

Report on the Proceedings of the National Summit on Urban Public Transport

Asian Strategy & Leadership Institute

Thursday, 18 September 2008

Gardens Hotel and Residences

Welcome address by Dato' Dr. Michael Yeoh

Dato' Dr. Michael Yeoh, Chief Executive Officer of the Asian Strategy & Leadership Institute, gave his welcoming remarks on the urban public transport summit. He explained the need of this summit to address the issues revolving public transportation and the need for a comprehensive and efficient public transportation system, especially in light with the oil price hike. He highlights the recent budget address, where a substantial amount of RM35billion will be allocated for the next 5 years to upgrade the public transport system, as a welcomed measure by the prime minister. He underlined three key success factors (3Is) of Infrastructure, Innovation and Integration as paramount in ensuring efficient and effective public transport system. He argues that the creation of a new public transport commission should be vested under the Ministry of Transport as a central coordinating agency for public transportation systems as currently there are various bodies and agencies involved, requiring a need for a central regulating body. He hopes that the summit would provide a platform for information sharing and exchanging views from those in the government, trade, business and other representatives. Dato' Dr concluded his speech by thanking YB Minister of Transport, distinguished speakers, sponsors and participants for participating in this summit.

Opening Ceremony and Keynote Address on "Challenges and Strategies to Improve Public Transport: The Way Forward" by

Datuk Ong Tee Keat

Datuk Ong Tee Keat, Minister of Transport, gave a keynote address and officially opened the Summit by congratulating ASLI for conducting the timely summit for all the stakeholders involved in the Public Transport System. The Minister pinpoints rising oil prices as one of the imperative factors of improving the public transport system as the public are now even more reliant on a better and more efficient system. The need to improve public transport system has been an ongoing issue and unfortunately, according to Datuk Ong, we're still in the process in grappling with the identified concerns. He also highlights the misconception that public transportation are within the jurisdiction of Ministry of Transport when there are 13 different agencies jointly responsible in regulating public transport systems. This leads to a number of complications and he vouches for the need of a single body that is recognized by the Government to be in charge of public transport. The single commission would be able to speed up the progress in resolving problems surrounding public transport and would be entitled in the enforcement, licensing, monitoring and transport fees, among others.

Special Panel Discussion on "Enhancing Public Transport in the Klang Valley"

Moderator: Dato' Dr. Michael Yeoh

**YB. Dato' Hj. Markiman bin Kobiran, Chairman of Commercial Vehicle Licensing Board, Ministry of Entrepreneur
& Co-operative Development**

Dato' Hj. Markiman provides a comprehensive picture on the public transport system that not just pertaining to the Klang Valley alone. He spoke on the public transport system based on the scope of The Commercial Vehicle Licensing Board (CVLB), which is governed by CVLB Act 1987. CVLB is the overall authority in controlling the issuance of license of public and commercial transport and is placed under the Ministry of Entrepreneur & Co-operative Development. The CVLB as the power to revoke or suspend and works in tandem with other authorities such as DBKL, DBPP, Putrajaya, in formulating specific policies to be implemented in respective areas. However, policies are sometimes tweaked because it is not within their authority. He expressed his concerns on bus drivers transferring from one operator to another, making it hard for the ministry to keep personal data up to date. He also pointed out that tourist buses are not under the care and authority of CVLB but is under the guardian of the Ministry of Tourism. Consumers are not lodging enough complaints to ensure that service would be enhanced, calling for a more cooperative work from the consumers with the ministry to ensure better services for consumers.

Dr Aizi Razman bin Ismail, Undersecretary, Technical & Geopatial Division, Ministry of Federal Territories.

Dr. Aizi Razman argues that there is a need to enhance sustainable development in order to encourage sustainable transportation, especially in regards to the Klang Valley.

