

**SPEECH BY MR RAYMOND LIM, MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT AND  
SECOND MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS,  
AT THE VISIT TO KIM CHUAN DEPOT,  
FRIDAY, 25 JANUARY 2008, 9.00AM**

**DOUBLING OUR RAIL NETWORK**

1 It is my pleasure to join you here this morning at the Kim Chuan Depot.

2 Last week, you heard about our major initiatives to improve bus services. Today, I will share with you the exciting plans that we have for the rail network, and how we will meet the transport needs of diverse groups of people.

3 Let me start by telling you what commuters can look forward to in the future.

4 By 2020, people who live or work in the city and those who shop and find enjoyment there will be able to reach an MRT station within 400m on average, a mere 5-minute walk. Travelling across the city will be a breeze, because we will have a dense network of MRT stations like what we see in London and New York today.

5 Outside the city, many more areas that are not served by the MRT now, such as Sin Ming, Marine Parade and Tuas will get high speed access to the city.

6 Commuters will also enjoy a more comfortable ride and a shorter wait during peak periods on the existing lines, as additional train trips will be added to increase capacity.

7 I will touch on the new rail lines first.

**New Rail Lines to be Built**

*Thomson Line and Eastern Region Line*

8 From the heart of Marina Bay, a new MRT line, the Thomson Line, will travel northwards, through the Central Business District and up through Ang Mo Kio all the way to Woodlands connecting estates such as Sin Ming, Kebun Baru, Thomson and Kim Seng which do not now have a direct MRT link. From Marina Bay, this line would connect with another new MRT line, the Eastern Region Line, which will serve the residential estates of Tanjong Rhu, Marine Parade, Siglap, Bedok South and Upper East Coast, and link them to Changi in the east. The

Thomson Line or TSL and the Eastern Region Line or ERL together will add 48km to our rail network. The Government has given the go-ahead for the TSL to be built by 2018, and the ERL by 2020.

9 The TSL and ERL will shorten journey times and significantly enhance the connectivity of the rail network. Commuters staying in Sin Ming can save 20 minutes out of their current 45-minute journey to the city, whereas a trip from Marine Parade to Marina Bay on the ERL would take about 20 minutes, almost as fast as travelling by car.

#### *New extensions to North-South and East-West Lines*

10 We will also add extensions to the North-South and East-West Lines, which should be completed around 2015.

11 The North-South Line now ends at the Marina Bay station in the south. We will extend the line 1-km southwards to serve upcoming developments in the southern Marina Bay area, such as the new cruise terminal in Marina South.

12 The East-West Line will be extended by another 14km into Tuas. Today, a commuter who lives in Clementi and takes the MRT to work in Tuas has to alight at Boon Lay station and then take a 35-minute bus ride to get to his workplace. With the new Tuas Extension that brings the East-West line right into the heart of Tuas, more of the journey will be on the high speed MRT, reducing his journey time by 20 minutes.

#### *Doubling of rail network by 2020*

13 These new rail lines will cost us some \$20 billion to build, over and above the \$20 billion that government has already committed for the on-going Boon Lay Extension (BLE), the Circle Line (CCL) and the Downtown Line (DTL). The government has decided that all these rail projects are a necessary investment to ensure that our transport infrastructure meets the needs of a growing population and an expanding economy.

14 Together with the rail lines now under construction, the new rail lines will double our network from today's 138km to 278km in 2020. We expect our rail network to carry 3 times as many journeys, rising from today's 1.4 million a day to 4.6 million in 2020.

15 Many more people will be served by the MRT, and they will be able to use it to get to many more places. The density of our rail network will increase by 60%, from 31 to 51 km per million population by 2020, comparable to cities like New York and London, and surpassing Hong Kong and Tokyo.

