

Sama-sama sa Pag-arangkada!

Magkaisa para sa Pang-masang
Pampublikong Transportasyon!
Ipagtanggol ang Prangkisa at Kabuhayan!

(Moving Forward Together: Unite for Mass Public Transportation!
Defend Franchises and Livelihoods!)

Transport Summit 2023

Philippine Social Science Center
Quezon City
10 June 2023



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About the Proceedings

These are the proceedings of the Transport Summit 2023, “Sama-sama sa Pag-arangkada! Magkaisa para sa Pang-masang Pampublikong Transportasyon! Ipagtanggol ang Prangkisa at Kabuhayan! (Moving Forward Together: Unite for Mass Public Transportation! Defend Franchises and Livelihoods!),” held last 10 June 2023 at the Philippine Social Science Center, Quezon City. The summit was organized by the Pagkakaisa ng mga Samahan ng Tsuper at Operator Nationwide (PISTON)¹, IBON Foundation, Samahan at Ugnayan ng Consumers para sa Ikauunlad ng Bayan (SUKI)² Network, No To Public Utility Vehicle (PUV) Phase Out Coalition, and PARA - Advocates for Inclusive Transport (PARA-AIT).

The summit had the following objectives: (1) discuss and identify key challenges in the implementation of the Omnibus Franchising Guidelines (OFG) and the Public Utility Vehicle Modernization Program (PUVMP); (2) consolidate the perspectives, criticisms, and positions of transport workers, commuters, academics, and legislators regarding OFG and PUVMP, to form a united position, to be presented to the government in the ongoing review of the OFG; and (3) develop greater collaboration among stakeholders of the mass public transportation system.

1 The Pagkakaisa ng mga Samahan ng Tsuper at Operator Nationwide (PISTON) translates to United Organization of Jeepney Operators and Drivers.

2 Samahan at Ugnayan ng Consumers para sa Ikauunlad ng Bayan (SUKI) translates to of Association and Coalition of Consumers for the Development of the Nation.

The summit was opened by the lead convener of PISTON, who welcomed attendees from various social sectors. It was then followed by solidarity messages from members of the House of Representatives, consumer networks, and transport advocates. The program proceeded with panel discussions. The first panel discussion highlighted key systemic issues influencing the implementation of the PUVMP. The second panel discussion and conclusion highlighted the experiences of traditional jeepney operators and drivers associations (JODAs) and outlined the demands of the summit to the Philippine government. After each panel session, several transport, active mobility, and commuter groups gave their reactions.

This documentation is a result of a collaboration between the transport summit organizers and the UP Center for Integrative and Development Studies (UP CIDS) Program on Alternative Development (AltDev).

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Moderators of the Transport Summit 2023 open the event

Source: Mayday Multimedia



1 Rationale and Introduction

■ Mody Floranda

*National President,
Pagkakaisa ng mga Samahan ng Tsuper
at Operator Nationwide (PISTON)*

Mody Floranda, the National President of PISTON, delivered an opening speech to set the tone of the Transport Summit 2023. He provided an overview of the challenges faced by the transport sector and highlighted the importance of unity among the stakeholders of the transport sector in addressing them.

Floranda also emphasized the vital role of the public transportation sector in promoting economic growth and development. The ongoing transformation in the transportation sector is marked by profit-driven technological fixes and false climate solutions, worsening poverty as experienced by transport workers and commuters. Since 2015, the Philippine government has expressed its intent to modernize Public Utility Jeeps (PUJs) and other types of Public Utility Vehicles (PUVs). In 2017, the Department of Transportation (DOTr) implemented Department Order No. 2017-011, known as the Omnibus Franchising Guidelines (OFG), which aimed to put the PUVMP in operation. This program involved consolidating individual franchises of PUV operators, re-routing via route rationalization, and mandating the replacement of PUVs.

Both OFG and PUVMP received backlash from the transport workers, particularly from the Jeepney Operators and Drivers (JODs), in the form of protests and strikes. Alongside their supporters from

various sectors, transport workers contested the unjust provisions and methods of the program's implementation. Floranda recounted the two-day strike in March 2023. PUV drivers and operators, which commuters and the public supported, demanded from the government the cancellation of the OFG and the PUVMP, and the pursuit of a people-centered mass public transportation system. The government was forced to respond by committing to a reevaluation of the OFG and the PUVMP.

The Transport Summit was organized to foster unity among PUV operators and drivers and to facilitate collaboration in forming a sectoral strategy regarding the OFG of the PUVMP. Resolutions and recommendations agreed on and formulated during the summit will be submitted to DOTr, and the Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board (LTFRB). Before concluding with a chant that rallied the crowd, Floranda mentioned ongoing efforts to organize transport summits in different regions before the imposed deadline on JODs in December 2023.

2 Solidarity Messages

■ **Hon. Arlene D. Brosas**

Gabriela Women's Party (GWP)

On behalf of the Gabriela Women's Party (GWP) and the women's sector, Hon. Arlene D. Brosas expressed solidarity with the transport summit and the struggle of the transport sector. She acknowledged that the pressing issue of the PUV phaseout has been a recurring concern each year. She also commended PISTON for being at the forefront of the battle in the transport sector. PISTON has been actively involved in numerous protests to defend and advocate for the rights of JODs and other PUV operators and drivers. She again commended PISTON and all those who participated in the transport strike in March 2023.

Hon. Brosas pointed out the absurdity of the government in enforcing the PUVMP. The PUVMP places the burden to operate modern jeepneys that cost PHP 2.8 million each on JODs, and mandates cooperates to collectivize loans and franchising. Stating that these measures obstruct the primary livelihoods for JODs, she then asserted that the government's principal concern should be the development of an effective mass public transportation system that benefits the people rather than impose the currently ill-received PUVMP.

■ **Hon. France L. Castro**

Alliance of Concerned Teachers (ACT Teachers) Party-list

Hon. France L. Castro began her address by expressing her deep connection to the transport sector; her father had been a long-time driver. She emphasized the importance of valuing those in the

transportation sector, particularly the drivers of jeepneys and other PUVs. They play a crucial role in people's mobility. She highlighted that without these drivers, the daily commutes to work or school would not be possible.

She underscored the significance of the fight against the government's bogus PUVMP. This program threatens to revoke the franchise of operators, jeopardizing the livelihoods of JODs and other workers, their families, and relatives, all of whom are dependent on and connected to the transport sector.

The desired modernization, she clarified, should place primary concern on the context and situation of the JODs, ensuring that they should be part of its planning process. She criticized the exploitation of modernization for the benefit of foreign corporations and government profit. She stressed that it is imperative to oppose policies that do not align with the needs and rights of JODs, as well as the harassment and oppression faced by those who speak out against the PUVMP.

Hon. Castro also stressed the need for a compassionate mass public transportation system that does not jeopardize the livelihoods of drivers, operators, and all workers in the transport sector. She assured the transport workers that the ACT Teachers Party-list, with the rest of the Makabayan Bloc⁵, supports them in advocating for a better public mass transportation system and better working conditions for transport workers.

5 Makabayan Bloc is a coalition of progressive party-lists namely the Alliance of Concerned Teachers Party-list, Anakpawis Party-list, Bayan Muna Party-list, Gabriela Women's Party, and Kabataan Party-list. It aims to advance the aspirations, triumphs, and potentials of the people's parties as well as promote nationalism, democracy, and the rights and welfare of the Filipino people.

