

Mass transit vow reaffirmed

Dark Red, Light Red lines being tested

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The State Railway of Thailand's Red Line is in the process of test runs and is scheduled to start commercial operations in 2021. Chanat Katanyu

The government has vowed to continue infrastructure and electric rail development projects in Bangkok and adjacent provinces covering a total of 559 kilometres with 336 stations by 2029.

According to Deputy Prime Minister Supattanapong Punmeeaow, the government is committed to completing the 20-year mass rapid transit master plan for Bangkok Metropolitan area (2010-29).

The master plan calls for the development of 14 routes of electric rail projects serving the Greater Bangkok area.

Of the 14 planned routes, nine routes covering 168km including an extension of the Green Line from Mor Chit-Saphan Mai-Ku Kot with seven stations, and the first phase of the 1.8km Gold Line from Krung Thon Buri station to Khlong San station are already up and running.

The mass transit routes scheduled to start commercial operations in 2021 include the 26km Dark Red Line (Bang Sue-Rangsit) and 15km Light Red Line (Bang Sue-Taling Chan), which are in the process of test runs. Official operation of the two lines is scheduled for November 2021.

As of November 2020, the Mass Rapid Transit Authority (MRTA), which handles mass rapid transit development in Greater Bangkok, reported the Orange Line's eastern section (Thailand Cultural Centre-Min Buri) is 72.7% complete and scheduled to operate in 2024.

The Pink Line (Khae Rai-Min Buri) was reported to be 68.5% complete, while its operation schedule was postponed to 2022 from the previous schedule of 2021 due to a delay in the environmental impact assessment process.

The Yellow Line running between Lat Phrao area and Samrong in Samut Prakan is 70.5% complete, with test runs scheduled in April 2021 and commercial operations for October 2021.

The MRTA is scheduled to call a bid in February 2021 for the 23.6km Purple Line's extension from Tao Poon-Rat Burana worth a total of 125 billion baht. The bid winner is expected to be announced in August or September 2021, with six years for construction allotted.

The Blue Line extension from Bang Kae to Phutthamonthon Sai 4 section worth 17.3 billion baht is likely to be delayed, as the MRTA and the Bangkok Expressway and Metro, the concessionaire, want to monitor commuter numbers in the Ban Sue-Tha Phra and Hua Lamphong-Bang Khae sections under the Blue Line's extension.

According to a source from the State Railway of Thailand who requested anonymity, the bidding plan for the Red Line extension that already won cabinet approval in early 2019 is also expected to be postponed because the Transport Ministry enacted a policy to consolidate the construction cost of the extension projects with existing debts of the Red Line's Bang Sue-Rangsit and Bang Sue-Taling Chan sections.