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ACE Paper 14/2009

For advice on 14 September 2009

**Report on the 109th
Environmental Impact Assessment Subcommittee Meeting**

INTRODUCTION

On 3 August 2009, the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Subcommittee considered the EIA report on “Hong Kong Section of Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link” submitted by the MTR Corporation Limited (ACE-EIA Paper 7/2009 refers).

ADVICE SOUGHT

2. Members are requested to consider the views of the Subcommittee and advise on the EIA report.

THE PROJECT

Need for the project

3. The EIA report points out that the project will form part of the national high-speed railway network, connecting Hong Kong with Guangzhou, with intermediate stations at Futian, Longhua and Humen, outside of Hong Kong. It will provide a fast and convenient railway service linking the cities, with the journey time between Hong Kong and Guangzhou reduced from about 100 minutes as at present to about 50 minutes. With the project’s Mainland section connected to the Beijing-Guangzhou Passenger Line and the Hangzhou-Fuzhou-Shenzhen Passenger Line, Hong Kong can be connected directly with major Mainland cities,

such as Beijing and Shanghai, as well as other major cities in the Pearl River Delta via the Intercity Rapid Rail.

4. The EIA report states that the project will help promote Hong Kong as the gateway to the Pearl River Delta area, further strengthening the economic ties and cooperation between Hong Kong and the Mainland, promote mutual economic prosperity and development, and raise the competitiveness of the region as a whole.

Description of the project

5. The project is a 26 km long underground railway running from West Kowloon to boundary at Huanggang, as shown in **Figures 1 to 3 at Annex A**. **Figure 4 at Annex A** shows the protected areas in the Northern Section of the XRL project. The Terminus of the project will be at West Kowloon in Hong Kong and will be provided with boundary crossing facilities. The project comprises a West Kowloon Terminus, eight ventilation buildings, one emergency access point, Stabling Sidings and maintenance facilities at Shek Kong, and an Emergency Rescue Station located next to the Stabling Sidings. The project constitutes a designated project by virtue of the following items in Schedule 2, Part I of the EIA Ordinance (EIAO):

- (i) a railway and its associated stations (Item A.2 of Part I of Schedule 2 of the EIAO);
- (ii) a railway siding and maintenance workshop (Item A.4 of Part I of Schedule 2 of the EIAO);
- (iii) a railway tunnel more than 800 m in length between portals (Item A.7 of Part 1 of Schedule 2 of the EIAO); and
- (iv) project includes works partly or wholly in a country park or special area, a conservation area, and a site of special scientific interest (Item Q.1 of Part 1 of Schedule 2 of the EIAO).

Consideration of alternative options

6. In the EIA report, alternatives or options with respect to railway alignment, locations of the major facilities and construction methods are provided. The preferred options have taken into account environmental factors as well as other considerations such as geographical and geological consideration, land resumption, site constraints, constructability, operation flexibility, maintenance and disruption to the community.

VIEWS OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE

7. Members noted that the public inspection period of the EIA report was from 21 July 2009 to 19 August 2009. Public comments received by the Environmental Protection Department (EPD) before the Subcommittee meeting were circulated to Members for reference before the meeting. Public comments received after the Subcommittee meeting will be circulated to all Council Members for reference before the Council meeting. Separately, the written response of the project proponent to some Members' questions and comments was circulated to Subcommittee Members for information before the Subcommittee meeting.

8. Members noted that a submission directly addressed to the EIA Subcommittee regarding the EIA report was received shortly before the Subcommittee meeting. The submission was circulated to Subcommittee Members for reference before the meeting.

9. A summary of issues discussed by the Subcommittee is at **Annex B**.

RECOMMENDATION OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE

10. Having regard to the findings and recommendations of the EIA report and information provided by the project proponent, the Subcommittee agreed to recommend to the full Council that the EIA report could be endorsed with the following proposed conditions –

- (a) the project proponent should submit a tree planting and landscape plan, including the compensatory woodland, in consultation with the

Planning Department and Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department, for approval by the Director of Environmental Protection (DEP);

- (b) the project proponent should submit a contingency plan to deal with any unforeseeable incidents which might affect the ground water level;
- (c) the project proponent should prohibit the disposal of any construction and demolition (C&D) materials generated by the project at the landfills, with the exception of the non-inert C&D wastes and the small amount of properly treated contaminated wastes;
- (d) the project proponent should take action to restore any fly-tipping sites found to be dumped with C&D materials generated by the project;
- (e) the project proponent should submit an updated C&D material management plan to the DEP within three months of the commencement of the construction works; and
- (f) the project proponent should set up community liaison groups comprising representatives of concerned and affected parties, including local committees, residents and schools in the affected areas along the railway alignment, to facilitate communications, enquiries and complaints handling on all environmental issues. A designated complaint hotline should also be set up for the project to address such concerns and complaints in an efficient manner.

EIA Subcommittee Secretariat
August 2009