Footbridges and Subways of Hong Kong

In the past, footbridges in Hong Kong were provided mainly for pedestrian traffic along steep terrains or over streams. However with the rapid increase in population and economic development in Hong Kong since the 1960's, there was a need to grade separate vehicular and pedestrian traffic by footbridges and subways to improve the road safety and traffic flow capacity. The first grade separated footbridge across Leighton Road near Victoria Park was constructed in 1963 and the subway at Kowloon City Interchange constructed in 1972.

Footbridges and subways allow a continuous flow of pedestrains through junctions without the need to wait at the kerbside to cross and also reduce traffic congestion. In the 80's footbridges and subways evolved from simple crossings to interconnected systems of elevated or underground pedestrian walkways. The elevated walkway along Connaught Road at Central District is a successful example. The Government is now planning to construct similar walkway systems in the busiest districts of Hong Kong including Mongkok and Tsuen Wan.

The total number of footbridge and subway structures in the territory has already exceeded 1,600, and is still increasing rapidly. Some statistics are shown in Table 1. The longest and oldest footbridge and subway are shown in Table 2.

Provision of BFA facilities at footbridge across Ting Kok Road

Table 1: Number of Footbridge & Subway Structures as at March, *2025*

	No. of Footbridge Structure	No. of Subway Structure
Hong Kong Island	242	34
Kowloon	233	95
New Territories	599	420
Total Number	**1,074**	**549**

The Government gives serious consideration at planning stages to choice of structural form, layout and finishes to encourage people to use footbridges and subways. All newly constructed footbridges have covers to protect the pedestrian from rain and sun shine. To cater for the needs of the elderly and persons with disabilities, barrier-free access (BFA) facilities such as ramps and lifts are being progressively provided to all footbridges and subways unless site constraints make them impractical.

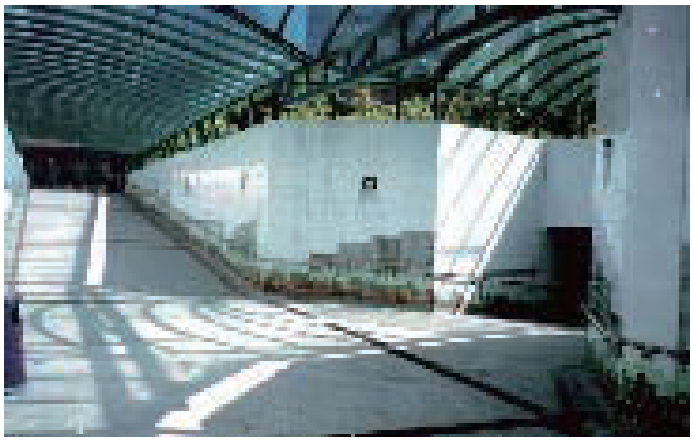
Table 2: Longest and Oldest

	Footbridge	Subway
Longest	Hillside Escalator, Link in Central Length: 800m	Subway under Mody Road, Blenheim Avenue and Hanoi Road Length: 640m
Oldest	Bowen Road Footbridge (along the hill side, completed in 1942)	Subway across the junction of Upper Albert Road, Caine Road and Glenealy (completed in 1967)

Not only the structural form of footbridges and subways change over time, the materials chosen also change. For example, the old footbridges along Bowen Road were constructed of masonry stone. In the 60s, quite a number of footbridges were constructed of timber. Due to the high maintenance cost, they have now been replaced by steel and concrete footbridges. At present, most footbridges and all subways are constructed of concrete, because they are more suitable to the local humid climate. Steel has not been widely used due to its maintenance liabilities and higher costs. However steel is the most viable alternative for long span footbridges.

Footbridges and subways are usually located at prominent positions and their aesthetics have direct impact on our city's appearance. Design of all footbridges and subways focus very much on aesthetic aspects including landscaping to enhance their aesthetics. Greater emphasis on appearance in recent years has also given impetus to the development of chromatic schemes with different colours. The Government has set up the "Advisory Committee on the Appearance of Bridges and Associated Structures" which is responsible for vetting these aesthetic designs.

With the various footbridges and subways, pedestrians would enjoy much more freedom and leisure to walk along without interfering with the vehicular traffic.



Forecourt Subway across Sports Road at Happy Valley