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Free bus service leads the way to greener Selangor

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State-wide initiative growing in popularity with requests for more routes

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THE Selangor government's Green Technology Action Plan 2015-2018 is well underway, led by its free bus service – now known as SMART Selangor Bus – that is primarily aimed at reducing cars on the road and reduce carbon emission by encouraging people to use public transportation.

Apart from this free service that uses electric buses, the plan to make the Selangor a green technology state includes using electric cars as official state vehicles,

setting up electric charging stations, installing solar roofing systems for the Selangorku housing project, energy-efficient state government buildings and making Industrial Parks more green.

The state-wide free bus service, launched in 2015, also helps to ease the burden of passengers who are from the lower income group, old folks, students and industrial and government workers.

It began first in Shah Alam, Subang Jaya and Klang, mirroring the project started by Petaling Jaya City Council (MBPJ) in 2014.

The MBPJ free bus service has shown positive results with a daily ridership of 10,800 recorded at the end of 2015, where it was reported that 19% of passengers switched from driving to commuting via the free bus.

Eleven buses were leased from Rapid Bus Sdn Bhd at a cost of RM3.6mil a year, with the operating cost for each route approximately RM1.1mil.

Shah Alam City Council (MBSA) and Subang Jaya Municipal Council (MPSJ) were allocated four buses which served 22 and 19 stations respectively, over 20km and 15km.

Klang Municipal Council (MPK)

was given three buses to service 11 stations in their 8km route.

During the state assembly meetings held from Oct 31 to Nov 10, the free bus service was one of the main topics discussed.

Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Azmin Ali announced that the state would allocate RM20mil for the free bus service route extensions in all local authority and outskirts areas.

The initiative began with an allocation of RM3.5mil that was raised to RM10mil this year.

State Investment, Industry and Trade, Small and Medium Industries and Transportation

Committee chairman Datuk Teng Chang Kim said the Smart Selangor Bus service would constantly be reviewed and evaluated to ensure that it continually improved.

"As of September 2016, there was a total of 3,153,009 passengers, which meant a 62% increase in ridership from June 2016.

"The response has so far been overwhelming and in 2017, we will focus on adding more buses and routes.

"Two new routes have already been introduced in Shah Alam and Subang Jaya; other local councils should follow suit and take measures to introduce new routes next year," Teng said at the state assembly sitting.

He said there were requests for the service in areas with no public transport access to the city centre, such as from Jalan Hulu Langat to Ampang via Jalan Bukit Ampang.

He said the decision to introduce new routes depended on factors such as suitability, safety and funds.

Suggestions and requests would be reviewed by local councils and the Land Public Transport Commission, he added.

StarMetro speaks to local councils in Selangor to find out how the bus services are faring.

Shah Alam City Council

This city council was first of three at the state's behest to start the free bus programme, connecting city dwellers from the Shah Alam KTM station in Section 19 to Sections 2, 4, 6, 7 and 14.

As of October 2016, this route has reported 612,943 passengers.

MBSA Corporate and Public Communications head Shahrin Ahmad said the positive response resulted in two new routes and 10 buses added on Nov 1.

The second route begins at the Section 14 City Bus Station and passes through Sections 13, 14, 22, 19 to 11, U1 and Batu Tiga.

Along this route are stops at Wisma MBSA, the state mosque, Shah Alam Aquatic Centre, MSU Section 13, AEON Mall Shah Alam, Politeknik SSAAS Section U1, Kampung Kebun Bunga Section 22 and Sekolah Agama Menengah Tengku Ampuan Jemaah in Section 10.

The third route goes to Section 17 through Sections 20 and 24, beginning at the KTM station in Section 19 and goes through the Section 18 commercial centre, SJK (T) Sungai Renggam, Section 19, SM Khas Vokasional, Section 17, SMK Seksyen 24, Klinik Kesihatan Seksyen 19, KPJ Selangor Shah Alam in Section 20 and SK Seksyen 19.

