

The Peak Tramway Upgrading Plan

In December 2015, the Chief Executive in Council (“CE-in-C”) approved the grant of the first 10-year operating right of the peak tramway (2016 – 2025) to the Peak Tramways Company Limited (“PTC”) under the Peak Tramway Ordinance (Cap. 265). According to Cap. 265, the CE-in-C must grant the extension of the operating right for not more than 10 years to PTC if the CE-in-C is satisfied by evidence that PTC is committed to and is capable of implementing a plan for modernising and improving the tramway and ancillary equipment and facilities and the implementation of the plan will be conducive to maintaining the tramway as an important tourism and recreational facility. PTC has formally submitted to the Government an application for a second ten-year operating right of 2026-2035 and an upgrading plan in support of its application.

2. According to PTC’s upgrading plan submitted to the Government, PTC plans to upgrade the peak tramway system that will increase its carrying capacity and improve the queuing arrangement at the two termini. To enable the District Council members to have an understanding of the upgrading plan, PTC will be invited to attend the meeting of the Traffic and Transport Committee of the Central and Western District Council to be held on 12 April 2018 to brief members on the details. The paper prepared by PTC is attached for members’ reference.

Tourism Commission

28 March 2018

The Peak Tram Upgrade Project

Background:

Commencing operation in 1888, the Peak Tram has grown from its initial transportation function to become the most iconic tourist attraction in Hong Kong. The Peak Tram's popularity is now one of its challenges as the demand at peak hours exceeds capacity, creating long queues outside the Lower Terminus at Garden Road.

The existing capacity of the Lower Terminus is approximately 400 passengers, with another 450+ passengers regularly required to queue outside on the pavement up Garden Road or opposite the terminus under the Cotton Tree Drive flyover.

During holiday peak hours, the queue reaches 1500 passengers. Peak Tramways Company, Limited ("PTC") deploy extra manpower to manage the queues outside the Hong Kong Park Sports Centre and along Tramway Lane & Tramway Path. This has proven to be very effective.

In 2014, PTC attended the Traffic & Transport Committee / Central & Western District Council ("CWDC T&TC") meeting to discuss improvements for the queueing arrangements and to introduce the upgrading plan of the Peak Tram.

Issue:

PTC had implemented measures to improve the queue management following the T&TC meeting and, since obtaining the ten-year operating right from 2016 to 2025, PTC is now proposing to upgrade the Peak Tram, with the objectives of the Peak Tram Upgrade Plan ("Upgrade Plan") as follows:

- Increase the capacity of the Peak Tram from 120 to 210 passengers per tramcar (subject to confirmation of the tramcar interior design) which on its own will dramatically reduce waiting times by 75-91% at present day demand;
- Provide covered, temperature controlled and comfortable queueing and waiting areas with entertainment (e.g. Peak Tram Historical Exhibit) for 1,300 passengers at the Lower Terminus, by relocating the boarding and alighting platforms some 70 metres uphill and creating an extended Lower Terminus extending down to St John's Building;
- Renovate the Upper Terminus platform areas including widening of the boarding platform; increased number of turnstiles and points-of-sale; and a larger waiting area prior to ticketing;
- Facilitate crowd control and improve safety of visitors, staff and pedestrians;
- Further enhance the image of the Peak Tram conducive to maintaining the tramway as an important tourism and recreational facility.

The Peak Tram Upgrade:

The Upgrade Plan works are targeted to commence in 2018 and are scheduled to complete in 2021 (subject to Chief Executive in Council's approval of PTC's application for the second 10-year operating right). PTC have begun stakeholder engagement with immediate neighbours who might have concerns about the works, including Helena May, World Wide Fund for Nature Hong Kong ("WWF"), St Joseph's College and Leisure and Cultural Services Department ("LCSD").

The stakeholders have no objection to the Upgrade Plan and have expressed views on potential construction impacts that PTC have undertaken to mitigate. LCSD expressed concern on some aspects of the Temporary Service Plan and these concerns have since been addressed through better queue segregation and management plus additional staff deployment. WWF in particular welcome the Upgrade Plan as it can drive foot traffic to their visitor centre.

