

The Rail Corridor journey

The Rail Corridor journey has been more than 11 years in the making, starting in 2011 when the Tanjong Pagar Railway Station was gazetted as a National Monument in April that year, followed by the gazette of Bukit Timah Railway Station as a conserved building a month later to formally recognise their deep historical significance in our transport heritage.

Calling for ideas and feedback

The return of the railway land to Singapore on 1 July 2011 saw the start of a comprehensive review by URA on the future uses and possible development of the railway land and the surrounding areas. This was met with widespread public interest and suggestions from people of all walks of life on what could be done with this 24km-long strip of land, that runs from the north to the south of the island. It was clear from many of those who sent in feedback that they wanted to make a tangible contribution towards the Rail Corridor's future.

In November 2011, URA launched the "Journey of Possibilities" ideas competition for the Rail Corridor, to draw innovative and fresh ideas from the public in addressing some of the key challenges and issues in planning for the future use of the Rail Corridor. Over 200 submissions were received, and the winning ideas were unveiled at a public exhibition and awards presentation in March 2012.

The next few years saw URA carry out extensive engagements with different segments of the community via different platforms to gather feedback on their aspirations for the Rail Corridor. The feedback from these sessions and previous engagements was distilled into a set of Planning and Design Goals for the Rail Corridor Request for Proposals in 2015, inviting design professionals to develop a Concept Master Plan and Concept Proposals for the Rail Corridor.

The winning proposals for the Concept Master Plan of the Rail Corridor and design concepts for Tanjong Pagar Railway Station and an integrated housing precinct at Choa Chu Kang were exhibited in The URA Centre in end-2015. A series of community exhibitions and workshops were organised in 2016 to seek the views of residents and stakeholders in neighbourhoods near the Rail Corridor on how the proposals could best meet their needs. The Rail Corridor was envisioned to be transformed into a green, connected, inclusive and endearing community space that celebrates Singapore's railway heritage and greenery.

Their views were taken on board to refine the concept ideas for Rail Corridor (Central), a 4km stretch between Hillview Road and Bukit Timah Railway Station, and develop the preliminary design for the stretch with the three key themes of Heritage and Culture, Biodiversity and Greenery, and Recreation.

From ideas to reality

Since 2018, URA and NParks have been implementing improvement works along the Rail Corridor (Central) to improve accessibility to the area and allow visitors of all ages and abilities to enjoy this unique green space, while conserving its built heritage for future generations to enjoy. Efforts to rewild and restore native forest were carried out to return the landscape to its original rainforest structure, re-introduce native plant species and strengthen the ecological connectivity along the Rail Corridor. In 2021, about 13km of improved trail along the southern and central stretches of the Rail Corridor was opened to the public. At Rail Corridor (Central), eight access points were added, four bridges were refurbished and an underpass was constructed. Together with enhanced greenery, the trail has become a popular recreational and ecological corridor.

Today, the Bukit Timah Railway Station community node has been opened to the public, with 9 Mile Platform scheduled to be opened later in 2022.