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CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

About six months ago, on 8 January 2016, the Public Transport Council (PTC) was given an additional statutory remit - that of an independent advisor to the Minister for Transport. PTC by design has a broad and diverse representation from society, which includes academia, labour union, industry and the people sector. This make-up is invaluable as it allows PTC to objectively weigh the considerations of commuters, the Government, public transport operators, and to provide balanced recommendations on how public transport can be improved.

Right governance, effective regulatory oversight, operational excellence, increased capacity, consistently safe and reliable public transport and affordable fares are essential in our public transport. There is unrelenting concentration by the Government, Land Transport Authority (LTA) as regulator and the public transport operators in these areas. We now have 5 MRT lines, 3 LRT lines, more than 5,000 public buses and 28,000 taxis. The goal is the welfare of the commuter and to deliver a great commuting experience every day to every commuter. It enables social cohesion, growth and development when our citizens make the most opportunities of life in modern Singapore. Public transport in our city state places commuters at the centre of its network.

PTC's first advisory report then begins with our commuters. It is about the daily commute to work, the journey to the clinic/hospital, to school, to shop, to eat at our hawker centres and to spend time recreationally at our numerous attractions. About 7.9 million passenger trips are made daily; 3 million on our trains, 3.9 million on

our buses and 1 million on taxis. PTC had to understand the commuters' suite of concerns and needs.

Between December 2015 and June 2016, we engaged and listened to our commuters - comprising a wide spectrum across various passenger segments - directly in a serious way through frank, deep and comprehensive in-depth interviews and focus group discussions (held at our commuters' convenience including evenings, weekends and public holidays for wider participation) in English and other languages, including dialects. PTC also undertook a survey on understanding what areas were important to commuters and a trend analysis¹ of their views as well as reports on public transport in the mainstream and social media. We have duly integrated the material data for this Report.

The focus on commuters was affirmed as the highest objective of public transport by public transport experts from London and major cities in Asia (Hong Kong, Seoul and Tokyo) with comparable commuter populations. Commuters are a precious social capital and as citizens, creators of public value in our public transport network. PTC wanted to ensure a properly balanced and feasible report. So we triangulated and interlocuted the commuters' views with our public transport operators, bus captains, taxi drivers, train station staff, the National Transport Workers' Union, the National Taxi Association, the LTA, and other industry actors for their reactions and considerations. Our brief was to enhance our public transport through commuter welfare and to work towards a truly great commuter experience.

¹ Trend analysis period was from 1 June 2015 to 31 May 2016.

In the midst of many diverse views of the commuters and other public transport actors, we discern some good shifts in our commuters' view of our public transport. These include the following:

- Commuters want to be engaged for their views and want to feel connected to public transport plans. So they were pleasantly surprised that PTC was engaging them directly and specifically on their public transport concerns and needs.
- Commuters have experienced improvements to our public transport with more buses and trains, better connectivity and accessibility, more comfort and higher frequency of buses. Investments in these areas are being felt in their day-to-day commute.
- Commuters say that, overall, we have a good public transport system. This speaks of co-ownership of our public transport system.
- Commuters want to be equipped to assist fellow commuters in the event of train breakdowns. This shared value (or co-production) is a very valuable asset.
- Finally, commuters want to be in control with accurate, up-to-date, relevant and consistent information, in particular during disruptions, to allow them to be able to re-plan their journeys.

This maiden Advisory Report carries the clear voices of our commuters. The findings and recommendations form the core of this Report. The Report reflects our wide-ranging commuter engagement and stakeholder consultation; a first time for such a focused exercise in recent memory. The findings result from all the engagement, consultations and studies we made, and are a rich and reliable resource of our understanding and evaluation of our commuters and their views on public transport. The recommendations are by and large at the micro-level or 'soft aspects' of public transport. It is common experience that multiple small steps moving in the same direction - in this case, of enhancing the commuter welfare, delight and experience - can bring about dramatic changes². These steps when integrated and implemented, with the evolving macro-level public transport governance, architecture and design will contribute significantly to a better public transport system.

On behalf of PTC, I would like to thank all whom we have spoken to, and made this Report possible. It has been PTC's honour to tell their stories.

Richard Magnus

Chairman, Public Transport Council

26 July 2016

² G. Morgan (2006). *Images of Organization*. 2nd ed., Sage publications, 255.

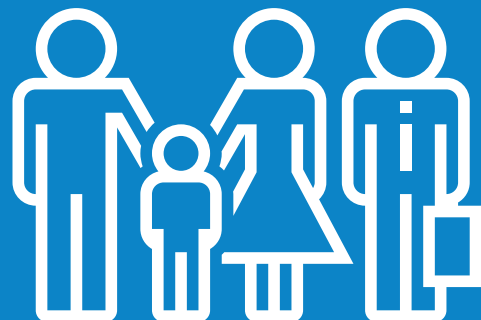
INTRODUCTION

FOCUSING ON COMMUTERS

Singapore's public transport system plays a paramount role in keeping our people moving. It is a means to economic growth and contributes to a modern and sustainable city. Public transport here has grown to 5 Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) lines, 3 Light Rail Transit (LRT) lines, more than 5,000 public buses, around 28,000 taxis, 118 MRT stations including 81 underground ones, 43 LRT stations and more than 4,600 bus stops.

Over the past three to four years, significant changes in public transport reinvestments, governance and innovations have enabled our public transport system to keep pace with rising demands and expectations. Every stakeholder in Singapore's public transport architecture has contributed significantly to the success of our public transport system today: there is political and policy will from the Minister for Transport and the Ministry he helms; public institutions such as the Land Transport Authority (LTA) and Public Transport Council (PTC); public transport operators – SMRT Corporation Ltd (SMRT), SBS Transit Ltd (SBS Transit) and now, Tower Transit Singapore (Tower Transit), Go-Ahead Singapore and taxi companies - and other commercial entities such as EZ-Link Pte Ltd, Network for Electronic Transfers (Singapore) Pte Ltd and Transit Link Pte Ltd.

Commuters, in turn, keep our city state thriving, efficient and vibrant. About 7.9 million passenger trips per day are made on our trains, public buses and taxis. Professor Phang Sock Yong³, a public transport expert puts it this way, "It is important to consider what commuters care about as failure to take this into account will not make public transport sustainable." Delivering a positive commuting experience is the *raison d'être* of our public transport network. Commuters are end users of Singapore's public transport. In many ways, they sit at the heart of Singapore's public transport system.



³ Professor Phang Sock Yong is Vice Provost (Faculty Matters), Celia Moh Chair Professor of Economics, School of Economics, Singapore Management University.

Paying attention to detail can make every commuter's journey more pleasant and comfortable. Very often, when commuters use public transport, they are not only receiving a functional experience of getting from point A to B, but also an emotional one (how they feel, or how they feel they have been served or treated). From the standpoint of the commuter, emotional needs must be well-addressed to enhance the journey experience. Good frontline service or clear signage may be considered "little things" but these are worthy of attention because they help make the system work.

We thus sought to engage our commuters and public transport stakeholders meaningfully. During our engagement process, commuters gave feedback on their present and felt needs, allowing PTC to understand the day-to-day challenges they face. Our near and medium-term recommendations are meant to address the enhancements suggested by commuters for their daily journey needs and deepen the human touch that they receive. These recommendations will also help the Government prioritise resources for commuters to make their journey more comfortable and convenient.

At a Roundtable workshop organised by the PTC in May 2016, Singapore's focus on commuters' needs as the highest objective was reaffirmed by well-regarded public transport experts.

"We are here to provide a service, not only to run trains and buses. We have to fulfill the needs of people...Whether how to deal better with the elderly or children, or disabled, or about giving feedback, these are all about humans... Transport for London has been through this journey. From being engineering-focused to customer-relevant. Once you start thinking from the customer's viewpoint, you will start to see new things."

Mr Shashi Verma

*Director of Customer Experience,
Transport for London, PTC Roundtable, May 2016*

"In public transport, the human touch is essential to become the choice provider. Technology may have grown, but sentiments of commuters still need to be addressed. Sentiments of commuter – some room for human touch."

