

RM160b public transport investment for connectivity

SEPANG - Transport Minister Datuk Seri Liow Tiong Lay said RM160 billion will be invested into the public transportation sector through 2020 to enhance connectivity, which is one of the key component to the nation's competitiveness and its goal to achieve high-income nation status by 2020.

At the unveiling of Express Rail Link Sdn Bhd's (ERL) new train yesterday, Liow said the investment will be made on rail related projects and represents a sum that is above and beyond the RM50 billion that has already been invested into public transportation since 1990.

"This is in line with the Urban Public Transport National Key Result Area under the government Transformation Programme, we are undertaking initiatives to increase the public transportation modal share in urban areas by 40% by 2030," he said.

The minister said he hopes public transportation will continue to be the focus in the upcoming budget, with the development of more infrastructure within the urban public transportation segment.

Liow said the Light Rapid Transit 3 line project which was launched by Prime Minister Najib Tun Razak in August will benefit 72,000 commuters upon completion in August 2020.

The Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) lines - Sungai Buloh to Kajang (Line 1) and Sungai Buloh to Putrajaya (Line 2) - will be able to connect the public to all parts of the city as well as to the airport. "MRT Line 1 will interface with the ERL system at KL Sentral, while MRT Line 2 will interface with the ERL's Transit in Putrajaya.

In conclusion, the increased capacity and connectivity with other rail systems will encourage a modal shift from private vehicles," the minister said.

ERL executive chairman Tan Sri Mohd Nadzmi Mohd Salleh said the four-car trains by CRRC Changchun Railway Vehicles Company Ltd will not only boost ridership with the additional capacity but the new trains will also cut operating expenditure.

"In addition to our 12 trains, the new train sets will increase the frequency, and enhance the service availability allowing the company to cater for the growth in ridership for the next 10 years," Mohd Nadzmi said.

The six trains, which will come into operations next March, should see ridership increasing from 21,000 per day to 30,000 per day for the ERL Express, while the ERL Transit ridership is expected to grow to 60,000 per day from the existing 30,000.

Asked about fare hikes, Mohd Nadzmi said there was a 20% drop in ridership when the new price of RM55 came into place earlier this year but he does not foresee another hike in prices any time soon.

In support of an employer public transport incentive to encourage the usage of public transportation, ERL chief executive officer Noormah Mohd Noor said the move requires government intervention.

If the government provides tax breaks for employers who provide public transportation incentives to their staff, many will jump on the bandwagon, she said.

"A huge chunk of a worker's salary is spent on transportation so if employers would provide a monthly travel pass for their staff, more people would shift to public transportation," Noormah said.

She said employees who choose to drive on their own will have to bear their own cost, thus making driving to work unattractive.

By doing so, the private companies can help the government achieve its goal of 40% usage of public transportation by 2030.

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