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Going for Superlative Service

US visitor Peter Duniho wrote in the *Straits Times* (20 March 2007) that it was a real pleasure getting around Singapore by train. "They travel smoothly and quickly, and provide an impressive degree of coverage to the island," he commented.

It's wonderful to hear foreigners like Duniho give a thumbs-up to our island's transport network, but despite compliments like these, we still have improvements to make. Striving for ever better service will always be our mission because Singaporeans' needs change over time.

Individuals' comments come from their daily experiences. By truly taking in what people are telling us, we can establish policies and provide the service that helps us to fulfil our primary goal: to serve the people.

Everything we do comes down to this.

We've talked a lot lately about the great importance of how we address the public. Liang Dingzi, in his commentary in *Today* (17 May 2007), hit the proverbial nail on the head when he described how having the last word can be a costly measure. He was referring to public service sector replies to complaints that often sound as though government is trying to have the last word to demonstrate its authority. Citing an example of how a gentleman's complaint of packed trains resulted in a reply filled with statistics and world comparisons, Liang says the person's actual experience had been interpreted as just "customer perception". What are we at LTA already doing to improve this situation?

Certainly it's true that averages and comparisons do not solve problems nor alleviate the stress that individuals experience. Urban transport researcher Tim Grosvenor made an insightful observation that people describe their journeys with emotional phrases that represent emotion-filled episodes: "Of course, hard factors are important in the decision-making

process, but if the emotions are ignored, then there can only be a partial understanding as to why people continue to make choices that may not be defined by a price/time equation alone."

Essentially, we have to remember that it is human beings who are using transport and their daily commute is an integral part of their emotional lives. So, in addition to operational or service issues that we address, we must remember that more is going on behind the stated concern than meets the eye. As service providers, we must also take into account the 'emotional factors' even if some issues cannot be easily resolved.

It is our responsibility to continue to educate the public on our purpose and what we are trying to achieve for them. We must

explain that numbers, statistics and comparisons help us set benchmarks against the major cities to which we compare ourselves. Even if we cannot immediately solve a problem, we owe it to our public to give a clear explanation. Genuinely demonstrating our efforts can go a long way in creating understanding.

But of course the public has a role to play too and we can help them to understand this as well. Motorists can better acknowledge the needs of other road users for example. Rail and bus users can move to accommodate more passengers. Pedestrians and cyclists can help by following traffic rules. And we can all appreciate everyone needs to take a break — people such as bus driver Yang Guo Hua, who may also need "time to rest and have a cup of coffee at the interchange" (*Lianhe Zaobao*, 3 April 2007)

At the end of day, striving for excellent service is a collaborative effort. We all have a stake in the outcomes and we owe it to each other to do our best — *BG (NS) Yam Ah Mee*



Connect Land Transport Authority

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Bimonthly Newsletter JUNE / JULY 2007



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The Grand Plan

Highlighting past achievements and announcing new endeavours for FY 06/07

It was a huge turnout despite the heavy downpour at LTA's yearly Corporate Workplan Seminar on 27 April. Staff, guests and media turned up in huge numbers at the ACS Barker Road campus, filling the concert hall to overflowing capacity.

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The Grand Plan



To kick-start the event, Minister for Transport Raymond Lim announced the government's approval for the construction of the Downtown Line (DTL), a 40-km long stretch that will cost \$12 billion. This is to prepare for a Singapore 40 to 50 years down the road, where population figures are estimated to hit the 6.5 million mark.

Designing a system to carry twice the number of people it presently transports without compromising on the quality of life is the major concern. "It is crucial that we try to answer such questions today, since transport infrastructure and policies take time to plan and implement," says the Minister, making reference to the 1967 commissioning of the State and City Planning study 20 years before the first train even commenced operation.

The DTL will begin addressing the needs of the growing population besides supporting current developments in the Marina Bay area. Targeted for completion by 2018, it will be constructed in three stages: DTL 1 — incorporating the Downtown Extension, DTL 2 — extending northwest through Bukit Timah to Bukit Panjang, and DTL 3 — expanding eastwards from Chinatown to Singapore Expo.



The Marina Bay area before (top) and after key establishments have been erected.

