

MAP Statement in Support of the Government's ITX Program

February 14, 2022

The Management Association of the Philippines (MAP) believes that efficient mass public transportation is critical to ensure mobility of people and goods for economic productivity and quality of life, as well as to enhance and sustain socioeconomic development and the country's progress toward upper-middle-income status.

Accordingly, MAP supports the government's Integrated Bus Terminal Exchange (ITX) program. It is a key structural and transformational transportation reform measure in which provincial buses terminate inbound trips at an ITX terminal on the outskirts of the metropolis and passengers transfer to city commuter buses. This bus hub system adheres to best practices in public transportation found worldwide, and the system provides seamless passenger transfers that promote good order and efficiency.

This ITX system could be a win-win situation for everyone involved. It spares provincial buses from getting stuck in urban traffic and enables faster turnaround trips back to provincial destinations. The government can assist the provincial bus operators in extracting value from their idled city terminals, which are sitting on now valuable land. These terminal sites can be devoted to other higher-yield commercial uses or disposed of at much higher prices. The gains earned should more than offset the cost of using the ITX terminal.

To commuters, going through an ITX terminal may disrupt the convenience of a "single ride mode" at present. But DOTR can accelerate the transition to the new orderly ITX system by ensuring timely and adequate city buses at the ITX terminal. With that arrangement, commuters will benefit from efficient transfers, and once on the city bus, from the much-reduced vehicle volume, noise, and traffic congestion on EDSA. Better air quality resulting from less vehicle exhaust is an added benefit for the commuters. Efficient mobility and a healthy populace boost economic productivity and promote social interaction.

The ITX program spans two national administrations, beginning with the previous P-Noy administration and laudably continuing under the current Duterte administration, with the ITX terminals already completed and operational. Private investors participated in the program, committing large investments in the construction and operation of the terminal facilities.

Deviating from the basic concept of the ITX program and allowing provincial buses to bypass ITX terminals will derail this vital government program, jeopardize the viability of the terminals, and undermine the sanctity of contracts with private concessionaires, thus, forgoing the many benefits from the program.

For the reasons above, MAP strongly urges the Department of Transportation (DOTr) to maintain and support the ITX program as originally conceived and implemented. And to further enhance people's mobility in the National Capital Region, MAP also urges DOTr to optimize the operations of such primary modes of transportation as the LRTs, MRTs, and PNR Commuter Line.