■ National Union of Peoples' Lawyers (NUPL)

Jovert Hoover, representing PISTON Panay, delivered the solidarity message from the National Union of Peoples' Lawyers (NUPL). NUPL began their solidarity message by expressing hope that the gathering would unite various stakeholders in advocating for the rights and interests of the Filipino people, especially regular commuters and small drivers and operators. It also acknowledged that the chosen theme for this year's transport summit, "Sama-sama sa Pag-arangkada: Magkaisa para sa Pangmasang Pampublikong Transportasyon! Ipagtanggol ang Prangkisa at Kabuhayan!" ("Moving Forward Together: Unite for Public Mass Transportation! Defend franchises and livelihoods!"), is both accurate and timely.

NUPL noted that the continuing neglect of public transportation reflects the worsening economic crisis caused by neoliberal policies (privatization, deregulation, and trade liberalization), which deliberately hinder the country's progress. It was emphasized that the PUVMP threatens the livelihoods and franchises of small drivers and operators. Through the analysis and campaign of PISTON, the true purpose of PUVMP was exposed: to handover the control of PUVs to large corporations (both local and foreign) while taking away the livelihood of small-capacity drivers and operators. With no accompanying comprehensive mass public transportation plan to improve routes or develop train systems nationwide, this would result in fare hikes that commuters cannot afford. Meanwhile, the wages of ordinary workers remain inadequate, and the prices of goods and basic necessities are high.

The lawyers of NUPL also stand in solidarity with the transport sector's continuous fight against the PUVMP and its advocacy for a public mass transportation system. They commended PISTON for its nationwide transport strike, during which they asserted their right to organize and freely express their grievances. They also admired PISTON for its

unwavering determination in refusing to be constrained by repressive regulations during the pandemic. Additionally, NUPL commended PISTON for asserting the rights of transport workers to travel freely and earn decent living. They affirmed that the most effective way to stand up for our fundamental rights to life and freedom is through collective action.

NUPL emphasized that through continuous and unwavering struggle, the transport sector, along with the poor and oppressed, will attain social justice. While it acknowledged that the existing legal system serves the interests of the ruling class, the pursuit of social justice will ultimately prevail.

■ **Atty. Neri Javier Colmenares**

*Samahan at Ugnayan ng Consumers Para sa Ikauunlad ng Bayan (SUKI)
Network and Bayan Muna*

Atty. Neri Javier Colmenares began his message by underscoring the interconnectedness between the transportation sector and consumers. He emphasized the importance of their collaborative efforts to address the challenges facing both the transport sector and consumers, stressing that the latter will also encounter difficulties once traditional jeepneys and other PUVs are phased out.

He also recalled the active involvement of Bayan Muna in various issues when it was still in Congress. These issues included the removal of the Value-Added Tax (VAT) on electricity, water, and fuel, as well as lowering the prices of essential goods. Bayan Muna worked alongside transport workers in their endeavors to abolish the oil deregulation law and oppose the bogus PUV modernization program. Colmenares then emphasized that Bayan Muna remains committed to struggling with the transport sector inside or outside of Congress, regardless whether there are elections or not.

Concluding his solidarity message, Colmenares lauded the transport sector for its significant battle against modernization. Despite the government's heavy-handed approach, their unity with the wider public, through the transport strike in March 2023, was an immense triumph. The transport sector inspired Filipinos by demonstrating the power of collective action. This exemplified the potential of unity across sectors, including jeepneys, buses, and other PUV operators and drivers, as well as consumers and the public.

■ **Reycel Hyacenth Bendaña**

Move As One Coalition (MAOC)

Reycel Hyacenth Bendaña commenced her solidarity message by highlighting the shared fate of transport workers and commuters. The interests of these two groups, she stressed, should not be set against each other. Bendaña reiterated that if the government does not heed the demands of transport workers, commuters will suffer the most. This, as an effect, will exacerbate the existing transport crisis, making commuting even more arduous for the 94 percent of Filipinos who do not have private vehicles. Transport workers are advocating for cleaner air and an environmentally friendly transportation system. However, the current program is displacing the transport workers, especially the elderly ones.

Bendaña revealed that the government has already been implementing the PUVMP for five years. However, it should have consulted the transport sector in designing a transport plan that is inclusive to transport workers. Since then, transport workers have voiced their apprehensions about the PUVMP's provisions; despite their efforts to be heard, they have been sidelined. The PUVMP remains inhumane as it has excluded both transport workers and commuters from a transport plan design that directly affects them. Bendaña suggested that a more appropriate response from the government would be to refrain from

blaming transport workers. It should instead consider how it can assist in addressing the issues raised.

Bendaña explained that transport strikes or *mga tigil pasada* demonstrate the transport sector's ability to disrupt the economy. It is the last resort of jeepney drivers and operators for the government to listen to their demands. The union, she added, not only considers their ability but also their capacity to sacrifice their income in order to sustain a prolonged strike until the government engages. Although commuters are caught in between, they extend that their demands for a humane and efficient transport system are shared. Ultimately, it is the government's action that is examined whether they intend to listen or disengage, as the transport workers exercise their fundamental rights to organize. MAOC extended their solidarity with those in the transport sector who may not be able to join the strike but advocate for a just PUV modernization program.

Bendaña concluded her solidarity message by stressing that transport workers and commuters share a common desire for a life of dignity and decent livelihoods to provide for their families. MAOC stands with commuters in their call for the government to listen and increase the supply of public transport, and also demands a just modernization of the transport sector to ensure dignified commuting and fair fares.

■ **Hon. Bonifacio L. Bosita**

1-RIDER Party-list

Hon. Bonifacio L. Bosita expressed his opposition to the phasing out of traditional jeepneys. He advocated for a more practical approach in modernizing the traditional jeepneys. Rather than replacing them, he suggested that it is sufficient to rehabilitate—to repair and improve the engines and chassis of current jeepneys. In closing, Hon. Bosita expressed his solidarity to the transport workers and emphasized the importance of unity within the sector.

3 Panel Discussion 1

The first panel discussion highlighted key systemic issues influencing the implementation of the PUVMP. The discourse delved into the translation of neoliberalism in the transport sector, the historical development of the PUVMP and its other iterations, and the resistance mounted by transport workers in response. It also elucidated how the government blindsides PUV drivers and operators in the context of the PUVMP; and has delved into the pending bills in Congress that seek to institutionalize the PUVMP. Lastly, it also sheds light to other World Bank-initiated transport projects in the country, and their relations to the PUVMP.



Hon. Manuel discussing the PUVMP bills filed in Congress

Source: *Mayday Multimedia*

“Prospects of the PUVMP”

■ **Hon. Raoul Dannel A. Manuel**

Kabataan Party-list (KPL)

Before starting his presentation, Hon. Raoul Dannel A. Manuel affirmed Kabataan Party-list's solidarity with the transport sector. He recognized that the youth and students are and will be affected by the transport crisis. Like everyone else, the latter also desire an efficient, environmentally-sound, reliable, safe, accessible, and affordable mass public transportation.