Marina Downtown

The Chinese name of the Downtown Line has been changed to Marina Downtown Line (滨海市区线 *bin hai shi qu xian*) to more accurately reflect the Marina focal point, as the original translation of 市区线 (*shi qu xian*) merely described a city line.



Community Engagement

Minister Lim also stressed that building a first-rate land transport system was not solely the purview of the government, but rather dependent on transport operators, motorists and commuters as well.

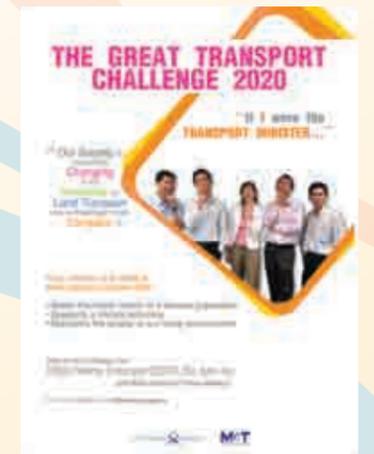
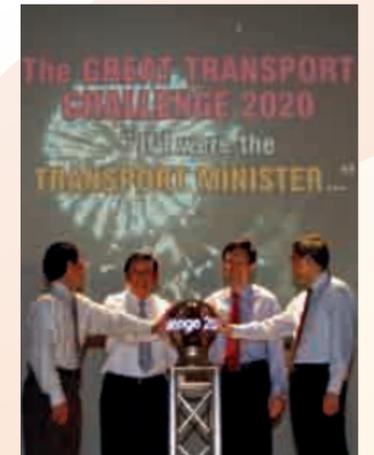
In engaging all stakeholders, LTA has launched a series of focus group discussions as part of the Transport Ministry's land transport review. The discussions helped gather suggestions and feedback on key issues and challenges facing land transport policies. (see page 6)

On a more entertaining note, the Authority also introduced an on-line game called *The Great Transport Challenge 2020 — If I were the Transport Minister*. "I am open to anyone who may wish to do my job on a permanent basis," dares the Minister. The game offers choices and trade-offs to players trying to develop an accessible, sustainable and people-centred transport system. "I encourage everyone to try the game and share your thoughts," he adds.

According to Dennis Yeo, LTA's Deputy Director of Application Services 3, the challenge was how to make the game simple, yet have an impact: "We want people to understand that everyone has choices and that there are trade-offs to what they want."

And this was exactly what some players felt. "Through the game, I have come to understand the challenges that LTA faces during the course of work," says Tan Hong Yi.

"It provides a good insight into the decisions that LTA makes," agrees Ang Kwang Siang.



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“I am confident that, together, we can overcome [challenges] and fulfil our promises to the public.”

LTA's CE BG (NS) Yam Ah Mee

FY06 Achievements

- More than 95 per cent of expressways and major arterial roads are congestion free during peak hours
- Average daily passenger journeys of 3.27 million surpassed target of 3.23 million
- Enhanced security in all public transport modes since IMF and World Bank meeting
- Formation of Public Transport Promotion Division (PTP)
- Launch of Barrier-free Accessibility audit

The Three Cs

The Transport Challenge was just one of the areas LTA has embarked on its journey to serve the public better. Community-centric, commuter-centric and customer-centric were the buzz words LTA's CE BG (NS) Yam Ah Mee emphasised in his speech following the Minister's address. "We will need to engage more pro-actively the communities affected by our policies and projects, the travelling public who use the transport system, and our internal and external stakeholders with whom we work closely to address their needs and concerns," he says.

In his closing, BG (NS) Yam affirmed his belief that the future transport landscape will be bright and exciting for LTA staff. "I am confident that, together, we can overcome [challenges] and fulfil our promises to the public."

“We will need to engage more pro-actively the communities affected by our policies and projects...”

LTA's CE BG (NS) Yam Ah Mee



VR-10 eGame gained international recognition in Finland this May.



Minister for Transport Raymond Lim studying an exhibit.



Some of the colourful posters at the exhibition.

