Examination of Estimates of Expenditure 2026-27 Reply Serial No.

TLB010

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

(Question Serial No. 0974)

Head: (42) Electrical and Mechanical Services Department

Subhead (No. & title): (-) Not Specified

Programme: (2) Mechanical Installations Safety

Controlling Officer: Director of Electrical and Mechanical Services (POON Kwok-ying)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Transport and Logistics

Question:

The Electrical and Mechanical Services Department is responsible for monitoring the safety performance of electrical and mechanical (E&M) systems of the railway service provided by the MTR Corporation Limited (MTRCL). In this connection, will the Government inform this Committee of:

1. the total expenditures for monitoring the E&M safety of the MTRCL's railway systems in the past 3 years, with a breakdown of the expenditure by category;

2. the number of safety hazards identified in the MTR network and the total number of improvement notices issued in relation to the safety issues of the MTRCL in each of the past 3 years; and

3. whether the Government will consider increasing expenditure on the regulation of the MTRCL in the light of the numerous incidents that have occurred in the MTR network in recent years to reduce their occurrence; if yes, the details; if no, the reasons?

Asked by: Hon CHEUNG Pui-kong (LegCo internal reference no.: 19)

Reply:

1. The Railways Branch (RB) of the Electrical and Mechanical Services Department (EMSD), in accordance with relevant ordinances on railway safety, is responsible for regulating and monitoring the safe operation of railway systems, including those operated by the MTR Corporation Limited (MTRCL), the Automated People Mover at the Hong Kong International Airport operated by the Airport Authority Hong Kong, the tramway system operated by the Hong Kong Tramways Limited and the peak tramway system operated by the Peak Tramways Company Limited.

   The total expenditures of the RB of the EMSD in the past 3 years are set out in the following table:

	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26 (Estimate)
Salaries	71.8	75.5	71.4
Other operating expenses	15.3	16.3	16.3
Total expenditure ($ million)	87.1	91.8*	87.7^

* The increase in the total expenditure in 2024-25 compared with that in 2023-24 was mainly due to the 2024-25 civil service pay adjustment and an increase in salary expenses for staff on pre-retirement leave.

^ The decrease in the estimated total expenditure in 2025-26 was mainly due to a reduction in salary expenses for staff on pre-retirement leave.

2. The EMSD always adopts a "risk-based" approach to inspections, which involve inspecting, checking and assessing areas that may pose a higher risk to the safe operation of the railway based on past records. These include regular inspections, surprise checks and incident investigations. The EMSD will also conduct the "comprehensive and direct assessment" exercises, which involve taking the initiative to audit the assets and safety management systems of MTRCL's operating railway lines, with a view to identifying potential problems at an early stage. If any problems or areas for improvement are identified during inspections and audits, the EMSD will immediately request the MTRCL to follow up and make improvement recommendations, and will monitor the progress of the MTRCL in implementing the improvement recommendations.

   In the past 3 years, the EMSD identified a total of 226 items that required follow-up actions during the "comprehensive and direct assessment" exercises. Besides, 6 items that required immediate follow-up were identified during the audits in 2025, mainly involving the maintenance of electrical systems and overhead lines. The EMSD immediately required the MTRCL to take follow-up action and proposed 11 improvement recommendations. Currently, the 6 items have been properly addressed to ensure railway safety, and the relevant improvement recommendations are being gradually implemented.

3. In 2025, the MTRCL operated more than 1.85 million train trips on its heavy rail network, making an average of over 4.7 million passenger trips every day. The level of both train service delivery and passenger journeys on time was maintained at a high standard of 99.9%. In 2025, there were 83 incidents of service disruption of 8 minutes or above due to factors under the MTRCL's control, a figure lower than that in 2024 (89 incidents). Nevertheless, the Government attaches great importance to every incident and will require the MTRCL to conduct thorough investigations to identify the causes, and to implement improvement measures to prevent occurrence of similar incidents, thereby ensuring safe and reliable railway operation. As the statutory regulatory authority on railway safety, the EMSD carries out railway safety regulatory work in accordance with the Mass Transit Railway Ordinance (Cap. 556), the Mass Transit Railway Regulations (Cap. 556A) and other relevant legislation. Apart from conducting investigations after incidents, the EMSD has adopted a more proactive, comprehensive and preventive auditing approach to establish a regulatory regime for major railway systems. This includes identifying at an early stage potential system defects and safety hazards in the railway system that may lead to railway incidents through the "comprehensive and direct assessment" exercises, thereby nipping problems

in the bud. In addition, the EMSD will enhance the long-term railway safety of projects by conducting the "project safety review" process in new railway projects.

The RB of the EMSD is led by 1 Assistant Director/Railways, who oversees 4 divisions headed by 4 Chief Engineers (CE) responsible for railway safety regulatory work. Of the 4 CE posts, 2 are time-limited posts created in 2021 and were granted approval in 2025 for an extension of 5 years until 2030 to strengthen the regular and continuous safety regulation of railway services. The EMSD will continue to utilise existing resources to step up the review of the major railway systems of the MTRCL's operating lines, and apply innovative technologies to enhance its capabilities in monitoring the railway services and asset maintenance performance, thereby ensuring railway safety.

- End -