

Make a Beeline for private bus app's code

Public or enterprises can use code for crowd-sourced app to develop new apps

Lim Min Zhang

Calling all developers: The code for Singapore's first crowd-sourced private bus service app will be open to the public from today.

Senior Minister of State Janil Puthuchery announced yesterday that the two-year-old Beeline app, run by the Government Technology Agency (GovTech), will be progressively open-sourced to the public.

Dr Janil, who is in charge of GovTech, was speaking at the finals of the first National Data Visualisation Video Challenge – organised by the agency at the Amazon Web Services office at Raffles Place – where he was the guest of honour.

By releasing the code, members of the public or enterprises can use it to build other crowd-sourced transport apps similar to Beeline, or develop completely new apps, such as using Beeline's bus-tracking feature.

The first set of Beeline code will be released today on popular developers' site GitHub.

"We hope that people will use it, change it, adapt it, innovate using it... to ride on the public sector data that's already available around transport," Dr Janil said.

The app provides a matching service and booking platform for bus services run by private operators. Users can request a specific route and, if enough people ask for it, the route will be taken up by one of the bus service providers.

Since 2015, it has been downloaded 56,000 times. There are currently 130 routes run by seven private bus operators, including Grab, BusPlus and Woodlands Transport, with 19,000 active monthly bookings.

A total of 54,000 route suggestions have been made so far, leading to 80 crowd-sourced routes being launched. Eight of them are currently running.

GovTech chief executive Jacqueline Poh said: "Smart urban mobility is a key component of Singapore's Smart Nation vision.

"By open-sourcing Beeline, we hope to catalyse innovative solutions, be it by commercial operators or individual developers."

More than 200 students from the Institute of Technical Education, junior colleges, polytechnics and universities participated in the data visualisation challenge, integrating storytelling, data analysis and video production in their 82 project submissions.

It aimed to encourage the use of open government data to improve daily decision-making or enhance the quality of lives for loved ones.

The event was supported by six industry partners: Amazon Web Services, Carousell, Cloudera, Microsoft, Google and The Straits Times.

A team of four students from Nanyang Polytechnic won the top prize for its project to work out the area of solar panels required to meet Singapore's peak demand for power usage.

Said team member Kat Yong Jie, 19, a third-year multimedia and infocomm technology student: "We want to show the public that it is possible to feed 100 per cent of Singapore's energy needs through solar power."

Pulling together information from government websites like data.gov.sg and the Energy Market Authority, the team found that about 5 per cent of Singapore's land area, or about 36 sq km, would be needed to meet this demand.