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Initiative to create pedestrian-friendly streets to be trialled in 5 neighbourhoods by 2025: LTA

by Kok Yufeng on 28 March 2023



The Friendly Streets initiative aims to improve pedestrian safety and encourage the use of public transport and active mobility. PHOTO: LAND TRANSPORT AUTHORITY

SINGAPORE - The elderly, people with disabilities and families with young children can expect a safer, more pleasant stroll within their neighbourhoods when a new initiative retools streets to improve the walking and cycling experience here.

The Land Transport Authority (LTA) on Friday set out a plan to create what it calls Friendly Streets, which will incorporate elements from existing efforts to improve pedestrian safety and encourage the use of public transport and active mobility.

Under the new initiative, features from school zones, silver zones and transit priority corridors will be used in concert to make streets that are close to key amenities and transport nodes with high footfall less vehicle-centric.

These features include wider footpaths, dedicated cycling paths, barrier-free pedestrian crossings and traffic-calming measures – such as 3D road markings and lower speed limits – aimed at slowing motorists down.

The area around Ang Mo Kio Street 31, which is a five-minute walk from Ang Mo Kio MRT station and in the vicinity of Teck Ghee Primary School and Deyi Secondary School, will be among the first places where the new Friendly Street initiative will be tested.

The new initiative will also be trialled in Bukit Batok West, Tampines, Toa Payoh and West Coast before it is refined and expanded to other towns, LTA said.

The aim is to be more inclusive in how Singapore plans and designs its roads, which hitherto has been more focused on meeting the need of vehicular flows, said Minister for Transport S. Iswaran.

Noting that local streets are an integral part of residents' daily lives, Mr Iswaran said public feedback has been to make them more conducive for everyday pedestrian use, especially with an ageing population.

Each Friendly Street project will be unique and designed in partnership with its community so that it is tailored to local needs.

Public engagements in the five trial locations will start in 2023, with the aim of implementing the trials by 2025. A Friendly Streets Committee will be formed in each location to lead these efforts.

During the debate on her ministry's budget on Friday, Senior Minister of State for Transport Amy Khor said neighbourhood streets will be made more people-friendly by facilitating more direct and safer journeys.

For instance, pedestrian crossings will be added where there are natural pedestrian flows, reducing the waiting time needed to cross the road.

"The streetscapes will also be filled with more greenery, and we will consider upgrading bus stops where possible," Dr Khor said.

The repurposing of existing road spaces for pedestrians and cyclists will be key to the new Friendly Streets initiative, said LTA.

In 2021, 60 sites in Singapore where roads could be converted into footpaths, cycling paths or bus lanes were identified, and the authorities have since embarked on road purposing projects in Woodlands, Tiong Bahru, Havelock Road and the Civic District.

Two more projects in western Singapore were announced on Friday, with civil works slated to start from the second half of 2023.



The target is to implement all five trials here by 2025 after public consultations are complete. PHOTO: LAND TRANSPORT AUTHORITY

The first is an 80m stretch of Choa Chu Kang Terrace that will be pedestrianised so that residents will have better access to nearby Sunshine Place and the future Choa Chu Kang West MRT station on the upcoming Jurong Region Line, which is expected to open in 2027.

The second is an 18m stretch of Yung Sheng Road between Taman Jurong Shopping Centre and Taman Jurong Food Centre that will be turned into a footpath, with a covered linkway and ramps to be built as well.

LTA said the communities in these two areas will be consulted for ideas on how to use the repurposed road spaces before works begin.

Giving an update on the ongoing road repurposing projects, LTA said works to convert a 200m stretch of Woodlands Ring Road into a walking and cycling path will be completed by end-March 2023.

By June 2023, the area around Tiong Bahru Market will also be more pedestrian-friendly, with the pedestrianisation of a 60m stretch of Eng Hoon Street and the widening of footpaths along Seng Poh Road and Lim Liak Street.

Meanwhile, an inter-agency workgroup led by LTA is continuing to look at ways to improve walking and cycling in Tanjong Pagar. Already, a footpath along Yan Kit Street has been widened and an informal crossing at the junction of Peck Seah and Wallich Street has been made barrier-free.

Separately, 27 silver zones have been created so far, and Singapore is on track to complete 50 by 2025, Dr Khor said in response to Ms Nadia Samdin (Ang Mo Kio GRC), who had asked for an update.

Overall, the accident rate for senior pedestrians across all silver zones has fallen by 80 per cent, Dr Khor added.

She said future silver zones will have even more safety measures, including Y-junctions, which create a gradual bend so that motorists slow down when approaching the junction.

LTA is also looking to install lifts at more than 110 existing pedestrian overhead bridges, Dr Khor added. This is on top of the 77 bridges that have already been retrofitted with lifts, and 30 that will be similarly upgraded over the next three years.

For cyclists, several MPs, including Mr Saktiandi Supaat (Bishan-Toa Payoh GRC), called for the creation of segregated paths or road lanes for two-wheelers to improve safety.

In response, Senior Parliamentary Secretary for Transport Baey Yam Keng said LTA tries to build such segregated paths where space allows, and the Central Business District is a good place to do so.

Plans to expand the national cycling path network to around 1,300km by 2030 are being accelerated, Mr Baey added. By the end of 2024, all 27 Housing Board towns and estates will have some cycling paths, up from 13 towns currently.

The Government has also accepted recommendations put forth by the Active Mobility Advisory Panel (Amap) in February to harmonise rules for novel mobility devices such

as cargo bicycles, tricycles and recumbents, and limit the width and length of devices used on roads here.

When the new regulations are implemented, all active mobility devices used on roads cannot be wider than 1.3m and longer than 2.6m. This is to address safety risks posed by mobility devices that are less manoeuvrable due to their size.

Mr Baey said these size limits are being introduced in consultation with the Traffic Police and Ministry of Home Affairs. They are pegged to trishaws and two-seater tandem bicycles – the largest mobility devices currently being used in Singapore.

Amap is also reviewing the use of personal mobility aids, such as electric wheelchairs, after reports of misuse and abuse. The 16-member panel chaired by Mr Baey will submit its recommendations on this later in 2023.

Discussion Questions:

How does this contribute towards sustainable social development?

Why is inclusivity important when achieving sustainable development?