



# Call to review decision on telematics

> Device can boost safety of bus travel, say experts

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**PETALING JAYA:** Road safety experts have called for a review on the decision not to make it compulsory for the installation of telematics device in buses as part of the requirements under the Malaysian Motor Insurance Pool (MMIP) coverage.

The experts have collectively agreed that the device will assist bus operators and authorities to gauge the level of performance and behaviour of drivers over a period of time.

Universiti Putra Malaysia Road Safety Research Centre Associate Professor Dr Law Teik Hua has urged Land Public Transport Commission (SPAD) to allow telematics as a compulsory device in buses as it will provide useful information on policy and regulation.

"In Malaysia, the crash rate for buses and the injury rate for bus occupants are relatively high when compared with other transport modes," he pointed out.

"In 2013, the crash rate for buses was 140 cases for every thousand buses.

"This was higher than passenger car and motorcycle crashes, which were 60 cases for every thousand passenger cars

and 10 cases for every thousand motorcycles, respectively," he added.

Law said bus drivers were always at high risk for crashes due to their long hours of driving and exposure to different road environments.

"Therefore, understanding and quantifying their risks and taking steps to manage them could improve safety," he said.

He suggested a financial subsidy to alleviate bus operators' burden for installation of telematics device and maintenance fees to see through the implementation of telematics nationwide.

Universiti Pertahanan Nasional Malaysia Civil Engineering Department lecturer Jocelyn Ng said telematics was an effective monitoring tool as it could ascertain the number of hours a bus driver had been on the road over a particular route and the data retrieved could be obtained in real time and analysed later.

However, Universiti Sains Malaysia deputy vice-chancellor Professor Dr Ahmad Farhan Mohd Sadullah stressed that a safety policy should focus on outcomes and bus companies must be audited based on those outcomes.

"We want a situation where companies take ownership of their fleet safety. Telematics are tools and enablers," he said.

Ahmad Farhan, who is also a SPAD member, has cautioned that a prescriptive system as initiated by the insurers, "may also not work because they are not exactly outcome based".

On March 2, it was decided that the tracking device and telematics insurance product would only be an option for bus operators rather than a requirement under MMIP coverage.

SPAD chief executive officer Mohd Azharuddin Mat Sah had said that the telematics devices were no longer compulsory as they already had GPS as the tracking mechanism for express and stage buses connected to SPAD's Performance Monitoring Hub System.

He also said it was also due to the financial constraints faced by the operators lately due to rising cost in operation and maintenance.

On Jan 28, *theSun* had reported that bus operators were fuming that they had to bear the cost to fit the device into the buses totaling RM3,400 (per vehicle) – consisting of RM2,300 per item, RM200 installation fee (outside Klang Valley) and RM900 annual service fee.

MMIP had stated that it introduced the telematics insurance effective from Feb 1, "to safeguard the millions of passengers by introducing insurance telematics to identify and monitor every driver in control of its insured vehicles on a 24/7 basis".