

**Speech by Senior Minister of State Mrs Josephine Teo at
Launch of the Singapore Bus Academy
on 17 Oct 2016, 10 am, Devan Nair Institute**

Tripartite partners

Brothers and Sisters from the labour movement

Our valued Bus Captains

Partners from our four public bus operators

Colleagues from MOM, WSG and LTA

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Focussed Support for Bus Professionals

1. Our public transport industry has undergone a transformation in the last five years. Since 2012, the Government has invested very significant resources to improve bus services:
 - a. We have expanded the public bus fleet by 35% through Bus Service Enhancement Programme. There are now some 5,400 buses serving 4 million commuters daily.
 - b. More than 80 new bus services were added to the network.

- c. Headways have improved by up to 10 minutes for services during peak hours.
2. These improvements have been felt, on the ground, by commuters. Satisfaction levels have gone up every year since 2012. I thank all our bus captains and public bus operators for your help in raising service levels for commuters. It was a challenge that you took in your stride. However difficult, you were undaunted and stayed committed to the task. Thank you!
3. Under the bus contracting model, service standards and the bus fleet will be enhanced further. However, this must be complemented by an equal focus on bus professionals.
4. A larger bus fleet and expanded services requires more bus drivers, technicians and planners. Our pool of bus drivers has grown larger, from 7,500 in 2012 to over 10,000 today. Along with this expansion, salaries have risen by an average of 40% over the last four years. Beyond salaries, operators are also working to uplift and professionalise careers in the bus industry, through better career progression and improved work environments.

5. The Government supports these moves by the operators. In May, we had launched the Bus Industry Manpower Plan, (formerly known as the Sectoral Manpower Plan). One of the strategies for uplifting the bus industry is to raise professionalism through enhanced training. The Singapore Bus Academy, which we are launching today, is a key thrust of this strategy.

Standardised Foundational Training

6. First, the Bus Academy will be a one-stop training centre to conduct foundational training for bus captains. This has gained new importance as we welcome more new bus drivers to the industry, who may be employed by different operators. The Academy will therefore introduce a standardised Enhanced Vocational Licence Training Programme for all new bus captains. This programme will cover essential proficiency requirements and will complement the in-house training efforts of individual operators that are more tailored to suit their own operating practices.

7. The Bus Academy will welcome the first intake of 30 trainees under this programme starting from the end of this month. Over the next three years, we expect about 6,000 bus captains to benefit from this programme. LTA and e2i will provide training grants to cover approximately 70% of course fees for all local bus captains who complete this programme.

Expanding and Deepening Capabilities

8. Second, the Academy will help to broaden and deepen the capabilities of bus professionals throughout their careers, including mid-career entrants. The Academy will introduce refresher courses and advanced-level modules for bus captains to undergo continual training and development.

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9. While the initial focus is on bus captains, the Academy has every intention to provide training opportunities to the rest of the bus workforce such as technicians and planners. To support these efforts, an Advisory Committee for the Academy, comprising members from our tripartite

partners, was set up in July to give inputs on curriculum development.

Acknowledgements to Tripartite Partners

10. The launch of the Singapore Bus Academy as a centralised training centre and career resource centre is an important milestone in our journey towards uplifting and professionalising careers in the bus industry. It would not have been achieved without the collaborative efforts of our tripartite partners. I would like to specifically thank the NTWU, WSG, e2i and our bus operators for their support. We look forward to the sustained collaboration between the partners.

Objectives of Singapore Bus Academy

11. 今年五月，我们公布了公共巴士行业人力计划，目标是要吸引更多的新加坡人加入公共巴士行业。为了实现这个目标，我们今天成立新加坡巴士学院，希望通过更多元化的培训，使公共巴士行业更为专业化。

12. 学院将是集中培训的基地，重点在于培养高素质的专业人才，以便提升公共巴士系统的服务水平，同时也帮助巴士工友打好基础应对未来的挑战。
13. 新加坡巴士学院计划在未来的三年为大约 6,000 名新加入的巴士车长提供更系统化的基础培训，以提升他们的核心技能。学院也计划推出更高层级的进修课程，让在职的巴士工友通过培训，深化技能或扩大发展空间，提高他们获得晋升的机会。
14. 我希望新加坡巴士学院能够陪伴所有的公共巴士行业专业人士，在发展事业的旅途上一起迈进，共同打造更高水平的公共交通服务。

Conclusion

15. Let me conclude. The Bus Academy is another demonstration of the Government's commitments to improve our public transport industry for the Singaporean commuter.
16. At the start of my speech, I spoke about our significant investments to improve our public transport network and infrastructure. Investing in hardware alone is of course not

enough. We depend on a high quality, professional workforce to translate these investments into better commuter experiences on the ground.

17. This is why developing our human resource must be a key pillar of our overall efforts. With a core of competent bus professionals, commuters can enjoy reliable, safe and comfortable journeys.
18. It is my hope as the Chairperson of the Public Transport Sectoral Tripartite Committee, to see more people recognise the value of bus professionals and to be willing to join the industry. I congratulate LTA and our tripartite partners on the successful launch of the Singapore Bus Academy.

19. Thank you.