

Press ReleasePR079/07
23 October 2007**Green Light for Further Planning and Detailed Design of MTR West Island Line**

The MTR Corporation welcomes the Executive Council's decision today to ask the Corporation to proceed with further planning and detailed design of the MTR West Island Line (WIL).

The decision of the Executive Council marks an important milestone for the WIL project, which will extend the existing MTR Island Line from Sheung Wan to Kennedy Town, via Sai Ying Pun and University at an estimated project cost at HK\$8.9 billion in 2006 prices. The 3-km extension will bring substantial economic, social and environmental benefits to the community of HK\$44 billion over 40 years of operation and generate about 3,000 employment opportunities.

After the completion of WIL, the travelling time between Western District and the other parts of Hong Kong will be significantly reduced. "The West Island Line will provide convenient and reliable MTR service to the 200,000 people living and working in the Western District. The estimated journey time from Kennedy Town to Sheung Wan and Tsim Sha Tsui will be reduced to 8 and 14 minutes by rail respectively," said Mr Lincoln Leong, Acting Chief Executive Officer of MTR Corporation.

MTR Corporation has carried out extensive public consultation since 2005, the railway project is widely supported by the community. "In planning the West Island Line, we adopt a 'Community Railway' concept. We will take the opportunity during railway construction to rejuvenate the Western District by improving public facilities in the area. For example, the re-provisioning of David Trench Rehabilitation Centre, Kennedy Town Public Swimming Pool as well as the building of lifts and escalators at Sands Street will be included in the project. These will greatly enhance the connectivity in the community."

The estimated project cost of WIL is about HK\$8.9 billion, funding support of approximately HK\$6 billion is required from HKSAR Government to bridge the funding gap of the railway project. Since there is no suitable site along West Island Line alignment for property development, the Government will provide funding support in the way of capital grant in two stages, which is commonly adopted for public works funding in Hong Kong. The first stage funding support expected later will cover the expenditure of the design phase. The second stage funding support covering the funding gap arising from the construction is expected after the completion of the detailed design when a more accurate estimate of the project cost is available.

While the funding gap of WIL will be bridged by capital grant, the Government will consider the most viable options for providing funding support for each railway project on a case-by-case basis. The rail plus property model will remain as possible option.

Following the gazette of the WIL scheme later in October 2007, the detailed design and preparatory works of WIL will be carried out in parallel. It is expected that the construction of the project will commence in 2009 and is expected to complete in 2013 or 2014.

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