

**Report of the 91st
Environmental Impact Assessment Subcommittee Meeting**

Introduction

At its meeting held on 21 February 2005, the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Subcommittee considered the EIA report on Kowloon Southern Link. Separately, the Subcommittee considered a paper submitted by the Airport Authority reporting the results of the bubble jacket noise attenuation trial and test. When endorsing the EIA report on Permanent Aviation Fuel Facility at the Council meeting held on 29 July 2002, it was agreed that the results of the trial and test should be reported to the EIA Subcommittee before piling commenced. The majority of Members endorsed that the recommendations of the report were agreeable and the paper needed not be discussed at the Subcommittee meeting.

Advice Sought

2. Members are requested to advise whether the EIA report on Kowloon Southern Link could be endorsed without condition. Members are also invited to note the views of the Subcommittee on the report of the bubble jacket noise attenuation trial and test results.

Views of the EIA Subcommittee

EIA report on Kowloon Southern Link (KSL)

(ACE-EIA Paper 1/2005)

Need for the project

3. The project will connect the East Tsim Sha Tsui Station to the West Rail Nam Cheong Station and provide a railway link for residents in the North West New Territories to reach the Tsim Sha Tsui area using West Rail without the need to interchange or to connect to other areas served by the East Rail with convenient interchanges at Hung

Hom Station.

Description of the project

4. The project comprises the following key items -
- (i) A 3.7 km underground railway with its alignment running under Salisbury Road, Canton Road and the West Kowloon Reclamation area;
 - (ii) A station, the West Kowloon Station, at West Kowloon;
 - (iii) A centralized fresh-water cooling facility within the West Kowloon Station to serve both the station and the tunnel;
 - (iv) Two ventilation/plant buildings to provide tunnel cooling and ventilation: the Yau Mai Tei Ventilation Building and the Canton Road Plant Building;
 - (v) An Emergency Egress Point at Canton Road south of No. 1 Peking Road.

Members' views

5. Members noted that the project would be carried out in a densely developed area and a tourist centre. They also noted through mass media that the local community had raised concerns on the potential environmental and visual impacts of the project. Members' views expressed during the meeting focused mainly on construction methodologies in tunneling, noise impact, waste control, dust control, landscape and visual impact, monitoring work and scope of public consultation.

Construction methodologies in tunneling

6. On the construction methodologies in tunneling, the project proponent team explained that the cut and cover tunneling technique, which was considered a less environmental friendly technique than the others, would be unavoidable for most part of the tunnel sections due to various physical constraints. To cater for future plan of a through train from West Rail to Hung Hom Station, the use of tunneling techniques was constrained by existing structures, like the Nam Cheong Station and box culvert at Cherry Street with fixed vertical alignments; the need to take into account the future huge interchange at Yau Mei Tei area; and gradient capacity of the proposed alignment. On the scheduling of tunneling work at Salisbury Road, the project proponent team explained that while the tunneling work of the whole project would take about two and a half years' time, the duration of road work for each section would be limited to a few months.

Noise impact

7. On the noise impact, Members noted that the predicted noise level at two schools, namely Lai Chack Middle School and Canton Road Government School, and Man King Building would exceed the criteria. The project proponent team explained that the anticipated level of exceedance was about 4dB(A) for about two months and 2dB(A) for about four months for the schools and Man King Building respectively. The assessment of the noise level was taken outside the facades under open window condition. The impact for the schools was expected to be much reduced under closed window condition and with the provision of air-conditioning which had been installed under the requirement of the Road Traffic Noise Abatement Scheme. As for Man King Building, the noise would mainly affect the residents at the lower and middle level directly facing the tunnel construction. Members were pleased to note that a continuous onsite noise monitoring mechanism throughout the entire construction period would be implemented at one of the schools and Man King Building. The monitoring results, in table and graph formats, would be uploaded to a designated website which would largely enhance the transparency in monitoring the noise level. Under normal circumstances, the results could be uploaded to the website after about 29 hours in capturing the close to real time noise level. Updated information would also be conveyed to the sensitive receivers through regular updates in community liaison groups. Members noted that, according to the Environmental Monitoring and Auditing (EM&A) Manual, appropriate actions would be taken if the acceptable and/or predicted noise levels were exceeded.

Waste Control

8. On the waste control, the project proponent team noted Members' request for maximizing the beneficial reuse of construction and demolition materials and minimizing disposal at public fill. They explained that efforts had been exerted to identify means to minimize waste generation and maximize reuse of construction and demolition materials at the outset during the design stage. As to the possibility of maximizing the reuse of rock during the construction phase, the project proponent team explained that there would be technical limitations as the rock cutting from TBM operation would be fairly flat and small which would not be suitable for use as aggregates. Nonetheless, they would monitor the generation of waste closely with a view to maximizing reuse. Regarding waste water, the project proponent team agreed to review the content of potential waste water generated during the operational phase to ensure proper disposal method would be adopted.

