

# BTSC ready to reveal malfunction fixes

## Policy to include new crisis handling plan

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The operator of the BTS Skytrain will announce a remedial policy on Thursday for commuters who were affected by a string of signalling malfunctions last week that resulted in some trains being delayed and mass passenger congestion.

Bangkok Mass Transit System Plc (BTSC) CEO Surapong Laoha-unya made the promise after the National Broadcasting and Telecommunications Commission (NBTC) inspected the Skytrain's services yesterday morning.

The BTSC finished installing new signal transceivers on Friday and immediately switched over to using a new frequency spectrum for its radio communication system. This was to prevent signal interference from telecom firms which were blamed for last week's disruptions.

Details of the new policy will be concluded after the BTSC's board discusses the matter, Mr Surapong said. The upcoming policy plan will also cover crisis management, he added.

The Foundation for Consumers (FFC) has blasted the BTSC for initially responding to the delays with a temporary measure that did little to address the root cause.

Mr Surapong said earlier that commuters who carried the BTSC's value-added cards would not have their fares deducted if they had chosen to exit the stations after entering without riding the Skytrain. One-way ticket holders were permitted to keep their tickets for reuse within 14 days.

Saree Aongsomwang, the FFC's secretary-general, branded the firm's solution "unfair" for consumers. She said the BTSC should compensate passengers for delays prior to the communication systems refit, instead of focusing only on last week's incidents.

"Furthermore, it is unjust to deem one-way ticket holders ineligible for a refund. They may not feel the need to use the network in the next 14 days, [as they may not be regular users]," Ms Saree said.

"The operator can't just keep the money it has taken from them."

She said passengers who are dissatisfied with company's proposed solution can lodge a complaint with the foundation so it can take legal action on their behalf, possibly as part of a class-action suit.

Meanwhile, NBTC secretary-general Takorn Tantasith gave the Skytrain services the all clear yesterday and said recent inspections had not yielded any further signal malfunctions.

The checks were carried out by authorities from the commission, City Hall and the Transport Ministry, who boarded a train from Ari to Phrom Phong.

The telecom regulator pointed out yesterday that the signalling interference stemmed from a failing of the BTSC's own signalling-system management, not from TOT's 2300-megahertz transmittance.

The regulator sent a letter to the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (BMA) urging it to discuss ways of properly compensating those who were affected with the BTSC.

Mr Takorn told *Bangkok Post* the NBTC was adamant the TOT spectrum — which launched commercially on June 6 — was not responsible, as this had been reconfirmed by subsequent technical analysis.

Moreover, the BTSC's existing radio

transmission system has not been replaced by the new version in some areas, thus opening a window for interference, he added. The BTSC began installing new radio transmission system under the Moxa brand last year and gave an original completion deadline of October.

Another issue, Mr Takorn said, is that the BTSC failed to install a so-called "band-pass filter" system to prevent signal interference, as it should have done in the interests of better risk management.

Finally, the BTSC was found to have not shifted the frequency range for its signalling system from between 2400MHz and 2415MHz to between 2480MHz and 2495MHz, he added.

"The 2300MHz range was held by TOT with the permission of the NBTC, and is now operated by Total Access Communication [DTAC] courtesy of the TOT-DTAC partnership," Mr Takorn said.