### A More Comfortable Ride on Existing Lines

16 Let me turn to the existing rail lines. Train ridership is increasing steadily and commuters have said that they are feeling the squeeze, especially on the North-South and East-West lines. Now, we are far from the crowded conditions of Tokyo trains, which Mr Norman Chong, a Singaporean who has lived in Tokyo for 10 years, describes as being “so packed that bodies are crushed against one another.” He calls it his “regular morning massage”. Other MRT users have likened the average peak period loading on our trains to an off-peak crowd in Shanghai.

17 However, we are not about to let conditions deteriorate and commuters need not worry about getting morning massages any time soon. LTA closely monitors the passenger loading on our trains. To ensure a more comfortable ride for commuters, LTA has worked with the train operators to run 93 additional train trips per week during the morning and evening periods from February 2008 on the North-South East-West and the North-East lines. For commuters, this will mean less crowded trains and a reduction in waiting time by about 10-15% during peak hours.

18 Beyond that, we will also expand the carrying capacity of the North-South and East-West Lines. We will be working with SMRT to purchase more trains and address infrastructure constraints so that peak hour train frequencies can be increased. When completed in about 4 years' time, carrying capacity will be increased by a further 15%, and commuters can look forward to shorter peak waiting times of 2 minutes, compared to the current 2.5 to 4.5 minutes at stretches that experience heavy loading, and an even more comfortable ride.

### A Shorter Wait for the DTL and CCL

19 Many people are counting down to the day they can use the Circle Line (CCL). Others have asked whether we can speed up the building of the Downtown Line (DTL). We have taken to heart such feedback and worked hard with the Ministry of Finance and other partners such as URA, to see how we can bring forward the opening of these lines, to make public transport a choice mode.

#### *DTL 3 to be brought forward by 2 years*

20 To benefit residents of Bedok Reservoir and Tampines, we will bring forward the completion of DTL 3 by 2 years, from 2018 to 2016. The completion date of DTL 3 will now be just one year after that of DTL Stage 2 serving the Bukit Timah corridor. As we speed up the

development of the DTL, LTA will continue to maintain stringent safety and quality standards in construction.

#### *Earlier opening of Circle Line in 2009*

21 Likewise, we will bring forward the Circle Line which was due to open from 2010 onwards. We will now open Circle Line Stage 3 in mid-2009 to benefit residents in the north and north-east. This CCL segment connects Bishan station on the North-South Line and Serangoon station on NEL and opens up multiple new connections for residents in the north and north-east. With the CCL 3, Serangoon residents will take only 25 minutes to get to Yishun by transferring to the North-South line at Bishan station, compared to 45 minutes by bus or by taking the NEL all the way to Dhoby Ghaut before transferring to the North-South line. As for residents staying in Marymount, Lorong Chuan and Bartley, they will enjoy more seamless and direct travel to the city and other parts once CCL 3 commences operation.

#### *More Circle Line stations will be opened*

22 Other than bringing forward CCL 3, we will also open more stations on the Circle Line. This will enhance the reach and connectivity of the Circle Line, and allow many more people to benefit from the MRT. We had earlier decided to build the Thomson and West Coast stations as shell stations and fit them out only when there are sufficient developments around them. As the pace of development around these stations is picking up, LTA will now fit out these stations and open them together with the other CCL stations. To enhance the accessibility of the Marina Bay area to the rest of the island, LTA will also build and open the Marina Bay station as part of the CCL extension beyond Bayfront station in 2012.

23 With all these developments that I have highlighted, commuters can look forward to new extensions or stages of new lines opening almost every other year until 2020.

#### Platform Screen Doors for Above-ground Stations

24 The safety of our rail commuters is key. The incidence of people entering the train track area of above-ground MRT stations has risen from an average of 16 cases a year to 30 in 2006 and 31 in 2007. Besides endangering lives, such incidents disrupt train services and inconvenience many commuters, especially during peak hours.

25 To enhance safety and reduce the incidence of track intrusions, LTA has been studying the feasibility of installing platform screen doors on above-ground MRT stations. With platform screen doors being

adopted in more transit systems worldwide, their cost has fallen, making them more cost-effective now.