Hon. Manuel focused his discussion on evidence weighing on the PUVMP as discussed in the House of Representatives. KPL sits as a member of the Committee on Transportation in Congress, where all matters concerning public transportation services in the country are deliberated. Providing further context, Hon. Manuel presented a timeline of the PUVMP's deliberation in the Committee. Following the transport strike in March 2023, Congress held a hearing regarding the PUVMP, in which the KPL and other Makabayan Bloc members (GWP and ACT Teachers Party-list) participated. This hearing exposed numerous flaws in the PUVMP. First, with regards to the replacement of traditional jeepney units, as the government essentially placed preferences in sourcing units from foreign manufacturers. It was revealed in the meeting that local manufacturers such as Sarao and Francisco were ignored as candidates by the agency. The second issue discussed was the rehabilitation of older models of traditional jeepneys to comply with environmental standards as proposed by JODs. This proposal was also ignored as an option as the maintenance of the units are still being outsourced to foreign suppliers who will be contracted for the PUVMP. The findings from the congressional hearing are expected to be acted upon by Congress; if not, the transport sector, which includes both transport workers and commuters, may face further challenges.

The PUVMP was listed as a priority program by then-President Rodrigo R. Duterte in 2017, under the supervision of former Department of Transportation Secretary Arthur P. Tugade. Continuing under the current administration of President Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr., some officials have aimed to adopt the OFG into law through Congress, despite the transport sector and the public's objections to it. If the plan succeeds, it will further institutionalize the bogus modernization program. Between July 2022 and January 2023, three bills institutionalizing the OFG have already been filed by lawmakers in the Congress. Hon. Manuel asserted that it is essential to examine these bills closely. If they are found to be disadvantageous or questionable, these bills should be strongly opposed.

According to Hon. Manuel, major points of the bills include:

- The Department of Transportation (DOTr) remains to be the leading agency responsible for releasing the implementing rules and regulations (IRR).
- The Bureau of Philippine Standards of the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), together with the DOTr, is in charge of establishing the road-worthiness standards for the modern PUVs (engines should be Euro-4).
- Subsidies for PUV operators and drivers range from 10% to 20% of the modern PUV unit's acquisition cost/price.
- There will be a tripartite lending mechanism between the government, private financing institutions, and PUV operators, with an interest rate of 4% and a 15-year amortization period.
- The government's budget for subsidies (both for PUV operators and drivers and local manufacturers) and loans can be sourced from either the unused PHP 5.0 billion or 20% of the gross

collection from vehicle owners under the Republic Act 8794 (Motor Vehicle User's Charge).

- Should there be a remaining budget from the DTI's Comprehensive Automotive Resurgence Strategy (CARS) Program, it will be an additional source of subsidy for local manufacturers (production and assembly) of locally made modern PUV units and parts.
- A five-year transition period will be afforded to PUV operators to comply with the requirements specified in the IRR of DOTr. After this period, non-complying PUV operators who wish to continue providing services will receive a provisional authority for 1 year. If they are unable to comply, after which the government will provide financial assistance for them to find alternative livelihoods.

Hon. Manuel pointed out that the subsidy for local manufacturers was only initiated after the implementation of the PUVMP. Large foreign corporations are at a head start to comply with government's specifications. Furthermore, the subsidy also remains unsure, as it will depend on the remaining budget from the CARS Program of DTI. The availability of funds from the DTI and the Motor Vehicle User's Charge for subsidizing PUV drivers and operators, as well as supporting local manufacturers, and loans, is also still uncertain. Hon. Manuel also noted that the 10-20% (around PHP 280,000 – PHP 560,000) subsidy for PUV drivers and operators is far from the full unit price of PHP 2.8 million, quoted from the unit, which has passed the government's standards for PUV replacement.

While the word "phaseout" is not explicitly mentioned in the bills, the proposed points indicate that this is the direction that the institutionalization of the OFG is heading towards. The sentiments of the transport sector and the Filipino people have been ignored despite the extensive support for the transport strike. This shows that

the fight has substantial grounds. Hon. Manuel called for an elevation of the resistance and continued struggle against the PUVMP and OFG. Concluding his sharing, he highlighted that KPL, and the rest of the Makabayan Bloc, draw inspiration and strength from the ongoing fight of transport workers and commuters for efficient, environmentally-sound, reliable, safe, accessible, and affordable mass public transportation.

“Kasaysayan ng Pagsulpot ng Negosyong Modernisasyon at Ang Pakikipaglaban Natin Dito (History of the Privatized Modernization and the Resistance of PUV Operators and Drivers)”

■ Ruben Baylon

PISTON

In his presentation, Ruben Baylon provided valuable insights on the development of the bogus PUV modernization program and the transport workers' years of struggle to defend their rights and livelihood. He explained that the bogus modernization program started as early as 2012, with the government's focus on small-capacity PUVs. The initial phase began with the modernization of the UV Express PUV, which entailed replacing existing ones with new units. UV Express operators and drivers were the first to experience PUV modernization, and their resistance to such policy set a precedent for further government initiatives which now affect JODs and other PUV operators and drivers. This marked the inception of alliances formed by UV Express operators and drivers to protest the bogus modernization program. They organized massive rallies and extended caravans to convey their demands to LTFRB, DOTr, and Malacañang. Despite succeeding in conveying their concerns, some of the alliance

leaders were coerced to the bogus modernization in exchange for commissions for themselves.

In late 2015, the DOTr and LTFRB introduced the traditional jeepney modernization program. It was promoted as a solution to the traffic crisis, with electric jeepneys (e-jeepneys) making headlines. Even former US President Barack Hussein Obama II rode one during his visit to the Philippines. The expensive City Optimized Managed Electric Transport (COMET) e-jeepneys were the program's initial rollouts. As early as December 2015, various transport groups, particularly that of the JODs, organized rallies and directed their protests at DOTr, LTFRB, and Malacañang. The transport sector continued its resistance. Upon the assumption of President Duterte in 2016, their demand included the removal of the phaseout policy for PUVs, including traditional jeepneys. Although Duterte made this promise to JODs, he did not fulfill them.

Between 2016 and 2017, PISTON sent letters of request for a dialogue with Malacañang, but these requests received no response from President Duterte. The transport groups were even told to go on strike just so they could be heard by the government. With the release of the OFG in June 2017, pickets were organized to protest the unresponsiveness of Malacañang. In October 2017, JODs launched a two-day transport strike. What followed after were a series of 'anti-people' Department Orders (DOs) and Memorandum Circulars (MCs) from the DOTr and LTFRB, which continued well into Marcos, Jr.'s administration. Continuous resistance was maintained against the DOs and MCs. In March 2023, a two-day transport strike was carried out again, pushing back the franchise consolidation deadline from June 2023 to December 2023.

According to Baylon, the current PUV modernization focuses on Euro-4 compliant modern jeepneys costing over PHP 2.8 million. Although the Development Bank of the Philippines (DBP) and Land Bank of the Philippines (LBP) offer subsidies for JODs who

plan to obtain loans for modern units, these subsidies represent a small percentage of the overall unit price— only less than 10%. Additionally, the available equity subsidy as well as the loanable amount (to purchase modern jeepney units) from the DBP and LBP are only limited. Thus, this pushes JODs to access loans from private financing institutions and banks instead.

Baylon mentioned that the traditional jeepneys that we have today originated during World War II, through the transformation of American military jeeps. At that time, the government of the Philippines was expected to take the lead in supporting public transportation. However, they abandoned this responsibility. With the government's lack of initiative, the Filipino people took it amongst themselves and found ways to establish their own public transportation system—the traditional jeepney.

Baylon also debunked the prevailing notion that traditional jeepneys have not been modernizing, explaining that JODs have long been modernizing their traditional jeepneys. Over the years, traditional jeepneys have seen improvement in passenger capacity (from just 5 passengers to 20); and engines used (such as 22I, C190, 240, 4VA1, 4D15, 4D30, and BC2 among others). He also clarified that local manufacturers like Sarao and Francisco have been actively manufacturing traditional jeepneys. Their track record of producing locally-made jeepneys is proof that traditional jeepneys have been modernizing. Despite this, the government has shown preference in expensive, imported, and foreign-made modern jeepney units, making the cost of modern jeepneys extremely expensive. Supporting the local manufacturers, he noted, will reduce the cost of new jeepneys significantly.

