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**SPEECH BY MINISTER FOR COMMUNICATIONS,  
MR MAH BOW TAN,  
ON THE COMMEMORATION OF BASIC STRUCTURES COMPLETION AND  
COMMENCEMENT OF TRACKLAYING FOR THE WOODLANDS MRT EXTENSION,  
ON TUESDAY, 11 OCTOBER 1994 AT 10.00 AM**

Today's ceremony marks another significant milestone in the Woodlands Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) project - the completion of basic structures, and the beginning of tracklaying for the Woodlands extension. The Mass Rapid Transit Corporation (MRTC) tells me that they will meet the target I have set for them to complete and open the Woodlands MRT Extension for train service by February 1996.

Even as the MRTC is busy constructing the Woodlands extension, it is looking ahead to prepare for future extensions of the MRT network to serve other major population areas. As the authority on mass rapid transit, the MRTC has the important role of promoting the development and use of mass transit systems, which may be MRT, Light Rapid Transit (LRT), or people-mover systems, as part of the Government's overall land transport strategy to ensure efficient movement of people and goods.

MRTC's role requires it to plan ahead, explore new possibilities, and constantly review and update its development schedule. As you are aware, the MRTC recently appointed a consultancy team to review its plans for the proposed North-East Line and a possible Changi Airport Extension. Today, I am pleased to announce that the MRTC has commissioned another study for a proposed guided transit system for the Marina Centre and Beach Road/Nicoll Highway Corridor and Shenton Way. The study will be completed in about five months time.

Many commercial developments in the Marina Centre and Nicoll Highway area are coming on-stream in the next few years.

This will significantly increase demand for transportation services in the area. The Public Works Department (PWD) has studied and concluded that an all-bus service network using the road system would only be adequate to serve the area over the next few years. In the long term, a mass transit system with a separate right-of-way would provide a better level of public transport service for commuters, while relieving traffic congestion on the road system in the area.

The MRTC has therefore commissioned a technical and financial feasibility study to recommend a suitable mass transit system and alignment to serve the Marina Centre, Beach Road/Nicoll Highway, and Shenton Way area. The study will make passenger traffic projections based on public and private projects that have been committed along the proposed alignment routes, and take into account current transportation infrastructure and future development plans. In addition, the study will also evaluate the merits of looping this system to the future Marina South development.

These, and future studies on possible new MRT/LRT extensions, will help the MRTC to plan a comprehensive mass transit network - not only to reach out to more Singaporeans but also to cater to rising traffic on the existing network by offering MRT passengers alternative routes to their destinations.

The other equally important aspect of the MRTC's role, besides planning and building MRT extensions, is to promote their use. In this regard, the MRTC recognises the importance of ensuring that MRT stations are highly accessible and user-friendly to commuters who live nearby, as well as those transferring from other modes of transport such as bus, taxis, cars or bicycles. This will help to maximise the catchment of the MRT, and bring its benefits to as many people living along the MRT corridor.

A \$6 million programme to install and improve commuter facilities at 33 of the existing MRT stations is currently in progress. For the Woodlands extension, these commuter facilities

have been integrated into the design so that they will be completed and ready when MRT operation begin. All the stations will have covered walkways, covered access to taxi stands, pick-up points and bus stops. If the bus stops are on the opposite side of the stations, they will be linked by covered overhead pedestrian bridges.

The long term directions which the MRTC has set for itself is to extend the reach of the MRT network, and make it more accessible to passengers who do not live or work in the immediate vicinity of the MRT corridors. I look forward to seeing the Corporation translate its vision into Singapore's landscape in the future.

For now, I would like to congratulate all MRTC staff and contractors who have been involved in bringing the Woodlands MRT project to this particular milestone. I would also like to thank all community leaders, many of whom have kept in close touch with the MRTC during the period of construction and help facilitate progress of the works. I am happy to see so many grassroots representatives here today - to all of you, may I say thank you. We count on you to continue giving us your support and understanding so that we can finish this project on time.

I would also particularly like to acknowledge the presence here today of Mr Michael Fam who has been so closely associated with the MRT from the beginning, as the first Chairman of MRTC. Many of us here know that Mr Fam has been an unremitting and fervent proponent of the Woodlands project.

Finally, I would like to say that I appreciate very much the opportunity to be here today to see for myself the strides that you have made in bringing the Woodlands MRT project to this stage of development. If you succeed in setting new standards for the project, it will be a tribute to both the past and present team of people who have been a part of the MRT development over the years.

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