Mr Tetsuto Igarashi

*Director of Urban Railway Policy Division,
Railway Bureau, Ministry of Land, Infrastructure,
Transport and Tourism, Tokyo, PTC Roundtable,
May 2016*

"...how we can serve other specific segments. Both 'hardware' and 'software' – booking systems, people at station, travelling with disability, use service etc. In terms of 'hardware', introducing low floor buses. Not just for wheelchair users, but elderly and those with kids."

Dr Dorothy Chan

*Deputy Director (Administration and Resources),
Head of Centre for Logistics & Transport, and advisor of
Centre for Degree Programmes, Hong Kong University,
Hong Kong, PTC Roundtable, May 2016*



From left: Dr Nakmoon Sung, Dr Dorothy Chan, Professor Phang Sock Yong, Mr Shashi Verma, Mr Tetsuto Igarashi

WHAT PTC IS REPORTING IN THIS ADVISORY REPORT

This Report sets out PTC's engagement with the various segments of commuters and stakeholders. Commuters whom PTC spoke to appreciated this engagement. It also humanises public transport. We heard their views, concerns and needs. Most of their concerns and needs were immediate felt needs, some for the short term of 1-3 years and mostly for the medium term of 3-5 years.

The Report will also show that PTC studied best practices on commuter welfare and experience in other comparable jurisdictions and their adaption to Singapore, bearing in mind the felt needs of our commuters.

PTC then discussed its findings and commuter recommendations with the public transport stakeholders. The findings lent strong support to our recommendations.

After a considered evaluation, PTC made its recommendations in this Report. The recommendations, in the main, arise from the commuters and are important to them, however small they may seem in the overall public transport schema. Small multiple steps create value for the commuters. Having the relevant stakeholders consider and implement them will demonstrate to the commuters that we care about them.

The intent of these findings and recommendations is to reiterate to the public transport stakeholders that they should remain connected to the ground, in this case the commuters. The commuters' views, concerns, needs and recommendations should be integrated into the macro-level plans and developments of our public transport.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

PTC is guided by three key considerations in proposing its recommendations. These are:

1) RECOMMENDATIONS MUST BE FACT-BASED AND REFLECT THE REALITY ON THE GROUND

Commuters who take public transport daily have many suggestions to offer. We listened. We engaged our commuters through interviews and focus group discussions for a first-hand appreciation of their sentiments and thoughts about our public transport system. This primary evidence is essential and invaluable.

"I feel good knowing that the Government is actually concerned about what we think about public transport."

Working adult, male

"I feel that focus group discussions help because you hear more from other people. You need different (profiles) of people to better understand different needs."

Working adult, female

2) RECOMMENDATIONS MUST ADOPT A BALANCED APPROACH

We considered the views of several direct stakeholders. The views of public transport operators as well as their employees helped us to understand commuter issues from their perspective, uncover the challenges they face serving commuters, and was instructive on how and what improvements can be made. These individuals are the 'invisible' people in our public transport system.

"Nice to talk to you. When are we going to meet again? I volunteer...We must have this talk, (it is) important."

Bus captain

"When I hear PTC wants to talk to us, my tears come. Appreciate your initiative."

Taxi driver

3) RECOMMENDATIONS HAVE TO BE PRACTICAL AND COST-EFFICIENT

PTC must ensure that additional or enhanced designs and financial investments of the recommendations are sustainable and do not impact the overall affordability of fares for commuters.

"PTC's approach in seeking to enhance the commuter's experience through cost-effective improvements and innovations will generate more value per dollar."

Professor Phang Sock Yong

To sum up, in our public consultation exercise, commuters and stakeholders told PTC that they were appreciative that their views were sought and heard by an independent channel and expressed the hope for more improvements and positive change in our public transport system.



Recommendations reflect reality on the ground

GROUND ENGAGEMENT

LISTENING TO COMMUTERS AND STAKEHOLDERS

PTC carried out both quantitative and qualitative research through a survey, in-depth interviews, focus group discussions and media/social media discourse for the preparation of this Report. We listened to a diverse range of commuters and this face-to-face exercise humanises public transport. We sought the views of the National Transport Workers' Union and the National Taxi Association. We also spoke to public transport operators, SBS Transit, SMRT and Tower Transit, and LTA in order to propose sensible and feasible improvements to benefit commuters.



GROUND ENGAGEMENTS

PTC conducted 44 in-depth interviews and 51 focus group discussions of some 400 commuters from December 2015 to June 2016. These engagements were conducted in English and other local languages, including dialects. This also reflects the realistic profile of our commuters. Many of these engagements were conducted in the evenings, weekends and public holidays for the convenience of commuters. The backgrounds and profiles of these commuters were deliberately diverse to be as inclusive as practicable and were as follows:

PROFILE	
Segments⁴	Working adults in different geographical areas in both business and non-business hubs Tertiary students Parents with young children Seniors Wheelchair-bound commuters using public transport on their own without a caregiver Car owners who also use public transport
Age range	17 to 81 years old
Ethnic groups	Chinese, Malay, Indian, Others
Language of interviews	English Mandarin and Chinese dialects Malay



Focus group discussions with seniors



⁴ Due to practical reasons, PTC has not included all possible segments, but will undertake separate exercises in the future to interview them. Examples of the segments include the visually handicapped, hearing impaired etc



Focus group discussion with wheelchair users

We commissioned an independent survey. For this survey, 2,132 commuters were randomly selected from 15 MRT stations and 15 bus stops island-wide from 20 to 26 February 2016, between 8am and 8pm, to take into account both peak and non-peak hours. The survey questionnaire was in English, Chinese, Malay and Tamil.

Apart from commuters, PTC also had conversations with taxi drivers from different companies, and public transport frontline staff from SMRT and SBS Transit.

As part of PTC's collaboration with NUS, we examined commuters' experiences at various public transport 'touchpoints', through interviews and focus group discussions. A total of 5 focus group discussions and 14 qualitative interviews were conducted in April 2016.

We had discussions with public transport regulators and academia from Copenhagen, Hong Kong, London, Oslo, Paris, Perth, Seoul, Sydney and Tokyo to understand their best practices, potential application and relevance to Singapore. Our commuters' views and feedback were in our minds in these discussions and evaluation.

PTC also held a Public Transport Experts Roundtable, on 25 and 26 May 2016, on our respective public transport systems and commuter experiences. These experts were from Hong Kong, London, Seoul and Tokyo – comparable metropolitan jurisdictions – as well as from Singapore and the International Association of Public Transport (UITP).

We monitored, through an independent study commissioned to analyse traction trends, 513,413 sentiments and conversation threads in our local mainstream and social media during the period between 1 June 2015 and 31 May 2016. PTC evaluated them against what we had directly heard from the commuters. The issues raised were consistent with the data gathered by PTC. Aside from that, we also referred to previous years' findings from the Public Transport Customer Satisfaction Survey. We also monitored key public transport trends and developments through international publications such as Eurotransport. PTC's membership in UITP also gave us access to a worldwide network of transport experts and reports.



Focus group discussion with tertiary students

With the above collation of information and analyses, we also sought the views of:

- Land Transport Authority
- National Taxi Association
- National Transport Workers' Union
- SBS Transit Ltd
- SMRT Corporation Ltd

These enabled PTC to make balanced and realistic findings and recommendations for our commuters. These were, in our view, a rigorous respect for our commuters' views.



Ground engagements help improve Singapore's public transport system

FINDINGS

UNDERSTANDING DIVERSE VOICES

The findings in this section arise from the engagement with our commuters and stakeholders detailed in Section 2 of this Report.

This section focuses on:

- improvements observed by commuters in recent years;
- a summary of areas of importance to our commuters when using public transport; and
- areas which the Government, LTA and public transport operators are already investing resources to address commuter needs, although the effects will take time to be felt on the ground.

“Over the years, as commuters, we noted a big jump in quality of public transport. Just that it takes time.”