He also pointed out that only 16% of the public are using public transportation whereas the rest uses Single Operated Vehicles (SOVs) and there is still a long way to achieve the ideal of 60% users. In order to achieve the said aim, there are a number of problems to overcome such as addressing the lack of connectivity for pedestrians (with considerations to the climate we have), limited bus/railway network, as well as the need for a single urban transport regulator. DBKL and Putrajaya Corporations are involved heavily with Klang Valley's transport development with the Federal Territory Ministry. In his recommendations, the question of congestion charges arose as a solution to encourage usage of public transportation. However there will need vast improvements of the public transport system before implementing such charges. Otherwise, there will be an outcome of the rich versus the poor, whereby the rich would have no troubles paying charges restricted but those in the lower income group would still need to access the zones charged out of necessity. He added that parking rates should be charged to a higher fee for long term parkers and lower fees for short term parkers. He also highlights the problem of having a number of differing agencies, including JPJ, JKR, PDRM and DBKL in addressing the public transport problem. DBKL should look into capitalizing existing infrastructure of buses instead of building more rail tracks and rail stations. He also stressed on the need to have economic, growth-centred, socially and environmentally sustainable development.

En. Moaz Yusuf Ahmad, Advisor for Association for the improvement of Mass Transit (TRANSIT-Klang Valley)

En. Moaz stressed that significant problems begin with the poor planning of public transportation services and development, where uncoordinated and incomplete planning of construction has led to a series of changes, which has encountered a number of safety issues. There is also a lack of timely investment in public transportation services such as lack of investment in expanding the structure leading to overcrowding, network breakdowns such as the KTM crisis. Existing networks have significant missing links and are not properly integrated such as the KL Sentral Monorail/LRT. Problems as such, including inaccessible and inconvenient station location that are either too remote or not located at pedestrian friendly areas, coupled with unreliable services turns people off from using public transportation. It is a community issue that needs to be resolved quickly. En. Moaz also acknowledges that the 13 agencies are detrimental to betterment of public transportation system along with the lack of power, ability and willingness to enforce regulations. There is an incomplete understanding of what public transport can offer to a community whereby if the focus of the system were on the lower income group, there would be lower expectations of the service. 10 000 people can be moved in an hour if the opportunity is

given regardless of income groups and if the public uses it. It should also not focus on the urban areas but also the rural areas. He also acknowledges that competition does not help the industry as operators may be inclined to sacrifice quality, service, mobility, safety and rights of workers. In terms of planning, local government should not focus on traffic management and catering to cars, as it should include public transportation in early development planning. Planning should also be coordinated with other governments within the region. He also argues for the need of real investments in public transportation by looking at infrastructure as an asset for this nation. Rail infrastructure is the most efficient way to move people and goods with complete and accessible rapid transit networks to increase people's mobility. With better planning and heightened mobility would ensure lesser cars on daily roads and fewer jams. This would eventually lead to greater economic growth and quality of life.

En. Moaz provided four key solutions to the problem with a recommended structure:

- a. The need for a committee that is non-partisan, fair and open, which answers to the parliament.
- b. Introduction of national public transportation authority which introduces and maintain standards; and ensures integrated planning across Malaysia
- c. Utilizing local/regional public transport authority in local and regional planning, controlling routes, fares, assets and for a governing body where operators under contract provide services.
- d. Encourage and ensure public feedbacks are addressed.

Recommended structure:

His recommended structure include the bus and rail operators given a time-limited contract to each Local Public Transport Authority (LPTA), with the Ministry of Finance being involved in buying busses and providing capital funding where required. LPTA would also own the buses and routes to maintain local oversight and provide direct operations subsidy where needed. He also calls for the need to think past the LRT dream as people want connectivity and convenience but LRT takes time to build and serves limited areas. There are also other forms of rapid transit available and would be the cost-effective, quick and comprehensive solutions we need. He also proposes short term and long term action plans, which has been a running theme in his talk.

Q&A (numbers denote questions and alphabets denote answers given)

1. The forum has not talked about accessibility and has only addressed mobility.
 - a. There is the need to encourage those who are travelling the car to use public transport system instead. The issue of mobility is linked with accessibility. It is important to not only see public transport as solely moving people but also need to ensure people can use and access them, which demands the need to locate stations where people can get to and access. Comprehensive planning can be done if a single body is involved, with laws following suit when authority is placed.
2. The question was pertaining maintenance issues, specifically why don't things work?
 - a. If operators were not making enough profits, quality would eventually be sacrificed. This would lead to people using less of the public transport and lead to a further downgrade of services. There is a need to find a solution for public transport services to make certain amounts of profit to stay in the business. An authority for implementation and funds to maintain transport system is needed, however, soft loans is not going to be a solution as it is a short term problem solver. The Government should maintain and control the assets to ensure equipments and transportations are not downgraded as a trade off for profit.
3. In terms of planning for public routes, is it done before or after housing plans are submitted?

