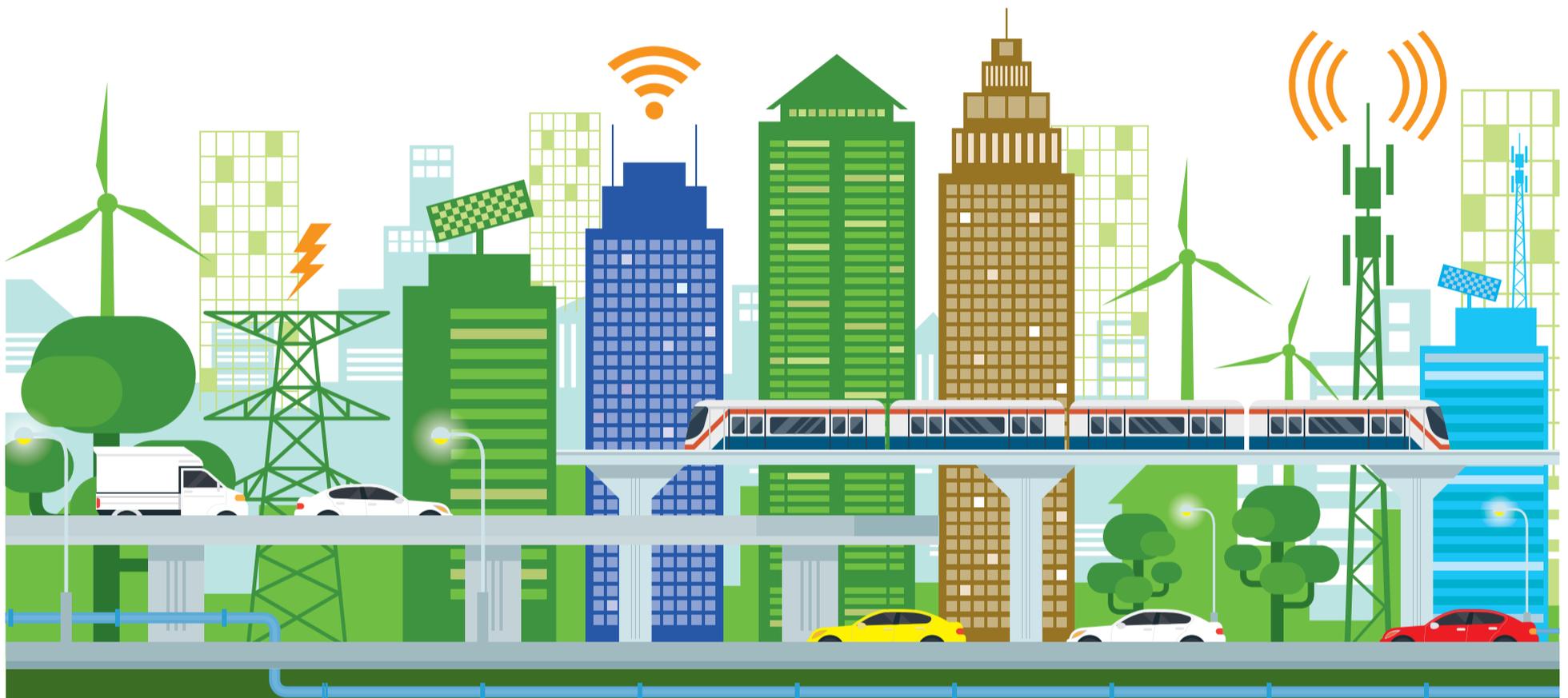# STREET SMART

China is showing the world the benefits that data-driven solutions can bring to urban infrastructure and town planning

By DAVID HO in Hong Kong
For China Daily Asia Weekly

Hangzhou is home to some 9 million people who live around an idyllic lake surrounded by well-kept woods in a city partly run by artificial intelligence (AI), which is doing a remarkably good job.

What is happening in the capital of East China's Zhejiang province could eventually spread across the country and, in time, globally, as smart city technology improves. Traffic and transport are key areas of focus for smart city applications, in which big data and software are applied to make the most of existing hardware.

Hangzhou provides a road map for what is possible, but it is hardly alone in its ambitions. There are 661 cities in China, going by the country's official definition, and more than 500 of them are taking big leaps to become "smart cities".

In Hangzhou, the city government worked with hardware developer Foxconn and e-commerce giant Alibaba on the City Brain project, which launched in October 2016. Using enormous amounts of data, City Brain has helped alleviate traffic congestion, minimize road accidents and even cut down on crime.

The move is part of an ongoing transformation of China's economy and society, one that is driven by both the public and private sectors and from the largest and most established companies to the smallest startups.

"In Hangzhou, we have 1.2 million vehicles traveling on roads every day, with 50 percent that pass through highways. The Hangzhou City Brain has reduced 10 percent of the time required to travel on highways, the equivalent of saving time for half of those 1.2 million drivers," said Wang Jian, chairman of the Technology Steering Committee at Alibaba, during the keynote speech at a conference hosted by the company in October.

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