Father with young children



IMPROVEMENTS OBSERVED BY COMMUTERS IN THE RECENT YEARS

Commuters were asked to assess public transport as a whole in the last few years. They generally felt that there had been an improvement in the public transport system and customer service. This explains why our Public Transport Customer Satisfaction Survey showed an improvement in commuter satisfaction from 88.5% in 2013 to 91.8% in 2015.

“I see a huge improvement. Need to credit LTA. Certain times still frustrated, but overall still a good job done over the last 5 years.”

Working adult, female

“I’m satisfied with the public transport provided. As a commuter, I am aware that the authority is taking a proactive approach in seeking continuous improvement, instead of being complacent.”

Working adult, male

Specifically, the improvements felt and experienced by the commuters relate to:

- better public transport infrastructure and assets;
- better connectivity, accessibility and comfort;

- there being more options (for example, new train lines and more buses) to choose from;
- higher frequency of buses; and
- better management of train disruptions.

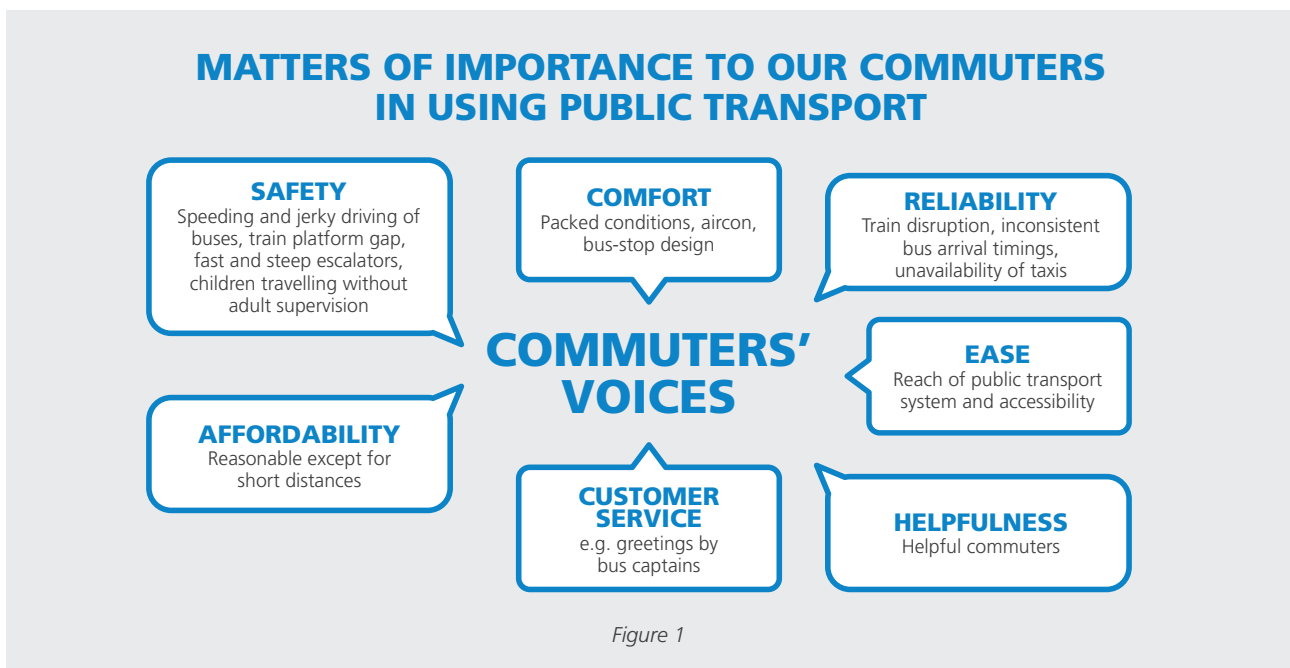
MATTERS OF IMPORTANCE TO OUR COMMUTERS

The next few findings are both fundamental and significant to our commuters. In other words, these areas are *sine qua non*, a ‘must’, to our commuter welfare and experience. There are 7 aspects which are elaborated below and referred to as ‘Matters of Importance to our Commuters’.

When we spoke with the public transport experts, these areas are consistent with the best practices in other comparable metropolitan jurisdictions. This means that our commuters are not unlike their counterparts in these jurisdictions in terms of commuter interests, concerns and needs. Our commuters have articulated them well.

These are: Safety, Reliability, Affordability, Ease, Comfort, Customer Service and Helpfulness.

Figure 1 illustrates these aspects.



These matters of importance carry or are accompanied by emotional responses, such as happiness or gratitude – when being helped by others or when good customer service is received – or undue stress such as during moments of uncertainty. The availability or otherwise of these matters at every commuter journey will impact the commuter welfare and experience individually or collectively. We need to bear in mind that there are approximately 6.9 million passenger trips on our buses and trains daily.

SAFETY

TRAINS

Safety is fundamental to public transport. However, commuters take it as a given. PTC has ascertained how the safety of our train system is being ensured by LTA, SMRT and SBS Transit. To name a few:

- LTA has a Rapid Transit System Safety Section that ensures systems and operations safety in all rail and road tunnel construction projects⁵. LTA adopts a 'safe-to-use' philosophy that ensures any rapid transit system is safe for staff and commuters before being open to the public.
- When LTA grants licences to train operators, there is a safety assurance operating performance standard that needs to be met, failing which the licence may be cancelled.
- Both train operators take safety matters seriously. For example, SMRT has been enhancing its management of critical rail infrastructure, assets and equipment that affect safety⁶.
- SBS Transit conducts safety audits regularly to ensure the safety standards are complied with⁷. It also rolled out a public education campaign on escalator safety at the Chinatown station to minimise the incidences of using escalators at train stations.

“Safety is actually taken for granted. Singapore is known for its safety. So far I think we can assume we are safe on public transport.”

Working adult, male

BUSES

Commuters were more concerned over the risk of falling on buses due to jerky driving.

“Taking a bus have fear for the safety...jamming brakes. Fear of safety.”

Senior, male

PTC found that operators have various initiatives to improve bus safety records. Regarding the issue of jerky driving, bus captains share their side of the story: that they need time to get used to the bus model, especially when they had to drive many different models in a day. The more experienced bus captains tend to be better in handling the buses. To improve on this aspect, some operators are now using telematics systems which are installed on buses to monitor how well or smoothly bus captains drive.

“We drive different bus models everyday. The way to drive each bus is different. Scania - need to tap lightly. If you tap too hard, the passengers will fly from the back of the bus to the front. Another is double decker. Volvo will require harder tapping of the accelerator. If you are used to driving Volvo, Scania would be very hard to drive.”

Bus captain

⁵ LTA website - <https://www.lta.gov.sg/content/ltaweb/en/industry-matters/safety-and-health-and-environment/rapid-transit-system-safety/rapid-transit-system-safety-rtss-section.html>

⁶ SMRT Annual Report 2016

⁷ SBS Transit Annual Report 2015

OTHER SAFETY CONCERNS

Parents with young children are concerned about letting their children take public transport alone for three main reasons: They worry about their children a) crossing the road; b) being pushed in by the crowd when entering trains; and c) using steep and fast-moving escalators.

Wheelchair-bound commuters travelling alone are concerned about the wheels of their wheelchairs getting caught in the platform gap, while many seniors are afraid of steep and fast-moving escalators.

“For the elderly, they can feel giddy on the long and steep escalators.”

Senior, female

RELIABILITY

Issues of reliability like train disruptions, inconsistent bus arrival timings, and taxi unavailability are the most common challenges faced by commuters. Taken together, these are negative situations that create stress and feelings of uncertainty in commuters. Commuters want to feel assured that they can get to their destinations on time. Psychology research shows that uncertainty during an unpleasant situation will intensify the negative affective reaction⁸. Enhancing reliability will thus increase commuters' confidence in the public transport system.

“The Government wants to encourage people to use public transport...So the more reliable it gets then the more confidence the public would (have to) want to use it. That's how it works.”

