

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 2023.

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 cross-harbour extension (May 2022). The above heavy rail lines network currently has 96 stations and carried an average of about 4.60 million passenger trips per day in 2023.

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 2023, the AEL carried an average of about 29 700 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 2023, it carried an average of about 411 000 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. As at April 2024, the Hong Kong section of the XRL connects to a total of 73 destinations in the Mainland with 188 daily trips. Direct trains run between the Hong Kong West Kowloon Station and ten short-haul destinations (Futian, Shenzhenbei, Guangmingcheng, Humen, Qingsheng, Guangzhounan, Dongguan, Dongguan, Changping and Guangzhoudong Stations) as well as 63 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 on August 14, 2023, and was extended to Shenzhenbei Station on March 18, 2024. Two new types of Multi-ride Tickets were also introduced on January 25, 2024, allowing passengers to travel between Hong Kong West Kowloon Station and designated short-haul destinations with discounted fares. In 2023, the Hong Kong section of the XRL recorded a daily average passenger traffic of about 57 300 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 134 000 in 2023.

Railway and Smart and Green Mass Transit Systems Projects under Planning: Having regard to transport demand, cost-effectiveness and the development needs of new development areas and other new development projects, as well as the potential housing supply that may be brought about by railway development, the Government is implementing the new railway projects recommended in the Railway Development Strategy 2014 in an orderly manner. The railway network is targeted to serve areas inhabited by about 75 per cent of the local population and about 85 per cent

of job opportunities. The construction works of the Tung Chung Line Extension, Tuen Mun South Extension, Kwu Tung Station as Phase 1 of the Northern Link project and Oyster Bay Station have commenced in 2023 and are expected to be completed progressively from 2027 onwards. The construction of Hung Shui Kiu Station and Northern Link Main Line is expected to commence in 2024 and 2025 respectively.

Besides, the Government promulgated the Hong Kong Major Transport Infrastructure Development 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; proposing 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 plans to put in place smart and green mass transit systems in East Kowloon, Kai Tak and Hung Shui Kiu/Ha Tsuen.

To jointly develop the "GBA on the Rail", the governments of Hong Kong and Shenzhen have established the "Task Force for Hong Kong-Shenzhen Co-operation on Cross-Boundary Railway Infrastructure" to take forward the Hong Kong-Shenzhen Western Rail Link (Hung Shui Kiu - Qianhai) and the Northern Link Spur Line. The second stage of study of the Hong Kong-Shenzhen Western Rail Link (Hung Shui Kiu - Qianhai) project is expected to be completed within this year. The detailed planning and design of the Northern Link Spur Line is also expected to commence within this year.