

# SMRT and Prasarana to form joint venture by June

**Firm to run JB-S'pore rail link; operators to ink concession for service by Sept 30**

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Rail operators SMRT and Prasarana Malaysia will form a joint venture by June this year to run the Johor Baru-Singapore Rapid Transit System (RTS) Link.

The companies have also committed to sign the concession agreement for the cross-border MRT service by Sept 30, Singapore's Land Transport Authority (LTA) and Malaysia's Land Public Transport Commission (Spad) said in a joint statement yesterday.

This first concession period will last for 30 years. Subsequent concessions will be awarded through open tender.

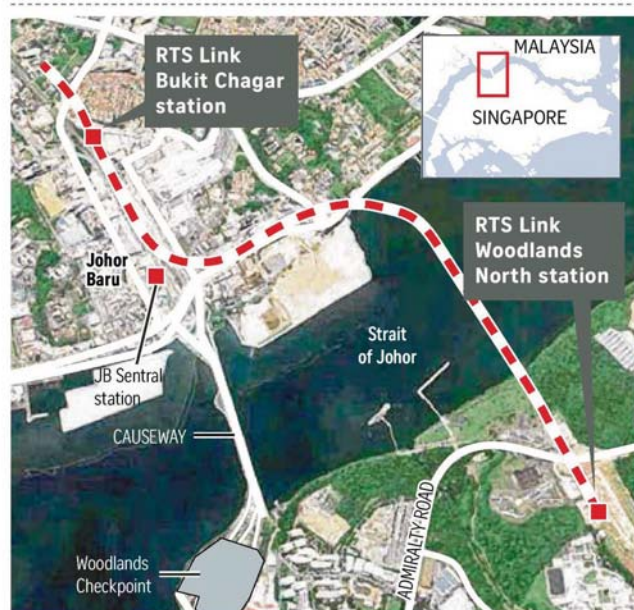
The joint venture company will pay a concession fee to Singapore and Malaysia, and collect fare revenue in exchange. Fares will be set by the company and not regulated by the two governments.

The 4km line will link Bukit Chagar station in Johor Baru to the Singapore terminus in Woodlands North, where commuters can transfer to the upcoming Thomson-East Coast MRT Line (TEL).

It will cross the Strait of Johor via a 25m-high bridge in a straight line rather than curving over water – making a bend over land in Malaysia instead.

This new alignment addresses the Johor Sultan's earlier reserva-

## Rapid Transit System (RTS) Link



NOTE: Location of RTS light maintenance facility at Bukit Chagar not finalised

PHOTO: GOOGLE MAPS Sources: LTA, SPAD STRAITS TIMES GRAPHICS

tions about the project.

Last August, Sultan Ibrahim Sultan Iskandar had said the idea for a curved bridge was impractical, unsustainable and potentially costly.

He also said such a design would disrupt the Johor Baru city skyline, and agreed in November to the construction of a straight elevated bridge for the rail line instead.

The Straits Times understands that joint engineering studies found the revised alignment feasible, and that it will make no difference to Singapore in terms of cost or operations.

The RTS Link shares the same core systems – including trains and signalling – as the TEL, for economies of scale, said LTA and Spad.

The agencies added that heavy maintenance for the RTS trains will be outsourced to TEL operator SMRT at the TEL's Mandai Depot, while a light maintenance facility will be built at Bukit Chagar.

When it opens by Dec 31, 2024, the link can carry up to 10,000 passengers per hour in each direction.

This translates to an additional capacity of 60,000 commuters crossing the Causeway during peak hours – the equivalent of about two-thirds the number crossing now.

This is much higher than the average 300 passengers per hour in each direction carried by the daily shuttle train service between Woodlands and Johor Baru, Spad and LTA noted.

The Keretapi Tanah Melayu Berhad's Tebrau Shuttle will cease six months after the link begins operations. The shuttle frequency will be increased in the interim to cope with demand.

Singapore and Malaysia inked a legally binding agreement to build the link yesterday. It captures key points such as technical, safety and security requirements; commercial, financing, procurement and regulatory frameworks; and Customs, immigration and quarantine arrangements.

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Malaysia's Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Abdul Rahman Dahlan (left) and Singapore's Coordinating Minister for Infrastructure and Minister for Transport Khaw Boon Wan shaking hands yesterday at the Istana after signing a legally binding agreement to build a cross-border MRT line linking Johor Baru and Woodlands. With them are Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak and Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong. ST PHOTO: ONG WEE JIN

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