“The Blind Side of the Government’s Jeepney Modernization Program”

■ Teodoro Mendoza

Retired Professor at the University of the Philippines Los Baños (UPLB)

Retired Professor of the University of the Philippines Los Baños Teodoro Mendoza delivered a comprehensive presentation on the overlooked aspects of the PUVMP. The PUVMP purportedly aims to enhance passenger safety and comfort and provide a reliable, clean, and eco-friendly transportation system. The rationale behind the need to phase out traditional jeepneys is based on claims that (1) these emit hazardous and highly pollutive gases, contributing 15-33% of emissions in Metro Manila, and (2) are described as being driven recklessly and undisciplined, with passenger-unfriendly, unsafe, crowded seats, and poorly maintained seatbelts. However, Mendoza contested these claims, arguing that traditional jeepneys are responsible for only about 4% of overall emissions in Metro Manila, based on his computation using government data.

Mendoza also expressed his desire to preserve traditional jeepneys as part of Philippine culture. It is a symbol of Filipino innovation, resourcefulness, and creativity. Many local manufacturers and mechanics, he asserted, possess the skills to repair, overhaul, and even manufacture new traditional jeepneys.

According to Mendoza (2021), there are three main blindsides of the PUVMP based on the OFG:

1. Fleet Management Scheme

The scheme requires JODs to form cooperatives or corporations to consolidate operations and management. However, a prerequisite is that jeepney operators must surrender their franchise and traditional jeepneys. This essentially means surrendering their primary source of livelihood. Fleet management involves maintaining and overseeing at least 15 modern jeepney units.

The question arises as to where the JODs can find land and funds for the required layover garage. The issue of training for cooperatives and corporations through a drivers' academy still remains uncertain. Moreover, Mendoza explained that the route rationalization via the Local Public Transport Route Plan (LPTRP) is yet to be accomplished by many Local Government Units (LGUs).

2. Financing

The financing aspect presents a significant challenge, as it is unclear how small JODs with limited capital can acquire modern jeepney units. The expensive price of modern jeepney units is one of the major issues of the program, as admitted by DOTr and LTFRB.

Considering the total number of traditional jeepneys in the Philippines (300,000) and the cost of each expensive modern jeepney (PHP 2.5 million in 2021), the total cost of the program

would be PHP 750 billion. In contrast, the combined loans offered by Development Bank of the Philippines (DBP) and Land Bank of the Philippines (LBP) to JODs only amount to only PHP 2.5 billion (PHP 1.5 billion from DBP and PHP 1.0 billion from LBP). This is sufficient to purchase 1,000 units only or 0.33% of the total traditional jeepneys to be replaced. The financing aspect of the program is clearly problematic given the insufficient funding from government financial institutions (GFIs) for the PUVMP.

According to Mendoza, another possible source of loans could be private financing institutions. However, these require good track records and collateral for loans, thus presenting additional challenges to the JODs. He also pointed out that some argue that LGUs could take over the PUVMP.

Thus, the question arises: do LGUs even have sufficient funds to purchase expensive modern jeepneys and recover the costs to acquire more?

3. Repayment of Loans

The repayment of loans depends on the fixed cost (base price of modern jeepney per unit) and variable cost (interest rate and repayment duration). Based on computations of the fixed cost and the variable cost per year and translated to per day basis: if a modern jeepney unit was priced at PHP 2.5 million, the earnings of modern jeepneys should reach PHP 7,000. For it to happen, they would have to increase the fare by 2-3 times to cover the acquisition and maintenance costs. Fares increase by PHP 1.0 more or less per PHP 200,000 increase in jeepney.

Mendoza explained that the claim of the government that there will be no fare hikes is impossible given that there are associated costs with the modernization of traditional jeepneys and PUVs - affecting

both the JODs and the commuters. The LTRFB has yet to establish a fare regulation policy for the modern PUVs.

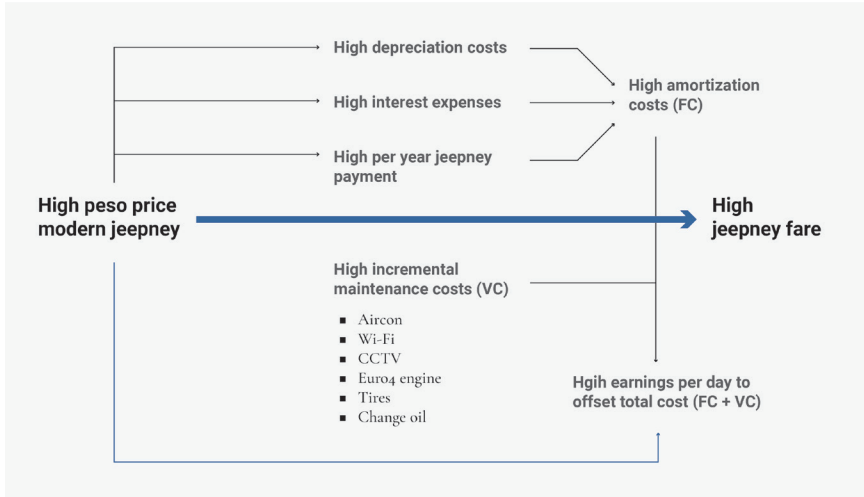


Figure 1. Interrelated effects of High Price of Modern Jeepneys (Php 2.5 million)
Source: Teodoro Mendoza

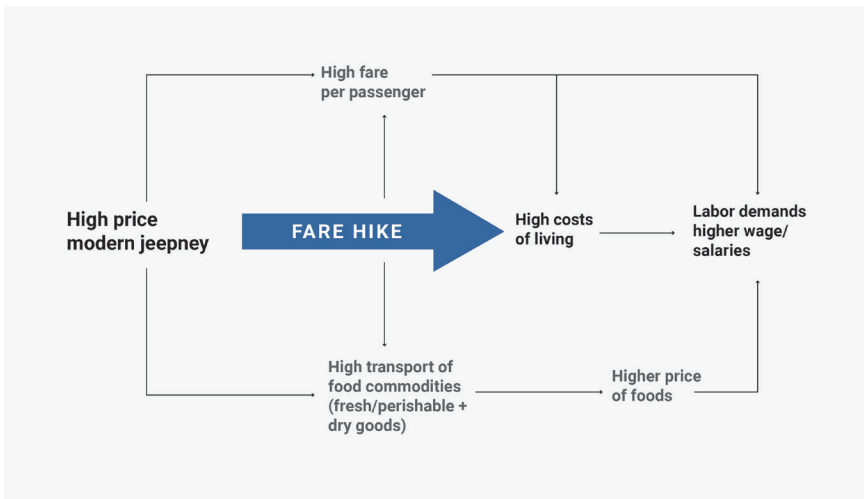


Figure 2. Domino effect of fare increase
Source: Teodoro Mendoza

Before concluding his presentation, Mendoza presented possible short-term, and medium to long-term solutions:⁶

Short-term / Transition Stage (1–10 years)

1. Allow engine overhauls or remanufacturing to reduce carbon emissions significantly, aligning with the Clean Air Act's emission standards. Removal of engines that are 15 years or older must not be imposed. LPG fueled engines must be allowed to be used in jeepneys since these emit less gas. Privately owned emission tests apparatus must be calibrated with the reference machines, stamped, regularly monitored and evaluated.
2. Encourage local manufacturers to fabricate safe, comfortable, and low-emission jeepneys and PUVs. There are numerous parts that can be manufactured locally, such as the rubber tires (as rubber plants grow significantly in the country) and vehicle parts (e.g. chassis, body, tire wheel, and other simple parts).
3. Relax the Euro-4 engine prescription, and allow engines that meet the mission standards of the Clean Air Act. The prescription of Euro-4 engines should not be mandatory. Citizens should be afforded a choice of engine types based on the intended use, provided they comply with the emission standards. Mendoza noted that Euro-4 engines are actually already outdated abroad. He questions why it is being enforced strongly: "Are we being made into a dumping ground for obsolete and expensive engines?"

