

High-speed rail puts Zhanjiang on fast-track for economic growth

A new era is welcomed with much faster route to Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area

By CHEN HONG
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The long-awaited high-speed rail link to Zhanjiang — the Jiangmen-Zhanjiang Railway — was met with universal acclaim during a trial run for the public last Saturday. Officials said it looks set to provide the coastal city in Southern China's Guangdong province with a hefty economic boost.

The addition of the high-speed rail line is expected to narrow the economic gap between Zhanjiang and heavyweight cities in Guangdong province such as Guangzhou and Shenzhen, in providing an attractive, well-connected location for companies to settle and run their businesses.

"It's definitely a milestone in the history of the city," said Zheng Renhao, Party secretary of Zhanjiang, at the trial run on Saturday. "The high-speed rail will serve as a golden passage for the city's economy and a happy passage improving the livelihood of residents."

It used to take almost 11 hours from Shenzhen to Zhanjiang by normal-speed train and eight and half hours from Guangzhou to Zhanjiang. The railway line connects Zhanjiang with Guangzhou and Shenzhen, the two most developed cities in Guangdong, and cuts travel time between them by more than half.

Previously, bus routes were used as the main arteries between Zhanjiang and other cities in Guangdong province, but were often hampered by traffic jams causing the routes to be unreliable. The distance between Zhanjiang and Guangzhou, the capital city of Guangdong, is some 420 kilometers. It took six hours or even longer during the national holidays.

"The transportation problem has been a bottleneck that has depressed the development of Zhanjiang, which meant it could hardly benefit from the strong economic growth of the cities in the Pearl River Delta area, including Guangzhou and Shenzhen," said Jiang Jianjun, mayor of Zhanjiang.

"A city without high-speed rail is like a person without access to the internet," Jiang said. "It means he is marginalized and not able to keep pace with the world."

Zhanjiang, which is conveniently located on the edge of Guangdong, bordering Hainan province and the Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region, has been given a more important role in the region's strategic development, according to Zheng.

"Zhanjiang has welcomed a new era which includes a closer approach to the Pearl River Delta area and will play a more critical role in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area and



Zheng Renhao (right), Party secretary of Zhanjiang, and **Jiang Jianjun**, mayor of Zhanjiang, take part in the first public trial run of the new high-speed rail service between Guangzhou and Zhanjiang. ZHANG FENG FENG / FOR CHINA DAILY



Passengers prepare to board a high-speed train on the Jiangmen-Zhanjiang Railway on its maiden run for the public. LIU JICHENG / FOR CHINA DAILY

Hainan free trade zone," Zheng said.

He noted that the opening of the high-speed rail network has been unanimously welcomed by government officials, business leaders and citizens of Zhanjiang, with all eager for the expected new opportunities that it will bring.

Liang Xiaobin, director of the development and reform bureau of Zhanjiang said the city is expected to become a new investment destination for companies in the Pearl River Delta area, according to a report on the Zhanjiang Daily.

An increasing number of companies in the Pearl River Delta area are looking for desirable cities on the high-speed rail network for man-

ufacturing or other service facilities, which could help to accelerate the industrial upgrade of Zhanjiang and promote economic growth in the city, he said.

Yang Wenguang, director of the Zhanjiang Bureau of Commerce, said that high-speed rail is a major factor for many companies when it comes to making investment decisions.

"Given the premier geographic location, abundant natural resources, excellent environment, convenient transportation and low production costs, Zhanjiang will attract more companies to settle down, which will stimulate the development of the city's trade and logistics," Yang said in the Zhanjiang Daily.

Huang Lipai, vice president of Zhanjiang Port Group, agreed that the high-speed rail would bring more people into Zhanjiang, as well as create better logistics which will in turn attract manufacturing and trade.

"The city's trade business and manufacturing are forecast to grow, which will benefit the ports in the long run," Huang said.

The ports in Zhanjiang handled a total cargo throughput of 280 million metric tons in 2017, an increase of 10 percent year-on-year, ranking the city 11th among all coastal ports in the country and the second in Guangdong, according to recently released statistics.

“Zhanjiang has welcomed a new era which includes a closer approach to the Pearl River Delta area.”

Zheng Renhao, Party secretary of Zhanjiang

Its position as a domestically leading distribution center for iron ore, petroleum and coal will be further reinforced, Huang said.

Yu Jianren, chairman of the board of Guangdong Hoteli Science and Technology Co, based in Zhanjiang, said the operation of high-speed rail will bring more professionals to the city.

"It is very positive for the companies in Zhanjiang that intend to employ professionals from Guangzhou, Shenzhen or other cities in Pearl River Delta area, because the transportation has become so much easier," Yu said.

Roger Arnold, a research scientist at the China Eucalyptus Research Centre based in Zhanjiang, was one of the members of the public who rode the new high-speed rail during its trial run. He said that the line was a welcome addition to the city as well as being clean, spacious, comfortable and on time.



Visitors tour the Hu Guang Yan Geo Park, a major part of Leiqiong Global Geopark, which in 2006 was included on UNESCO's list of global geoparks.

