

TOP NEWS

21 million riders on first anniversary



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KUALA LUMPUR — Turning one today, the Mass Rapid Transit Sg Buloh - Kajang (SBK) Line ferried almost 21 million commuters and it's an achievement of sorts accompanied by accolades from users.

Phase 1 was opened to the public on Dec 16 last year, and Rapid Rail chief executive officer Datuk Zohari Sulaiman said many improvements on service performance and travel experience was managed within the year.

The rail operator continues to learn and work closely with contractors to improve the system.

"We continue to strategise to minimise the impact of technical glitches and service hiccups on the public.

"As a result, we have achieved 99.8 per cent in service reliability index within the first year of operations, which is usually difficult to be accomplished by a new sophisticated system like the SBK Line," Zohari told *Malay Mail*.

Zohari said various software updates and improvements were made, including adjustments to address deficiencies on system performance, such as the maintenance and engineering works, and the automated fare collection (integrated ticketing) system.

In terms of safety, he said the issue was addressed during the trial operations period and the rail operator continues to improve stability and performance of the services.

In moving forward, Zohari said new fare products would be introduced for RapidKL rail users that have value discount sometime early next year.

"This is would be on top of the existing two-day pass that we have offered for ERL (Express Rail Link) customers.

"During the first month of the opening of Phase 2 in July, the 50 per cent discount offered had successfully achieved its objective to introduce the service to the public from the areas heading towards Kajang," he said.

As of Dec 13, MRT recorded a total of 20,973,206 commuters since it was first launched.

Meanwhile, project owner and developer Mass Rapid Transit Corporation Sdn Bhd had taken up feedbacks and complaints from the SBK Line to improve the works on the Sungai Buloh-Serdang-Putrajaya (SSP) Line, which commenced on Sept 15.

The SSP Line scheduled to be fully completed in 2022.

Its strategic communications and stakeholder relations director Datuk Najmuddin Abdullah said among the steps



Coming up to a year in service, frequent users of the MRT praise the rail line but hope a few improvements can be made. — Pictures by Shafwan Zaidon

taken include engaging more proactively with state assemblymen and MPs to keep them informed on the progress of the project.

He said peoples' representatives would be an avenue for the public to share their feedback and complaints as well as a mediator for the stakeholders to find a solution to any issues.

Najmuddin said based on users' experience, the developer had collected complaints pertaining to the design of SBK Line, including weather protection for users (passenger comfort), the width of walkways, provisions for the disabled, improvements on surau (prayer rooms), and toilet facilities.

"All the complaints are currently being addressed in the design of SSP Line stations which is ongoing.

"We try to cater to all the public comments and concerns ever since the First Phase of the SBK Line was launched,

and we have been making improvements ever since," he said.

In terms of construction works, Najmuddin said there was downtime occurrence of the Variable Density Tunnel Boring Machines (TBMs), caused by the blockage of the slurrifier box during the mucking out process, which was part of the tunnelling works for the SBK Line.

He said in addressing the matter, modifications to the mucking system of the TBMs was carried out for the SSP Line to increase efficiency.

"The performance of the cutterhead was also improved and enhanced by applying better wear and tear protection," he said.

In the past year, the MRT project has received several awards for its performance, which includes the Asia Geospatial Excellence Awards 2017 for the Transport Infrastructure and Digital Engineering Technology categories, the Malaysian Construction Industry

Excellence Awards (MCIEA) 2017 for Best Major Infrastructure Project category, winner of the Be Inspired Awards 2017 for the Advancements In Rail And Transit category, and top prize winner of the Anugerah Inovasi Perdana Menteri 2017, themed Ideal Iconography Project Management.

Phase 1 of the SBK Line had opened 12 stations from Sungai Buloh to Semantan, covering a distance of 23 kilometres.

The Second Phase of the route opened from Semantan to Kajang station, which was operational since July 17, and included the opening of the Line's seven underground stations along 9.5km route beneath the city centre.

The entire stretch of the SBK Line runs for 51 kilometres with 31 stations.