Working adult, female

AFFORDABILITY

Affordability of fares to commuters we spoke to is taken to mean inexpensive fares. Most working adult commuters say that public transport fares are generally affordable (even compared with other countries), although a few shared that short distance fares were less so. They also like the distance fare system.

“Public transport is not (a) charity. They also need income to cover costs. Even manpower costs have increased.”

Working adult, female

“Minimum fee is far too expensive. Just a couple of bus stops...a few stops only. 79 cents just for 2 stops.”

Working adult, male



Commuters like the distance fare system

⁸ Yoav Bar-Anan, Timothy D. Wilson and Daniel T. Gilbert (2009), “The Feeling of Uncertainty Intensifies Affective Reactions,” *Emotion*, Vol.9, no. 1, 123-127.

PTC keeps fares affordable to commuters in general. Further help is given to low-income groups based on a targeted approach through various social assistance schemes. PTC tracks the proportion of public transport expenditure to the household income for the average public transport user as well as the lower income group. In deciding fares, PTC will take into consideration extenuating circumstances due to deterioration of affordability or adverse economic conditions. The fare adjustment formula saw lower fares in 2015. Our rail and bus fares are already cheaper than, if not on par with, most jurisdictions. PTC will continue to safeguard commuters' interests and keep fares affordable, while ensuring the viability of our public transport system.

EASE

Ease refers to how easy it is for commuters to get to their destinations, and is a combination of accessibility and connectivity. From the commuters' perspective, accessibility is about how easy it is to get to a bus stop or train station, and find one's way around, especially at train interchange stations. Connectivity is the reach of the transport network – how many destinations buses and trains can bring commuters to.



Rail expansion leading to enhanced connectivity

Accessibility is particularly important for seniors and wheelchair-bound commuters. Seniors may be confused and lost in train stations, and have difficulty navigating overhead bridges. Wheelchair-bound commuters need barrier-free access.

“(Bus) Convenient...accessible to anywhere.”

Senior, male

“Through all sheltered blocks...Wet or dry weather will use sheltered (walkway)”

Working adult, male

PTC ascertained that LTA has been investing in physical accessibility. These measures include:

- The Walk2Ride programme, which ensures that shopping, leisure, commercial and residential developments within a 400m radius of all MRT stations, and within 200m radius of all LRT stations and bus interchanges will be connected with sheltered linkways.
- Barrier-free connectivity at our train stations.
- More lifts are being fitted at pedestrian overhead bridges.
- By 2020, 100% wheelchair-accessibility of public buses and bus stops.

COMFORT

Key issues related to a sense of comfort include crowding (packed conditions), which sometimes results in stuffy conditions, especially in trains, as well as the reluctance of commuters to move in to provide more space. Comfort is also related to the adequacy of bus stop shelters that shield commuters from the elements, as well as the design of seats at bus stops. The latter is particularly important to our seniors.

“I find it awkward and uneasy in a fully packed train. We are standing too close to each other, men and women facing each other, complete strangers standing so close to each other. It is really uncomfortable and awkward.”

Senior, female

CUSTOMER SERVICE

Two areas of importance to commuters show that the human touch can mitigate many of our commuters' challenges – where a small gesture can make a big difference. The first is customer service from frontline staff of public transport operators.



Customer service from frontline staff makes a big difference
Photo credit: SBS Transit

Most commuters share that their most positive experiences on buses result from the customer service rendered by bus captains who go the extra mile to smile and greet passengers or wait for those running for the bus. However, the quality of the journey experience depends on two parties. Bus captains appreciate it when their greetings are returned and feel hurt when they are ignored. Aside from bus captains, train station staff also do their best for commuters.

“Drivers make the difference. The bus itself is just a bus.”

Working adult, female

“I do get bus drivers who are very cheerful and who greet me every time I take a bus...There is nothing that brightens the passengers' lives when you greet the passengers.”

Senior, male

“I say good morning and afternoon, but it hurts when they just ignore.”

Bus captain

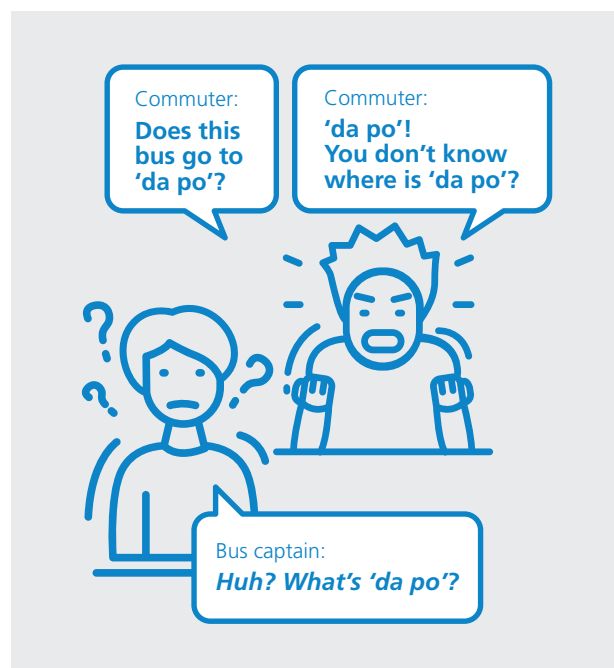
On the other hand, there were commuters who felt that some foreign bus captains were unable to communicate in English. We clarified this with foreign bus captains. They explained that they needed time to adjust to the peculiarities on the job. For example, commuters could use as many as three different names to refer to the same place. Older Singaporean commuters do ask for directions using colloquial terms. As a result, foreign bus captains were sometimes not able to address commuters' queries satisfactorily.

“Commuters asked if the bus goes to “Sand” (for Marina Bay Sands). I didn't know at first, but now I know. Some asked for Bayfront, but (it) refers to MBS. So, the landmark may be communicated to us in very many different ways.”

Bus captain

“Sometimes commuters used old terms only understood by older generations, like ‘da po’, ‘po di’ or ‘xiao po’ (to refer to different parts of Chinatown).”

Bus captain



Some bus captains feel that their training has enabled them to serve commuters well, and this is echoed by SBS Transit's Chief Executive Officer.

"We are very proud of our Bus Captains who are a very committed and hardworking group of individuals. They take great pride in their work and are always trying to improve the customer experience. To them, it is not just about driving the bus, it is about connecting with the customer and ensuring that they are as comfortable as possible."

Mr Gan Juay Kiat

Chief Executive Officer, SBS Transit

HELPFULNESS

The other important aspect of human touch is helpfulness rendered by fellow commuters. For example, commuters step forward to help by acting as interpreters when foreign bus captains struggle with English. Seniors find other commuters, especially young adults, helpful and supportive.

"Most young Singaporeans are polite towards the old folks, and they are willing to help us. Young Singaporeans are good, especially the young women. They are very helpful."

Senior, male

Wheelchair-bound users also speak of helpful commuters who will step forward to wheel them and take care of them on buses and trains.

"Sometimes passengers see us trying hard to steer and reverse our wheelchair on the bus, they will step forward and ask if we needed help to steer the wheelchair."

Wheelchair user, male

AREAS ADDRESSED BY GOVERNMENT, LTA AND PUBLIC TRANSPORT OPERATORS

Commuters also raised other issues. The Government, LTA and public transport operators are aggressively ramping up efforts to address these such as crowdedness, train breakdowns and disruptions, reliability of bus arrival timings, bunching of buses, frequency and waiting time for bus services.

"I think there is improvement but as Singaporeans...we want perfect, not just improved. So we hope that it will improve further."

Working adult, male

Train service reliability is one of key factors important to commuters. In recent years, efforts have been made to improve service reliability, such as the replacement of sleepers and signalling systems for the North-South and East-West Lines. With the transition of SMRT Trains' rail lines to the New Rail Financing Framework, LTA will assume ownership of the operating assets and make more timely decisions for capacity enhancements, replacements, and upgrading of the assets. As an asset-light operator, SMRT Trains will focus on providing reliable and well-maintained rail services for commuters. In addition, LTA and the public transport operators have carried out ground deployment exercises to enhance the management of train disruptions.

