

LCQ7: Loading pressure borne by MTR East Rail Line during peak periods of outbound travel

Following is a question by the Hon Dominic Lee and a written reply by the Acting Secretary for Transport and Logistics, Mr Liu Chun-san, in the Legislative Council today (April 24):

Question:

It has been reported that during the long Easter holidays from the end of last month till early this month, there were over 1.98 million outbound passenger trips bound for the Mainland made by local residents. It is learnt that the flow of outbound passengers mainly concentrated at two rail-based boundary control points (BCPs), namely, Lo Wu and Lok Ma Chau Spur Line, and the MTR East Rail Line (ERL) had been overloaded by a large number of cross-boundary passengers. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it knows the daily total number of passenger trips carried by ERL between the 28th of last month and the 1st of this month;

(2) given that there are views that as the Labour Day holiday of the Mainland is approaching, a large number of Mainland residents will, upon arrival at Hong Kong via local rail-based BCPs, board ERL trains bound for the urban areas, whether the authorities have assessed the additional patronage that will be brought to ERL by Mainland visitors during the Labour Day holiday of the Mainland; and

(3) as there are views pointing out that ERL has been overloaded by a large number of cross-boundary travellers during the peak period of outbound travel, whether the authorities will arrange tour coaches travelling between urban areas and Heung Yuen Wai BCP as well as Shenzhen Bay Port during the peak period of outbound travel, so as to avoid ERL being overcrowded; if not, of the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

In consultation with the Transport Department (TD) and the MTR Corporation Limited (MTRCL), my reply to the question raised by the Hon Dominic Lee is as follows:

(1) According to the information provided by the MTRCL, the total patronage of the East Rail Line (EAL) between March 28 and April 1, 2024 is tabulated below:

	March 28 (Thursday)	March 29 (Friday)	March 30 (Saturday)	March 31 (Sunday)	April 1 (Monday)
EAL Total Patronage	907 700	738 600	718 200	749 300	653 200

During the Easter holidays, the MTRCL kept close contact with the relevant departments at the boundary control points (BCPs) and made corresponding adjustments to train frequencies in light of the situation at the BCPs. It also stepped up information dissemination and public announcement, and deployed additional staff to assist passengers and maintain station order.

(2) To meet the travel needs of passengers during festive periods, the relevant government departments will coordinate with the public transport operators in advance so as to enhance public transport services and crowd management according to the anticipated passenger flow. During the festive period, all relevant parties will also closely monitor and respond to the actual situation of travellers using the various BCPs and public transport services, to make timely adjustments to service arrangements.

For railway services, the MTRCL will assess patronage during the Labour Day holidays of the Mainland this year by making reference to the patronage and travel patterns of passengers in the past festive periods and make preparations, including enhancing the services of various railway lines as needed. During the festive period, the MTRCL will maintain close contact with relevant departments at the various BCPs, so as to flexibly adjust the EAL train services in a timely manner according to the situation at the BCPs. Moreover, additional staff will be deployed to the busier stations to facilitate passenger flow and assist passengers. The MTRCL is devising plans for the train services during the Labour Day holidays and will announce the details in due course.

(3) There are currently a total of seven land BCPs between Hong Kong and Shenzhen. The Government has always been planning the appropriate public transport connections having regard to the respective nature and positioning of the BCPs. The Government and the public transport operators also closely monitor the changes in travel patterns and number of travellers, with a view to adjusting the relevant services as and when needed to facilitate the flow of people between the two places.

The TD has been working with the public transport operators to draw up plans ahead of the peak periods of cross-boundary travel to cope with the transport demand during the period. Regarding cross-boundary coach services, to address the transport demand of cross-boundary travellers and facilitate their travel via various BCPs/Ports during the Labour Day holidays, the TD has coordinated with the relevant Mainland authorities to issue additional ad-hoc quotas of 140 for Shenzhen Bay Port and 100 for Heung Yuen Wai Control Point to cross-boundary coach operators, so that the number of daily trips of the relevant cross-boundary coaches will increase by 30 per cent from 1 498 on normal days to 1 978 in total. The cross-boundary coach operators will also deploy adequate staff at the BCPs/Ports and major passenger pick-up

points in the city to assist in maintaining order in passenger queueing and waiting.

Travellers can also make use of the various existing local franchised buses and public light buses to travel to/from the land BCPs, including Shenzhen Bay Port, Heung Yuen Wai Control Point and Lok Ma Chau Spur Line Control Point. The TD is co-ordinating with the various public transport operators to arrange for adequate staff and vehicles to meet the demand for cross-boundary land transport during the Labour Day holidays. The public transport operators will closely monitor changes in the number of travellers during the holidays and increase the service frequency timely during periods of particularly strong passenger demand, so as to expedite the dispersal of passengers.