



CONTINUE AND COMPLETE THE EDSA BUSWAY SYSTEM: NO TO RETURN OF BUS CHAOS ON EDSA

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The Management Association of the Philippines (MAP) commends the Metro Manila Development Authority (MMDA) for upholding the retention of the new EDSA Busway System – thus continually improving bus traffic flow in this busiest major thoroughfare --- and rejecting the proposal of bus operators to revert to the discarded practice of using two yellow bus lanes at the curbside for 3,000 bus units to resume operations.

The MAP likewise strongly opposes the proposal of the bus operators for the simple reason that for the past three years, it has been demonstrated that the EDSA Busway and Bus Carousel Line system is a far superior public bus transport system as it was able to carry a one-day peak load of 454,649 passengers on December 27, 2022 using no more than 550 bus units running on just one innermost busway lane with more spare system capacity to meet higher demand. Capital expenditures, excluding cost of rolling stock, by the national government totaled only about P500 million, which translates to the lowest capital cost-to-passenger ratio among transit systems.

Although still a work-in-progress, other remarkable performances of the Busway were achieved. Average daily busway ridership reached 380,378 during the heavy Christmas season in December 2022. Total ridership reached 154,100,856 from June 2020 up to December 2022. Drivers are better disciplined and they stop only at bus stations and do not linger there. Commuters' travel time was reduced, allowing them to be more productive at work and enjoy quality time with their families. The Busway has also facilitated travel for ambulances and emergency vehicles. This high performance was achieved due to the higher efficiency of the inner lane busway as a people mover.

In sharp contrast, the discarded highly inefficient two yellow curbside (outermost) lanes bus system gained worldwide notoriety as over 3,000 buses jammed EDSA bumper-to-bumper, while hapless passengers and other commuters suffered long commuting hours and massive volumes of noxious exhaust fumes that polluted the air. The drivers were impervious to discipline. Buses loaded and unloaded anywhere with impunity, weaving in and out of lanes in chaotic fashion. Reverting to the failed yellow bus lane system will be grossly detrimental to commuters, to bus operators themselves, and to the economy. Opportunity losses from traffic congestion may likely gallop way past the previously estimated P3.5 billion daily.

The main reason for the failure of the yellow bus lanes was their location at the outermost lanes. Being traffic conflict lanes, they are not ideal for bus mass transit in high density urban corridors because bus traffic flow was prone to interruption by vehicles exiting and entering the corridor from the many side streets. Access control to the curbside lanes was not possible and non-accredited buses easily entered to bloat the bus fleet.

On the other hand, the inner lane busway was introduced abroad over 50 years ago as a better alternative to the curbside bus lanes. Busways have globally accepted standards and best practices, chief among them is the alignment of the busway at the inner lane away from the traffic conflict curbside. Another is they must be dedicated for the exclusive use of public buses with no mixed traffic allowed. These are non-discretionary features of the tried and tested system. It was precisely for these reasons that the busway was persistently advocated by the MAP transport reform advocate starting in 2015 as the ideal replacement for the yellow bus lanes.

Exercising strong political will, the Department of Transportation (DOTr) introduced the new EDSA Busway at the innermost lanes. As a complementary measure, the Bus Carousel Line, developed by the DOTr Land Sector Team in consultation with bus operators, was introduced to operate on the busway with 550 maximum bus units. This transformational change introduced in June 2020 ushered in a new normal in EDSA, providing a sustainable commuter-friendly alternative bus system that is unimpeded by traffic, under rain-or-shine conditions and with less air pollution.

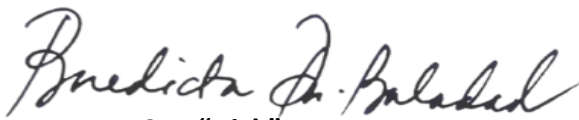
The consortium of bus operators now seeks to undo this structural public bus transit reform despite the benefits already shown.

Instead, we earnestly urge the DOTr to stay the course and expedite the completion of this project, preferably, in partnership with a private concessionaire, while adhering to global standards and best practices.

Moving forward, full completion and upgrade of the busway up to global standards with a bus exchange system for convenient transfer of commuters to feeder lines will attract motorists to take public transit and leave their cars at home. This shift will reduce vehicle volume and decongest EDSA. Car lanes may also be reduced to make way for wider sidewalks to enhance non-motorized mobility and planting of trees.

Efficient mass public transport and non-motorized mobility are the long-term solution to traffic congestion as envisioned in the National Transport Plan.

We call on all other concerned sectors to link arms in continuing efforts to improve public transportation efficiency that is key to our people's well-being.



BENEDICTA "Dick" DU-BALADAD
MAP President



EDUARDO H. YAP
Chair, MAP Infrastructure Committee