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Title: Commuters short-changed by replacement bus services

I take SBS Transit service 147 daily. During peak hours, many of the regular trunk services to Clementi are replaced by service 147A, which ends at Pearl Centre.

This stretching of resources to run the shorter 'A' services affects those who need to travel beyond Pearl Centre and, hence, can take only 147.

Recently, during morning peak hours, I waited at the bus stop at 7.08am and service 147 came only at 7.25am. In the 17-minute interval, two half-empty service 147A buses went by. I could only grind my teeth in frustration.

Yet, SBS regards services 147A and 147 as similar and refuses to give fare transfer rebates to those who hop onto service 147A, hoping to catch up with the service 147 ahead.

The 'A' services are eating into the frequencies and resources of the same-number regular services, and this short-changes commuters.

Dr Lim Boon Hee

Reply from SBS Transit

I refer to the letter "Commuters short-changed by replacement bus services" by Dr Lim Boon Hee dated 7 January 2006.

SBS Transit has introduced many different kinds of bus services to cater to the different needs of commuters. Short working trips are those which cater to high demand sectors of a particular service so as to ease the loading of the parent service. In the case of Service 147, the highest passenger volume is always seen during the morning peak period along Upper Serangoon Road. The number of passengers gradually lessens along Bendemeer Road, Jalan Besar and New Bridge Road, leaving a bus load of only 30% of passengers travelling beyond Chinatown. Based on this demand pattern, Service 147A was implemented to cater to the high demand sectors where it will benefit most of the commuters.

The scheduled headway for Service 147 during the morning peak period in weekdays is between 7 and 13 minutes. Together with Service 147A, its short working trip service, the combined headway is about 4 to 7 minutes.

With regards to transfer rebates, I would like to clarify that these are given to passengers who have to make transfers on a journey on different services. This helps to reduce the cost of travel for passengers who do not have direct bus connection and need to take more than one service to get to their destinations. For the same reason, transfer rebates are not given to passengers who transfer from a bus to another of the same service or subsidiary service like the short working trips.

We hope the above clarifies.

Yours sincerely,

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