service would terminate at a station in West Kowloon, where passengers could interchange with the Airport Railway. The station at either Kwai Fong or Mei Foo Sun Tsuen could provide an interchange with the MTR Tsuen Wan Line, while other intermediate stations might be provided at Tsuen Wan waterfront and Cheung Sha Wan. Station sites and interchanges with the MTR system would be subject to further detailed examination prior to implementation.
The Eastern Corridor

3.4 The Eastern Corridor would comprise a MTR extension to Tseung Kwan O and an East Kowloon Route which is an improved rail system serving the North East New Territories and east Kowloon, using the existing KCR mainline as its backbone.

(a) For the MTR Tseung Kwan O Extension (Figure 4-1), the line would run from the existing Lam Tin station, via Tiu Keng Ling, Tseung Kwan O to Po Lam. As part of the scheme, and subject to detailed studies, the MTR Kwun Tong Line may need to be extended from Quarry Bay to Tin Hau to relieve interchange congestion at Quarry Bay station.
(b) For the East Kowloon Route (EKR) (Figure 4-2), the preferred schemes are -

(i) an underground extension of the existing KCR line from Hung Hom to Tsim Sha Tsui, which could ultimately be extended to West Kowloon to interchange with the Airport Railway and the Western Corridor;

(ii) an ICS rail link from Ma On Shan to Tai Wai, the same time as the implementation of the KCR extension to Tsim Sha Tsui;

(iii) an ICS rail link from Diamond Hill to Hung Hom, depending on the scale and programme for development of the South East Kowloon reclamation and the former Kai Tak site; and

(iv) further improvements to the Kowloon Tong interchange.
Hong Kong Island Lines

3.5 The Hong Kong Island lines accord with the original RDS proposals (Figure 5):

(a) The *South HK Island Line* would be an ICS rail system connecting Aberdeen, Ap Lei Chau, Telegraph Bay and Wong Chuk Hang with Admiralty, but with a low priority for implementation.

(b) The *North HK Island Line* would provide an additional east-west rail link on the north shore of Hong Kong Island. The type of rail system, ICS or MTR, and the timing would depend on the form and density of development on the new reclamation.

(c) The *West HK Island Line* would be an extension of the existing MTR Island Line from Sheung Wan, via Kennedy Town, to the proposed Green Island reclamation. The extension's viability will depend on the development of the proposed reclamation.
Long Term Options

3.6 (a) The "Outer" Western Corridor proposed by the RDS has been kept in the recommended network. With the Yuen Long to Tuen Mun North link now included as part of the NWNT Sub-regional link, this Corridor could ultimately connect Tuen Mun, Yam O and Green Island.

(b) The second Port Rail Line to the Lantau port has also been kept in the recommended network.

The tentative alignments of these long term schemes are shown in Figure 6.
The Strategy - priorities and implementation sequence

3.7 In determining the priorities and timing for implementation of the recommended rail schemes, account has been taken of:

(a) the extent to which each project serves Hong Kong's transport needs, and in particular its ability to relieve critical transport corridors;

(b) the economic benefits and financial viability of the scheme; and

(c) the extent to which the scheme benefits land use development.

Using these criteria, the projects identified in the strategy have been categorized as Group A, Group B or Group C projects for implementation purposes.

Group A projects

3.8 The Group A projects are those railway proposals which are accorded highest priority. They are needed to provide relief for critical transport corridors or to serve committed developments, and are economically viable. The projects to be included in Group A are:

(a) *The Western Corridor* comprising the Port Rail Line, the Cross Border Passenger Service and the Sub-regional Passenger Service, including an extension to Tuen Mun North.

(b) *The MTR Tseung Kwan O Extension*

(c) *The East Kowloon Route - KCR extension from Hung Hom to Tsim Sha Tsui and a railway from Ma On Shan to Tai Wai.*

3.9 The three projects above are proposed to be implemented by 2001. The actual construction and commissioning programme will be established after completion of detailed implementation studies.

Group B projects

3.10 The Group B projects are those railway proposals which are at present less urgent in terms of transport need and whose implementation depends on land use and infrastructure development. Because of the present uncertainty surrounding these schemes, it would be premature to set firm target dates for their implementation. They will be kept under close review and implementation will be considered once the uncertainty is removed. Recommended schemes classified as Group B projects, together with factors affecting their implementation priority, are described below:

(a) *Extension of NWNT Sub-regional Passenger Service from Tuen Mun North to Tuen Mun Central* : With the NWNT passenger line now planned for extension to Tuen Mun North, Tuen Mun residents would be able to make use of the system with reasonable ease using the LRT as a feeder service. Further extension of the line from Tuen Mun North to Tuen Mun Central would depend on population build up in Tuen Mun, and the
capacity of the LRT as a feeder and of the proposed LRT/NWNT line interchange at Tuen Mun North. The probable alignment of this further extension would require further study from the environmental and engineering standpoints.

(b) **East Kowloon Route - KCR Extension from Tsim Sha Tsui to West Kowloon**: Possible further extension of the KCR main line from Tsim Sha Tsui to West Kowloon would depend on the implementation of the proposed Kowloon Point reclamation.

(c) **East Kowloon Route - ICS from Diamond Hill to Hung Hom**: This will depend on the scale and programme for development for Southeast Kowloon Reclamation and the former Kai Tak site.

(d) **South HK Island Line**: The planned road system should have the capacity to meet forecast transport demands. Population growth in the area, as well as the programme for the Route 7 trunk road from Western District to Aberdeen, will have a bearing on the timing of the project.

(e) **West HK Island Line including extension to Green Island**: This project will depend on the scale and timing of development of the proposed Green Island reclamation.

(f) **North HK Island Line**: This project will depend on the development programme for the Central and Wanchai reclamation.

**Group C projects**

3.11 The Group C projects are essentially proposals which depend on longer term land and port developments. Though the need for these proposals has yet to be firmly established in all cases, they are considered to be logical extensions of the railway system. It is necessary at this stage to reserve land for these projects (as well as those in Groups A and B) so as to ensure that their future implementation will not be frustrated by other developments. Like the Group B projects, these projects will be kept under review and considered for implementation when justified. Proposals classified as Group C projects are:

(a) The "Outer" Western Corridor - Tuen Mun to Yam O Link, Yam O to Green Island Link; and

(b) The second Port Rail Line to Lantau Port

**Summary**

3.12 A summary of the railway projects according to their grouping is given in Table 1 below and is shown in Figure 7. The costings will need to be refined following detailed financial, engineering and environmental studies, to be carried out once the strategy is approved.
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Notes:

1. MOD = Money of the Day

   MOD costs can only be given for the Group A projects, since these have target implementation date.

2. A range of costs is given for each project to cater for possible fluctuation in the assumed construction price. The costs are indicative at this stage and will need to be reviewed once detailed engineering and financial studies have been undertaken.

3. The figures exclude the cost of land resumption.
Figure 7  Priorities and Implementation Sequence
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