Fun-d Factor

Not all transport-related projects are dry and filled with technical jargon. The Land Transport Innovation Fund (LTIF) exhibition at the Workplan Seminar was a colourful mesh of posters describing 14 different projects. From improving noise mitigation at construction sites to an electronic integrated bus route planner, all projects, when implemented, will play an important role in enhancing the travel experiences of members of the public.

The LTIF, established in 2006 to encourage innovation, has an annual budget of \$10 million. Forty projects were funded last year, two of which have since been implemented: a motion control system for commuter facilities lighting and the VR-10 eGame, which won the International Association of Public Transport (UITP) Youth Project Award Grand Public Prize at the 57th UITP International World Congress in Helsinki, Finland on 24 May.

Reviewing Singapore's Transport System



“All suggestions will be carefully considered in the Land Transport Review.”

Minister of State for Finance and Transport, Lim Hwee Hua

“We need to change and respond to a growing and more diverse population and see through the eyes of the travelling public,” says Minister for Transport Raymond Lim at LTA's Workplan Seminar in April this year.

And one of the ways to assess the needs of the travelling public is through various feedback platforms, such as focus group discussions. To this end, the LTA organised six sessions for different clusters of stakeholders. Each meeting, chaired by Minister of State for Finance and Transport Lim Hwee Hua, focussed on different aspects of the three main strategic thrusts of Singapore's land transport system: making public transport a choice mode, managing road usage and being responsive to diverse needs.

The first thrust was tabled at three discussions, with the first held on 10 April and attended by more than 50 people made up of academics, commuters, taxi drivers and transport operators. Gerard Ee, Public Transport Council (PTC) Chairman and co-chair of this initial forum, divulged to reporters later that he was heartened by the constructive suggestions. “I have been given much food for thought. The PTC will certainly look at some of these suggestions,” he assures.

The suggestions included cutting back on parking lots in the city, raising parking fees to deter driving during peak hours and a nationalised public transport body.

While Mrs Lim pointed out that some areas of concern lay with social behaviour than with policies themselves, all suggestions will still be carefully considered in the Land Transport Review that the Ministry has embarked on to address the needs of a growing population by 2020.

Over and Above

by Monica Yap



On 31 March, residents from Punggol East & Punggol North constituencies gathered to witness the opening of a new pedestrian overhead bridge by Teo Chee Hean, Minister for Defence and Member of Parliament for Punggol-Pasir Ris GRC. The bridge across the Tampines Expressway, near Punggol Block 136 and Sengkang Block 183D, not only has covered shelters linking the blocks, but also barrier-free facilities, such as ramps and colour contrasting decision tactiles.

Facilitating Commuters



Covered link ways, an overhead bridge, a viaduct, a zebra crossing and ramps are just some of the facilities residents at Queen's Close now enjoy after the official opening of these services at the Queen's Close Block Party on 27 January. Construction of these amenities came about through feedback from the residents to the adviser for Queenstown Constituency, Baey Yam Keng (centre, above right).

Anniversary Lunch

by Aaron Chong

Even one year after the launch of the e-Services@ONE.MOTORING, the memories of long lines at LTA's Sin Ming Road office remain vivid for used car dealer Tan Ah Chew. "In the past, we had to do the paperwork for our customers who were selling cars and I remember the queues we had to go through," he reminisces. "Now that we can do it online, it is much easier," he adds.

Ho Chew Hoon, Immediate Past President of the Singapore Vehicle Traders Association agrees: "With the improvement in technology, the new system has allowed car dealers the convenience of performing LTA transactions in our own office, at our own time."

Tan and Ho are two of the many people who attended a thank you lunch on 16 April organised by LTA for partners in appreciation for their valuable support for the successful launch of the service.



Let Your Fingers Do the Talking

Experiencing potholes on the road or spot malfunctioning traffic lights? Send your feedback through an SMS. LTA's latest feedback channel offers the public a quick and easy way to transmit their thoughts. Just send your text message to 77 LTA (77582) and receive an acknowledgement and reply via the same format. LTA, however, reiterates that more complex issues should be brought to the other feedback platforms, such as the 1800-CALL LTA (1800-2255 582) hotline and the Talk2LTA portal at <http://talk2lta.gov.sg>.



