

SPEECH BY MR KHAW BOON WAN, COORDINATING MINISTER FOR INFRASTRUCTURE AND MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT, AT THE OPENING CEREMONY OF THE DOWNTOWN LINE 3, 20 OCTOBER 2017, 11.10AM, EXPO STATION

Completion of Downtown Line (DTL)

1. We are here this morning to open DTL3 and celebrate the completion of the entire Downtown Line. It is a proud moment for all of us.
2. Two years ago, we launched DTL2 at Botanic Gardens Station. Today, we launch the final stage of the Downtown Line at Expo Station. The entire Downtown Line has 34 stations, of which one-third, 11 are interchange stations. This will enhance our MRT network resilience significantly. It is expected to serve more than 500,000 riders every day. This is about 10% of our resident population.
3. Just as DTL2 was a game-changer for residents in the west, DTL3 will similarly be a game-changer for residents in the east. For example, a Bedok Reservoir resident working in the Clarke Quay area will find his journey shortened from 60 minutes to 35 minutes. When DTL2 was launched, many residents in Bukit Timah switched to public transport. We hope the same will happen for DTL3.

Engineering Challenges during Construction

4. The construction of DTL3 is one of the biggest engineering challenges in Singapore. To build a new rail line in a densely built-up city, the team of LTA engineers had to tease out narrow corridors around existing buildings and infrastructure, and introduce new innovative diversion techniques. For example, parts of the Singapore River were moved and rerouted to build the tunnels around the Fort Canning Station. To do this, a new canal had to be constructed first to divert the river. The river was then filled with stabilising material before tunnelling works took place. After the tunnelling works were completed, the river was reinstated to its original position. The DTL is also built at a deeper depth than the older lines¹, with an average depth of 25m which is equivalent to an 8-storey tall building.
5. LTA could not do this alone. Our planners from URA worked closely with LTA transport planners to find creative solutions for some stations. Take for example Bencoolen Station. This station was particularly challenging, because it was at the

¹ The existing stations on the North-South and East-West Lines, North East Line and Circle Line have an average depth of 15 to 20 metres.

confluence of many buildings, as well as the North-South Line (NSL) and Circle Line (CCL) tunnels. LTA and BCA also worked closely to overcome the engineering and design challenges and went on to achieve the Green Mark Gold Plus Standard.

Significant Improvements in Rail Transport

6. Over the last six years, we have expanded our rail network significantly. We added new stations to the NSL and CCL, opened the Tuas West Extension, launched DTL1 and 2, and now DTL3. In total, we added 41 new stations and grew the rail network length by 30%. This comes at a total cost of nearly \$21 (\$20.7) billion. It was a very significant investment to improve public transport. With the completion of DTL3, we now have five full MRT lines.

7. We have also increased train capacity by adding more trains and shortening the headway between trains. When the ongoing re-signalling upgrade for the North-South and East-West Lines is completed, the shortest headway between trains will be reduced by about 20% to 100 seconds. This will allow us to add up to 6 more train trips every hour during peak periods. To do this, we have bought 57 new trains. Most of these new trains are already here. Commuters will enjoy shorter wait times and less crowded trains.

8. Yet more rail projects are in the pipeline. The first three stations on the Thomson-East Coast Line will open in 2019. Thereafter, the North East Line extension will open in 2023, followed by the Jurong Region Line and Circle Line Stage 6 around 2025 and the Cross Island Line (CRL) around 2030. When the CRL is completed, we would have achieved our goal of eight in ten households being within a 10-minute walk of a train station. Our vision of being a car-lite society is within our grasp.

9. As our network becomes denser, MRT stations on different lines will be nearer to each other. In some instances, commuters may save time by exiting one station, walking over to another station, and transferring to another line. Our fare structure currently does not provide for such transfers except at 3 stations, namely Bukit Panjang, Newton and Tampines Stations. Commuters doing so will incur a second boarding charge. With the completion of the DTL, I understand that the PTC will review our distance-based fare transfer rules to ensure that they continue to facilitate fast, seamless public transport journeys. I am sure PTC will examine the issue thoroughly, to ensure fairness to commuters and taxpayers.

Conclusion

10. Finally, I would like to thank the DTL team, planners, engineers, architects, contractors, SBS Transit and everyone who have contributed to the project. To the residents, schools and businesses near our DTL3 construction sites - thank you very much for your patience and understanding over the past six years. We have caused you much inconvenience, noise, dust and even sleepless nights. We deeply appreciate your tolerance. We will now ensure that you get to enjoy the convenience that the DTL3 brings to your doorstep.

11. LTA will be offering free rides on the entire DTL tomorrow and on Sunday. I encourage residents to try the trains to experience this improvement in connectivity and convenience for yourself!

12. Thank you.
