

S.A.M.S.

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# \$300m stand will double race crowd

By FRANCIS LI

The Government has endorsed a Royal Hongkong Jockey Club proposal to nearly double the crowd capacity of Shatin racecourse from its present 38,000 to 70,000, the Shatin District Board was told yesterday.

A second public grandstand to accommodate the additional 32,000 racegoers, was approved by the board.

The grandstand, estimated to cost more than \$300 million, is scheduled to be ready for use at the start of the 1985-86 racing season.

However, despite their approval, board members were concerned about the anticipated transport problems in moving the extra numbers to and from the racecourse.

The board demanded that detailed plans showing how these problems will be overcome should be submitted to it for discussion.

According to an information paper provided by the Jockey Club, the extra racegoers will be carried to the course by the electrified Kowloon-Canton Railway and the Mass Transit Railway.

Before the new grandstand is opened, both the MTR Island Line and the KCR's full electrification scheme should have been completed, as well as the Taiipo-Shatin coastal highway, the paper said.

The proposal admitted that non-racegoers would be subjected to some inconvenience — especially residents in Shatin and the northern New Territories.

But it said the "effects would not be too severe."

According to the acting assistant general manager of the KCR (traffic), Mr Ma Tsok-leung, 32 electrified trains going in each direction will ferry about 30,000 passengers in less than two hours during racing days.

Of these, eight 12-car trains from Hungghom to Shatin will terminate at the racecourse and three nine-car trains will go to Taiipo Market and stop at the course, Mr Ma said.

There will be a shuttle service at 20-minute intervals between Shatin and Hungghom.

There will also be interchange facilities at Kowloon Tong for MTR passengers and at Tai Wai and Mongkok for those going to the course by bus.

However, the Kowloon Tong interchange will have to undergo improvement works, with the cost probably being shouldered by the Jockey Club, to handle up to 22,500 people an hour.

Three additional footbridges will also be built to link the racecourse with the train station to make commuting easier.

And two extra footpaths will be built to meet the needs of people walking to the racecourse.

A chief transport officer, Mr Daniel Au, told the board that the projected growth of the bus fleet could well cope with the additional racegoers by 1985-86, in conjunction with off-road systems.

With bus routes capable of handling 15,000 from Shatin to Kowloon, coupled with 5,000 being ferried by mini-buses and about 3,000 moving between Shatin and the northern New Territories by bus and another 5,000 by the KCR, Mr Au said he felt the 70,000 race crowd could be moved away from the course within an hour.

The board was also told that the Jockey Club wants to push attendance levels to the maximum when the new stand is completed, but is willing to do it in stages to make practical arrangements simpler.

It has been tentatively suggested that, by controlling the sale of admission badges, the crowd could at first be restricted to 50,000 and gradually brought up to 60,000 and eventually to 70,000 if no drastic problems arise.

And to avoid overstrained peak hour traffic demand, the club has also agreed to start its Wednesday evening meetings at 8.15 pm — about half an hour later than before.