"We want to nurture a growing affinity for public transport, by inspiring a new standard of service excellence for our commuters and delivering an experience that is safe, reliable and customer-centric."

Mr Desmond Kuek

Chief Executive Officer, SMRT

To address issues such as bus arrival and frequency, more than 800 government-funded buses have been added to the public bus network through the Bus Service Enhancement Programme (BSEP). The number of BSEP buses is set to increase to 1,000 by 2017.



Number of BSEP buses set to increase
Photo credit: Land Transport Authority

With improved connectivity in the bus network, customers are provided with more public transport choices. More trains and lines will also be added to the network. By 2030, the Singapore train network will reach 360km, comparable to that of London, Tokyo and New York.

“There have been significant improvements to public transport in recent years, especially on the rail network. For example, the opening of Downtown Line 2 has been a gamechanger not only for those who live along the Bukit Panjang and Bukit Timah corridors, but we see many commuters who live in Sengkang, Punggol and Woodlands who now transfer to the DTL to get to the city centre. With every new expansion, commuters will experience greater connectivity and shorter travel times.”

Mr Chew Men Leong
Chief Executive, LTA



More trains and lines will be added to the network
Photo credit: SMRT Corporation Ltd

LTA introduced the Bus Service Reliability Framework (BSRF) trial in February 2014 to improve the regularity of bus arrivals at bus stops. The BSRF trial was expanded to include a total of 45 bus services and has yielded encouraging results⁹. The transition to the Bus Contracting Model (i.e. Tower Transit from May 2016, and Go Ahead, SMRT and SBS Transit from September 2016), with the BSRF as a key performance indicator in the incentive framework, should further improve bus reliability.

“Since day one of being awarded Singapore’s first bus contract, we said we’d build a people-centric bus service where the customer is at the centre of everything we do. A service that is personable and intuitive.”

Mr Adam Leishman
Chief Executive Officer, Tower Transit Group

The next section presents PTC’s recommendations to address the areas of importance to commuters, which will make a difference to their day-to-day journeys. Each recommendation may address a specific area of importance or a few at the same time. These are on top of what the Government, LTA and public transport operators are already doing.

⁹ LTA, Expanding the Bus Service Reliability Trial <http://www.lta.gov.sg/apps/news/page.aspx?c=2&id=76c8984b-93ee-41a2-a06d-3623c094450d>

RECOMMENDATIONS

IMPROVING THE COMMUTER'S JOURNEY

Feedback from commuters rest more on their present and felt needs, and our recommendations are consequently reflected under four main themes: Commuters@Heart of Inclusive Public Transport, Commuters@Heart of Information, Commuters@Heart of Design and Good Neighbours on Public Transport.

Attention to detail is important from the commuters' perspective and can make the journey more pleasant or comfortable. From the commuters' point of view, apart from addressing the matters of importance for their daily journey, our recommendations must truly and effectively meet their emotional needs¹⁰ to enhance the journey experience.



¹⁰ Mark van Hagen and Pauline Bron (2013), "Enhancing the experience of the train journey – Changing the focus from commuter satisfaction scores to one on the emotional experience of the commuter," European Transport Conference.



FIRST AND LAST TRAINS

Line	Direction	First Train	Last Train
North South Line (NS)	Northbound	06:00	00:30
	Southbound	06:00	00:30
North East Line (NE)	Northbound	06:00	00:30
	Southbound	06:00	00:30
Circle Line (CL)	Northbound	06:00	00:30
	Southbound	06:00	00:30

Please use **North East Line** for a shorter journey to HarbourFront station

- 82 Linkway to Ticket Concourse
- 83 Transfer Level to Ticket Concourse
- 84 Platform

North East Line
Northbound
Way out
Orchard Road/Passenger service

PLEASE GIVE WAY TO
PLEASE GIVE WAY TO

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PUBLIC
TRANSPORT**

PRIORITY QUEUE

PRIORITY QUEUE

In Singapore's drive towards being pro-family, mobility-friendly and senior-friendly ahead of an ageing population, LTA and the public transport operators have put in place many public transport initiatives to address the needs of different groups.

Nevertheless, more can still be done for special groups of commuters with different needs to access public transport conveniently and easily. The public transport system in Singapore can benefit commuters by being even more sensitive to their feelings and needs.

I. CREATE A MORE FAMILY-FRIENDLY ENVIRONMENT

What it addresses: Safety, Comfort, Ease

CONSULT STAKEHOLDERS IN REVIEWING POLICY OF OPEN STROLLERS ON BUSES

Families with young children share that they would like to buy a car if they can afford it. They cite some challenges when taking public transport with their young children especially that of not being allowed to seat their child in an open stroller during bus rides. Indeed, the policy to fold prams/strollers when boarding a bus is a topic that has surfaced from commuters and social media discourse.

Both Singapore and Hong Kong adopt a common practice of disallowing open strollers with the child sitting in it on buses for safety reasons. Bus captains worry about the safety of the child seated in an open stroller during a bus ride. When there is sudden or hard braking, there is a risk of the baby being flung from the stroller, or the stroller injuring another commuter.

This policy means that a parent travelling alone has to carry the baby, stroller and other bags all at the same time. Even tapping the farecard on the reader becomes a challenge. In addition, children with special needs such as cerebral palsy¹¹ may initially start out in a stroller rather



Parent travelling alone has to manage the child, stroller and other bags at the same time

¹¹ On 5 July 2015, a contributor Dr Daniel Ng Peng Keat wrote to the Straits Times Forum Page highlighting this issue. Dr Ng suggested allowing open strollers on buses for children with cerebral palsy but that the strollers be harnessed for added safety.

than a wheelchair. There is an added burden on the caregiver and increased waiting time for other passengers for the stroller to be closed before the bus driver can drive off.

Several cities allow open strollers on board buses. These include Chicago and Seattle in the United States, and Oslo, Copenhagen, Helsinki and Stockholm in Europe. Closer to home, Sydney allows open strollers only on accessible buses, while Melbourne requires children to be strapped securely in strollers. Among the conditions and requirements that other overseas operators impose, priority must be given to passengers with disabilities such as wheelchair users. This means that strollers must be moved out of wheelchair-designated areas should a wheelchair user require the space. In addition, strollers must have braking systems.

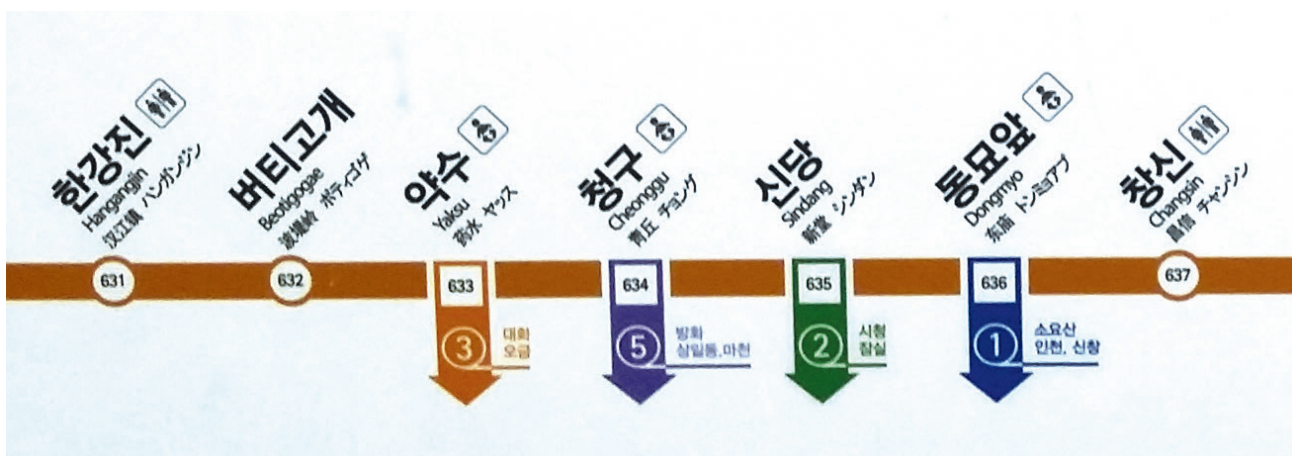
As we aim to make public transport more child-friendly, **PTC recommends that LTA review its policy on open strollers on public buses in consultation with parents, public transport operators, and experts**, to better understand issues relating to safety, liability, and costs, and what advisories should be given to parents. As there are no standard securing systems for open strollers, LTA should study how wheelchair-accessible buses can be retrofitted with safety belts for strollers to address height differences between strollers and wheelchairs. However, wheelchair users should still be accorded priority, with strollers folded if a wheelchair user requires the space.