- a. There are 11 to 12 agencies such as electricity, water, and health agencies involved in land development or new township. Public transport is not part of the development planning. Public transport only comes into picture when properties are inhibited. Public transport authority is not consulted when other authorities are involved in ongoing planning. CVLB, therefore, is not an active partner in the planning committee.
4. Why are dangerous buses are still on the road, especially those who hardly go to Puspakom
 - a. Puspakom's role is to inspect vehicles; upon inspection road tax will be returned. CVLB's involvement is solely on the extensions for permits (permit is valid for 5 years for buses, and 7 years for taxis). The rest of the responsibility lies with the transport department. CVLB suggests validity should be for six months or one year to ensure that conditions remain above average.

Special presentation I by Mr. Uwe Ahrens, Chief Executive Officer, Melewar Integrated Engineering Sdn Bhd. "Success factors of Public Transportation Systems"

The factors for a successful [public transportation systems](#) are based on realistic facts that are individualized for each project. It is also important to decide on the objectives and focus on those priorities. Factors such as size, relative speed and affordability should also be taken under consideration. Although there is a need to be commercially viable, it should also be realistic in terms of fund and the need for public accountability

Special Presentation II by Dr. Leong Siew Mun, Director of Urban Transport, DBKL

Challenges in public transport integration for KL city and the role of DBKL in improving public transport.

In order to improve the public transport system, DBKL has focused on enhancing public transportation as the major mode of mobility for the city and ensuring optimum utilization of transport system resources. Further strategies are the integration of the public transport system, improving the level of public transport services usage as well as deployment of Intelligent Transport System for public transport. This is done by integrating transport terminals and ticketing; planning further extension of the LRT; the integration project for the public transport; and restructuring bus routes.

Session 1: Towards an Efficient Urban Public Transport System.

Moderated by: **Tan Sri Dato Abdul Aziz**

There is an urgent need to find ways of improving an inefficient system. In terms of urban public transportation system, it should not be confined to the city of Kuala Lumpur or Klang Valley; instead it should be focused on the systems throughout the country.

Dato Mohd Nadzmi Mohd Salleh, Chairman & Managing Director, Konsortium Transnasional Berhad

The key is to make people switch over to public transport therefore there is the need to mark up the quality and ensure price is reasonable for the public. The government would need to invest more in planning, as there is a glaring lack of connectivity throughout the country and central planning by EPU is not followed strictly. BRT (Bus Rapid Transit) System would be an alternative as it is not only more efficient, but is also a cheaper way of transportation. This can be a solution to the high running cost of providing transportation services (which eventually lead to poor quality in order to maintain cost burden). BRT is also a more sustainable and environmentally sound alternative. He also argues that the private sector can run public transport more efficiently.

Dato' Dr. Thillainathan Ramasamy, Past President, Malaysia Economic Association

Dato' Dr Thillainathan compared the public transport system of KL to those of Singapore and Hong Kong, as well as their solutions to improve public transportation and reduction of single operated vehicles. All three countries have similar traffic rules however, Malaysian penalties are much lower and there is a certain degree of lack of enforcement, as well as usage of position by enforcement personnel as a supplementary source of income. In order to overcome these, there is the need to subject those who are involved with severe disciplinary action. Government should also reintroduce a mini bus feeder system within each suburbs and ensure a more effective enforcement of rules .

En. Shaipudin Shah Harun, Executive Director, Syarikat Prasarana Negara Berhad

The Prasarana is a government owned company with its activities in the provision of public transport infrastructure. It is an asset owner of the two LRTs and bus systems operated by RapidKL, the KL Monorail system and the Langkawi Cable Car system. For the 2009 Budget, the Kelana Jaya LRT line and Ampang LRT line will be extended as well as introducing new line from Kota Damansara to Cheras. It will also integrate a Transit Terminal, which is scheduled to be completed by November 2010. However, he expressed his concerns of time being lost with the 'obsession' of building new highways instead of enhancing or creating new lines, which indicates a severe deficiency in understanding public transport. He also acknowledges the problems at present times but argues that Prasarana is there to solve existing problems.