6 Teodoro Mendoza, "Addressing the 'blind side' of the government's jeepney modernization." UP Center for Integrative and Development Studies, 2021. https://cids.up.edu.ph/discussion_paper/up-cids-discussion-paper-series-2021-02-addressing-the-blind-side-of-the-governments-jeepney-modernization-program/

Different engine types can be considered for specific circumstances:

- for short distances and flat road: electric jeep;
- for areas with uphill roads: LPG type as it carries a lot of power;
- for very long distances such as inter-province travel: diesel-fueled engines as gas stations are already in place; less traffic and less stress on the engine which will result in lower emissions.

Medium to Long-term (11–25 years and beyond)

Promote homegrown modernization to generate employment, reduce dollar outflow from imports, increase the value of locally produced crops like rubber, and provide higher incomes for rubber farmers and local manufacturers.

Explaining that import-dependent modernization will drain the local economy, Mendoza emphasized, "This is not favorable to the Philippines, more so it is unaffordable to many, and makes only the poor, poorer and the rich, richer." No country has fully modernized their vehicles through importation, making it the major blindside of the PUVMP. Traditional jeepney modernization should be viewed as a component feature of our overall sustainable and inclusive economic development framework.

Porras' presentation focused mainly on the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Projects of the World Bank (WB). She explained that the WB initiated the BRT project started in Manila in the 1990s, but was halted due to WB's concerns with the Philippine government. However, these were later continued in Cebu and General Santos.

In the Cebu iteration of the BRT project, there was an intention to replace traditional jeepneys with expensive modern PUV units equipped with Euro-4 engines.

According to the said BRT project, the existing mass public transport in Cebu is considered outdated. Traditional jeepneys were singled out as the main source of pollution and a safety risk to passengers. This claim rationalized the replacement of the traditional jeepneys with modern bus units equipped with modern technologies that would make commuting easier for the public.

The "one cooperative, one route" system was first introduced in the Cebu BRT project. This system compelled the formation of cooperatives where significant capital was required from JODs for processing of licenses, permits, and other requirements. Porras noted that, according to a cooperative they interviewed in Cebu, JODs had to pay no less than PHP 70,000 for registration, with an additional requirement of a PHP 300,000 capitalization to participate in the BRT Project.

Though many cooperatives raised the necessary capital, they still couldn't participate due to issues with registration. Some of them had violations dating back to the 1970s, which remain unresolved by the LTFRB. Porras also highlighted that the Cebu BRT project implementation led to many JODs not being absorbed, particularly senior citizens aged 65 and above. Moreover, consultations of EILER with transport workers in Cebu revealed that the design of modern bus units is not suitable for the city's road infrastructure.

In the 32 routes affected by the BRT Project in Cebu, around 3,000 to 5,000 JODs were at risk of losing their livelihoods because traditional jeepneys were being replaced with modern bus units. However, Porrás explained that in the actual implementation of the Cebu BRT project, it was not modern bus units that replaced the traditional jeepney units but modern PUV units that the government had already ordered in advance. According to EILER's research, modern PUV units were already available prior to the implementation of the Cebu BRT project, indicating that there had already been a plan to use these purchased vehicles. Despite other affordable PUV units, which were also compliant with the Cebu BRT project's requirements, these were not allowed to be used.

Meanwhile, it was in the General Santos BRT project that the route rationalization was first implemented. This was also included in the PUVMP as one of its components that has led to the removal of traditional jeepney routes.

Through her discussion of the BRT project, Porrás hoped to have exposed another transport modernization project that involves scheming between large corporations and the government. Like the PUVMP, the BRT project claims to be for "environmental protection" and the "modernization of public transport." However, it only worsens the hardships of those in the transport sector, especially JODs, as well as commuter's dependent on traditional jeepneys and PUVs. She emphasized the need to relate the WB-funded BRT project to the OFG and the PUVMP in order to understand that government policies and programs are often influenced by neoliberal financial institutions like the WB. These institutions aim to expedite profit generation for large corporations rather than improving public services or creating employment.

Porras also provided key recommendations before ending her presentation:

- Transport modernization plans should be designed based on what transport workers can afford. Development should be people centered. The well-being of people is inseparable in discussions of progress and development (whether in modernization, technology, or sustainability).
- Any government project should create decent jobs and provide regular employment. Modernization programs (on transportation, in this case) should increase employment opportunities.
- Local industries should be developed to produce transportation modes that meet the conditions and needs of both transport workers and commuters. Local industries should also be environment-friendly.
- Government initiatives (whether projects, programs, or policies) that are anti-people should be rejected and opposed. Alongside strengthening the campaign against opposing, recommendations should be made for people-centered development.

"Negosyo, Hindi serbisyo: Modernisasyon ng Pampublikong Transportasyon sa Pilipinas (Business over Service: Modernization of the Public Transportation in the Philippines)"

■ Rosario Guzman

IBON Foundation

Prior to the sharing of Rosario Guzman, a video was played featuring former President Rodrigo Roa Duterte berating PISTON, JODs, and other PUV operators and drivers who voiced their concerns against the PUVMP. In the said video⁷, Duterte said:

*"Mga anak natin maging bobo 'yan. Stand-still ang traffic. It does not move. All the time, people of the Philippines are inhaling the fumes. Kung maintindihan niyo 'yan at nakikinig kayo PISTON - di ako papayag...alam mo pag ako ang Presidente, patayin niyo ako or sumunod kayo! 'Di ako uupo dito at magsalita kung 'di masusunod ang batas. *Curse words*! Magpapatayan talaga tayo! 'Di ako papayag.*

*Kung di niyo namodernize 'yan - umalis kayo! Mahirap kayo? *Curse words*! Sige! Magtiis kayo sa hirap at gutom - wala akong pakialam! It's the majority of the Filipino people - 'wag niyong ipasubo ang tao! Pag may sinabi ang gobyerno, 'yan (na) 'yan!"*

(Our children will become stupid. The traffic remains at a standstill. It does not move. All the time, the people of the Philippines are inhaling fumes. If you understand that and if you are listening, PISTON - I won't allow it. You know, if I were the President, kill me or follow me. I won't sit here and speak if

7 INQUIRER.net. 2017. "Duterte to Piston: Obey jeepney modernization plan or else..." Youtube, 1:37. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hAChDVAotmg>.

the law is not followed! *Curse words*! We will really kill each other! I won't allow it.

If you are not able to modernize (the traditional jeepneys) then be gone! You are poor? *Curse words*! Then, go ahead - endure the suffering and hunger - I don't care! It's for the majority of the Filipino people - don't endanger them! When the government says something, that's it!

