

One ring to pay transport fares

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by GWENDOLYN NG



RING MASTERS: Singapore University of Technology and Design undergraduates Edward Tiong, 23, and Olivia Seow, 21, have filed a patent for their invention, the Easy Ring. (PHOTO: OLIVIA SEOW)



If MR Edward Tiong, 23, and Ms Olivia Seow, 21, had their way, public-transport commuters would be paying for their fares by simply flashing a ring on their finger.

The undergraduates from the Singapore University of Technology and Design (SUTD) have invented the Easy Ring, which is being used by some 300 students at the university to enter lecture halls, laboratories and other facilities on campus.

Each Easy Ring, built by the duo at a cost of about \$20, comes with a microchip programmed with a student's unique identification data.

Mr Tiong and Ms Seow, who are first-year engineering undergraduates, hope that the ring will be adapted for use on public transport here one day.

The duo developed it after being inspired by a similar college ring called the Brass Rat at the Massachusetts

Institute of Technology (MIT) in the United States.

Mr Tiong, who is reading Engineering Systems and Design, said: "It started from the frustration of having to dig into our bags to retrieve our ez-link cards when taking public transport.

"We wanted to transplant that technology into a more convenient form. The ring was a natural choice."

The first prototype was created in March last year, and the students created a fully functional prototype in January using 3-D printers.

About 300 rings were made in a week, and given out to the entire second intake of SUTD students after their inauguration ceremony in May.

The Easy Ring is constructed from plastic, but there are plans to mould it out of metal.

Emblazoned with the SUTD initials, the inventors hope to turn it into an enduring tradition, much like the Brass Rat.

The duo have filed for a patent for the Easy Ring, but have bigger dreams for it beyond their school campus. They hope to adapt it to pay public-transport fares.

They began a 10-week exchange programme at MIT last month and obtained permission from the public-transport authority there to adapt their Easy Ring to pay for fares on buses and trains.

Speaking to My Paper from the US, Ms Seow, who is reading Engineering Product Development, said: "We're excited to see our invention in reality and can't wait to see how far we can go with the project.

"Hopefully, it can be implemented back home in Singapore."

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