26 We will therefore install platform screen doors at all above-ground MRT stations, so that commuters can have safer and more reliable train services. LTA will carry out a pilot at Yishun, Jurong East and Pasir Ris stations in 2009 to ensure that operational considerations are met, before rolling this out to all stations by 2012.

### Rail Financing and Industry Frameworks to be Strengthened

27 Besides the slew of initiatives I have described - extending the rail network, opening MRT lines earlier and giving commuters more comfortable and safer rides - we will also strengthen the financing framework to facilitate rail expansion. At the same time, we will introduce greater contestability in the rail industry to ensure efficient rail operations and keep costs competitive.

#### *Review financing framework to support rail expansion*

28 From now till 2020 and beyond, we are rolling out ambitious rail expansion plans to meet the travel needs of a growing population.

29 As we expand the rail network, future lines will be more expensive to build, operate and maintain as they will be mostly underground. New lines will also need time to build up their ridership, compared to mature lines which serve the more densely built-up corridors. Hence, to keep up the pace of rail expansion, MOT will work with the Ministry of Finance to refine the financing framework. The framework should allow for a network approach, instead of a line approach, to be adopted in evaluating new lines. This would potentially enable future new lines to be implemented a few years earlier than otherwise, so long as the entire rail network remains viable.

#### *Greater contestability in the rail industry*

30 We will also strengthen the rail industry framework to enhance efficiency and maintain cost competitiveness.

31 We currently have two rail operators. This enables the regulator to benchmark the operators against each other in terms of service standards and cost efficiency.

32 There have been suggestions to merge the separate rail operations to reap greater economies of scale. Others see value in retaining the existing structure, as competition between the operators helps improve efficiency and service standards.

33 Following an extensive study, LTA's assessment is that the key issue here is not so much whether there are one or two operators but that the threat of competition must be real to the incumbents. Further, competition must not compromise the integration of the network as the seamless working of the whole network is what gives value to the commuter.

34 Going forward, we will make the rail industry more contestable, to drive efficiency and enhance service standards for commuters. A key step in enhancing contestability is to have shorter operating licences, say 10 to 15 years, compared to the existing 30-year licence periods. Operators will compete for the right to operate rail services. They will have to meet service obligations or risk being replaced at the end of their term. LTA will study the implementation issues carefully with relevant stakeholders.

### Meeting Diverse Needs

#### Ensuring Accessibility for All

35 As we enhance the rail network, we will ensure that our MRT system and the wider transport network are accessible to all, including elderly commuters, families with young children, people with disabilities and those who are less well-off. This is part of our broader commitment to meet the needs of diverse groups within our people-centred land transport system.

#### *Pedestrians*

36 Pedestrians can look forward to a more comfortable walking environment, as we build more covered linkways and pedestrian overhead bridges, and make it more convenient to get to bus stops and MRT stations. 86% of pedestrian overhead bridges will be covered by 2010. Walkways and commuter facilities will also be made accessible to all, including the less mobile. By 2010, LTA will have completed its \$60 million islandwide programme to make pedestrian walkways, access to MRT stations, taxi and bus shelters, and all public roads barrier-free.

#### *Elderly and Less Mobile Commuters*

37 The introduction of low-floor, wheel-chair accessible buses has also been welcomed by elderly commuters and wheel-chair users. By 2010, 40% of our buses will be wheelchair accessible, and we intend that by 2020, the entire fleet will be so.

38 More will also be done for MRT users. All MRT stations have already been provided with at least one barrier-free entrance inclusive of a lift. However, the elderly or less mobile commuters sometimes

have to make long detours to get to that one entrance with the lift, which defeats the purpose. We will therefore provide 17 additional lifts for 16 MRT stations at the cost of \$70 million. Currently, these 16 stations have entrances that are either far apart or are separated by major roads. Putting in a lift at another entrance will benefit, among others, the elderly residents at the Boon Keng housing estate, enabling them to get into the MRT station more easily. So too the people who alight from Boon Keng station to go to the Kwong Wai Shiu Hospital. By end 2011, more than 70% of our MRT stations will have at least two barrier-free access routes.