Pathway to Access

by Monica Yap

A simple footpath at Bedok South Avenue 1 that opened on 21 April was cause for much joy. The lane links an existing footpath along East Coast Parkway to the Laguna View Condominium, creating valuable access for the residents, who had raised their concerns to Chan Soo Sen, Member of Parliament and Adviser to Joo Chiat SMC, during one of his visits.



Reaching Out to the Community



by Teo Kuan Yee

As part of its proactive community outreach efforts, LTA participated at the Bishan East Family Carnival on 10 June at the open field along Bishan St 13 and 14. Guest-of-Honour Deputy PM Wong Kan Seng and senior grassroots leaders toured LTA's twin booths featuring exhibits on Circle Line 3, VR10 and the Great Transport Challenge. A cheque of \$2,000 was also presented to the Citizens' Consultative Committee.



by Michelle Ang

Circle Line Stage 5 played host to third year Diploma in Civil and Structural Engineering students of Singapore Polytechnic (SP) on 25 and 27 June. The team gave an overview of the civil works and operation of the Tunnel Boring Machine. Lecturer of Civil Engineering Tan Poh Seng, from SP's School of the Built Environment, conveyed his appreciation saying: "the students have benefited a great deal; the knowledge and exposure gained will definitely help them in their studies, as well as their future career".

Carnival Consensus

by Spencer Lim

The Pioneer Neighbourhood Carnival on 27 May brought residents and LTA's Boon Lay Extension (BLE) Project Team together in a rare occasion of camaraderie. An exhibition and drawing competition entitled 'Pioneer, My MRT Station' helped inform residents of the night works that would ensue in the near future. Guest-of-Honour Cedric Foo, Member of Parliament for West Coast GRC and Adviser to Pioneer Grassroots Organisation, was particularly pleased with the exhibition and the progress of the BLE works.



One of the entries of the children's drawing competition.

Accessibility for All



“A lot needs to be done to create barrier-free access”

Higher Engineering Officer Steven Tay

photo by: Vincent Nghai



photo by: Vincent Nghai

Steven Tay attempting to descend a slope.

Most people would not even pay attention to the 10cm step from the pavement to the road, but for wheelchair-bound individuals, this small drop can pose a myriad of problems, as several LTA staff recently experienced.

“It’s not as easy as it looks, especially going up and down slopes and over obstacles,” says Muthusamy s/o P Vengadasalam, a Senior Engineering Assistant. “Without somebody helping us, it is very difficult to move around,” he attests.

Higher Engineering Officer Steven Tay concurs: “It’s really strenuous having to push the wheelchair, especially over uneven ground. In many instances, I lost my grip on the wheels and got my wheelchair stuck in gaps.”

Muthusamy, Tay and another Higher Engineering Officer, Ho Cher-Ron, manoeuvred wheelchairs from Redhill MRT station to Leng Kee Community Centre on 24 April as part of a group involved in an audit to map out areas within a 400-m radius of all MRT stations that were not easily accessible to people

with disabilities, the aged and mothers with strollers. “The experience has given me a perspective of the difficulties faced by the disabled in their daily lives — a lot needs to be done to create barrier-free access,” Tay emphasises.

The audit, taking place island-wide, will ensure that all 110 MRT and LRT stations will be upgraded with barrier-free access. “Now I know how a wheelchair-bound person feels, and it has helped me in my work,” Muthusamy confides.

“I am also better able to improvise on modifications, and give clearer descriptions and instructions to the term contractors providing the barrier-free facilities,” adds Ho.

After a successful pilot upgrading at Simei MRT station last year, priority will be given to areas with more elderly residents and where the human traffic is higher. The entire audit and upgrading will take five years to complete at a cost of \$60 million.

Call for Volunteers



LTA staff and grassroot members surveying the area around Khatib MRT Station.



A minimum of eight LTA staff volunteers and four grassroot members are required to participate at each survey site. This amounts to more than 1,000 people in total. It is definitely an uphill task to mobilise manpower for each audit taking session, but the benefits are tangible as it provides more people within and outside the organisation with a first-hand experience of what it takes for Singapore to become barrier-free.

