

Some commuters don't mind higher ferry fares



Safe, comfortable and clean: Passengers taking the new ferry say the ride is relaxing and those who commute daily, say it's safer than driving on the Penang Bridge. — LIM BENG TATT/The Star

By N. TRISHA
trishang@thestar.com.my

GEORGE TOWN: The new ferry fares have drawn mixed reactions, with some saying they do not mind the new charges as long as it ensures a more comfortable and safer journey.

Motorcyclist Albert Khoo, 26, who travels to the mainland from the island for work, said he would not mind paying RM5 for a round trip as he saved on petrol and a significant amount of travelling time.

"Although I need to pay both ways now, I still prefer to use the ferry as it is safer than riding my motorcycle across Penang Bridge daily. This is a better option for bikers like me.

"I do not mind the payment and it is nice to just relax during the trip across the North Channel," said the interior designer.

In a statement on Wednesday,

Penang Port Sdn Bhd (PPSB) said the new fares for foot passengers were RM2 per trip, children below 12 years old (RM1), cyclists (RM2) and motorcyclists (RM2.50).

This means the total fare is now doubled for a return trip, compared to the previous charges which were only imposed on the mainland side.

The previous ferry fares for a round trip for foot passengers were RM1.20, cyclists (RM1.40) and motorcyclists (RM2).

The new rates came into effect yesterday, after ferry commuters were given a month-long free rides from Aug 7 with the arrival of four new ferries.

PPSB said monthly passes would be available for foot passengers (Malaysians only) at a 50% discount until the end of this year and 30% thereafter.

Another commuter, Poojhasree Sivasangaran, 23, said she would take the ferry

daily as her work place is a five-minute walk from the ferry terminal on Penang island.

"I now work on the island and this is the easiest means of transport for me.

"Driving can be tricky as traffic on the bridge can be unpredictable.

"Plus, I have to pay for parking too," said the loan processor at a bank, who would be getting the monthly pass to ease her pocket.

Motorcyclist Muhammad Arrif Ahmad, 52, who has been commuting by ferry for over 20 years, said the new rates for motorcyclists were steep.

"It is pricier now as we have to pay on both sides.

"I work on the island so it is a daily commute for me.

"It will be great if they can give us the same discounts as foot passengers," said the senior executive.

Muhammad Arrif said taking

the ferry was safer than driving on the bridge daily.

"It is convenient and fast, it only takes eight minutes to get across, which is great," he said.

Consumers Association of Penang (CAP) president Mohideen Abdul Kader said children below 12 years old, senior citizens and cyclists should not be charged for using the ferry services.

"We want to promote healthy living and reduce the carbon footprint, so cyclists should not be imposed any charges.

"Another issue is that there are no trips after 10pm.

"Some of the trains arrive later, at 11.30pm or midnight.

"Maybe they can reduce the frequency after 10pm but still offer trips hourly," he said.

Mohideen said the new fares for motorcyclists were high, adding that monthly passes should also be offered to those who travel daily for work.