PROVIDE MORE FACILITIES

Another way to make the public transport system in Singapore more family-friendly is to give more support to parents with infants.

At the moment, diaper-changing tables are only available in wheelchair-accessible toilets and/or female toilets. It would be more user-friendly **if diaper-changing tables could be incorporated in both the male and female toilets, apart from the wheelchair-accessible ones.**

Comparatively, Tokyo has 254 'multi-purpose' toilets built in train stations that are wheelchair-accessible and have diaper-changing and baby seat amenities. In Seoul and Taipei, dedicated nursing rooms are provided at selected train stations. Onboard the trains, **mothers in Seoul are able to identify a 'baby' icon on information panels to find out where they can alight to use a nursing room.** PTC recommends LTA and public transport operators look into implementing some of the best family-friendly practices from other cities.



'Baby' icons show commuters the locations of nursing rooms along stations in Seoul

II. KEEP YOUNG CHILDREN SAFE

What it addresses: Safety, Helpfulness

In general, parents are not overly worried about their young children taking public transport alone, except for the possible risk of being pushed in by the crowd when entering the train, or steep and fast escalators.

ENCOURAGE ADULT COMMUTERS TO BE MORE MINDFUL OF YOUNG COMMUTERS

Other adult commuters can contribute by acting as 'extended parents' to keep a lookout for children on public transport. **Adults can be made more aware to give way to young children in their midst or to notice any problems our young appear to be facing. Such awareness initiatives can be introduced under the Public Transport Graciousness campaign.**

CAPTURE THE ATTENTION OF CHILDREN THROUGH CATCHY ILLUSTRATIONS

To make signage on safety for children more appealing to them, **PTC recommends the use of bigger text and more imagery, including humorous ones, to make warnings stand out.** There are good examples adopted by Seoul Metro on how to make warnings more eye-catching and effective. Tokyo Metro also developed posters with iconic illustrations by a Japanese graphic artist, which not only communicated safety messages but were so popular that they went viral on the internet.



The poster from Tokyo Metro depicts a commuter rushing into the train like a rugby player



Current safety signs at MRT escalators in Singapore may not appeal to children



Seoul Metro uses eye-catching visuals on the safe use of escalators

III. PROVIDE GREATER ASSISTANCE TO INDEPENDENT WHEELCHAIR-BOUND COMMUTERS

What it addresses: Safety, Customer Service, Reliability

REDUCE RISK OF WHEELS GETTING STUCK IN GAPS BY STAFF LENDING A HAND

A key challenge faced by wheelchair-bound commuters when taking trains is the risk of the smaller front wheels of their wheelchairs getting stuck in the gap between the platform and the train. This could cause falls and injuries to the wheelchair users and even result in train delays.

In Taipei, the Taipei Metro developed an “Alert System for Station Guide Services” to provide special needs passengers with safe guiding services on Metro transportation¹². London has a similar system as Taipei, while in Tokyo, station staff are trained to assist wheelchair-bound commuters. **PTC suggests that wheelchair-bound commuters travelling alone be strongly encouraged to approach station staff for help and for staff to proactively assist them. A label can be placed near the wheelchair accessible fare gate to remind them to approach station staff for help.** This will mitigate incidents of wheels getting stuck.



Wheelchair-bound commuters travelling alone to approach station staff for assistance

TRAIN TAXI DRIVERS TO SERVE WHEELCHAIR USERS BETTER

Wheelchair-bound commuters hailing taxis on the street feel that some taxi drivers deliberately shun them by switching their signs to ‘Busy’ or changing lanes to avoid picking them up. Taxi drivers explain their concerns that some wheelchair-bound commuters hail them from bus stops or busy roads where it is illegal or dangerous for taxis to stop. The time taken to fold the wheelchair also increases safety risks if the pick-up location is unsafe. In addition, some taxi drivers have reservations that they were trained to handle wheelchairs but not the person and are afraid of injuring them.

Hence, taxi drivers have suggested that wheelchair-bound commuters be encouraged to book a taxi instead of street-hailing, and be accompanied by a caregiver as far

as possible. Taxi drivers also shared that they take personal pains to be sensitive to the feelings of wheelchair-bound commuters, for example, those who take Maxicabs.



More training for taxi drivers to assist wheelchair-bound commuters

“Now, because of the new model of Maxicabs, all the wheelchairs have to go up from the back. Then a lot of those terminally ill (passengers)...say only coffins go up from the back. Superstitious lah... We rather carry him up from the side and then put the wheelchair behind.”

Taxi driver

Although this is a good initiative on the part of individual taxi drivers to be sensitive to the needs of their passengers, **taxi operators could collaborate with disability agencies to provide formal sensitivity training and disability etiquette training for taxi drivers. This would be on top of the training that they receive as part of their Vocational Licence training, and will help them to be more confident in their day-to-day interactions with wheelchair-bound commuters** where the commuter requires some form of physical help (for example, moving from wheelchair to taxi).

¹² Taipei Metro Website - www.metro.taipei

In Taipei, when a special needs passenger enters a station, station personnel will notify the control centre to enter the data into the Alert System. The System then works out automatically the arrival time at the destination according to the train schedule. Before the train arrives at the destination, an automatic alert is issued to remind the destination station personnel to wait for the special needs passenger on the platform to offer assistance. This creates an “immediate and seamless” passenger guiding service and a new perspective on public transportation services for special needs commuters.

IV. ENHANCE ACCESSIBILITY FOR SENIORS

What it addresses: Safety, Ease, Comfort, Customer Service

ENHANCE CONVENIENCE FOR SENIORS

There are more than 600,000 seniors in the commuter population. Many seniors who have weak knees, leg injuries or health issues prefer to minimise walking and stair-climbing. The installation of more elevators at overhead bridges has helped them avoid climbing stairs. Buses are preferred by seniors as they are more direct in bringing them to their destinations and require less walking. They also find the long walks to make transfers between MRT lines inconvenient and tiring.

LTA has already provided travellators at some MRT interchanges, such as Dhoby Ghaut and Serangoon. More can be done, and **PTC recommends that for future MRT interchanges where walking between transfers to different lines can be challenging for seniors, travellators should be considered.**



Travellators make long walks less tiring

REDUCE ESCALATOR SPEED AND ENCOURAGE USE OF LIFTS FOR SENIORS

Some seniors are afraid of using escalators which may be too fast and steep. **Stations with high commuter volume of seniors and stations located near hospitals can consider slowing down their escalator speed**, particularly during off-peak hours, provided this does not affect the clearing of commuter load exiting from trains. From the Thomson-East Coast Line onwards,

LTA will provide dual-speed escalators and public transport operators will have the flexibility to operate these escalators at lower speed when needed. Public transport operators can do more for the escalators on the existing MRT lines, building on SMRT's trial of lower escalator speeds at the Circle Line Kent Ridge and East-West Line Pioneer stations.



Seniors are afraid of fast and steep escalators

In train stations today, there is clear signage on where lifts are located. However, seniors can be better encouraged to use these lifts instead of escalators. **Various reminders can be explored – such as printing them on senior concession cards or on floor stickers placed near entrances to train stations.**

PROVIDE A GRACE PERIOD FOR RE-ENTRY FOR URGENT USE OF TOILETS

Commuters and voices in mainstream media have mentioned that for seniors, children and adults with health problems (for example, irritable bowel syndrome), it is inconvenient during moments of urgent need to use toilets outside the paid area of train stations. When commuters need to use the toilet, they have to tap out and pay a fare again to re-enter stations.

