



On the opening day of the Tuen Ma Line, crowds of people take pictures of relics at Sung Wong Toi Station.

## Hi-tech MTR line offers journey through history

The Tuen Ma Line of the Mass Transit Railway System opened last weekend.

This is the longest of the railway routes in operation in Hong Kong, with 27 stations, spanning 56 km with a total travelling time of about 70 minutes, linking Tuen Mun with Wu Kai Sha as the east west railway link for the New Territories.

Residents of Kowloon City and To Kwa Wan can finally connect to the mass transit railway, with faster and more reliable travelling time. In time, with the increased connectivity to other districts, we can expect property prices in those areas to rise.

Some small businesses may find it too expensive to continue, but this is part of the evolution of any city.

Bus and minibus routes will also be rearranged. Invariably, some residents may find it less convenient than previously, but overall the majority of commuters will benefit.

Inside the stations, the MTRC has worked hard to put a bit of character in them. The To Kwa Wan Station displays a lot of art pieces with a "Home" theme to reflect that it is still predominantly a residential district.

As the station is in an older and congested district, there is not enough width to build the normal "island" type platform with tracks on both sides. Instead, the uptrack and the downtrack are on different levels to reduce station footprint width.

At Sung Wong Toi Station, which is on a historic site, there are even more features. The most notable one is the ancient well, which has a round top and a square lower section. As the station concourse is beneath the top of the well, a skylight allows commuters and visitors to see the well in its entirety.



The completion of this feature will still take some time as a lot of reinstatement work will need to be done to the ground surface and the surrounding areas.

Near to this historic feature, along the wall in the concourse, are display cabinets that show 500 relics recovered during the construction of this station. It will be like a mini-museum and may even attract a lot of visitors.

For commuters, a "mod-con" will point them to cars which are less crowded. A "traffic-light" system, using the usual red-amber-green signals, will show commuters, as they enter the platform, which of the eight cars have more room. They are directed to those parts of the train efficiently with less need for station personnel to usher them along, as in other stations.

This system employs load cells in the train-cars to reliably measure their passenger load.

To follow the city's transport plan of using railways as the backbone and road transport as a supplement, the opening of the Tuen Ma Line this month and the Shatin Central Link next year will make travelling in our city more convenient, and we can enjoy all-weather commuting with more reliable journey times.

The success of a city largely depends on the efficiency of its infrastructure, and we are fortunate that our transport infrastructure is among the best. Ninety percent of our transport journeys are by public transport.

**Veteran engineer Edmund Leung Kwong-ho casts an expert eye over Hong Kong's iconic infrastructure**