

Six stations of Downtown Line to open on Dec 22

Households near MRT stations less likely to own cars: survey

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THE first stage of the Downtown Line will open on Dec 22 and, it seems, not a moment too soon in the effort to make public transport a choice mode, as a survey reveals that car ownership for households near MRT stations is lower than for those further away.

Transport Minister Lui Tuck Yew unveiled this yesterday when he launched the Land Transport Master Plan 2013 at the opening of the Singapore International Transport Congress and Exhibition.

The 42-kilometre Downtown Line is being built in three stages and will be Sin-

gapore's longest, fully underground driverless train system when it opens completely in 2017. The first stage comprises six stations – Bugis, Promenade, Bayfront, Downtown, Telok Ayer and Chinatown.

As a medium-capacity rapid transit system, it allows direct access from the central business district and new developments in the Marina Bay area to north-western and eastern Singapore.

This Master Plan is an update of the one announced in 2008 and retains the central aim of making public transport a choice mode.

For 2013, Mr Lui said that efforts have been intensified and significantly more resources invested to improve the quality of public transport along three thrusts – by creating “More

Connections”, by providing “Better Service”, and by supporting a “Liveable and Inclusive Community”.

Regarding the first thrust, More Connections, the minister reiterated that the rail network will double to 360 km by 2020, with four in five homes expected to be within a 10-minute walk of a train station.

“For households within 800 metres of a train station, public transport usage is about 12 percentage points higher than those living two km and farther,” said Mr Lui, adding that there is a multiplier effect in having a denser and more connected rail network, “with every addition to the network increasing the overall attractiveness of taking the train, and increasing the likelihood of switching people from cars to public transport”.

“We saw evidence of

this with the opening of the Circle Line,” he said.

Mr Lui said that Singapore has made good progress on the Master Plan in the past five years.

“Our peak-hour public transport mode share has since increased to 63 per cent in 2012,” he said, citing the Household Interview Travel Survey 2012.

The figure was 59 per cent in 2008 and reverses a downward trend since the survey was first conducted in 1997.

“Interestingly, more higher-income commuters appear to be choosing public transport.”

Based on the survey, individuals with monthly incomes above \$8,000 taking peak period public transport rose to 28 per cent from 23 per cent in 2008.

Other key findings from the survey, in which 10,000 households took part, in-

clude the 14 per cent increase in trips made on public transport as a whole, with train trips growing from 1.7 million daily in 2008 to 2.3 million in 2012, a 35 per cent jump.

Daily bus trips also grew, from 3.1 million trips in 2008 to 3.2 million in 2012.

As for changes in private car ownership patterns, the survey revealed that the growth in private vehicle trips slowed significantly to 9 per cent from 2008 to 2012, compared to 29 per cent from 2004 to 2008. This was partly a result of a slower increase in the car population.

During this period, the car population was still growing faster than the resident population, resulting in more households owning cars now than before.

In 2012, 46 per cent of households owned cars, up



Mr Lui: *The rail network will double to 360 km by 2020*

from 40 per cent in 2008 and 38 per cent in 2004.

But car ownership for households near MRT stations is seen to be lower. For households within 400 metres of an MRT station, only 39 per cent own cars, compared with 55 per cent for households that are more than 1.8 km from a station.

Land Transport Authority chief executive Chew Hock Yong said: “The findings of the latest survey reaffirm that our policies under the inaugural Land Transport Master Plan in 2008 are on the right track.”