Guzman initiated her presentation by acknowledging President Duterte's earlier remarks, explaining that this clearly illustrates neoliberalism in transport modernization— the topic assigned to her. She defined neoliberalism as, “a policy where anarchy prevails; corporations rule; the government stands aside (or paves the way for private corporations); public services and utilities are controlled by private corporations. If you don't like it, then die!”

She explained that neoliberalism is fascism within capitalism or fascism in the economy. Her discussion then shifted to the pressing transportation crisis in the Philippines. Guzman underscored that the Philippines is facing one of the worst traffic situations globally, as confirmed by the data from Waze. According to the 2022 TomTom Traffic Index, Metro Manila ranked ninth as the most congested city of 390 cities across 56 countries.⁸ She pointed out that approximately PHP 3.5 billion a day is lost in the Philippine economy, as a result.

She elaborated that the typical 30-minute commute in the Philippines can extend by an additional 27 minutes in the morning and 38 minutes in the evening. This is primarily caused by persistent traffic congestion. However, this computation has not yet considered the waiting time of commuters. Guzman emphasized that also has to be accounted for.

⁸ TomTom Traffic Index 2022: <https://www.tomtom.com/traffic-index/ranking/>.

Furthermore, she pointed out that 88% of air pollution in Metro Manila is from vehicle emissions, not from industrial or agricultural sources. The Health Professionals Alliance Against COVID-19 has even identified the inadequate and unsafe transportation system as a critical public health issue, framing traffic as a health crisis.

Guzman contended that the root cause of the transportation crisis is neoliberalism, particularly manifested in the transport modernization. This has led to an absence of an efficient, environmentally-sound, reliable, accessible, affordable, and safe mass public transportation system in the Philippines. As highlighted by IBON Foundation (2018, 28):

The Philippine government implements neoliberal policies in mass transport, including infrastructure development, route planning, and traffic management which is generally geared towards privatization and deregulation of mass transport. These have ultimately created the chaotic and anarchic situation of the country's transportation system since these policies have only promoted the profit-making interests of infrastructure, transportation, automobile and rail corporations, as well as real estate companies, shopping malls, fare collecting banks, and the commissioning LGUs and agencies.

Neoliberalism in transportation is clearly manifested in:

1. absence of mass transport modes that are owned, operated, and managed by the government;
2. dominance of private corporations in different modes of transport (PUV, bus, railway, ferry) and even road networks;
3. unplanned transportation system wherein transport modes are unintegrated and disconnected from each other;
4. chaotic and uncoordinated governance of the transportation system

These promote a privatized, individualized, and private car-intensive transportation system in urban centers. This is coupled with the proliferation of vehicle loans (that are offered by private financial institutions/banks); enforcement of vehicle number coding (that encourages purchase of more than one private vehicle); and construction of roads and highways (that are accessible only to private vehicle users). She noted that these exacerbate profiteering of private corporations.

The result is what she referred to as "Carmageddon," a scenario where commuters and transport workers wage daily battles against private vehicle users. Elucidating this, the following shows the figures on the road space occupied by public transport modes vis-a-vis private vehicles:

- 70% of passenger trips in Metro Manila, Southern Luzon, and Central Luzon are made in (small-capacity and large-capacity) public transport modes but are only occupying 22% of the available road space. 78% of the road space are occupied by private vehicles (which only have 1-2 passengers).
- The majority of traffic congestion results from private vehicles, which accounts for 44% of the traffic volume. Registered cars (71%) and sports utility vehicles or SUVs (67%) are disproportionately concentrated in Metro Manila, Southern Luzon, and Central Luzon, where capital and modernization efforts are also focused.
- Every year, the number of registered vehicles steadily increases by 10% along with sales volumes (which increase by 31%) and auto loans (which increase by 9.5%), further contributing to the traffic crisis.

The consequences of neoliberalism have been especially detrimental to public transport. From 2012 to 2019, bus and jeepney journeys decreased by 14%, while private car and motorcycle travel increased by 46%. Subsequently, from 2019 to 2021, bus supply dropped by 22%, and jeepney supply by 46% (exacerbated by the pandemic).

The government's response to the crisis focused on the:

1. construction of roads and highways by private corporations through programs such as Build Build Build during the Duterte administration and the Build Better More in the Marcos, Jr. administration;
2. importation of foreign-made modern PUV units supplied by foreign corporations, effectively phasing out traditional jeepneys; and
3. enforcement of shorter shelf life or lifespan of vehicles, benefitting foreign corporations (that sell vehicles) and private financial institutions/banks (that offer auto loans).

The PUVMP centers around corporate interests, primarily benefiting foreign private corporations involved in manufacturing, vehicles, engines, and parts along with local oligarchs that act as salesmen.

Guzman also argued that the government's equity subsidy falls short. The loans it offers only lead jeepney operators and drivers to further debt. Route rationalization, under the LPTRP, opens the door to corporate monopoly, with one route controlled by a single corporation. Meanwhile, small PUV operators are challenged to meet the financial requirements of the PUVMP, effectively disqualifying them and potentially leading to the loss of franchises along with their routes.

The government's proposed replacement, the modern jeepney units, will either be largely assembled using imported components by local

assemblers or imported as fully-built units. Notable pioneers in the production of e-jeepneys, such as the Philippine Utility Vehicle Inc., operate as consortia of assemblers and car part manufacturers with foreign capital, including companies like Yazaki-Torres, VSO, Glasteck, Nito Seiki, Autofir, MD Juan Enterprises, and Manly Plastics. Moreover, one of the leading manufacturers of e-jeepneys today is the Teco Electric and Machinery Co. Ltd., a Taiwanese company and a member of the Electric Vehicle Association of the Philippines. They have exported fully-built e-jeepneys from their factories in Taiwan to fleet managers in the Philippines. Similarly, the COMET, once praised as a remarkable alternative to traditional jeepneys, was designed and manufactured by the US company Pangea Motors, LLC and distributed by Global Electric Transportation, Ltd. Even the approved prototypes of the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) for compliant PUVs are based on platforms designed by foreign corporations, including Japanese companies such as Mitsubishi, Fuso, Suzuki, and Isuzu, as well as the Indian corporation Tata Motors (IBON Foundation 2018). The following corporations contributed to the 16 prototypes which were unveiled in October 2017:

- a.** Almazora Motors Corp., Centro Manufacturing Corp., Del Monte Motors, Hino Motors Philippines Corp., and Sta. Rosa Motor Works Inc. provided the bodies;
- b.** Foton Motor Philippines, Mitsubishi Motors Philippines Corporation - Fuso, Hino, Hyundai Philippines, ICC Ichigan Inc., Isuzu Philippines Corp., Philippine Utility Vehicle Inc., and Pilipinas Taj Autogroup Inc. (the local distributor of Tata Motors) supplied the platforms.

These above-mentioned corporations are poised to benefit the most from the PUVMP as they will be the primary sources of compliant modern PUVs. Many of them are leading players in the manufacturing of vehicles, parts, accessories, and engines. Toyota, Mitsubishi, and Isuzu are the three most profitable corporations in

the vehicle manufacturing sector (IBON Foundation 2018). Guzman also explained the rise of the electric vehicle industry, which the Philippines is poised to embrace. Private corporations, both local and foreign, are starting to capitalize on this emerging market.

