

Railways play a vital role in serving the transport needs of Hong Kong. They account for about 42 per cent of domestic public transport in 2022.

Existing Network: MTR is a heavily patronized railway network consisting of nine heavy rail lines, Airport Express, 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 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 3.66 million passenger trips per day in 2022.

Airport Express (AEL): The AEL, which came into service in 1998, provides services to the Hong Kong International Airport and also in-town check-in facilities in some stations. 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 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 number of flights travelling to and from Hong Kong decreased sharply due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2022, the AEL carries about 8 500 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 2022, it carried an average of about 360 900 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. To prevent and control the COVID-19 pandemic, the XRL had suspended service since January 30, 2020. The XRL services has progressively resumed since January 15, 2023, with Guangzhoudong, Dongguannan and Dongguan Stations newly added on the same day; followed by the introduction of Changping, Shengfang, Huizhoubei, Heyuandong and Ganzhouxi Stations from April 1; and the launch of Chengdudong Route (including Yibinxi, Leshan and Chengdudong Stations) from July 1. At present, Direct trains run between the Hong Kong West Kowloon Station and ten short-haul destinations (Futian, Shenzhenbei, Guangmingcheng, Humen, Qingsheng, Guangzhounan, Dongguannan, Dongguan, Changping and Guangzhoudong Stations) as well as 58 long-haul destinations including Beijing, Shanghai, Tianjin, Chongqing, Changsha, Fuzhou, Guiyang, Hangzhou, Kunming, Nanchang, Nanning, Shijiazhuang, Wuhan, Zhengzhou, Xiamen, Shantou and Zhaoqing Stations, making it a more comprehensive network.

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 117 000 in 2022.

Railway 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 will implement the new railway projects recommended in the Railway Development Strategy 2014 in a timely 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 of the Tung Chung Line Extension has commenced in May 2023 and is expected to complete in 2029. Construction works of Tuen Mun South Extension, Kwu Tung Station and Oyster Bay Station are

planned to progressively commence later in 2023. The MTRCL is carrying out the detailed planning and design for the Northern Link Main Line and Hung Shui Kiu Station projects.

The governments of Hong Kong and Shenzhen have established the “Task Force for Hong Kong-Shenzhen Co-operation on Cross-Boundary Railway Infrastructure” to jointly develop the “GBA on the Rail”. The task force has embarked on a study of the Hong Kong-Shenzhen Western Rail Link connecting Hung Shui Kiu and Qianhai. Meanwhile, the Government is actively following up on the relevant work of the Northern Link Spur Line with the Mainland authorities and the MTRCL, with a view to reaching consensus with the Mainland authorities on the implementation arrangement of the Shenzhen section of the Northern Link Spur Line and commencing detailed planning and design of the project in 2024.