

18 June 2014

To: The Editor

Dear Sir/Madam,

We refer to the concerns about noise, safety and hygiene in allowing pets on public transport, such as buses and trains.

Some have suggested that those who do not have their own cars should arrange for private transport specifically catered to pets. In the name of public convenience, similar justifications were used about two decades ago against the provision of wheelchair-friendly buses and the building of lifts at MRT stations to give better access to commuters with disabilities and special needs. Today, these facilities are part of the standard requirements for new buses and MRT stations.

Pets on board public transport is an increasingly common sight in cities across Europe, North America and Australia. Small animals are placed either in designated carriers or adequately leashed and bigger, well-trained dogs may sometimes be muzzled. A more regulated and inclusive public transport policy, with proper guidelines on responsible pet ownership and provisions for commuters travelling with pets, even specially allocated train carriages, has diversified the available modes of travel.

In fact, in South Korea, the tourism authorities have made provisions for visitors to take along pets that are small animals to tourism and cultural sites, so long as they are properly kept in carriers, are visibly identified by their collar tags and owners provide bags to dispose of any pet waste.

In contrast, not only are pets in Singapore unquestionably prohibited from public transport, responsible pet owners, volunteers and staff of animal welfare organisations without cars also find themselves shunned by many taxi drivers with the same prejudices against animals, including guide dogs.

Beyond just ferrying passengers, a progressive model should be socially inclusive and culturally sensitive to evolving commuter profiles, be they women, people with disabilities or those travelling with pets and guide dogs. In this respect, instead of adhering to outdated assumptions, we hope that the public transport authorities and service providers will explore possibilities with pet owners, guide dogs users and animal welfare groups to use the trains and buses as well as establish schemes to incentivise, identify and acknowledge taxi drivers who accept passengers with pets.

Collectively, we can work towards not just a more efficient mode of travel, but a city that is both liveable and loveable for man and pet.

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SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMAL



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and

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