Through a sweeping mandate to modernize public transportation, the government has consistently prioritized the economic gains of a select foreign private corporations engaged in transportation infrastructure and mass transport—at the expense of the welfare of the poor majority. In conclusion, Guzman called for a collective rejection of the profit-driven import-dependent modernization of transportation. She stressed that the transport workers' fight is a fight for all citizens aspiring for a sustainable economy.

Reactions

■ Edrich Samonte

PARA - Advocates for Inclusive Transport (PARA – AIT)

Edrich Samonte, highlighting a key point from the earlier discussion of Guzman. Samonte reiterated that a transportation crisis was already evident even before the introduction of the current jeepney modernization program. He also referenced Mendoza's research, published under the UP CIDS AltDev, which explained the economic repercussions of the PUVMP for transport workers, commuters, and the public.

Samonte pointed out that there are currently only 180,000 traditional jeepneys on the road 'after' the pandemic. However, the government has shown no interest in restoring the pre-pandemic number of 300,000 which leads to substantial losses for commuters, affecting not only the transport workers. This issue is of paramount importance

as it challenges the prevailing narrative that frames the concerns of transport workers as mere inconveniences for commuters.

Samonte also noted that commuters are becoming more aware of the impact of the issues faced by the transport workers. He then stressed that PARA-AIT is not against “modern” transportation. However, PARA-AIT demands that any modernization in transportation must be inclusive, humane, and just, not only to commuters but more so to the transport workers. Lastly, he emphasized the need for an efficient, environmentally-sound, reliable, accessible, affordable, and safe mass public transportation system in the Philippines.

■ **Jasper Abunyan**

QCiklista

Jasper Abunyan highlighted that public transportation is largely left out when one examines the plans of DOTr and other government agencies concerned with mobility. From the viewpoint of cyclists, he explained that the desire to promote cycling as an alternative mode of transport has grown, largely due to the ongoing transport crisis which was exacerbated by the pandemic.

He noted that the PUVMP clearly leaves behind the stakeholders in public transport, leading to many problems (especially to transport workers). Lastly, he underscored that the transport crisis is not solely the concern of the transport workers. It affects everyone, including commuters, cyclists, and other social sectors.

■ Ja Montalban

Pro-People Engineers and Leaders

Ja Montalban pointed out that although the PUVMP may sound appealing at first, especially for commuters, it is unjust upon closer inspection of its provisions. The PUVMP seemingly adopts a "survival of the fittest" approach, shifting the burdens of the program onto the transport workers. He called the modernization program a "debt trap" for JODs and other PUV operators and drivers. Their current earnings, drastically affected by the pandemic, are not sufficient to cover the costs associated with the PUVMP.

The government's version of transport modernization, he explained, is anti-poor and is dominated by large foreign private corporations. According to him, modernization should empower and enable people, instead of putting down the marginalized even further. Lastly, he reminded fellow engineers and scientists to consistently ask the question, "Modernization/ Development for whom?"

4 Panel Discussion II

The second panel discussion centers on the unique experiences of Jeepney Operators and Drivers Associations (JODAs) in two regions of the country: the Southern Tagalog Region and the National Capital Region. The discussion also emphasized the principles of a sustainable mass public transportation system and presented a proposal for its implementation in the country.

■ Elmer Portea

*Southern Tagalog Region Transport Sector Organization (STARTER)
PISTON*

Elmer Portea emphasized the vital roles of JODs and PUV operators and drivers in the transport sector. He noted that the operators and drivers in the Southern Luzon region strongly oppose the PUV phaseout.

In the struggle of the transport sector against the bogus modernization program, it has become evident that the PUVMP is not in favor of PUV operators and drivers. He asserted that franchise consolidation under the PUVMP is detrimental to the interests of transport workers as it only benefits foreign private corporations. Drivers and operators are put in a challenging situation. Failure to register in the PUVMP, which requires forfeiture of their individual franchise, places them in a precarious position. Efforts to forcibly consolidate franchises has led to the issuance of MCs and DOs, leading to the removal of the 5-year validity of their franchise and issuance of provisional authority; the validity of which is dependent on DOTr and LTFRB issuances.

Portea explained that refusing to fight against the PUVMP effectively abandons not only their cause but also their children and the public, since they provide a vital public service in transportation.

He hoped that the summit could be an opportunity to make their voices heard in Senate and Congress, urging the Marcos, Jr. administration to prioritize the needs of the Filipino people over the interests of private corporations that aim to earn profit from the modernization program.

■ **Zaldy Canaval**

No to PUV Phaseout Coalition - Pasig

Zaldy Canaval expressed deep sadness over the prolonged hardships faced by JODs and other PUV operators and drivers. Despite the long years of dedicated service in public transport to commuters and the public, it is apparent that the government does not recognize their meaningful contributions and their role in the country's economic development. He noted that many PUV operators and drivers feared that they would no longer be able to provide for their families and educate their children.

He raised concerns about the challenges posed by the franchise consolidation, emphasizing that the requirements of the bogus modernization program are unattainable for JODs. Major issues include the high cost of modern jeepney units and the stipulation of a minimum of 15 units per corporation or cooperative. He questioned the fate of the many JODs who might lose their jobs as a result. He stressed the importance of restoring their 5-year franchise as it would secure their livelihoods. Canaval also criticized the modernization program for ensuring that JODs fall into debt without earning.

JODs in the Pasig-Taguig-Pateros-Marikina route vehemently opposed the government's modernization program and called for its termination. Additionally, Canaval pointed out that while many congressmen and senators express support for preserving the iconic traditional jeepney, they have not approved the locally-made jeepneys endorsed by local manufacturers such as Sarao and Francisco. According to him, it is because the government has already ordered a significant number of modern jeepney units, which remain unused.

■ Renato Reyes, Jr.

Secretary General, Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (BAYAN)

Renato Reyes, Jr. started with discussing the pivotal role of mass public transport in modern society. He emphasized its significance for the movement of the population, particularly workers and employees who drive the economy. In urban areas, the development of a mass public transportation system within a comprehensive mass public transportation plan should be at the heart of urban and rural planning.

Sustainable mass public transportation system has to be efficient, environmentally-sound, reliable, accessible, affordable, and safe:

- 3. *Efficient and Environmentally-sound:*** Efficient transport involves minimizing travel distances and durations, conserving fuel, and reducing vehicle emissions. It also has associated benefits such as less traffic congestion, lower transport costs, and more time for work/leisure/education. Environmentally-sound transport promotes clean and energy-efficient technologies, but also ensures that transport modes are efficient (to conserve fuel and reduce vehicle emissions).

4. *Reliable*: Reliable transport ensures passengers reach their destinations on time without unnecessary time wasted on waiting and traveling. This also means transport should be predictable and commuters are assured transport services. Proper operation and maintenance are essential for reliability. Increasing infrastructure capacity and implementing organized route planning can enhance reliability.
5. *Safe*: Creating pedestrian-friendly conditions and infrastructures, and implementing safety measures and procedures can reduce accidents, traffic fatalities, and improve public health. Prioritizing passenger safety, rather than meeting daily quotas, rental fees, or profit, should be the primary concern of transport agencies and transport workers.
6. *Accessible and Affordable*: Mass public transport should be affordable to the majority of the population, especially the poor. It should offer affordable fares for workers. It must also have infrastructure and facilities for persons with disabilities, the elderly, and children.

Reyes emphasized that without mass public transport, the economy would come to a standstill. Explaining its social value, he argued that it is then the government's primary responsibility to provide mass public transport that serves the interests of the public.

