Hong Kong: The Facts

Railway Network



Railways, being the backbone of public transport system, play a vital role in serving the transport needs of Hong Kong. They account for about 44 per cent of domestic public transport in 2024.

Existing Network: MTR is a heavily patronized railway network consisting of nine heavy rail lines, Airport Express (AEL), Light Rail and the Hong Kong Section of Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link (XRL) with a total route length of about 271 kilometres. The heavy rail, AEL and XRL comprise a total of 99 stations, while the Light Rail comprises 68 stops. The Legislative Council passed in June 2007 the Rail Merger Ordinance which provides the legal framework for the post-merger corporation to operate both the Mass Transit Railway (MTR) system and Kowloon-Canton Railway (KCR) system. The post-merger Corporation, i.e. the MTR Corporation Limited (MTRCL) has been granted a 50-year franchise to operate the MTR and KCR systems with effect from December 2, 2007. Other fixed track systems include the Tramway and the Peak Tram.

MTR: Nine heavy rail lines include Kwun Tong Line, Tsuen Wan Line, Island Line, Tseung Kwan O Line, South Island Line, Tung Chung Line, Disneyland Resort Line, East Rail Line and Tuen Ma Line. The East Rail Line was commissioned in 1910. The first passenger train of Kwun Tong Line started operation in late 1979, followed by the subsequent expansion of the network to include Tsuen Wan Line (1982), Island Line (1985), the Eastern Harbour Crossing connecting Lam Tin to Quarry Bay (1989), Tung Chung Line (1998), Tseung Kwan O Line (2002), West Rail Line (2003), Ma On Shan Line (2004), Disneyland Resort Line (2005), bifurcation of East Rail Line to boundary crossing at Lok Ma Chau (2007), bifurcation of Tseung Kwan O Line to LOHAS Park Station (2009), extension of West Rail Line to Hung Hom Station interchanging with East Rail Line (2009), extension of Island Line to Kennedy Town Station (2014), extension of Kwun Tong Line to Whampoa Station (2016), South Island Line (2016), Tuen Ma Line (connecting the West Rail Line and Ma On Shan Line) (June 2021) and East Rail Line crosshabour extension (May 2022). The above heavy rail lines network currently has 96 stations and carried an average of over 4.6 million passenger trips per day in 2024.

Airport Express (AEL): The AEL, which came into service in 1998, provides services to the Hong Kong International Airport. In end 2005, the AEL was further extended to an in-venue station in the AsiaWorld-Expo located at the northeast corner of the Airport. The AEL has five stations with a route length of 35.2 km and a maximum speed of 135 km per hour. An average journey between the Airport Station and the Hong Kong Station takes about 24 minutes. In-town check-in facilities are provided in some of the stations.

In 2024, the AEL carried an average of about 35 900 passenger trips per day.

Light Rail: Light Rail is a local transportation network which started operation in 1988 to meet the transport needs of the residents in the northwest New Territories. It now has a route length of about 36.2 km with 68 stops. In 2024, it carried an average of over 420 000 passenger trips every day. It has four interchange stations with the Tuen Ma Line in Yuen Long, Tin Shui Wai, Siu Hong and Tuen Mun to facilitate passenger interchange between the Light Rail and heavy rail line networks.

Hong Kong Section of Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link (XRL): The Hong Kong section of the XRL, commissioned in September 2018, is a 26-km long underground rail corridor connecting Hong Kong with the national high-speed rail network. From July 2025, the Hong Kong section of the XRL connects to a total of 96 destinations in the Mainland with at least 208 daily trips. Direct trains run between the Hong Kong West Kowloon Station and 11 shorthaul destinations (Futian, Shenzhenbei, Guangmingcheng, Humen, Qingsheng, Guangzhounan, Dongguannan, Dongguan, Changping, Xintang and Guangzhoudong Stations) as well as 85 long-haul destinations including Beijing, Shanghai, Chaoshan and Xiamen, making it a comprehensive network. To further promote the "one-hour living circle" in the Greater Bay Area (GBA), the "Same-day Flexi-trip Arrangement" was launched for passengers travelling between Hong Kong West Kowloon Station and Futian Station in August 2023, and was extended to Shenzhenbei Station in March 2024. Two new types of Multi-ride Tickets were introduced in January 2024, allowing passengers to travel between Hong Kong West Kowloon Station and designated short-haul destinations with discounted fares. Sleeper trains departing in the evenings and arriving the following mornings between Hong Kong West Kowloon Station and Beijingxi Station/Shanghai Hongqiao Station were also introduced from June 2024. In 2024, the Hong Kong section of the XRL recorded a daily average passenger traffic of about 73 000 passenger trips.

Tramway: Electric trams have been operating on Hong Kong Island since 1904. The tramway operates seven routes on 16 km of tram track. Its average daily passenger trips were about 138 000 in 2024.

Railway and Smart and Green Mass Transit Systems Projects under Planning: The Government promulgated the Hong Kong Major Transport Infrastructure Development Blueprint (the Blueprint) in December 2023 to formulate a planning framework for the city's future transport infrastructure development and outline a forward-looking vision for strategic

railway and major road networks, with a view to meeting Hong Kong's long-term transport and logistics demand up to 2046 and beyond. We are actively taking forward various local railway projects, among which the Tung Chung Line Extension, Tuen Mun South Extension, Kwu Tung Station, Oyster Bay Station and Hung Shui Kiu Station are under construction and will be completed progressively from 2027 onwards. Besides, the Blueprint proposes the Northern Link Eastern Extension to extend the Northern Link to Ping Che via Lo Wu South and Man Kam To areas, connecting New Development Areas and different boundary control points; the Northeast New Territories Line to provide a north-south railway from Heung Yuen Wai to Fanling Station of the East Rail line via Ping Che and Queen's Hill areas, linking major development nodes; the Central Rail Link to connect Kam Tin with Kowloon Tong Station via Tsuen Wan and Kwai Chung; the Tseung Kwan O Line be extended southward to Area 137 in Tseung Kwan O.

At the same time, the Government is committed to taking forward smart and green mass transit systems (SGMTS) in East Kowloon, Kai Tak and Hung Shui Kiu/Ha Tsuen and Yuen Long South New Development Areas. SGMTS is also planned to be adopted for the South Island Line (West), forming a transit loop with South Island Line (East) and Island Line. The Kai Tak project will be the first SGMTS introduced in Hong Kong, to be commissioned by 2031.

To jointly develop the "GBA on the Rail", the governments of Hong Kong and Shenzhen continue to take forward the Hong Kong-Shenzhen Western Rail Link (Hung Shui Kiu - Qianhai) (HSWRL) and the Northern Link (NOL) Spur Line through the "Task Force for Hong Kong-Shenzhen Co-operation on Cross-Boundary Railway Infrastructure". The investigation and design for the Hong Kong section of the HSWRL has commenced in mid-2025, and the target is to complete construction works in 2034, followed by integrated testing and commissioning to realise simultaneous commissioning of the Hong Kong and Shenzhen sections in 2035. As regards the NOL Spur Line, the Government has made the bold decision to substantially bring forward the planning of the project and implement it in combination with the NOL Main Line as one project, with a view to achieving synergies and enhancing speed and efficiency. The target is to advance the commissioning of the NOL Spur Line together with that of NOL Main Line by 2034 or earlier.