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Press Release

New XRL Option Confirmed as Feasible

XRL Expert Group Invites the Government for Putting Forward the New Option Together

The “Integrated Option” proposal from the “Express Rail Link Expert Group” (hereafter the “XRL Expert Group”) of The Professional Commons announced on last Wednesday (7 October) has received significant attention. Members of the XRL Expert Group met with Government officials and the engineers from the MTR last Monday. In response, the Government has originally agreed to provide relevant information by this Wednesday (14 October), but they have delayed until late evening yesterday for sending out the information. Hence, the proposed second meeting which is originally scheduled to be held today, did not take place.

Establishment of a “Joint Steering Group”

Taking reference from the preliminary responses from the Government in the past week, the XRL Expert Group has taken further studies and on-site investigations. It has been confirmed that not only there are no technical obstacles that could not be resolved under the new option, the goals of tremendous social and economic benefits, “cheaper, faster and better”, could also be reached. The technical issues raised by the Government officials are merely side issues, which could be resolved during the further designing stage of the project. In regard to the underestimation of construction costs, the Government officials fail to provide the relevant data. Even though there might have been normal discrepancies in the estimation of the costs, it would not alter our conclusion in which the “Integrated Option” could save tens of billions of public money, as well as providing further convenience to 4 million members of the general public.

In light of this, The Professional Commons sent a letter to Ms. Eva Cheng, Secretary for Transport and Housing today, recommending the establishment of a “Joint Working Group”, comprising members of the XRL Expert Group, as well as Government officials. The “Joint Steering Group” should take up the task of fine-tuning the design, as well as

nominating an independent consultant to study and clarify various technical issues. Members of the “XRL Expert Group” are willing to contribute their professional expertise on this project at no cost for the common good.

New Option Could be Launched at the End of the Year

Chairman of The Professional Commons, Albert Lai stated: “Through the assistance of the independent consultant, the “Joint Steering Group” is able to verify the cost effectiveness of the “Integrated Option” for the public in a month or two, as long as the Government would not delay the study process. Should the new proposal be adopted, the Government could launch the relevant procedures by the end of this year. As the engineering works of the new option is relatively simple, it could save two years of construction time as compared to the Government’s option. Hence, the whole project could be completed in 2015 as scheduled. The Government, on behalf of the general public, should not miss the opportunity to make the brilliant decision of simply spending one month’s time to save HK\$30 billion for the general public as a whole.”

For the general public to better understand and compare the pros and cons of the two proposals on the Express Rail Link, The Professional Commons has already invited the Government to attend a public forum on 8 November.

The “XRL Expert Group” also published an investigation report of “Study of the Location of the High-speed Rail Terminus of the Major Cities in the Mainland”, and a planning study entitled “Seven Sins of West Kowloon Terminus” today.

The Majority of the Terminus of the High-speed Rail are not Located in the City Centre

Member of the “XRL Expert Group”, Dr. Leung Kai-chi, stated, “Out of the 16 cities along the lines of the “Beijing-Hong Kong Passenger Express Rail Link” and the “East-South Passenger Express Rail Link”, the high speed rail terminuses in 10 cities are located far away from the city centre. Hence, we can reach the conclusion that the decision for locating the terminuses high speed rail link should be decided upon the principle of “seeking truth from facts” and to **suit the local circumstances and conditions. Our planning study has already pointed out the seven problems on making the terminus of the XRL at West Kowloon, Hence, merely having the advantage of “reaching direct to the urban area” is unable to offset with the costs and negative factors, the loss overweighs the gains.**”

Attachments:

1. Letter from The Professional Commons to the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Ms. Eva Cheng
2. Responses from the Government departments on the provision of technical information from the XRL Expert Group
3. Presentation of the “Study of the Location of the High-speed Rail Terminus of the Major Cities in the Mainland”
4. “Seven Sins of West Kowloon Terminus” Planning Study

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