The Upgrade Plan will require two additional areas of unused, unallocated government land adjacent to the tramway close to Helena May and St Joseph's College, and a third unused area to allow the extension of the existing passing loop.

The existing trees along Tramway Path will be retained or replaced with semi-mature trees. Potential environmental impacts during construction have been mitigated by PTC through specifying low-vibration construction methods; environmental protection during construction; and strict monitoring regimes in conjunction with AMO requests. There are no adverse long-term environmental impacts generated by the project.

PTC have invested over HK\$50M to date in planning for the Upgrade Plan, employing twenty-seven consultants and contractors to plan, design, make submissions, carry out site investigations and construct models of the new tramcar, systems and infrastructure. The design and tender documents have been prepared and tenders issued and, upon approval of the Government, the work will commence on site and the manufacture of the new tramcars will begin.

PTC have set out the benefits of the Upgrade Plan which include: increasing the carrying capacity of the new tramcars from 120 to 210 passengers per trip; better facilities for persons with a disability; improvements to queueing areas and queueing arrangements such as providing comfortable queueing and waiting areas for over 1300 passengers at the Lower Terminus and

significant reductions in waiting times at both the Upper Terminus and Lower Terminus.

The construction period is scheduled to run from 2018 through to 2021 (subject to Chief Executive in Council's approval), whilst maintaining the Peak Tram service as much as possible.

The first phase of construction includes the facelift of part of Tramway Path and the building of the platform between Tramway Path and the tramway itself, with the new alighting platform adjoining Tramway Path used as the temporary boarding platform. The works (including demolition of existing cable store, site formation and new platform construction works) would be carried out from early 2019. During this period, the Peak Tram would operate a normal service. After completion of the new alighting platform (temporary boarding platform), there will be a short period of service suspension (for around 1 to 2 months) in 2020 for construction of a temporary alighting platform, and modification of the existing Peak Tram system for operation of the temporary platform.

After completion of the above, the Peak Tram service will be resumed and maintained while the remaining parts of the Lower Terminus including ticket hall, waiting area, and the existing terminus in St. John's Building will be constructed / renovated. This temporary platform would be in operation for around 12 to 15 months from Q2 2020 to 2021. The second period of service suspension is expected in 2021 (for around 4-5 months) when the existing tramcars, systems and haulage equipment are replaced with the new.

PTC have made a comprehensive proposal for the continuation and provision of service of the Peak Tram during the Upgrade Plan works and have submitted a Temporary Service Plan document for the operation of the temporary platform arrangements. The temporary platform arrangement is necessary, to vacate the area for the construction of the new Lower Terminus and, to largely reduce the total service suspension time for the Upgrade and the impact to the Peak Tram users. The Temporary Service Plan has been comprehensively planned with professional consultant architects, engineers and traffic planners. The temporary arrangements maintain all existing thoroughfares and access points. The Temporary Service Plan maintains the current frequency and capacity of the Peak Tram service with segregated and managed temporary queueing for 1500 passengers at the Lower Terminus.

PTC have also submitted a Traffic Impact Assessment (“TIA”) Report, covering both the temporary platform arrangements and the ultimate state after the Upgrade Plan works. Transport Department’s comments have been largely addressed and some minor issues will be further followed up.

The two suspension periods of the Peak Tram service would be broadly published via the media in advance to inform stakeholders. During the suspension periods, liaison with road-based public transport operators will be maintained to ensure sufficiency of alternative public transport services. A special bus route 315 via the Lower Terminus will be operated by New World First Bus Services Limited for those in need of public transport services at Lower Terminus. This service has been operated successfully during recent planned service suspensions (in June 2017 and January 2018).

The TIA also confirms that there will be no adverse impact to local traffic during the works or after the Upgrade.

PTC have made further submissions to various government bureaux and departments in support of the Upgrade Plan and now seek CWDC’s views on the Peak Tram Upgrade Plan as well as the Temporary Service Plan.

Submitted by:

Peak Tramways Company Ltd (via Tourism Commission)

22 March 2018