

Press Statement

12 October 2009

Express Rail Link for Hong Kong Government Agrees to explore better options

Nine members of the Railway Expert Group of the Professional Commons met government representatives today to discuss the Express Rail Link project. The government delegation was led by Mr SM Yau, Under-secretary of Transport and Housing Bureau, with the support of Bureau officials and engineers from the Highways Department and MTRC.

Although the government currently recommends the West Kowloon Terminus Option, both parties agreed that it is important to allow the public to fully understand the feasibility and comparative merits of the current proposed option involving a West Kowloon Terminus, and the Integrated Option proposed by the Expert Group. It was also agreed that all participating professionals should be encouraged to conduct the discussions on the basis of hard fact and good science without political interference.

Ir Ron Taylor, a core member of the Expert Group and an experienced railway engineer who attended the meeting, commented, "I am glad to see that the government did not reject our Integrated Option and is willing to explore the issues further. We had useful exchanges with the engineers around the table. Based on the discussion, we have sent an information request list this afternoon to the government. The government and MTRC have promised to provide us with more information on Wednesday and we have tentatively agreed to another meeting this Friday."

Ir Albert Lai, Chairman of the Professional Commons, remarked, "The current government scheme, even at its original estimate of \$39.5 billion, is already 2.3 times more expensive on a per-km basis than the world's most expensive railway, the channel tunnel, and 8 times more expensive than the Beijing-Shanghai express rail currently under construction. If we can find an option that is more convenient for most of the community but at a substantially lower cost, it will be a big win for Hong Kong. To allow the public to understand the pros and cons of both options, we have proposed to hold a public debate and I hope it can take place soon."

Attachment: Information Request List by Expert Group to Government