

TRAINS

Ambitious project will upgrade 3 rail stations

POST REPORTERS

Khon Kaen, Ayutthaya and Pattaya train stations are set to be developed with a budget of 64 billion baht.

Director-General of the Office of Transport and Traffic Policy and Planning (OTP), Punya Chupanit, said staff were in the process of preparing the Transit Oriented Development (TOD) project's proposal to be submitted to the Transport Ministry by next month.

The cabinet is then expected to approve the project in principle in May ahead of the full operations of the Red Line suburban train link in November, according to the director.

The office is drafting the TOD Act to stipulate the powers and responsibilities of TOD operators and paint an overview of the project. How each turns out depends on the needs of people in the area, said the director. He gave an example of Khon Kaen train station, whose project was born from the needs of the municipality.

The land owner would be in charge of a TOD developed on the site and the OTP would set guidelines and draft laws for its operations, the director said.

An OTP source said it had selected the three specific stations because it felt they had the potential to complete

the developments within the approved 64-billion-baht budget.

Khon Kaen station will be redeveloped so it becomes a city centre in its own right.

This development will also be aligned with the government's planned high-speed train to the eastern region, which will take in Khon Kaen.

In Ayutthaya, the project will focus on creating harmony between the old and new towns. It will connect with a new high-speed train station and a river bridge, piers and feeders will also be constructed.

The Pattaya station will connect with beaches in the city as well as a high-speed train link. The project has been scaled down to suit the local heritage, according to the source.

The office's study found that 177 train stations along double-track and high-speed rail routes nationwide, except the sections in Bangkok, had the potential to be developed as TOD.

The OTP will also continue with its study on energy saving in the double-track rail project with the goal to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 and energy consumption in the transport sector by 2037.

Wilairat Sirisoponsilp, the deputy director-general of the OTP, said the double-track railway construction would be a turning point in Thailand's transport sector. Double-track railways would help to create new economies and bring economic prosperity to the provinces, she said.

The double-track railways from Chira to Khon Kaen and from Chachoengsao to Kaeng Khoi, both opened last year, had made substantial energy savings in the consumption of oil and greenhouse gases, Ms Wilairat said.