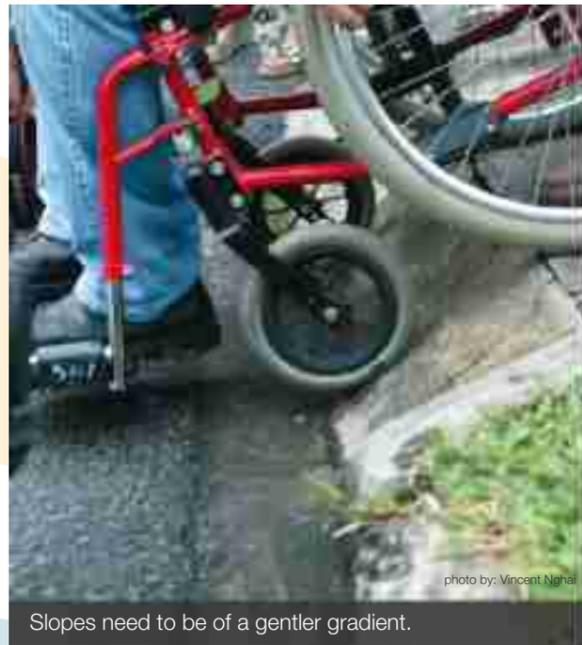
At present, besides the completed audit at Redhill, Khatib and Yio Chu Kang MRT stations, another six to seven MRT stations that have undergone a trial survey earlier will be scheduled for a second run to confirm the findings.

We will definitely need more volunteers for this audit to succeed. Staff who are interested can email: Tan Chye Soon, Ang Boon Pah and Norliza Yatim.

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Suggested Improvements

- Creating gentler gradients for wheelchair ramps
- Increasing width of pavements to at least 1.5m
- Levelling road-pavement surfaces
- Providing more space at bus stops for wheelchair users to board and alight from buses
- Removing obstructions



Design for All People



The HarbourFront MRT station has won a bronze medal at the Building and Construction Authority's inaugural Universal Design Awards for the Built Environment. The awards, part of Singapore's drive towards a barrier-free environment, recognise buildings for its usefulness, friendliness, facilities, protection and safety, connectivity to public facilities and aesthetics.

HarbourFront's design incorporating clear signages, tactile guidance system for the visually impaired, wider entry and exit gates to accommodate wheelchairs, grab bars on benches for the elderly and even diaper-changing facilities for mothers was built with continuous and seamless barrier-free accessibility in mind. Over the next five years, other MRT stations will also be retrofitted with barrier-free zones.



A Driving Influence



Drink driving is on the increase. It is estimated that an average of 10 people are arrested each day on this charge, quotes the *Lianhe Zaobao* on 27 May. The statistics are alarming: 914 arrests in just the first three months of this year, up 21 per cent from the previous year's 753 figure.

Driving under the influence of alcohol has been discouraged across the globe for the danger it inherently poses. Alcohol in the bloodstream slows down a person's response to situations, so even a small amount can retard reflexes even if the individual believes his tolerance level is high. And this misconception has costly consequences — in 2006 alone, there were 7,499 accidents where 9,706 people were injured and 190 killed.

Surprisingly, some motorists still prefer to risk life and limb. To educate this group and carry the road safety message island wide, the LTA — together with the Traffic Police, National Safety Council of Singapore and Automobile Association of Singapore — organised a two-day road safety exhibition on 21 and 22 April as part of the United Nations Global Road Safety Week's worldwide coordinated effort.

Singapore's agenda included the launch of the Traffic Police's Road Safety Outreach 2007 Programme, the Shell Traffic Games and a half-day conference on 'Towards Better Road Safety for All'.

Two-prong Approach

Accident-free roads can only be achieved if road developers and users work hand in hand. While education is being reinforced in schools, community centres and the heartlands, better road design and use of technology are also being implemented.

Since 1999, the LTA's Project Safety Reviews have addressed several concerns pertaining to road issues. The development of the Traffic Accident Analysis Module and Black Spot Programme also helped target high-accident sites for countermeasures to be developed. These measures include:

- increasing the length of speed-reducing strips;
- improving the visibility of Curve Alignment Markers;
- installing Red-Amber-Green arrows to control right turns;
- introducing the Vibraline to alert fatigued drives from swerving off the road; and
- mounting crash cushions at critical exit points along the expressways to absorb the impact of a crash and reduce the probability of injury.



