

Newspaper: The New Paper
Date: 16 January 2006
Title: Slow buses annoy passengers

During my many rides on SBS or Tibs buses, I have found that the drivers intentionally slow down their vehicles by various means.

One way is to linger longer at bus bays even after the passengers have boarded or disembarked.

Another is to approach traffic lights slowly waiting for them to turn red.

Or the buses just crawl at a snail's pace from one bus stop to another.

These delay tactics, obviously made to keep to scheduled arrival times at bus terminals, are unfair to passengers.

The bus operators should not be too strict with drivers who arrive too early or too late since scheduled times can be breached due to traffic conditions and other factors.

This strictness is why drivers use such means to avoid being penalised.

Can the operators display a hotline number in buses, so that passengers can call when they see such tactics.

Another thing: I had to wait in Toa Payoh for 45 minutes (from 5pm to 5.45pm) for service 105 headed for Serangoon Central on 7 Jan.

It was not the first time this service took such a long time to arrive.

Suggestion: Provide information at bus stops on average arrival times of the various services, together with a customer hotline.

Perhaps there can be a device to allow passengers to key in the service number at the bus stop he is at, to know the approximate arrival time of the next bus.

Ninan John

Reply from SBS Transit

I refer to the letter "Slow buses annoy passengers" by Mr Ninan John dated 16 January 2006.

We have investigated the late arrival of Service 105 experienced by Mr Ninan John on 7 January 2006. The frequency for Service 105 is about 12 minutes. On 7 January, it was raining extremely heavily and as a result, four trips of Service 105 arrived late at the mentioned bus stop.

We would like to apologise to Mr Ninan John for the delay.

With regard to the issue about the bus drivers driving slowly. We wish to clarify that our Bus Captains are required to regulate their speed if they notice that they are ahead or behind of schedule. The reason for this is to ensure that the Bus Captain keep the arrival times as close to the planned schedule as possible.

We hope commuters can appreciate that traffic conditions on the road can vary. Our schedules, however, can only be planned to meet what is usually the expected traffic condition at the various times of the day. There will be times when the traffic conditions are usually clear or congested and this often results in buses being too early or late.

From the perspective of the passengers on board the bus, the journey seems slow but to the passengers waiting at the bus stops along the route, they expect their bus to arrive on time as scheduled.

Nonetheless, we will monitor our services closely and make adjustment to the running times where necessary to minimise such situation.

Currently, SBS Transit has put up time tables of bus services with a scheduled headway of more than 15 minutes during peak period in our website, www.sbstransit.com.sg to help commuters to plan their journey better. Commuters can download the credit card size time table directly from the website so that they can cut it out and carry it with them conveniently at all times. They can also join our mailing list to get news updates of their selected bus services and our latest promotions.

Yours sincerely,

TAMMY TAN (MS)
DIRECTOR
CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS
SBS TRANSIT LTD

**Note: Text in Italic is added on to our online reply to better explain the situation.*