

# Full-day bus lanes will carry extra red line

I REFER to the letters regarding the impending bus-lane modifications.

The bus-lane scheme was introduced in 1974 to give priority to public transport so that larger numbers of people can be carried more efficiently, quickly and reliably. Since then, we have consistently monitored and modified the scheme to keep up with the changing travel and traffic patterns of road users. The latest modifications reflect recent travel trends.

For example, we have shifted the evening bus-lane hours to between 5 and 8 pm, from the current 4.30 to 7 pm, because traffic volumes now peak at a later time. We are removing Saturday bus-lane hours, except at the full-day bus lanes, following reduced Saturday peak-hour traffic volumes.

Our studies have shown that at certain locations in the city, the travelling schedules of buses are hampered by the

constant encroachment of other vehicles into their path, be it cabbies dropping off or picking up passengers, other motorists doing the same, or drivers of delivery vehicles offloading their goods. While each of them may stop for "a few moments", these "moments" add up when everyone is at liberty to stop in the bus lanes.

There are sufficient facilities, such as taxi stands, side roads, delivery points, alighting bays and drop-off points, for everyone to conduct their business in the proper manner.

As an average of over 100 buses ply these roads every hour, daily, it has become necessary to extend the full-day bus lanes to these areas for the benefit of bus commuters.

We note with concern that some letter writers seem to assume that bus commuters travelling outside peak hours have plenty of time to waste and don't deserve to have

their journey made smoother and faster with full-day bus lanes. We hope that better understanding will prevail eventually.

To ensure that motorists are not unwittingly and unnecessarily caught by the extended scheme, the full-day bus lanes will be demarcated clearly with an additional red line running alongside the yellow line typically used for normal bus lanes. This is similar to the full-day bus-lane marking along Orchard Road.

There will also be signboards to remind motorists that they are approaching full-day bus lanes. We hope that taxi commuters will desist from asking taxi drivers to stop in bus lanes.

LTA's next phase of publicity for the scheme will see car decals and flyers posted to the 600,000 registered vehicle owners, and brochures at petrol stations. These materials are currently in production.

Readers have questioned the right of buses to move out of their lanes. While the bus lanes are reserved for buses, they do not restrict buses to bus lanes. Buses of-

ten need to travel in the other lanes to adhere to their route, e.g., to turn right at junctions or into certain lanes on the right side of the road. Also, when bus drivers find their paths blocked, they often have to filter into the next lane. We hope the bus lanes will reduce the necessity to do so.

Motorists need to understand that while they have the ability to travel faster than buses, and the flexibility to alter routes and speeds to make up for delays, public buses have limited speeds and little scope to change their routes to compensate for lost time. So they need additional help to convey passengers to their destinations on time.

There is no other way forward than to continue to improve the travel experience of bus commuters to encourage more people to choose public transport and reduce congestion on the roads. If such measures are not taken, there would be gridlock.

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