

TRANSPORT

Discounts mulled to boost rider numbers

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The government is mulling over giving discounts of between 10-52% on expressway charges and electric train tickets for a three-month period, as part of its attempt to boost ridership figures.

The proposed discounts have been approved by the Mass Rapid Transit Authority of Thailand's board, and the plan will be forwarded to the cabinet for endorsement on Tuesday, said MRTA's board chairman, Sarawut Songsivilai.

"Under the proposal, fares on the MRT's Purple Line will be capped at 20 baht per ride from Dec 25 to March 31 — a 22-baht reduction from the current upper ceiling of 42 baht," he said.

"We believe the discounted fare will help boost ridership figures on the Purple Line by 18%, or about 10,000 more passengers per day." Mr Sarawut said that as the discount will attract more passengers to ride on the Purple Line, MRTA will ultimately offset its revenue loss from the reduced fares.

While the discounts are aimed at increasing passenger numbers, Mr Sarawut said it will also help bring down residents' living costs by about

38 million baht per month.

The discounts will help city residents save 12 million baht a month in commuting costs, an additional 14 million baht in costs associated with traffic congestion while the rest is calculated based on the rise in general happiness and well-being, he said.

While the board approved the Purple Line's discounts, it chose to defer a meeting on the proposed monthly passes for the Blue Line.

"We also agreed to lower expressway tolls by 10% or about 5 baht, at six selected entrances, namely Din Daeng, Dao Khanong, Bang Na, Bang Chak, Pracha Niwet and Asok," said Mr Sarawut, who is also a board member of the Expressway Authority of Thailand.

The discounts will be valid from Jan 6 until March 6 next year, he said.

In a related news, Traisulee Traisoranakul, deputy spokeswoman for the PM's Office, said the cabinet yesterday approved a proposal to waive the toll charges on Motorway 7 between Bangkok and Pattaya and Motorway 9 between Bang Phli in Samut Prakan and Bang Pa-in in Ayutthaya from Dec 27 until Jan 3.