### Helping Poorer Singaporeans Access Public Transport

39 Another group that we pay close attention to are the less well-off Singaporeans. While fares have to reflect the cost of operations, we will see to it that public transport remains accessible to the poorer Singaporeans. Fares will continue to be regulated by the Public Transport Council by a fare cap formula, so public transport operators cannot charge whatever they think the market can bear. This will help keep public transport fares affordable for the general public. As for lower-income families who need more help with their public transport costs, the government is committed to providing targeted help through schemes such as Workfare. Help from the community is also available, such as through the transport vouchers provided by the public transport operators and government.

### Improving Taxi Services

40 While we enhance public transport and ensure that all have access to it, we will also facilitate a wide range of transport choices, including taxis and cycling.

41 Taxis offer commuters high-end door-to-door service like cars. The taxi industry is liberalized and taxi supply and fares are determined by the market. LTA sets the Quality of Service standards to protect commuters' interests.

42 To further enhance taxi services, LTA will tighten the call booking Quality of Service standards to ensure that taxis are available when commuters call for one.

43 LTA will also set up a common call booking telephone number for taxis by July 2008, to complement the taxi companies' call booking systems. This will make it more convenient for the public, especially the tourists, to call for a taxi as they will only need to remember one telephone number, instead of the different telephone numbers of each taxi company today.

## Facilitating Cyclists

44 Cyclists are another group that we will facilitate. There is a growing interest in cycling, with more people cycling for recreation, or to get around the neighbourhood.

45 We invited some of them to our land transport review focus group discussions to see how we could better cater to their needs. Some cyclists asked for more bicycle stands around our bus and MRT stations. Others made the point that some foldable bicycles were not much bigger than prams, so why not allow them onboard our trains and buses?

46 Responding to this, LTA together with the public transport operators will launch a six-month trial from March 2008 to allow cyclists to carry their foldable bicycles on board trains and buses. LTA will also work with NParks and other agencies to leverage on the park connectors to enable cyclists to get to public transport interchanges more easily. Bicycle parking facilities at the MRT stations and bus interchanges in housing estates will be improved.

47 The cyclists also shared their 'war stories' and asked us to help improve safety on our roads. Following a pilot in Changi, LTA will put up signs to alert motorists to the presence of cyclists along frequently used cycling routes such as those in West Coast and Thomson from March 08. LTA and the Traffic Police have also started a trial to allow cycling on pedestrian footways in Tampines.

48 But at the end of the day, it is also an issue of mutual accommodation – for the motorists to look out for cyclists on the road; and for cyclists to have a care for pedestrians.

## Protecting the Environment

49 Greater use of our MRT and buses as well as non-motorised transport like cycling will help reduce greenhouse gases and protect the environment. Land transport has a critical role in whether a city is liveable or choking on its own exhaust. Our transport policies as a whole serve to ensure a high quality living environment for all Singaporeans.

50 LTA will work with the transport operators to further improve the emission standards of their fleets. By 2014, all our taxis will comply with Euro IV emission levels. By 2010, about 40% of public buses will have achieved this emission target, with 100% by 2020. Through schemes like the Green Vehicle Rebate, LTA will also work with other agencies to



promote more energy efficient vehicles as well as the use of cleaner fuels such as CNG (Compressed Natural Gas).

### Conclusion

51 By 2020, we will have an integrated, efficient and user-friendly public transport system that enables every Singaporean, including those with special needs, to take part in the life of the city. With a vastly expanded rail network and a bus network that works in partnership with rail, commuters will have fast and reliable connections that bring them where they want to go. A gamut of transport choices including premium buses, taxis and cycling among others, will enable different needs to be met. As society evolves and people's needs change, our land transport offerings must keep pace as well as encompass the diversity of needs and aspirations. To achieve this, we will plan our land transport system around people, not the other way round. This then will be our touchstone in the planning of land transport policies going forward.