



IN THE WORKS

FEATURES THAT EXCITE YOU

A 'RAIL' LOVE FOR TRAINS

Meet Ong You Yuan and Liang Ge Song, Friends of Land Transport whose love for locomotives led them to run SGTrains, a website that shares everything you wanted to know about the trains that ply our tracks.

Even with their eyes closed, Ong You Yuan and Liang Ge Song can identify the different types of MRT train models – just by the sounds the motors make.

“The fourth-generation trains make a higher-pitched sound than the older trains, which are noisier,” said Ge Song, 19, a Human Resource Management student at Singapore Polytechnic, who became hooked on trains seven years ago.

Both used to spend hours recording the registration numbers of passing trains – a hobby known as trainspotting. “We could identify patterns and know which trains were not running on any day,” explained You Yuan, 26, a recent Business Information System graduate from the University of Wollongong at

Singapore Institute of Management. His special affinity with MRT trains started at the age of five.

Today, the trainspotting duo are part of a team that runs a website called SGTrains, which is dedicated to everything rail-related in Singapore.

A key feature of SGTrains is its dedicated travel guide, which includes first and last train timings that are consolidated across all MRT lines. The website also includes frequently sought-after tips such as train etiquette and safety guidelines.

SGTrains has become a go-to page site for many commuters, receiving over 20,000 monthly views. Their pages featuring train timings, and early closures and late openings on certain lines, are among the most popular as they provide convenient and reliable information to commuters.

The group also engages the public through events such as the annual Singapore Train-Enthusiasts' Amazing Race, where participants traverse Singapore using public transport to solve puzzles. They also frequently hold Facebook contests, with prizes like limited-edition EZ-Link cards up for grabs. They have also set up booths and conducted activities for the public at LTA events such as the opening of the Downtown Line.



You Yuan and Ge Song checking out a Bombardier train at the InnoTrans exhibition in Berlin.



*InnoTrans Exhibition
Berlin - September 2018*



Photo credits: SGTrains

They have even gained international recognition, as some tourists use their website to plan their travels around Singapore.

"As the majority of Singaporeans use public transport, we help to provide accurate information on trains," said Ge Song.

SGTrains has built up a sizeable online presence since its launch in 2011. Over 300 train enthusiasts have joined the group, and its Facebook and Instagram pages count more than 6,100 and 1,300 followers respectively.

You Yuan and Ge Song are part of LTA's Friends of Land Transport (FoLT) programme, which engages people interested in land transport. Through the programme, they have been able to visit LTA sites for an up close and personal look at developments in land transport, often sharing their feedback on land transport issues which has been constructive and useful.

The team has visited sites like MRT depots and the upcoming Thomson-East Coast Line (TEL) tunnels. LTA also invited them to Jurong Port in May 2018 to witness the delivery of the first trains for the TEL line. For these enthusiasts, the experience was exhilarating. "It was the first time we saw such a process of trains being delivered and transported to the depots," shared Ge Song.



[▶ Watch SG Trains' video of their visit to Jurong Port](#)

A GERMAN ADVENTURE

One of the most memorable trips for the duo came in September 2018, when transportation giant Bombardier invited them to the biennial InnoTrans exhibition in Berlin. This is the world's largest trade fair for the rail transport industry.

The Canadian company, which built the Downtown Line (DTL) trains, Bukit Panjang LRT (BPLRT) trains, and the upcoming R151 trains for the North South & East West Lines (NSEWL), had been impressed with SGTrains' engagement with the public.

In Berlin, You Yuan and Ge Song saw exhibitions showcasing the latest rail-related gadgets and services, met some of Bombardier's top brass, visited its factory and tried its Virtual Reality (VR) technology that is looking to revolutionise how rail maintenance is being done.



With VR, staff can say goodbye to tediously flipping through user manuals and fixing parts concurrently. Now, they are able to identify parts of a train that require repairs – even before getting their hands dirty. It is similar to Singapore, where LTA is currently exploring the use of VR to train employees to dismantle and assemble train components.

The duo also explored Berlin's public subway system. "I think Singapore's is better. Their trains do not have air conditioning so it's really hot," quipped You Yuan.

As Berlin's subway uses a shared track system between many train lines, they had to occasionally wait up to 15 minutes for trains. "We found that the trains aren't as efficient as Singapore's," he added.

These train enthusiasts were more impressed with Berlin's public buses, especially the electronic displays that give detailed information on bus and train services at subsequent bus stops. For first-time visitors like themselves, it was extremely helpful as they were able to make connections between services seamlessly.

"As tourists, we weren't afraid of getting lost. The small details that they have focused on make the commutes very interesting and easy," said You Yuan.

GOING THE EXTRA MILE FOR COMMUTERS

Back in Singapore, the SGTrains team also acts as a link between commuters, public transport operators and LTA.

Inevitably, SGTrains receives many queries and feedback from commuters, and they dutifully forward them to the relevant parties with whom they have established a working relationship.

"In a sense, we help the authorities maintain communications with the commuters. You could say we are like an informal corporate communications team," joked You Yuan.

When taking trains, they also look out for defects and notify the operators. "We know that people are benefitting from what we do, and it motivates us to keep it up," said Ge Song.

Both are considering careers in land transport, although You Yuan points out that passion and work are two "different things".

It has been quite a journey for a website that began as a local forum. Now, it is almost like a Wikipedia page of rail information, including blog posts on interviews with the biggest names in the rail transport industry.

For these train aficionados who have seen what other countries have to offer, Singapore's trains still top their rankings.

"Our trains are already among the better ones in the world in terms of reliability, comfort and operations. If you go to Tripadvisor, you'll see tourists praising our system. I think Singaporeans should be proud of our train systems."

ONG YOU YUAN
FRIEND OF LAND TRANSPORT





GROWING UP WITH DOWNTOWN LINE

We engage in some #throwback moments as we trace back SGTrains' journey along with the construction of the Downtown Line. Try and see if you can spot some familiar faces here!



2009

First visit to DTL Mockup Train



2011

Commencement of DTL2 tunnelling works



2013

Sharing the excitement at DTL1 opening



2012

Interaction with our engineers



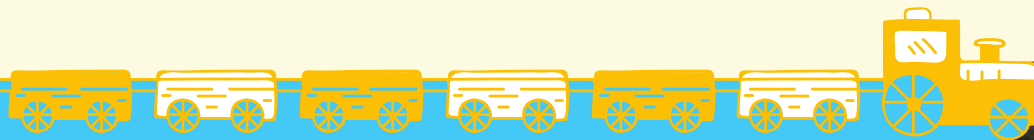
2015

Celebrating the opening of DTL2



2017

Helping to improve the DTL3 signage



The next generation of transport enthusiasts

A gallery tour, an art jamming session, and being a train captain for a day.

What a treat! A group of 17 children participated in a fun-filled event as part of the Friends of Land Transport Juniors programme, which was launched in March 2018 to engage primary school-aged children.

The children toured the Singapore Mobility Gallery, which showcases interactive and multi-sensory exhibits on how LTA plans and builds our land transport system.

The Friends from SGTrains were on hand to quiz the children on public transport etiquette and gracious behaviour, and answer their many queries on the intricacies of our land transport system.



Proudly displaying their artwork's

These junior transport enthusiasts also tried a realistic simulation programme developed by the Friends from SGTrains which allowed them to "drive" a train along one of the MRT lines. To cap off a colourful experience, the children painted their imaginative and intricate visions of Singapore's future land transport system. For children who love trains and everything to do with land transport, look out for our next event for our junior Friends!

Art Jam