Caring for the Community

by Maninderjit Kaur



LTA's Chief Executive placing the final piece of the puzzle to complete the Fund's logo.

Addressing the diverse needs of the community — one of LTA's strategic thrusts — has been given more emphasis with the Authority's efforts to cater to the needs of another group of physically challenged individuals, such as quadriplegics or those with brittle bones.

To help this group of people defray the higher cost of taxi services, LTA set up the LTA Cares Fund. The committed annual sum of \$120,000 over the next three years will be administered by the National Council of Social Services.

Launched on 15 June at LTA's Quest for Excellence Day, the fund highlights the Authority's continuous mission of helping the less fortunate lead a more fulfilling life. In fact, over the last seven years, LTA has been actively participating in worthy causes. With the support of staff and partners, almost \$2.5 million has been raised for voluntary and charitable organisations, such as the Asian Women's Welfare Association's (AWWA) TEACH Me Services, Bright Hill Evergreen Home, Handicaps Welfare Association, Muscular Dystrophy Association of Singapore, *The Straits Times* School Pocket Money Fund and the victims of Asia's tidal waves. These efforts have garnered for LTA the President's Social Service Award (Formal Group) in 2006.

Moving ahead, LTA's partnership with ComCare Connection takes volunteerism to a higher level by



Metta School students learn soft skills, such as purchasing a meal at the coffeeshop.

getting staff to spend time with the less privileged. Working in tandem with Metta School, an institution providing special education, LTA hopes to help children with special assistance needs.

Staff will be involved in monthly field trips organised to equip students with independent living skills — such as taking public transport and performing simple chores — and assist teachers in preparing teaching materials or enhancing their website. The inaugural field trip held on 25 May touched the hearts of many volunteers. Says Administrative Assistant Rabiah Mohd Shariff: "It was tiring and the weather was extremely hot, but the kids' energy and the smiles that never seem to leave their faces made it all worthwhile."

"It is definitely more blessed for us to give than to receive," agrees Deputy Contract Manager Patrick Lim from the Rail division.

To help older students (16-18 years old) prepare for future employment and integration into society, job attachment opportunities have also been offered to the School. Since April 2007, four students have been working in the LTA Staff Club House performing simple administrative duties and assisting with logistics arrangements.

From London to Singapore

A year ago, LTA signed a Memorandum of Cooperation with Transport for London (TfL), a statutory body relatively similar in structure and operation to that of the Authority. Exchange of ideas and experts, as well as joint investigations into land transport matters were some of the areas the cooperation encouraged.

TfL started the ball rolling with a visit last year, which was followed this year by a secondment of one of their Senior Legal Counsels, Sarah Taylor, to LTA's Legal Division. A New Zealander and British Resident, Taylor joined TfL more than five years ago, just a little later than TfL's own inception in 2000.

Taylor says she sees many similarities in the transport systems of the two countries even though Singapore's youth is a far cry from London's more than a century's worth of experience. "There are fewer problems in Singapore because the system is still relatively new, but London is developing and improving just as rapidly," she explains.

Having been on the island-state for over a month now, Taylor intends to make the most of her six-month stay here as interesting as possible by travelling around Singapore — and beyond — via all modes of transportation: trains, buses, taxis, ferries, planes, and even by walking and cycling.



Going Global

It's been slightly more than 12 years since MSI Global Pte Ltd, a company wholly owned by LTA, was established in February 1995. Since then, its vision to be the preferred partner in land transport infrastructure/system projects has been met by its reach over more than 10 countries across the globe. Projects have ranged from system development and integration to consultancy, software, technical and training services, as well as project management and reviews.

Over the next few issues, LTA staff will share their experiences of working abroad. So, look out for these exciting stories.

Real-time Monitoring

adapted from *Challenge*, May 2007

LTA's ONE.MOTORING website, offering real-time viewing of traffic situations along major expressways, has become the inspiration for Alexander Hospital's (AH) Queue Viewer portal. Patients can now access the link on AH's website to gauge their waiting time at the Department of Emergency Medicine. Another medical facility, the National University Hospital, has also adopted this system.

