

LCQ8: Cross-boundary railway projects

Following is a question by the Hon Kenneth Lau and a written reply by the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Mr Frank Chan Fan, in the Legislative Council today (December 2):

Question:

The National Development and Reform Commission made public in July this year the Official Reply on the Development Plan for Inter-city Railway Links in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, agreeing to the implementation of a batch of intercity railway projects in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area ("Greater Bay Area") in an orderly manner to improve the quality of inter-city transportation in the Greater Bay Area. Those railway projects include extending the Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link from the Guangzhou South Station to the Guangzhou Railway Station and switching the terminus station to the latter. The Transport and Housing Bureau has indicated that it will maintain close communication with the Mainland rail operator and provide different train schedules to meet the demands of different passengers. There are comments that the development of the Greater Bay Area is a major national development strategy which can create a new area of growth for Hong Kong's economy, and the Government should actively participate in the development plan for the inter-city railway links in the Greater Bay Area and seize the development opportunities in the Greater Bay Area. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it knows which of the Greater Bay Area inter-city railway projects under planning will connect with the boundary control points in Hong Kong ("cross-boundary railway projects") and their details;

(2) whether it has formulated any cooperation plans with the relevant Mainland departments for the implementation of the cross-boundary railway projects mentioned in (1); if so, of the details, including (i) the specific work for which Hong Kong is mainly responsible, (ii) the mode of cooperation and division of labour among the various cities in the Greater Bay Area, (iii) the latest progress of the cooperation plans, and (iv) the expected date for announcing the concrete proposals;

(3) whether it has assessed the benefits to Hong Kong's economic and trade development that such cross-boundary railway projects will bring; if so, of the details; and

(4) whether it has plans to commence other cross-boundary railway projects in collaboration with the authorities of the other cities in the Greater Bay Area in the coming five years; if so, of the details?

Reply:

President,

My consolidated reply to various parts of the Hon Kenneth Lau's question is as follows:

The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government has been in contact with relevant Mainland authorities in relation to the Development Plan for Inter-city Railway Links in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (the Development Plan). The projects in the Development Plan mainly aims to enhance rail connection among prefectural-level cities within the Guangdong Province and include such short-term projects as Shenzhen-Huizhou Intercity Railway and Guangzhou-Guangzhounan Link, connecting to the Shenzhenbei Station and Guangzhounan Station respectively along the Mainland Section of the Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link (XRL). Passengers can conveniently access the above-mentioned railways through the Hong Kong Section of the XRL and travel to different cities in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (Greater Bay Area). At the same time, the Development Plan also pointed out that Shenzhen and HKSAR would achieve connectivity through the existing Beijing-Kowloon Railway and XRL in the near term. The HKSAR Government hopes that the implementation of the Development Plan will further facilitate the public to commute and strengthen the connectivity between Hong Kong and other cities in the Greater Bay Area.

With the commissioning of the Hong Kong Section of the XRL, which connects to the national high-speed rail network, in September 2018, the travelling time between Hong Kong and other cities in the Greater Bay Area has been greatly shortened. The HKSAR Government and MTR Corporation Limited will explore with the relevant Mainland authorities different measures to enhance the XRL service, with a view to strengthening the connectivity between Hong Kong and other cities in the Greater Bay Area. In addition, The Chief Executive's 2020 Policy Address also pointed out the Central Government's support towards the co-operation between Hong Kong and Shenzhen in enhancing the Lok Ma Chau/Huanggang and Lo Wu control points. We will explore with the Mainland authorities relevant suggestions on enhancing the transport connections in a timely manner, with a view to further facilitating the residents in the two places to commute. In the long run, we will closely monitor the long-term cross-boundary transport needs in view of the development of the Greater Bay Area, and explore the needs for and benefits of new cross-boundary infrastructure projects. At the same time, we will also take into account the impact on the patronage and financial performance of the Hong Kong Section of the XRL and other existing cross-boundary railways.

Thank you, President.