The construction of the SBK Line commenced on July 8, 2011.



Retiree Muhd Yusof Awang says MRT fares are affordable.

One year on, MRT still amazes frequent users



By **Danial Dzulkiify**
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KUALA LUMPUR — Punctuality, once a bane of public transportation, is now consistent as commuters laud the comfort, ease and timely arrivals and departures of MRT services.

Albeit with a few improvements needed to be made, the "tube service" line is praised to be on time, without much complications and with stations having enough facilities to accommodate customers.

However, complaints on weather protection and a somewhat higher fare compared to the light rail transit (LRT) service are some of the issues which commuters hope will be looked into.

Office employee Julnar Filza Abdul Malik, 29, who is a frequent traveller, said she has been using the service since it was launched last year.

"The trains arrive on time but there were one or two occasions when it was late for a few minutes.

"Facilities at the station are fine, but customer service at the stations could be better," she said.

Former civil servant Ahmad Zahari Mohd said he appreciated the rail service has put much consideration into providing

discounts for senior citizens and would often travel from the Sg Buloh station to his intended station.

"We enjoy using the MRT very much. After retiring, I usually spend time with my wife travelling to the city or even Kajang to eat at our favourite eateries.

Apart from paying half the price for the fares we also pay half for the park and ride facilities.

"The only discomfort I experienced is that at the Sungai Buloh MRT station, when it rains heavily, heavy winds would push the rain inside the station, potentially drenching people who are heading up to the platform," the 67-year-old said.

College student Shanthini Shanmugam, 20, said she prefers using MRT rather than the Keretapi Tanah Melayu (KTM) services.

"Comparing the two services from Sungai Buloh to Pasar Seni, I prefer the MRT as it is modern and faster than KTM.

"It also arrives on time and there are rarely cases of it being late," she said.

Hotel consultant Jazz Law, 37 said he is happy with the MRT service and its facilities. However, he wished the fare structure could be reviewed.

"Heading to the Bukit Bintang from Kota Damansara, the fare is quite expensive. In fact MRT services are more expensive than the LRT. I wished the fares could be looked into and reviewed.

"The park-and-ride fares for everyday users should also be looked into," he said.

Lai Yee Hang, 17, who has been using the line since it was launched, said he is content with the service.

"Coming from Sungai Buloh, it is convenient for me to get to Mutiara Damansara or Bandar Utama. So far I'm happy with the services," he said.

Former police officer and retiree Muhd Yusof Awang, 63, said he does not have any complaint thus far.

"So far, I have not had any major complaints about MRT. The fares are affordable and it allows me to travel into the city without much hassle," he said.

For Noshafawani Ilyas, 21, a frequent user from Sungai Buloh, said the trains could be slightly delayed at times.

"There are a few hiccups when it comes to trains coming on time however so far it has been very dependable," she said.

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Commuters at the Muzium Negara Station during peak hour.

FACTS AND FIGURES ABOUT MASS RAPID TRANSIT SUNGAI BULOH - KAJANG LINE

TOTAL LENGTH	51 kilometres
COST OF CONSTRUCTION	RM21 billion
COMMENCEMENT OF CONSTRUCTION	July 8, 2011
START OF TUNNELING	May 2013
NUMBER OF STATIONS	31
OPERATION TIME	6am to midnight daily
JOURNEY TIME	84 minutes from Sg Buloh to Kajang
NUMBER OF PARK 'N' RIDE FACILITIES	14 stations
PASSENGER CAPACITY	1,200 per train set
DAILY RIDERSHIP	400,000 passengers
NUMBER OF DAILY OPERATING TRAINS	42
TRAIN FREQUENCY	Average of 3.5 minutes
MRT MANPOWER	530
RETAILERS	41
PHASE 1	
COMMENCEMENT OF OPERATION	Dec 16, 2016
NUMBER OF STATIONS	12
LENGTH	21 kilometres
PHASE 2	
COMMENCEMENT OF OPERATION	July 17
LENGTH	9.5 kilometres underground and 20.5 kilometres elevated
NUMBER OF STATIONS	19