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Having access to a car reduces use of trains by 15.6%: study

By **Woo Sian Boon** | Oct 8, 2013

While having a train station within a 10-minute walk from their homes encourages more commuters to use the MRT as a primary mode of transport, having access to a car reduces the use of trains by 15.6 per cent.

On the other hand, having accessible bus stops did not lead commuters to adopt buses as their main mode of transportation, with only 16.1 per cent of non-daily public transport users preferring to travel by bus.

These were some of the six key findings from a year-long study conducted by researchers from the National University of Singapore's Institute of Systems Science, which was presented yesterday during a panel discussion about transport mobility in cities at the Singapore International Transport Congress.

The study, which is supported by the Land Transport Authority, aimed to discover how commuters make travel decisions and the factors that influence their choices, such as convenience, time and cost.

It was conducted from July last year and ended in August, using data gathered from field observations, interviews with transport operators, 1,500 survey responses and 47 focus-group participants.

Its principal investigator, Dr Pallab Saha, said that 37 per cent of commuters between 16 and 24 years old preferred cars as their transportation mode during peak hours, noting that owning a car has become "an aspirational symbol" associated with wealth.

This is compared to 26 per cent of commuters in the age group of 35 to 54, and 18 per cent aged 55 and above, who indicated they preferred private transportation.

Speaking to reporters, he said that more awareness and education is necessary for a mindset shift to "decouple car ownership and car access". "We have to address the

mindset so that cars no longer remain as the preferred mode ... All you need is access to a car, you don't have to own a car," Dr Saha said.

As such, he felt that "there is scope for improvements" in providing alternatives such as car sharing and car pooling, but acknowledged that it would take time for change. "It's not going to happen in the next one to two years, because this is not dealing with the physical infrastructure or hardware, this is dealing with the mental models," he said.