Tourism industry to boom on back of big investment projects

By CHEN HONG

In the wake of the decision to turn Zhanjiang into a major tourism destination of Southern China in the city government's 13th Five-Year Plan (2016-20), swathes of investment has flowed into the coastal city to create a new pillar of industry.

Located just north of one of China's most popular beach tourism attractions, the island province of Hainan, Zhanjiang enjoys a similar subtropical climate to many of the world's greatest holiday hot spots, including Hawaii and Miami in the United States.

Zhanjiang's white sandy beaches, clean seawater, long summers, hot springs, volcanic geology and fresh seafood are just a few of its major draws, according to Huang Jianhui, vice president of Dinglong Group, one of the developers that has invested in the city's tourism sector.

The company, together with Country Garden, one of China's top real estate developers, is to invest 50 billion yuan (\$7.5 billion) to build an international ocean theme park in the county-level city of Wuchuan in Zhanjiang.

The 1,667-hectare park, named Loong Bay Ecological Ocean Resort, will consist of China's biggest water park, four-to-five international hotels including Le Meridien, Four Points by Sheraton, Marriott and Courtyard, a Buddhist culture town, Asia's largest forest safari park and a hot spring town, according to Huang.

So far, a part of the water park has been completed and opened to the public.

"We expect the new high-speed rail, which stops in Wuchuan, will bring in a large number of travelers from the Pearl River Delta area, Hong Kong and Macao during the summer vacation period, which reinforces our investment confidence," Huang said.

Of the 50 billion yuan planned investment, so far more than 10 billion yuan has been used since construction work began in 2009.

To attract more visitors and raise awareness of the facilities available, the company is offering 2,000 com-

plementary tickets every day to its newly opened water park from July 1 to July 31, for travelers who arrive via high-speed train, he added.

The project is a part of the Wuchuan government's effort to upgrade its Jizhao Bay tourism area, according to Hong Haiwei, an official from the city.

A major part of the project, which is expected to attract 800 million yuan in investment, is aimed at improving Jizhao Bay's public services and information systems, as well as developing a tourism resort for elderly visitors with a focus on healthy lifestyles.

Additionally, Magnificent Development Holdings, a company owned by Shun Ho Group from Hong Kong, will invest 4.3 billion yuan in developing more cultural tourism in Jizhao Bay, according to Hong.

In total, more than 75 billion yuan in investment is being spread around Jizhao Bay's 27.5-kilometer coastline, he added.

Peng Hui, director of the Zhanjiang Tourism Bureau, said the tourism industry will become stronger, attracting even greater sums of investment as the transportation network continues to be improved.

A further four high-speed rail lines, six highways and a new international airport are scheduled to start construction in the near future, which will connect Zhanjiang at the southernmost part of China's land mass with the rest of the nation, Peng said.

The government of Zhanjiang launched 38 tourism-related projects in order to attract greater investment from home and abroad in mid-June.

Xu Taozun, general manager of a resort on Techeng Island, which is located just three miles from downtown Zhanjiang, said the city's tourism business will get better with the new high-speed rail.

"We rely heavily on the natural resources of Zhanjiang, for example the natural islands and hot springs, ancient mangroves and unique food," Xu said. "I hope these things will remain pristine and preserved when the tourism industry really starts to boom."

Efforts accelerated as city aims to become key regional transportation hub

By LI YU
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The Zhanjiang city government has pledged to redouble its efforts to improve its transportation network, in line with decisions outlined in the city government's 13th Five-Year Plan (2016-20), for it to become a major regional transportation hub.

According to Jiang Jianjun, mayor of Zhanjiang, the city government has rolled out an overall plan to develop the local transportation network, called the 56811 Project, which

features the extensive development of railway lines, highways, flights and shipping routes in and out of the city.

The Jiangmen-Zhanjiang Railway, which connects Zhanjiang with other Pearl River Delta cities, was launched on Sunday. The line will reduce travel times between the cities from around 10 hours to just three-to-four hours.

The high-speed line is the first of five high-speed lines that will feed into Zhanjiang in the future, including direct routes with Guangzhou,



Hepu, Haikou and Zhangjiajie. Some of the trains will be capable of running at speeds of 350 km/h.

"With the five high-speed railways to be in service in Zhanjiang, the city will real-

ize its goal of becoming one of the major railway hubs in the country," Jiang said.

The mayor added that a new international airport has been approved by the State Council and will begin construction early next year to provide better links to members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

Once the airport is completed it will function as one of the three main airports in Guangdong and help to support the province's harbors involved in the framework of China (Hainan) Free Trade

Zone, as well as the key hubs involved in the Belt and Road Initiative.

The reason that the central government has chosen Zhanjiang is because of its central position in the surrounding area, Jiang said.

Once the traffic network in Zhanjiang has been fully upgraded, it will provide fast and efficient links to the Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region, Guizhou, Yunnan and Sichuan provinces, the western regions of Hunan and Hubei, as well as Chongqing and Hainan, Jiang added.



A high-speed train glides along the tracks of the Jiangmen-Zhanjiang Railway. LANG SHUCHEN / FOR CHINA DAILY