En Suffian Baharuddin, Chief Executive Officer, Rangkaian Pengangkutan Integrasi Deras (RapidKL)

En Suffian spoke on the daily challenges buses face in the city with the lack of physical infrastructure (such as appropriate stops), the inefficient allocation of bus routes among operators, the challenges of meeting time schedule and the lack of single regulatory authority for public transport. Furthermore, he recommended an integration of the ticketing system, a comprehensive bus-lane, traffic signal priority, integration transport hubs, depots, sheltered bus stops, covered walkways and park and ride facilities to improve the current system.

Prof Sulik Suleiman Salleh, Public Transport Expert and Managing Director, Sulik Design Sdn Bhd

Prof Sulik argues that private developers should get involved in improving the system. Thus far, there has not been sufficient data available, nor are the identification of routes or future routes available. Planning is imperative as a town must not be planned to be inhibited for a mere ten years, but should be planned for the future. Strategic bus locations, therefore, need to be planned. This can be done if only one agency is involved. Prof Sulik argues that each country would have their peculiarities, therefore would need to find own strengths and address the weaknesses. This can be done by participation by the passengers who are paying for the services as they would desire easy ticketing interface, discount tickets, ample carparks, reliable services and most importantly, safety issues. The system should also be OKU-friendly as much as it should be environmentally friendly.

Mr. V Kanesan, Senior Vice President, Special Projects, Scomi Group Berhad.

Mr Kanesan introduced different models of monorails used all over the world and their benefits to public transportation system. He pointed out that Malaysia is facing a problem of integrating different kinds of public transport systems, which is unfortunate as Malaysia was ahead of the curve with the introduction of monorail. To catch on and keep ahead, there is the need to work with what we

have and the structures that are already built. Mr Kanesan argues that buses are not the answer as it will lead to further congestions. Monorails as alternatives would be cheaper, faster and safer option. It does not purport to be the answer but should be part of the system.

Q&A

Q&A (numbers denote questions and alphabets denote answers given)

1. **Peter Tang** who has been an OKU for 24 years wonders why are the disabled not in the equation and is always left out. Further question for prasarana, would future purchases for buses have any considerations on the accessibility for disabled citizens and when will bus stops is disabled-friendly.
 - a. It's a wholesome issue with many aspects involving town planning and structures. The country as a whole must have a real policy on the issue of the OKU to ensure that all facilities register the needs of the OKU and is catered for. There needs to be a holistic approach to address the plight of the OKUs in accessing public transportation and there is the need to have a continued advocacy for rights of the OKU to ensure OKUs are included in planning. The problem does not restrict to OKUs alone as other users also face similar problems of accessibility

2. Transportation system has become chaotic and this can be attributed to the lack of accountability for those who are entrusted in public care. Quality has been ignored for a long time and it is an endemic problem that has plagued the nation for a while. Government should be sincere in addressing these problems and the onus is on them to make recommendations.
 - a. The public transport system is a very heavily regulated industry and endless problems of regulators are due to those who are not knowledgeable enough to address the problem and there is a lack of political will. It's a natural monopoly where changes in ministry would only bring in new players. Government should look into this and ensure consistent policies are pursued. The problem faced today needs to be solved and it is hoped that with one centralized governing body, it would materialize. Government should manage institutions better and plan for long term, instead of short term fixes.

3. A representative from **Bank Pembangunan** asks to elaborate further on YB Ong's statement regarding the budget 2009 where the government plans to provide soft loan facilities for transportation fund. Will this reduce and improve bus systems?
 - a. Most bus companies are not bankable therefore the government are reluctant to increase spending. It's more profitable to operate elsewhere instead of Malaysia. It is difficult to see how the soft loan facility will aid the system.

