

# FIRST-AND-LAST-MILE ISSUES BEDEVIL FOLK

No change to situation if people have to drive to public transport hubs, says expert

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**A** TRANSPORT expert says the government should quickly solve first-and-last-mile issues to ease traffic congestion.

Associate Professor in Transport Engineering Dr Nur Sabahiah Abdul Sukor from Universiti Sains Malaysia said although the country had witnessed significant improvements in public transportation, it was still facing problems.

"Poor connectivity is not a new issue in Malaysia.

"There has been significant improvement in public transport hubs such as the TBS (integrated transport terminal) and KL Sentral. In the near future, we hope to see Putrajaya Sentral accommodate the demand.

"But we are still facing the first mile and last mile issue, because to reach public transport hubs, we still need to drive or utilise e-hailing services," she told the *New Straits Times* yesterday.

She said authorities must understand the transit patterns of public transport users before designing an integrated transportation system.

"First, identify the transit stations with higher demand. Next, identify the origin and destination to and from the station. After understanding the origin and destination, we should provide the appropriate facilities and infrastructure for walking and cycling.

"First mile and last mile access to public transport should always start and end by walking and cycling.

"According to many studies, Malaysians are willing to walk up to 500m with comfortable and safe pathways.



A LRT train coasting above cars on a congested road in Kuala Lumpur on Friday evening. PIC BY ASWADI ALIAS

"Now, cycling activities have increased, but we lack the facilities, such as cycling paths and bicycle parking."

Dr Nur Sabahiah said in states without trains, bus services should be enhanced.

"Similarly, try to solve the first mile and last mile issue to the bus stops. Provide real-time information that can be accessed through an application or online, instead of static schedules."

On Friday, the NST reported that the number of vehicles in the country had overtaken the human population, with an increase of at least a million vehicles annually since 2019.

Road safety expert Professor Dr Kulanthayan K.C. Mani of Universiti Putra Malaysia said there were 33.3

He said this was because Malaysians have habituated the intensive use of private vehicles.

"We still think of public transport as the last choice, because the priority is still the private vehicle. We are far from making public transport our first choice in commuting to work.

"In addition, the length of trips to work, business and leisure is not long enough to warrant the use of Park-N-Ride.

"When one is in a car, one might as well drive to the destination, which is more reliable, comfortable and safe instead of driving to the MRT or LRT station to catch a train."

He said the low public transport take-up and poor public transportation system would remain for at least five to 10

years.

He pointed out that without a strategy to restrain the use of private vehicles, public transport was far from being competitive.

"We need to adopt to more sensible and restrained private transport use.

"Let us look at our road congestion problems from a wider perspective and multiple angles such as social, land use, economic activities, culture, habitual behaviour, and cheap subsidised motoring cost.

"Let us be rational and sensible to realise the present situation before coming to a conclusion."



Associate Professor Dr Nur Sabahiah Abdul Sukor



Professor Dr Kulanthayan K.C. Mani

million registered vehicles nationwide up to last year versus the human population of 32.7 million.

Following the report, Malaysians urged the government to improve the public transport system, particularly the first-and-last-mile issue.

Another transport expert, Goh Bok Yen, said improving the public transport system would no doubt achieve a modal shift (a change from one form of transportation — private vehicles — to another) and ease road congestion, but the result would not be significant at this stage.