MBSA has also extended the operation time to seven days a week, from 6am to 10pm.

Kajang Municipal Council

There is only one SMART Selangor route in this municipality for now as it only began operations on Jan 4.

Four buses ply between Jalan Besar and the Kajang Bus Complex from 6am to 10pm every day including public holidays.

MAJLIS BANDARAYA SHAH ALAM
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The peak hours are 6am to 8am, noon to 2pm and 6pm to 8pm on weekdays.

The council's Development Planning Department economy officer Muqni Mubarak Anwar Mubarak said there are plans to add more bus routes but this is subject to the budget allocation by the state government next year.

"The public has provided us with their suggestions to have the bus service from Taming Jaya, Balakong to MRT Batu 11 station, the Selangor International Islamic University College in Bandar Seri Putra to Bangi Komuter station and from the Bandar Kajang station to Kajang station," he said.

Ampang Jaya Municipal Council

There is only one free bus route in Ampang Jaya, since it also began on Jan 1.

The service takes passengers from Jalan Ukay Perdana to Jalan Sungai Sering, Jalan Mulia 1/1, Jalan Riana Ukay, Jalan Riana Ukay 1, Jalan Ukay Indah, Jalan AU 4/2, Jalan AU5, Persiaran Permata and Jalan Taman Melawati.

Five buses travel on this 18km route at a 15 to 20 minute interval, where the peak hours are 6.30am to 8.30am, 1pm to 2.30pm, 5.30pm to 7.30pm.

A council spokesman said they had received requests from residents for route extensions to other parts of Ampang Jaya.

She said suggestions were for a route that included Hospital Ampang in Pandan Indah, AEON

Big, Bestari Arena and Renjana Ampang in Lembah Jaya, and starting from Cempaka LRT station to Taman Bukit Teratai.

Subang Jaya Municipal Council

In line with the Green City Plan 2030, MPSJ has been in full gear encouraging residents to utilise the free bus service and other modes of public transport since July 1 last year.

With a present population of 718,627, the two SMART Selangor bus routes have been integrated to connect with other public transportation already available in Subang Jaya, such as the Sunway BRT station and the Subang Jaya KTM and LRT stations, to provide better connectivity.

The current routes service a distance of more than 14.5km, with four buses that start their journey from the main bus stop at MPSJ headquarters in Persiaran Bakti, USJ 5, and call at 19 stops along the way.

Both bus routes operate from 6am to 10pm with a 15-minute interval between stops.

The council opines that Route 2 is the more popular as it is often used by university students. Subang Jaya has an approximate population of 30,000 college students.

However, according to Kinrara assemblyman Ng Sze Han, Route 3 is the more popular one.

"Presently, we have Route 2 (Tesco Puchong to SS18 in Subang Jaya) and Route 3 (SMK Puchong Jaya A to BK5 LRT station) servic-

ing Puchong residents.

"Route 2 is currently very punctual and a bus always arrive within 15 to 20 minutes.

"Route 3 has more secondary school students using it. At 7am and 1pm the buses are usually full with students.

"Many housewives take the 8am bus on Route 3 to the morning market in Taman Kinrara 1 or Taman Kinrara 3.

Selayang Municipal Council

For Selayang Municipal Council (MPS), the SMART Selangor bus service is focused on linking residents in inner suburban areas to institutions for more convenient access.

The service began on May 16 and covers a 30km route from Selayang Mutiara to Terminal Putra Gombak, which takes an hour and 20 minutes.

Five buses were leased from RapidKL, with four operating daily and one for emergency purposes.

Depending on traffic conditions, MPS stated that the intervals ranged from 40 to 50 minutes waiting time.

Since its operations began, the most popular areas where the bus is often full is at Selayang Mutiara and Greenwood, especially in the morning as many students use the bus to get to school.

According to the council, the least popular stops on the route are the Malaysian Examinations Council and the Gombak Land and District Office, because the bus-stops are too far from the office buildings.



The free bus in Shah Alam makes a stop at the state secretariat building.

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