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Backing for Chek Lap Kok ferry plan

By FANNY WONG

A PRO-CHINA Airport Consultative Committee (ACC) member yesterday pledged support for opening ferry services to the new Chek Lap Kok airport to avoid a monopoly by the airport railway.

Mr Ho King-on welcomed the Government's plan to consider ferry services linking Chek Lap Kok with Central and Kowloon.

Speaking in an interview with the semi-official Hongkong China News Agency, Mr Ho said that it was reasonable to open ferry services to compete

with the railway. Mr Ho noted that the Mass Transit Railway Corporation (MTRC) had said operating the airport railway without the express line would reduce revenue by 60 per cent.

"This has raised concern that the fare of the express line will be more expensive and commuters will have to pay more to travel to and from the new airport," he said.

Allowing different modes of transport to compete with the rail service would not only avoid any monopoly but also make the transport operators consider thoroughly how to reduce costs.

His remark came amid increasing pressure to find a more cost-effective way to build the controversial rail link to the new airport.

The director of the Chinese State Council's Hongkong and Macau Affairs Office, Mr Lu Ping, urged the Government to control the rising cost of the railway project on Friday, while the ACC chairman, Mr Wong Po-yan, also called for cuts in the cost of the plan.

Mr Ho welcomed remarks by Secretary for Transport, Mr Michael Leung Man-kin, that the Government would not rule out the possibility of allowing ferry services to Chek Lap Kok.