



Bangkok Post Learning: *Test Yourself*

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Too expensive to ride by Gary Boyle

Read the following story by Thana Boonlert from the *Bangkok Post*. Then, answer the questions that follow.



Photo courtesy of Bangkok Post

Electric train fares hurt the average city resident

What if you are a single mum who earns a daily minimum wage of 331 baht in Bangkok? A plan to raise the electric train fare ceiling on the Green Line to 104 baht per trip could be a heavy blow. Fortunately, the plan was suspended last week. Nevertheless, this is only the beginning when it comes to the city's public transport problems.

On Feb 8, Bangkok governor Aswin Kwanmuang issued a statement postponing the price hike after the government told the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (BMA) to review the policy following an outcry. Last month, it had announced that the fare hike would take effect from Feb 16. Aswin offered to reduce the hike from its original plan of a maximum of 158 baht to 104 baht.

As part of the scheme, Green Line fares were divided into four brackets. While rides between Mo Chit-On Nut and National Stadium-Saphan Taksin stations were to remain between 16-44 baht, fares between the Mo Chit-Khu Khot extension range from 15-45 baht; On Nut-Kheha (Samut Prakan) extension from 15-45 baht; and Saphan Taksin-Bang Wa extension from 15-33 baht.

The new fare ceiling came under fire and was met with widespread opposition, leading to transport minister Saksayam Chidchob calling on the BMA to halt its policy. The Association for the Protection of the Thai Constitution said the new fares would make the transport system too expensive for daily commuters.

Sumet Ongkittikul of the Thailand Development Research Institute (TDRI) said the launch of new routes will lead to fare hikes because they are calculated on different concessions.

"The government has put the maximum fare ceiling at 42-45 baht, keeping a whole journey on the same line at under 2 baht per km. However, people don't travel like this. When more routes are available, their departure and arrival stations may not be on the same line," he said.

Sumet gave an example in which commuters have to change between three different lines in a single trip, which would raise the total ticket price to over 100 baht. For instance, if a commuter departs Phra Ram 9 for Min Buri, he or she will have to pay 109 baht, which is considerably more expensive than a van which would cost anywhere between 40 baht to 50 baht.

"Of course it is more convenient," he said. "But is it fair?"

Section 1: Write the correct answer in the space provided.

1. What is Bangkok's daily minimum wage?
2. Which Green Line section is cheapest?
3. What is Saksayam Chidchob's job?
4. What is the government's upper fare limit per line?
5. Changing train lines makes a trip more expensive. True or false?
6. From Phra Ram 9 to Min Buri, the electric train fare is more than twice the van fare. True or false?

Section 2: Read the following passage. Then, fill in the blanks with the correct words from the choices given.

"In Singapore, up to 70% of the ...7... uses public transport because the government ...8... the number of cars by charging drivers during rush hour. Hong Kong also limits parking space, ...9... 80% of its residents to use public transport. However, only 30-40% of the population in Bangkok uses public transport and reducing ticket fares is not ...10...," Sumet said.

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| 7. __A. populate | __B. population | __C. populations |
| 8. __A. reduce | __B. curbs | __C. stops |
| 9. __A. encourages | __B. encouraging | __C. encouragement |
| 10. __A. fair | __B. enough | __C. ready |

Section 3: Find words that match the following definitions.

11. an increase
12. an upper limit
13. people who travel to and from work
14. a trip from one place to another

For the answers, find the story online at www.bangkokpost.com/learning. If you have any questions or feedback, please contact the Editor at garyb@bangkokpost.co.th