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**for information**

## **ADVISORY COUNCIL ON THE ENVIRONMENT**

**Meeting on 29 April 1996**

**Information Paper on**  
**Kowloon-Canton Railway Corporation**  
**West Rail**

## **Background**

In December 1994, Government published the *Railway Development Strategy (RD Strategy)*, which provided an overall planning framework for the development of the Territory's railway network. In particular, the *RD Strategy* gave high priority to the Western Corridor Railway, the title of which has now been shortened to West Rail (Figure 1), calling for an in-service date of 2001. Subsequently, on 26 January 1995, the Government Secretariat, Transport Branch, invited KCRC to submit a proposal for the construction and operation of the West Rail, consistent with the *RD Strategy*.

Accordingly, KCRC performed a Detailed Feasibility Study (DFS) as the basis for its response to Government's invitation and an Initial Proposal was submitted for preliminary discussion with Government in June 1995. The KCRC's Full Proposal in response to Government's invitation was submitted in November 1995 the Summary Report of which is attached.

During the course of the DFS, KCRC has determined that the West Rail is indeed feasible, subject to satisfactory agreement with Government on legal, financial, land resumption, technical and environmental matters.

The purpose of this information paper and the associated presentation, is to appraise the Council of the details of the proposal, explain the environmental work completed to date and the way in which the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) will be taken forward. It is intended to return on two further occasions to brief the Council during the course of the EIA process.

## **West Rail Benefits**

The West Rail is aimed at satisfying critical regional transport needs and should result in significant benefits to Hong Kong.

It will provide a railway which will serve:

- North West New Territories commuters
- Cross-border and through-train passengers
- Freight customers

Whilst the proposed West Rail passenger and freight services will bring significant economic benefit to the territory they will also provide an important environmental benefit.

By removing from the road transport system nearly 2.0 million containers per year by the year 2011, together with carrying 720,000 passengers per day who would otherwise travel by car or bus, the West Rail will have a significant impact on future total vehicle emissions throughout the territory.

### **Preliminary Environmental Investigation (PEI)**

The DFS included a preliminary look at the potential environmental issues and problems that the West Rail may create during both the construction and operational phases. Attached to this paper is a copy of the Summary Report of the PEI which provides an outline of all the key environmental issues examined which will be discussed further during the presentation to the Council.

The PEI concluded that there were a number of key environmental concerns that need to be comprehensively examined in the full EIA and these concerns will be addressed using the PEI as the basis of the necessary investigations and evaluations.

### **The Way Forward**

It is envisaged that the EIA will commence shortly and be undertaken in tandem with technical studies leading to detailed design.

Potential environmental impacts requiring mitigation will be analysed, and where appropriate, measures taken in the design process to overcome the problem. Similarly, if mitigation can be achieved by particular construction or operating methods, then appropriate requirements will be included in the construction and operational contract documentation and procedures.

### **Programme**

In order to keep the Council fully informed of the environmental issues associated with the project it is intended to present the output from the EIA at two stages during its progress. After approximately six months an Interim EIA report will be produced which will address in detail all the important environmental issues and recommend ways of overcoming any potentially unacceptable impacts. At this stage we envisage being able to establish that there will be no insurmountable environmental problems associated with the project.

During the next six months detailed mitigation measures will be produced together with monitoring and audit requirements, all of which will be presented to the Council in the Final EIA Report.

While the EIA process is actively being pursued, the Corporation will also need to press ahead in parallel with other planning prerequisites, such as effecting railway gazetting and land resumption processes. Such a working programme is essential if the target completion date of 2001 is to be achieved. However, the Council should rest assured that these other planning procedures would in no way pre-empt the EIA work and that a decision to build the railway would only be considered after the Council has fully considered and endorsed the Final EIA Report.

### **Conclusions**

It is KCRC's intention to ensure that all environmental issues are adequately addressed during engineering design, construction and operational phases of the West Rail so that environmental considerations become an integral part of the day to day implementation of the project.



Figure 1 West Rail Alignment