



Last month's 'heavy rain' has been blamed for a two-year delay on the West Kowloon Terminus Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link.

The delay has been announced less than a week after potential bidders met the closing date deadline (*April 17*) to submit their expressions of interest for the MTR Corporation's new duty free business at the West Kowloon Terminus project.

The problems with the delay apparently relate to the tunnel boring for the 26km underground section of line being constructed between Hong Kong and Guangzhou.

The entire US\$8bn project was due for completion and opening next year, but Hong Kong-side engineers have now advised MTR Corporation's senior management that recent heavy rainfall has made tunnelling conditions much more difficult, causing damage to tunnels and the tunnelling machine. Local media is now speculating that the full rail link will not open until 2017.

The Hong Kong SAR Government is said to be very unhappy about the delay to this prestige project and senior management at the MTR Corporation has moved quickly to claim it was equally unaware there were any major problems with meeting the original deadline until earlier this month.



The Shenzhen line on the Mainland Chinese side is already up and running and is just waiting for the underground tunnelling of the 26-mile section to Hong Kong to be completed [Photo credit: Alan CRH].

TENDER PROCESS UP IN THE AIR?

Quite where this leaves MTR's tender process for its new duty free contract remains to be seen. *[Due to public holidays, MTR Purchasing Officer Ms. Phyllis Tong was unavailable for comment when TRBusiness contacted her office today-Ed].*

The fall out from the announcement of this 'sudden delay' is expected to have more repercussions and particularly considering that this rail link has been held up as a prestige project. The whole aim has been to inject new life into the Pearl River Delta region by making travel much easier between Hong Kong, Guangzhou and Shenzhen in particular.

Works have already been completed on the Mainland side connecting both Guangzhou and Shenzhen, but it is the final all-important link to Hong Kong itself that will need to be addressed.



Contract tender advertising from MTR Corporation.

When completed the service will provide high-speed train services of around 48 minutes between Hong Kong and Guangzhou, compared with 100 minutes today and it is expected to result in a staggering demand for the service of up to 99,000 passengers a day.

The 15 platforms at the West Kowloon Terminus station are also scheduled to provide direct rail connections between Hong Kong and Beijing.

For more information on the MTR tender details, click here:

[\[http://www.trbusiness.com/index.php/regional/asia/14832-mtr-tenders-hong-kong-beijing-link.html\]](http://www.trbusiness.com/index.php/regional/asia/14832-mtr-tenders-hong-kong-beijing-link.html)