Dust control

9. On the dust control, the project proponent team explained that the reference to USEPA standard on dust impact assessment mainly referred to dust emission factor from soil. The target and objectives of dust control were governed by air quality objectives used in Hong Kong. Members noted some variances in the frequency of watering in different sites. The project proponent team explained that the projected frequency of watering was based on a number of factors such as wind direction. During the EM&A process, the frequency of watering would be closely monitored and reinforced where necessary. Regarding the possibility of further enhancing dust barrier, the project proponent team explained that stockpiles of soil would be covered by impervious membrane and water would be sprayed on open surface, which were considered the most effective methods to minimize dust dispersion. On the issue of footprint, the area of site in the current proposal had already been much reduced in some areas as compared with that in the gazettal in March 2004. Members also noted that the dust impact assessment had taken into account a background Total Suspended Particulates (TSP) concentration in accordance with the “urban” category in EPD’s Guidelines on Assessing “Total” Air Quality Impacts. Moreover, a baseline measurement would be conducted before the construction started under the requirement of EM&A program as a reference for future dust monitoring.

Landscape and Visual impact

10. On the visual impact of the project, the project proponent team noted Members’ grave concern that Tsim Sha Tsui was an important tourist centre and a densely developed area. To minimize the degree of visual impact during the construction phase, mitigating measures such as enhanced hoardings and retaining walls would be used to make the project more visually acceptable. They were seeking the advice from the major sensitive receivers like hotels on the use of site hoardings with graphics on the upper portion to beautify the area. Members considered that the design and visual impact of the project after construction should be in line with the local characteristics of the region as well as the world-class image of a tourist center. Members also noted that decision had not yet been made on the development plan of the residential and/or commercial development above/near the West Kowloon Station. The exact design of the Station had yet to be confirmed.

11. On the possibility of further minimizing tree loss, the project proponent team noted Members’ concern and explained that they had made concerted efforts to minimize the loss of tree. Given the construction line of 3.7 km long and constraints faced, the number of tree loss had been kept to the minimal. Moreover, a minimum of 80% of the

affected trees of high amenity value would be transplanted. The project proponent team agreed to consider Members' suggestion to display potted plants along the affected sites during the construction phase. Members also noted that a public comment had been received by DEP expressing their disagreement that the visual impact on the Former Marine Police Headquarters (FMPHQ) redevelopment was insubstantial after mitigation. The project proponent team explained that they were discussing with the developer of the FMPHQ site to explore the possibility of integrating the emergency egress point structure with the FMPHQ redevelopment to make it more natural. DEP had also discussed with the relevant authorities which reconfirmed that the commentator's concern was not substantiated but welcomed further negotiation between the developer and project proponent.

Monitoring work

12. On the monitoring work of the project, the project proponent team stressed that they would deploy in-house resident site staff to supervise the contractor directly so as to ensure close monitoring and immediate action could be taken as soon as possible where necessary. Moreover, the independent environmental checkers would work directly to them rather than the contractor which could ensure the independence of the monitoring and auditing work. As the project would be a design and built contract, the contractors would have to submit construction method statements to the project proponent in the tenders. Construction could not be commenced without their endorsement. In the EM&A Manual, there would be action plans to indicate measures to be taken if the acceptable levels were exceeded.

Scope of public consultation

13. On the scope of public consultation, the project proponent team noted Members' concern on the importance of community involvement. The project proponent explained that, like the projects in Tsim Sha Tsui extension and Ma On Shan rail, they would set up community liaison groups with representatives of the affected buildings, like Chairpersons of Owners' Incorporations and District Counsellors, as well as task forces with hotels and business operators. Regular meetings would be held to update them with the progress of the project and to address their concerns.

Other Issues

14. The project proponent team agreed to consider Members' suggestion to promote the use of renewable energy and recycling/green materials, such as recycled fences, tiles and glasses in buildings and concourse areas, during the construction and

operational phases to show their support to the recycling industry and products.

Conclusion

15. Having regard to the findings and recommendations of the EIA report, Members agreed to recommend the report to the Council for endorsement without condition. Members were pleased to note that the environmental checker would work directly under the project proponent to enhance independent monitoring and auditing; community liaison groups would be set up to address concerns of sensitive receivers; and continuous onsite noise monitoring mechanism would be adopted to enhance transparency in monitoring. These would set good examples for future project proponents. Members' overall recommendations and suggestions are summarized as follows -

- (a) the project proponent should make concerted effort to minimize environmental and visual impacts having regard that the site was a densely developed area and a tourist center;
- (b) the project proponent should make effort to further reduce waste and disposal at public fill;
- (c) the project proponent should review the content of waste water generated during the operational phase to ensure proper disposal approach;
- (d) the design and visual impact of the project after construction should be in line with the local characteristics of the region as well as the world-class image of a tourist center;
- (e) considerations should be made to further enhance community involvement; and
- (f) considerations should be made to the use of renewable energy and recycling/green materials during the construction and operational phases.