

SPEECH BY MR RAYMOND LIM, MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT AND SECOND MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS, AT OPENING OF THE INAUGURAL WORLD URBAN TRANSPORT LEADERS SUMMIT 2008, 04 NOVEMBER 2008, 9:30 AM AT LTA ACADEMY AUDITORIUM



Mr Michael Lim, Chairman, Land Transport Authority of Singapore

Mr Yam Ah Mee, Chief Executive, LTA

Distinguished guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

Good morning

1. Let me extend a warm welcome to all of you, and especially to all our friends and guests from abroad. I am pleased to join you at the opening of the inaugural World Urban Transport Leaders Summit organised by the LTA Academy; an event that we hope will make its mark on the international land transport calendar.

2. The theme for this Summit is “Transforming Urban Transport for Liveability and Sustainability”. The quality of urban transport matters greatly to a city’s character, its liveability, and whether it can continue to sustain itself and grow. Just imagine a city where the arteries of its roads are clogged up by traffic, its old, creaky buses overflowing with passengers, the environment polluted by smog, and the air filled with the blaring of horns from frustrated motorists. It would not be a very attractive city to live in. Instead, we would all rather have cities with smooth-flowing roads, a pleasant commute, modern and efficient public transport, clean air and a liveable environment.

### Urban Transport: A Common Challenge

3. The common challenge for us is to deliver these outcomes. Being stuck in a traffic jam feels pretty much the same the world over. Whether one is in Los Angeles, Moscow, Beijing or Singapore, the frustration is the same.

4. It is a challenge made much more acute and pressing now, because of rapid and

accelerating urbanisation. More and more people are moving from the countryside to the city. Today, about half of the world's population already lives in cities.[1] A UN report forecasts that this will rise to 70 per cent in the next 40 years.[2] The same report adds that in the last two decades, the urban population in developing countries has been growing by an average of 3 million people a week.

5. Such growth will put an unprecedented amount of pressure on urban transport systems. We need to urgently improve urban transport. If we get things right, our cities will be able to smoothly absorb this influx of people, and continue to grow and prosper. Our citizens will have a better quality of life.

6. But if we do not succeed, our cities will descend into gridlock. This has implications beyond the time wasted and frustrations involved in a traffic jam. Cities are places of exchange: where people come together to trade goods and services, to organise production, to share knowledge and to spark off creative ideas that take our societies forward. If it becomes difficult to move around, interaction becomes inconvenient, exchange becomes difficult, and our cities will find it impossible to fulfill their basic functions.

### Common solutions?

7. Fortunately, we are not alone in this task. We face a common challenge. Even if we cannot have a common solution that fits our diverse situations, we will at least be able to benefit by learning from one another.

8. Singapore is an example. In addressing our urban transport challenges, we have sought to learn from the experiences of others. We may have been the first to introduce a system of congestion pricing in 1975, the Area Licensing Scheme for the central business district, but we were building on the intellectual groundwork laid by the Smeed Report to the UK Government in 1964. Going forward, we will continue to refine our Electronic Road Pricing (ERP) scheme by studying the experiences of other cities, such as London, Oslo, and Stockholm.

9. The experience of others also shaped the Land Transport Masterplan which we launched

earlier this year. The Masterplan lays out our programme for urban transport improvement in the next 10 to 15 years. It was important for us to study as many real-world examples as we could, and apply elements of what would work to our local context. We benchmarked the performance of our public transport system against many global cities, including Hong Kong, London and Paris. We implemented more bus priority measures with inspiration from Curitiba, Brazil. We decided to package our bus routes for competitive tendering, which some Australian cities have done. And we tightened our performance standards for rail operators, after looking at the experiences of Tokyo and New York, amongst others.

10. Many of our technology systems in urban transport have also been developed collaboratively with other cities. For example, we have a GLIDE system that optimises traffic signals to smoothen traffic and creates as many ‘green waves’ as possible. Such components for an Intelligent Transport System may be too challenging or expensive for any one city to take on alone. But if we adopt a collaborative approach, they become feasible to implement and allow us to optimise the use of our limited road space.

#### WUTLS and LTA Academy: Facilitating collaboration

11. Over the next three days, you will have many opportunities to network, exchange views on the key issues of transport and share experiences of what works and what does not. We are fortunate to have with us top policy makers, transport chiefs, leading academics and industry leaders from North America, Europe, Africa, Middle-East, North Asia and Australia. With many distinguished experts and practitioners among us, I am confident there will be insightful discussions on the most pressing issues of urban transport.

12. The opening of this Summit is also a good opportunity to announce the official opening of the new premises of the LTA Academy – what you see around you – as well as the launch of its flagship journal, entitled “Journeys”, written for urban transport practitioners. Launched in 2006, the LTA Academy is the organiser for this Summit. It is also Singapore’s contribution to the larger cause of global collaboration among governments, organisations, and urban transport professionals. To help the Academy attain its vision of becoming a centre of excellence for land transport issues, an Advisory Board has been formed. Chaired by Professor Cham Tao Soon, the Board will advise the Academy on the strategic direction for its future growth.

13. Ladies and Gentlemen, I wish you a fruitful Summit, and a pleasant stay in Singapore.  
Thank you.

---

[1] The Economist, special report on cities (“The World Goes to Town”), 5 May 2007

[2] United Nations Human Settlements Programme, State of the World’s Cities report 2008/2009

Contacts

**Name** Evelyn Quek

**Tel** 63765042

**Other** 81397290

**Email** evelyn\_quek@mot.gov.sg