PTC recommends providing special exceptions for such commuters. For example, a grace period could be implemented for these commuters to exit and re-enter through the swing gate, facilitated by station staff.



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**INFORMATION
PROVISION**

Information availability is important to our commuters, especially at significant 'touchpoints' of their journey experience. Before the commencement of a journey, commuters find bus apps on their mobile phones helpful in journey planning. Once on the bus, information like the bus number, next stop and final destination provide assurance to commuters on where they are headed. Finally, information on alternative routes is very important during train disruptions. Information provision helps commuters make informed decisions, which increases certainty and reduces anxiety for a more seamless and stress-free journey.

I. PROVIDE MORE INFORMATION ON BUSES

What it addresses: Ease

Commuters suggest that buses provide more information, including having audio announcements for the present and next bus stops. Audio announcements would also benefit the visually handicapped and seniors who have poor night vision. PTC observes that some SMRT buses already have display panels showing the next bus stop, while the LTA concept buses featured at the Bus Carnival include electronic screens that show not only the next stop (with an audio announcement), but the next few stops.

In addition to the information that LTA is considering for their new electronic screens on buses, **PTC recommends the inclusion of information such as the bus service number and the final destination.** With that information, commuters can alight at the next stop if they have boarded the wrong bus in a hurry. The electronic screens can also be used to **disseminate real-time information regarding train disruptions and the affected stations.** Commuters travelling by bus to an affected MRT station can make alternative plans instead of alighting at the MRT station facing disrupted service.



An information panel in LTA's concept bus



An information panel in Seoul's Red Bus, depicting the current, previous and next bus stops



Information on the bus route in Seoul's Yellow Bus

II. IMPROVE COMMUTER PREPAREDNESS WITH AWARENESS-BUILDING VIDEOS

What it addresses: Ease, Reliability

During a train service disruption, commuters want to know alternative routes to reach their destinations. Commuters today are provided with information on alternative routes at each station through yellow, red or purple signs that direct them to specific bus stops to continue their journey. Although the intention of these signs is to prepare them with the information even before a service disruption occurs, commuters rarely linger on to read signs or notices in their hurry to enter or leave the station under normal circumstances. Apart from alternative routes, there are also other types of information that commuters would benefit from, such as free bus bridging services.



Signs near exits describing what to do during a disrupted service

PTC recommends creating an awareness-building video on what to do during a disruption. This video can be played regularly on display screens at MRT platforms. It can include for example, (a) advice to commuters to look out for yellow, red or purple signs near exits; (b) simulate what commuters should do, for bus-bridging services (similar to the train-to-track detrainment video done by LTA and the Public Transport Security Committee). LTA and the public transport operators could collaborate on this video.

III. RAISE COMMUTER AWARENESS OF TAXI STOPPING RULES

What it addresses: Reliability, Safety

Commuters often mention taxi availability as a key challenge which taxi drivers attribute to traffic jams and the changing of shifts. Over time however, this problem may ease with the development of new technologies such as mobile apps for taxi and private-hire car bookings.


The challenge could be compounded by commuters being unfamiliar with some road traffic rules. If they are tourists and non-drivers especially, they may not be familiar with bus lanes or zig-zag lines where taxis cannot stop. Taxi drivers feel that there would be fewer complaints if commuters better understood the road traffic signs and rules.

“A lot of existing rules, full-day bus lane, double zig-zag...a lot of passengers don't understand what it means. But drivers, they know they cannot stop. So you see my car driving past, they say you purposely don't pick up.”

Taxi driver

Taxi drivers suggest more public education for commuters. PTC recommends putting messages such as ‘Do’s and Don’ts’ within taxis. We note that some taxi companies already provide such information within their taxis, which other companies can also consider. In addition, commuter-centric cues such as ‘No Stopping. Bus Lane’ at ‘hotspots’ such as Orchard Road can be considered.





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DESIGN

315

Serangoon Hin

SBS Transit

SCANIA

SBS8147J

Good public transport design revolves around the commuter. Increasingly, attention is being paid to the aesthetic design of infrastructure and facilities of the Singapore public transport system. This has not gone unnoticed by commuters, who appreciate these changes. At the same time, aesthetics must also be matched with functionality. Good design enhances journey comfort and convenience while providing commuters with ease of way-finding. Rather than overhaul our current bus stop designs or signage, our recommendations are meant to be considered for new bus stop designs or when older signs are due for replacement.

I. DESIGN FUTURE BUS STOPS TO BE MORE COMMUTER-FRIENDLY

What it addresses: Safety, Ease, Comfort

Commuters suggest that some bus stop designs could be more commuter-friendly, to cater especially to rush hours and to allow queues to be formed for bus boarding. Commuters who run to catch the bus may sometimes have to navigate through bollards, pillars and narrow spaces (between bollards and seats), which prevent smooth access. Some bus stops do not provide adequate shelter from the rain, while others have transparent roofs that do not protect commuters from the hot sun. Another aspect for review is the design of seats at the bus stop. Tilted bum-rests pose a challenge, especially for seniors.

“Seats are a problem. Not comfortable to sit. Seats are inclined...prevents people from sitting properly. Sometimes when you need to rest on the seat and the floor is slippery, you may fall... I thought it can be better constructed; with back rest and proper seating.”

Working adult, male



Commuters do not get adequate sun protection from the transparent roof at this bus stop



Sun rays coming through the transparent roof at this bus stop



Bus stop beside Tanah Merah MRT has bollards, pillars and narrow spaces, which prevent smooth access



Commuters like to see more of the new high-roof bus stops, such as this one at Serangoon Station



Tilted bum-rests at Orchard bus stop which may not be comfortable

For future bus stops, to enhance comfort, **seats can be wider and flatter, compared to the current bum-rests. In addition, seats with arm and back rests would also help seniors sit down and get up more easily. Especially at high human traffic bus stops, consideration can also be taken to ensure more space is available for commuters to move.** For example, these bus stops can adopt a design similar to

the new bus stops along the Downtown Line 2 stations, and selected North East Line and Circle Line stations, which commuters like. These new bus stop designs allow commuters to board the bus without getting wet and also shield them from the sun. As part of LTA's review of bus stop design, PTC recommends that these issues be considered.

II. DESIGN BUSES THAT ENCOURAGE COMMUTERS TO MOVE TO THE BACK

What it addresses: Safety, Comfort

Some commuters share that various aspects of current bus designs are not conducive for standing or sitting at the back: a) They are reluctant to move in as they are concerned for their own safety. Some buses require the commuter to climb up one or two steps at the back or up to the seats which may cause a fall when the bus is jerky or when there is a sudden brake; b) Taller commuters find the ceiling too low for them to stand upright behind; c) On some buses, the narrow design of the back portion and the position of the poles next to the seats make it more difficult for commuters to manoeuvre to alight. **PTC recommends addressing these issues as well as having a third rear exit to encourage commuters to move to the rear and allow others to board.**

Some buses in London adopt a design where seats above the wheel chamber are higher and commuters would need to step up one step to get to them. The corridor thus has no steps until the last row. **PTC is aware that LTA will be reviewing the design of public buses.** In the future when buses are being replaced, **this design with one step that starts only at the last row could be considered as an option to alleviate the safety concerns of commuters.**

“LTA has embarked on a review of the design of our public buses. We aim to make the daily commute of passengers smoother and more comfortable and will be introducing features such as USB ports and passenger display panels to better help commuters make their way around the island. The buses of the future will also feature three doors and two staircases, which will ease commuter flow and encourage passengers to not congregate at the doorways.”

