

face off

Each week, our two teenagers will debate a hot topic. **This week ...**

Should we remove trams from Central?



**Naz Iraj, 17,
St Margaret's Girls' College**

Trams are a cheap and eco-friendly means of transport, but their disadvantages outweighs the benefits.

Other transport systems are much faster and more reliable. Another problem is, unlike cars and buses, trams are simply not suitable for present-day Hong Kong because they run on tracks along the city's busy streets. While buses can move around obstacles, trams must wait for the road to clear before they can continue their journey.

In addition, their slow speed and frequent stops worsen the city's traffic congestion. This may not bother tourists who enjoy a tram ride, but it won't help solve Hong Kong's air pollution problem.

These days, most governments are keen to implement energy-saving plans. By removing trams between Central and Admiralty, we can save a huge amount of electricity.

Moreover, trams are not the first choice of transport for many Hongkongers who prefer cars, trains or buses.

As former government town planner Sit Kwok-keung said: "MTR services cover the whole of Hong Kong Island, so why do we still insist on a mode of transportation that is slow and carries few passengers?"

It's about time we let go of the idea that trams are a part of Hong Kong's heritage and should be preserved.

If preserving our culture is so important, then including trams in a transport museum does not sound like a bad idea. Trams belong in museums, not on the city's streets.



**Joshua Lee, 17,
Sha Tin College**

Retired town planner Sit Kwok-keung has proposed making a section of the city's Central district tram-free.

He says the removal of trams from Des Voeux Road Central to Admiralty will improve road traffic and ease congestion.

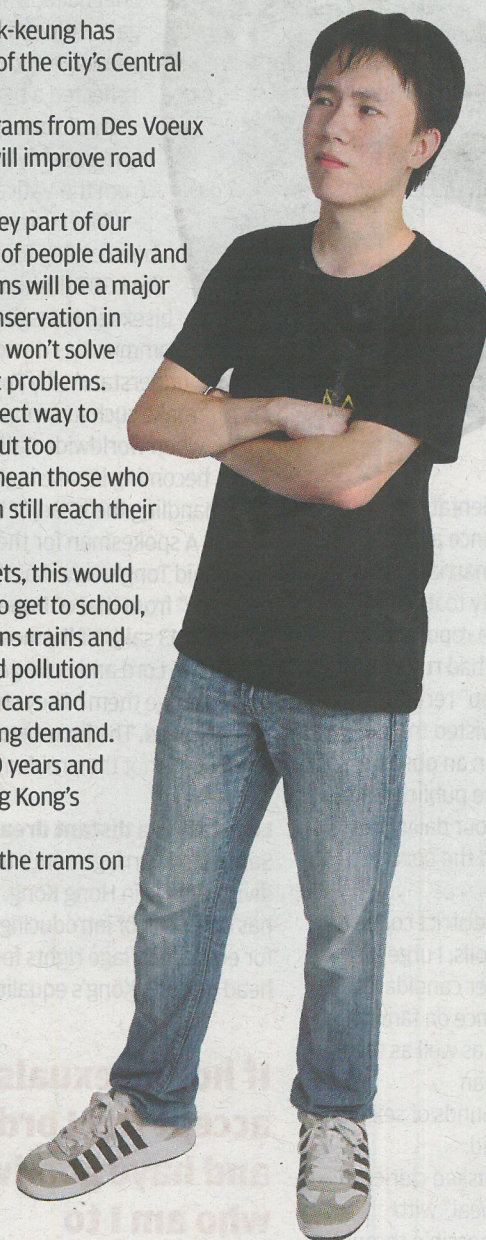
But it's a very bad idea. Trams are a key part of our transport system. They serve thousands of people daily and help reduce pollution. Removing the trams will be a major blow to heritage conservation in Hong Kong and won't solve the city's traffic problems.

Taking a tram is the perfect way to make a journey that is too long to walk but too short to take the MTR. The cheap fares mean those who cannot afford to take the train or bus can still reach their destination.

If trams were to be taken off the streets, this would seriously hamper some people's ability to get to school, or work, or to move around town. It means trains and buses would become more crowded. And pollution would become more serious when more cars and buses hit the streets to cope with the rising demand.

Trams have a history of more than 110 years and have grown to become a key part of Hong Kong's culture and identity.

We should make every effort to keep the trams on our streets.



Did you enjoy this debate? If you would like to take part in the next academic term, send your details to yp@scmp.com