

COMFORTDELGRO GROUP COMES TOGETHER **TO HELP BELEAGUERED CABBIES**

23 March 2020 – ComfortDelGro Taxi has a message for its drivers: We are looking at more ways to help you cope with falling demand but if you really can't continue, join our sister company as a Bus Captain instead.

The Group is looking at not only extending rental rebates that it is currently giving to its 10,000-odd hirers, but also new ways to help them tide over the economic malaise brought on by COVID-19. Together with the Government, it has already committed a total of \$28 million in rental rebates to its cabbies. Cabbies, like other workers who lose their jobs or suffer income losses, will also be able to apply for a one-time payment of \$300 from the NTUC, it was announced last week.

Since the start of the outbreak in Singapore in late-January, taxi drivers have seen demand fall significantly as tourist arrivals dwindle and an increasing number of people work from home. Excluding rental rebates, the drop is as much as 42% in nett income and a smaller 22% with the rebates. With the situation expected to persist, many are finding it difficult to make ends meet.

ComfortDelGro Managing Director/Group CEO, Mr Yang Ban Seng, said: "These are difficult times. The focus of the day is survival. As a Group, we are very clear that we want to do all we can to help our people as things get progressively worse. Our cabbies may not be our staff but they are definitely one of us – people we have worked closely with for years and we want to ensure that they are looked after. Our message to them is stay with us, let's try to ride this out together but if you really have to give up your taxi, think about being a bus captain. You are welcome there."

For cabbies who have decided to give up their taxis, ComfortDelGro has offered them an alternative which will continue to utilise their driving skills: Becoming a Bus Captain with SBS Transit. If they make that switch, they can look forward to receiving a one-time sign-on bonus of \$3,000 which will be paid out at three significant milestones in their first year with the Company. The first tranche of \$500 will be given out when they complete their training at the Bus Captain Driving Centre, the

second tranche of \$1,500 will be handed out in the first six months, and the remaining \$1,000 on their first work anniversary.

Cabby Quak C H, 42, who has been driving with the Company for about a year, said: “It’s becoming increasingly difficult to find passengers. With the rebates, I have been able to still make some money every day but it is tough. I’m grateful to the Company and the Government for the help they have given so far. I’ve heard about the Bus Captain scheme and am thankful that it is there as an option. For now, I would still like to continue driving in the hopes that things get better in the next few months.”

To-date, SBS Transit has 168 BCs who were former taxi drivers or private-hire vehicle drivers. Currently, 11 of them are undergoing the 31-day training programme and are expected to be deployed to the interchanges for service duty from April 2020. To help them better transit to their new jobs, SBS Transit has taken special care to pair all new cabby-turned-BC with a mentor who, like them, used to be cabbies.

One such mentor is Senior BC Lee Liang Seng, a spritely 61-year-old who has been a Bus Captain for eight years. Once a taxi driver for nine years, he called it a day when SARS hit Singapore back in 2003. In between that time, he had been a patient relations officer and a private bus driver. In 2012, he joined as a Bus Captain and was promoted to Senior Bus Captain five years later. He also had the opportunity to develop his supervisory skills as a project mentor for the On-demand Public Bus Service trial that was conducted for the Land Transport Authority in 2019.

Explaining the difference between driving a bus and a taxi, Senior BC Lee said: “Driving a taxi is definitely different from driving a bus. There are more blind spots to watch out for but this can be easily overcome with training and guidance. At the end of the day though, it really doesn’t matter which I’m driving because both enable me to meet different people every day and be on the move. I am not desk-bound and I like that freedom.”

More details of the road shows will be announced later on SBS Transit’s and ComfortDelGro Taxi’s social media platforms.

Background

ComfortDelGro is one of the world's largest land transport companies with a total fleet size of over 41,600 buses, taxis and rental vehicles. We also run 83km of light and heavy rail networks in Singapore. Our global operations span seven countries – Singapore, Australia, China, the United Kingdom, Ireland, Vietnam and Malaysia.