Mr Chew Men Leong

Chief Executive, LTA



Steps in older models of public buses



Newer barrier-free bus design with slope, but which still require a step up for commuters to sit at the back half of the bus



A bus design in Singapore, where last-row commuters still have to navigate a short walk before stepping off

III. IMPROVE SIGNAGE FOR BETTER WAY-FINDING

What it addresses: Ease

Non-English-speaking seniors face problems differentiating station names and understanding directional signage. Some have to resort to counting the number of stops and stations, while others look out for station numbers. Other commuters share that despite being English-educated, they are sometimes confused at MRT interchanges. Way-finding for commuters may become even more complex with the addition of new MRT lines.

“Sometimes get confused. We are in between – one line goes to HarbourFront and another somewhere else... Sometimes it may be busy and we are confused. But sometimes if unsure and in an unfamiliar place, will ask the MRT staff... There is the blue and purple line and we get confused... The confusing ones are Outram, HarbourFront and Buona Vista.”

Senior, female

To mitigate this, some non-English-educated and senior commuters request for signage in the MRT stations to be in more languages. However, this may not be feasible for all signage. **Instead, PTC recommends deepening the understanding of numbers that are already incorporated into signage to denote the direction/destination of trains.** These measures would lessen the stress experienced by commuters.



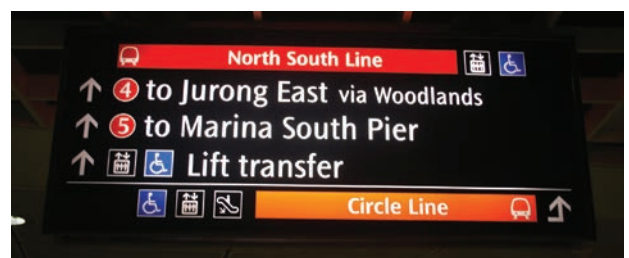
Commuter finding his way at a station interchange




Different directional signs at a station interchange



An example of numbers that some commuters may not understand



Difficult to have official languages on signage such as this



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A common theme emerging from our consultation exercise is that small gestures of care by both commuters and frontline staff can really enhance the whole public transport experience. While the government and public transport operators continue to improve on both the hardware and 'heartware' of Singapore's public transport system, commuters themselves can also play a part in ensuring that the future of our public transport experience can be a safer and more pleasant one.

"I think if we see someone who is more senior or needs assistance, we can offer to help...We should ask ourselves if we can contribute to do something useful and help those who are in need of assistance. We should help even if others do not."

Senior, female

"Always help others. If I see (someone) at (the) train...anyone who seems to be lost, (I) will ask them where they are heading and try to figure out the best and shortest journey for them."

Mother with young child

Many commuters express frustration when other commuters do not move in to the back of the bus or when they crowd around the exits on trains. This means that other commuters cannot board. Frontline staff share that they would like to see more students be responsive to their requests. In addition, wheelchair users share that some commuters may not notice their repeated requests to give way.

"Courtesy issue. People tend to congregate next to exits. They don't want to move. Front is very packed, and middle is empty."

Working adult, female

"The students rather stand and crowd near both the entrance and exit area on the bus even though there are seats behind. They just refuse to move in. I have to keep saying 'excuse' to them. Sometimes I have no choice but to wheel in forcefully...The students keep looking at their handphones and simply ignore my presence."

Wheelchair user, male

I. CULTIVATE MORE EMPATHY AND CONSIDERATION

What it addresses: Helpfulness

Frontline staff have difficulties carrying out their roles well if they are not respected or supported by commuters and the wider public. **PTC recommends that existing graciousness or kindness campaigns incorporate messages to commuters to show courtesy and understanding to frontline staff as they carry out their duties.**

"It's very stressful. Singaporeans like to complain...I will worry if I get complaints. It's very stressful."

Bus captain

"I get young students running on the upper deck. I went up to tell them to stop running...I received a complaint from the parent that I scared the students."

Bus captain

PTC understands that students learn good values and behaviour, and apply them in authentic learning contexts such as case studies which can be related to the use of public transport. However, what they learn in the textbook can still be enhanced through more application of concepts taught. **We suggest for schools and public transport providers to deepen collaboration by developing more opportunities for experiential learning so that students understand the challenges faced by other commuters such as wheelchair users, the elderly and even public transport frontline staff.** At the same time, our adult commuters should also be mindful to be good role models.



Commuter engrossed on mobile phone

II. REMIND COMMUTERS TO BE MINDFUL OF SAFETY

What it addresses: Safety

Commuters tend to be focused on their mobile devices while on the go. However, this could lead to safety issues. Bus captains feel that one area that could be improved is for commuters to take greater charge of their own safety; for example, by not being too engrossed in their mobile devices. This could result in them flagging the bus or pressing the alighting bell at the last minute, leaving the bus captain little time to react in a smooth and safe manner. **PTC recommends leveraging transport apps to prompt commuters to travel safely and not be too engrossed in their mobile devices.**

"I had a passenger who was so engrossed with his phone, his leg was still on the bus stop. I could not close the door as it would close on his leg."

Bus captain

"I think we need to educate more on flagging early."

Bus captain

Apart from fare affordability which will be addressed holistically in the next review of the fare adjustment mechanism, our recommendations have addressed the issues that are important to commuters. Through deepening the 'heartware' for public transport, we hope to see commuters show more care, consideration and mutual respect towards fellow commuters and frontline staff. Commuters playing their part will go a long way in transforming the Singapore public transport journey experience.

CONCLUSION

CONTINUING THE ENGAGEMENT

In the course of PTC's public consultation exercise, we noted that several of the challenges faced by commuters on public transport can be overcome through simple solutions or interventions, such as better design or clearer information, that do not necessarily require heavy engineering efforts.

In terms of deepening the human touch for a more convenient and comfortable journey, it is down to better customer service, mutual appreciation and respect between service staff and commuters, the willingness to help fellow commuters and commuters playing their part towards a safe and pleasant journey. These should be areas that can also be nurtured from young if we want our commuters to have a greater sense of community when using public transport.



Three important aspects stood out for PTC during the public consultation exercise this year.

The first is a deep sense of pride in public transport frontline staff. Public transport staff are proud of their jobs, and knowing that Singaporeans support and appreciate them helps them continue to carry out their jobs well. The sense of pride and duty is occasionally expressed in stories circulated in social media – of bus captains, MRT station staff and taxi drivers who go the extra mile. These are the examples that should continue to help fly the flag high for Singapore's public transport system in terms of 'heartware'. Commuters themselves can also play a part to improve the overall public transport experience.

The second aspect, which is related to the first, is how the human touch can be deepened in public transport through staff delivering better customer service. On the one hand, Singapore has begun exploring how to take advantage of self-driving technology to overcome manpower constraints in transportation services, while our local ticketing agencies are adopting innovative technology such as contactless/account-based ticketing aimed at making transactions for commuters seamless, secure and more convenient. Yet, even as the use of automation and innovative technologies proliferates, it is

still important to retain the human touch where possible. Public transport experts whom we spoke with strongly advocated this.

The third aspect is how engagement with commuters must be a continuous process. This process will also provide insights into how best to address commuters' needs so that public transport becomes the mode of choice to achieve our car-lite vision for Singapore. No matter should be too small for commuters to suggest for improvement if it affects them on a day-to-day basis.

PTC's work has only just begun, and we will offer advice to the Minister on a regular basis. Our independent advice to the Minister for Transport, coupled with the Government's clear political will and the commitment of public transport stakeholders are three important pillars of the Singapore public transport system. These will bring about more improvements for our commuters who sit at the heart of the public transport system.

We submit our recommendations to the Minister for Transport for his consideration. Through this, it is PTC's hope that public transport will continue to contribute to a greater sense of community and improve the quality of life to make Singapore a great home for all.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We are indebted to the commuters and stakeholders for taking time to share their views. We also wish to thank our Roundtable panel of experts, and contributors who have written in to the media with their suggestions.

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ORGANISATIONS

- EZ-Link Pte Ltd
- Land Transport Authority
- Ministry of Education
- National Taxi Association
- National Transport Workers' Union
- Network for Electronic Transfers (Singapore) Pte Ltd
- SBS Transit Ltd
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