

No more face to lose over MRT woes

Written by Taipei Times Editorial
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After some Taipei city councilors thought the Muzha-Neihu MRT line's slew of mechanical problems might be linked to an unlucky name, the Taipei City Government spent about NT\$1 million (US\$31,200) in October on new maps and signs to rename the line the Wenshan-Neihu Line, which it said sounded more elegant and luckier.

Hopefully, no Taipei City Government officials really believed changing the name from Zhahu to Wenshan would put an end to the line's breakdowns.

Given the spate of incidents since October, the problem-ridden line needs more than just some name changes to reverse the "bad luck" that has plagued it since it was launched last July.

The latest to the long list of malfunctions occurred during the morning rush hour on Monday. Service was interrupted for more than 30 minutes, affecting 19 trains and more than 1,700 passengers. The Taipei Rapid Transit Corp (TRTC) said an unexpected power interruption caused the problem.

The breakdown not only dampened what was left of Taipei residents' confidence in the Wenshan line, but was a slap in the face for President Ma Ying-jeou (馬英九), who just last Wednesday stood by the decision he made when he was Taipei mayor to make the line a medium-capacity system.

Ma said the Wenshan line's overall performance during its trial period had been much better than that of the original Muzha line.

"I am confident about the future of the Taipei MRT," he told Control Yuan members probing alleged irregularities during the line's construction, adding that he considered extending the MRT system to be "the proudest" achievement of his eight years as mayor.

Maybe Ma, or Taipei Mayor Hau Lung-bin (郝龍斌), would want to ask Taipei residents what they think of the line. Are they as proud of a line that cost the city government almost NT\$70 billion to build?

The truth is the Wenshan line has experienced multiple breakdowns since its trial period. Aside from the regular malfunctions such as power outages, circuit-board issues and network glitches that have yet to be completely resolved, braking irregularities and reports of a scorched smell have also been reported.

Rather than letting a fluke determine the magnitude of an incident whenever a breakdown occurs and just blaming TRTC or its contractors for their ineptitude, it's time for the Taipei City Government to take proactive measures.

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Suspending the line temporarily might incur a wave of criticism, and worse, deal a blow to Ma and the city's sense of pride. However, if the city government wants to prove it is a responsible administration that cares about its residents' well-being, it should stop letting ego — or face — stand in the way of admitting faults and correcting wrongs.

The city must carry out a blanket inspection of the Wenhua Line and tackle all the issues, even if that means shutting down the line for a substantial period of time.

For the sake of passenger safety, it is better to be safe than sorry.

Source: [Taipei Times - Editorials 2010/02/10](#)