

# SMRT launches new training centre for bus drivers

Jul 2, 2015

<http://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/transport/smrt-launches-new-training-centre-for-bus-drivers>

Twelve simulators have been set up at a new training centre for bus drivers, to give trainees a real sense of what happens on the roads - before they get behind the wheel.



Senior Minister of State Josephine Teo (centre) with CEO of SMRT Mr Desmond Kuek (centre, right) at the control centre of the SMRT Training and Evaluation Centre

Jointly set-up by SMRT and the Devan Nair Institute for Employment and Employability (e2i), the Bus Training and Evaluation Centre (BTEC) opened its doors on Thursday after nearly a year of planning.

The 6,300 sq ft space currently houses four full-cabin simulators that replicate the look and feel of a driver's cabin - complete with rear-view mirrors, steering wheel and instrument panels. The other eight simulators can be used for more basic training such as route familiarisation.

"We designed this place with the intention for the entire industry to come here for this training," said SMRT vice-president for buses Tan Kian Heong.

According to e2i, Tower Transit – the London-based operator that won the first bus-contracting tender in May – had already expressed interest.

SMRT's new training centre has room for four more full-cabin simulators, which both the operator and e2i said would be added within a year. These four have not been built partly because it is still unknown what model of buses the new operators would bring in.

Together, the 16 simulators will cost about \$20 million, said Mr Tan, adding that it would reduce the time new drivers spent familiarising themselves with routes on the road - a time-consuming and tedious process.



Bus captain Amy Tan in the driver's seat demonstrating the capabilities of the full-cabin simulator.

"The 16 simulators networked together, allow not just for individual training, but team-based learning and training," added Mr Tan.

Senior Minister of State for transport Josephine Teo, who was at the centre's opening, said there are merits in consolidating training resources for the bus industry.

She added that the Public Transport Tripartite Committee is in talks to "bring about greater alignment of our training efforts" in future. "We have agreed to take the next few months to flesh out the ideas to take things forward," she said.

Separately, SBS Transit said in a statement on Thursday that it will install another 21 sets of its own bus driver training system at the company's development centre in Hougang within the year.



Bus captain Amy Tan (left) in the driver's seat of the full-cabin simulator as trainer Tan Yong Pin guides her.

Since 2006 till now, it has invested more than \$1.2 million in its Vigil and Mobileye training systems. The former uses technology to analyse bus drivers while they are on the move and generates a report of

their performance at the end of each session, while the later is a smart camera that alerts drivers if they are at risk of colliding with another object.

Senior bus captain Teng Hwee Cheong, 54, who has been driving SBS Transit buses for the past 12 years, said: "I am able to improve on my driving as Vigil is able to detect the smoothness of my ride whether I am braking too hard or accelerating too quickly. It has also helped me to be more conscious of the important need to check my blind spots."

Meanwhile, all of SMRT's 2,500 drivers will come to its centre for two to three days of training over the next year.

They will learn to work in a team-environment together with service controllers based in operations centres.

The simulator system has been programmed with more than 1,000 scenarios, which instructors can throw at trainees.



Senior Minister of State Josephine Teo (centre) trying her hand at the full-cabin simulator as bus captain Amy Tan guiding her.

For instance, a car could be programmed to stop in front of a bus stop, or the instructor could trigger cyclists or pedestrians to dash out.

This training can be "customised to individual needs", said Mr Tan.

Bus captain Amy Tan, who has been with SMRT for five years, said the simulator system was an excellent way for new drivers to get acquainted with their routes.

"On the road it can be dangerous for new drivers. Here you can learn without endangering pedestrians or passengers," said Madam Tan, 49.

[dansonc@sph.com.sg](mailto:dansonc@sph.com.sg)