

Activist criticises transport chief

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By Franz Leung

A SOCIAL activist yesterday threatened to lie across the tracks if the Mass Transit Railway increases its peak-hour surcharge to \$1.

Lau Chin-shek, a spokesman for the Joint Committee on Monitoring Public Utilities, also strongly criticised Transport Advisory Committee chairman, Professor Leung Chi-keung, for supporting the surcharge.

He said Prof Leung was "supporting the evil policy".

Mr Lau said MTR congestion was a result of over-dependence on the two railways.

He added the solution was to significantly reduce fares for passengers using the Eastern Harbour Crossing.

There will be greater protests from the public if the Government tolerates the surcharge while claiming to be taming inflation, Mr Lau said.

He said the TAC should no longer stand against public interest.

However, Prof Leung said the income the MTRC earned from the peak-hour surcharge was almost balanced by discounts to passengers using the Eastern Harbour Crossing.

"So MTRC is not making more profits by this policy," Prof Leung said after a visit to MTR headquarters and talks with MTRC management.

The MTRC wants to increase the surcharge to \$1 if passenger volume passes 75,000 during peak hours.

Prof Leung said the TAC would welcome any means to relieve traffic congestion and ensure passenger safety.

"Unless there is other possible means. But we have seen other means are not easy to find," he said.

"The peak-hour surcharge, under the present situation, seems to be a feasible means."

Asked if he was told the MTRC would increase the surcharge in summer, Prof Leung only said the surcharge is not seasonal, but related to passenger volume.