4. An **UMNO** representative is disappointed that we are always having seminars and summits for decades but when are we going to achieve the change that we want. Transportation is not a gainful enterprise; therefore the government should shoulder the responsibility in solving the problem.
 - a. There is currently too much vested interest involved. It is important to ration available resources for bidding. Cities are drivers of growth in every modern economy; therefore in order to develop economy, cities must be functioning.
 - b. Seminars and summits are always held but nothing has been done. Not much result based on the conclusion of seminars. Trying to convey the importance of the problems to be solved but it is difficult to solve. Mustn't give up and put pressure and advocate.
 - c. There is the need to pressure private enterprises to provide services for bus drivers or give the respect for bus drivers. The public have a role to play in making the job is respectable.

Summary of the session:

There are 3-4 major issues in public transportation and it has been discussed for the last forty years. 30 years ago, a seminar of this nature was organized and similar things were highlighted but none of the proposed plans were taken in action. Therefore, the same problems keep cropping up such as the question of regulators, lack of masterplan, lack of integrated public transport system and lack of quality in delivery.

Session 2.: Open Forum on Consumer's and User's Perspectives on Urban Public Transport.

Moderator: Datuk Eddy Chen

Prof. Dr. Abd Rahim Md Nor, Public Transport Expert and Professor, University Kebangsaan Malaysia

With the highway dependant policy and society, the reduction of congestion has failed. There has been a misconception and misunderstanding of how to finance public transport operation. The inadequate and inefficient track-based Transport system lacks in the park and ride areas, in the bus services and the insufficient LRT trains and KTM-Komuters. In long term there should be focus on sustained bus priority measures as well as rail-based mode should be for high population density areas

Ir. Dr. Gue See Sew, Managing Director, G&P Geotechnics Sdn Bhd

To improve the LRT and Bus system there need to be targets set including those for the prime ministers office. Also should their be public friendly maps as well as well maintained buses

Mr. Gurmit K.S. Singh, Chairman, Centre for Environment, Technology &Development, Malaysia (CETDEM)

Out of his own experience Mr Gurmit reported, that the public services fails the people many times. The money is not spent effectively and the government does not consider cheaper forms of transportation. But also the public participation is missing. He recommended that the public should be consulted before solutions are made. Furthermore he pointed out, that their was not enough data of public transport users as well as figures of public transport

Mr. R. Nadeswaran, Editor, the Sun

The state has no control over public transport, as the private sector does what it wants. There are no enforcements of regulations, no subsidies given by the state, as it is not interested in public transport. The state sees public transport a problem of the poor. However the public transport has to come back to the state.

Mr. Nirhiyananthan Nesadurai, President, Environmental Protection Society Malaysia (EPSM)

The integration of the different systems is a great problem in Malaysia.

The LRT stations are not always supported by feeder services linked to nearby residential areas, or are they supported by infrequent feeder services, making them inconvenient to access. But also the capacity of the LRT is at its limits. The buses do not go according to plan; instead it can happen that the bus stops at random place along the road.

When considering public transport options, the public should be consulted. These options do not always have to be at high cost, consider first the low cost and easier to implement options, such as the BRT. Enforce the no-parking and no- waiting rules on all roads so that the public transport can travel unimpeded. For public transport be geared to Singapore.

Mr. Paul Selvaraj, CEO, Consumer Research & Resources Centre, FOMCA

He suggested that the Government could save up to RM 3 billion in fuel costs per annum for each million passengers opting to take public transport. He also indicated that there is a need for a central authority under the Premier minister department. The role of the subsidies is to increase the prices and make it more affordable and reasonable for the public. To improve the public transport system the government should take the responsibility and work together with the industry for a collective decision.

Summary:

There seem to be conflicting priorities in terms of transportation. The promotion of national cars has been part of the cause of neglecting public transportation. There is the need to look at consolidation at all departments and bodies and it all comes down to political will as there are so many factors involved. Integration remains as one of the important need in the system, along with accessibility to transport for both abled and OKUs. There remain problems in subsidies, as there are conflicting sources at federal, state and local government level, therefore it needs to be resolved. Sustainable public transport need to be looked at seriously, especially with the climate change. In terms of economics, it would be more sustainable and improved lifestyle would eventually enhance the GDP. All stakeholders have shared interest in this therefore political will for change need to be constantly charged.

The summit concluded at 17:35