

► All-in-one transit apps could be next transport disruptor: Janil Puthucheary

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All-in-one transit apps would benefit commuters by allowing them to plan their journeys and pay for different transport modes through a single platform.

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All-in-one transit apps could be the next disruptor in the land transport sector after the emergence of ride-hailing services, said Senior Minister of State for Transport Janil Puthucheary on 26 August.

Such apps - dubbed Mobility As A Service (MaaS) - would benefit commuters by allowing them to plan their journeys and pay for different transport modes through a single platform, he noted.

They can also support Singapore's car-lite vision by helping to shift the public away from car ownership towards public transit, as well as shared modes such as taxis and active mobility modes such as bicycles.

Similar to journey planners such as CityMapper and Google Maps, MaaS platforms allow commuters to plan their journeys across a variety of transport modes, as well as pay their fares through these apps. In some cases, users are able to pay a flat monthly fee through the app that allows them an unlimited number of rides on public transit - a subscription-based model which Finnish start-up MaaS Global has compared to that of entertainment platforms such as Netflix and Spotify.

Dr. Janil was speaking at the 16th International Conference Series on Competition and Ownership in Land Transport, otherwise known as the Thredbo Conference, held at the Nanyang Technological University. He said the authorities are taking "as light a touch of regulation as possible" to this new development.

He compared the Government's approach to MaaS to its initial approach to ride-hailing operators, such as Grab, which helped facilitate a smooth transition to the new regulatory regime introduced earlier this month.

"Allowing space for innovation and competition to develop, allowing people to explore different models, is what we're applying to this nascent development," said Dr. Janil, who is also Senior Minister of State for Communications and Information.

At least two MaaS providers have expressed interest in the Singapore market. In October last year, MaaS Global announced a collaboration with local transport giant ComfortDelGro to launch its Whim app in Singapore.

In April this year, local start-up MobilityX, which is a spin-off of transport operator SMRT, launched a trial of its Zipster app here. Dr. Janil said the authorities are sharing transit data with MobilityX to help it improve its product. Even ride-hailing firm Grab has ventured into the MaaS idea, offering a public transit journey planner as well as e-scooter rentals through its app.

Dr. Janil added that there will be an event dedicated to the concept of MaaS during the Intelligent Transport Systems World Congress to be held in Singapore in October, which the Land Transport Authority is co-organising.

However, he noted that how MaaS works in Singapore - where there is already an existing 'dense and effective' public transport network - could be very different from other cities, where there are higher levels of private car ownership and less public transport ridership.

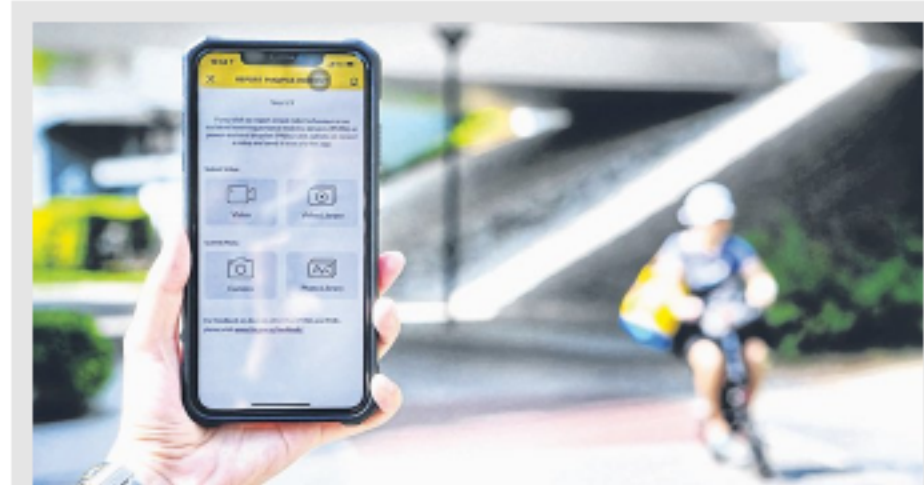
He suggested that two areas where MaaS providers can perhaps concentrate on are point-to-point transportation options, such as taxis and private-hire car services, as well as active mobility modes such as bicycles and personal mobility devices. Said Dr. Janil, "My suspicion is that because of the nature of our city and our public transport network, solutions deployed here will have to be quite different from many other cities."



An all-in-one app is envisioned to aid Singapore's car-lite vision by encouraging use of public transit



Commuters could benefit from easier route planning and from paying through a single platform



An all-in-one transit app could even integrate e-scooter rentals