For the government to develop a comprehensive mass public transportation plan that benefits the majority of Filipinos, Reyes noted that the government must recognize mass public transport as a public utility and should consider nationalizing it. He explained that no industrialized country in the world has developed without considering its transportation system as a public utility. This recognition implies nationalization of the mass public transport, where it is owned by the government and involves active participation in the provision of the transport service. The objective is to assure

the welfare of the commuting public and promote broader social and economic advantages for the country, rather than prioritizing profits. Hence, the government should reverse privatization and initiate the process of nationalizing the mass public transport.

While acknowledging that other countries took decades to create a functional mass public transportation system, Reyes criticized the lack of a comprehensive mass public transportation plan in the Philippines.

Reyes also highlighted the need for a comprehensive mass public transportation plan that maximizes both small-capacity and large-capacity transport—one that integrates land, sea, and air modes of transport, as well as active transport such as walking and cycling. He argued that a well-structured mass public transportation system, which is integrated into a comprehensive mass public transportation plan, could provide stable employment for transport workers, guaranteeing their income regardless of passenger load.

Reyes then addressed the importance of government investment in a robust mass public transportation system, highlighting the need to utilize the public funds for such development instead of through corrupt practices. He emphasized that commuters, transport workers, and operators are inherently aligned in their common goal of improving the mass public transportation system and fostering economic development.

Currently, the PUVMP is geared to phase out the traditional jeepneys from public service. He emphasized that the traditional jeepneys took the slack when the government abandoned the development of a comprehensive mass public transportation plan. He explained that the transport sector has the capability to formulate a plan to improve the PUV transport system that aligns with the broader goal of improving the mass public transportation system, in line with the overall development of the local economy. He maintained that it is not impossible for the government to run mass public transport, as

this is practiced in other countries. In cases where a government is perceived as corrupt, the pursuit of a competent government should be advocated.

Echoing BAYANs' recommendations, Reyes called for the government to undertake the following actions:

- Implement PUV modernization that is part of a comprehensive mass public transportation plan. This should prioritize the protection of JODs' livelihoods.
- Allocate government funds to support the rehabilitation of traditional jeepneys, recognizing them as public utilities that benefit society. This approach should be viewed as a social investment.
- Cease treating transport modernization as a profit-driven venture benefiting foreign private corporations and private financial institutions/banks. Instead, link the modernization of mass public transport modes to local manufacturing (and production) to create new jobs and sustain the livelihoods of transport workers.

Any form of cooperativization should be voluntary and gradual. It must also be based on the capabilities of drivers and operators to avoid unintended consequences, such as the loss of livelihoods for JODs and PUV operators and drivers.

Furthermore, he emphasized that drivers and operators are not opposed to the idea of developing the mass public transportation system. Transport workers do not wish to witness it become a profit-driven business that jeopardizes their livelihoods and allows large foreign private corporations to take control of the transport sector. Their aim is to improve the mass public transportation system while ensuring a humane approach to its development. In conclusion, Reyes underscored the importance of collective action in resisting the PUVMP and forwarding the demands of the transport sector

Reactions

■ Jerome Adonis

Secretary General, Kilusang Mayo Uno (KMU)

Jerome Adonis, representing the labor sector, emphasized the interconnectedness of the struggles faced by workers, drivers, and operators. He pointed out that the fight of the transport sector mirrors the challenges faced by the workers, as both are struggling against profit-seeking interests of the private corporations.

He maintained that the modernization program is bogus and will not benefit the transport workers, commuters, and the public. Adonis called for unity among various sectors to oppose the impending expiration of franchises and provisional authorities of JODs in December 2023.



Reactors of the 2nd Panel Discussion
Source: Mayday Multimedia

■ **Eufemia Doringo**

Secretary General, Kalipunan ng Damayang Mahihirap

In her reaction, Eufemia Doringo, representing the urban poor sector, highlighted the importance of the current struggle of the transport workers. She pointed out that during the two-day transport strike in March 2023, it became evident that the fight and aspirations of the JODs and PUV operators and drivers, aligned with those of the commuters, workers, and the public.

Doringo emphasized that the government's focus is on its own gains as well as those of the private corporations, rather than the welfare of the people. Since it is the people who put them in power, it is their duty to provide service for the latter in return.

She stressed that the resolution to the current dilemma lies in the unity of various sectors and the public. She encouraged everyone to stand together, highlighting that people from the marginalized sector must be united in this fight. To end, Domingo urged everyone not to be afraid to fight for their livelihoods and rights, especially when the government is in the wrong and is violating their rights.

■ **Mike Acosta**

PISTON Baguio

Mike Acosta described the PUVMP as a program that is "killing us (the transport workers) softly." He narrated how the JODs in the Cordillera region were not able to operate during the height of the pandemic. He also highlighted the importance of traditional jeepneys in the mass transportation system. Until the present, traditional jeepney routes are still limited. With the PUVMP requirements being strongly enforced, the situation becomes even more difficult for transport workers.

■ **Sandy Cachoso**

Malayang Alyansa ng Bus Workers at Employees

Representing the transport workers operating public utility buses (PUBs), Sandy Cachoso noted that the struggle of fellow transport workers operating PUVs has been ongoing for years. Despite this, their commitment to public transport service has not waned. Since 2015, he mentioned, PISTON has been largely excluded in public consultations or hearings regarding the PUVMP.

He also asserted that the government's persistent push for the bogus modernization program is driven by the profit interests of foreign private corporations. According to Cachoco, the PUVMP aims to handover the public transport services from dedicated and honorable transport workers to private corporations capable of fulfilling the requirements for the modernization program set by DOTr and LTFRB. He then highlighted the need for transport workers to fight for their livelihood.

Concluding his reaction, Cachoco underscored the need for national industrialization that would allow the development of local vehicle production and enable the creation of a comprehensive mass public transportation plan.

5 Conclusion

■ Steve Ranjo

Secretary General, PISTON

From 2017 to 2023, the government has evidently attempted to remove JODs from public service and displace them from their livelihood. Steve Ranjo explained that the former has pursued three methods from the OFG and PUVMP which aim to revoke the franchises of JODs:

7. **The forced formation of cooperatives or corporations.** This will serve as holders of both the franchise and the modern PUV units. He pointed out that in the traditional cooperatives in the transport sector, members still have their individual franchises and hold ownership of their traditional jeepneys. However, under the PUVMP cooperative, both the franchise and the modern PUV unit/s will be under the name of the cooperative/corporation. Members will only have a piece of paper proving their membership.
8. **The creation of new routes.** According to the LPTRP of LGUs, the creation of new routes would eliminate current routes. It would also expire the franchises and provisional authorities covering the previous routes of JODs
9. **The possible replacement of traditional jeepneys with other modes of transport.** This is evident in the Cebu BRT project.

In the ongoing implementation of the PUVMP, it is apparent that:

1. Stakeholders have had no meaningful engagement in the development and planning of the PUV modernization; and the claimed participation of DOTr and LTFRB is merely tokenistic and superficial.
2. The program is being enforced coercively and with deception.
3. The government is evidently uncertain about the modernization program even as they are railroading its implementation (Dimalanta, Atienza, and Samonte 2023). This is clear in the lapses in the various components of the PUVMP: financing, LPTRPs, training for cooperativization, among many others.
4. During the height of the pandemic, instead of supporting JODs who have provided public transport service and are under the jurisdiction of the DOTr and LTFRB, aid was denied from them—even as it was highly covered by the media that JODs turned to peddling for food. When lockdowns and community quarantines were slowly lifted, LTFRB still did not allow the operation of traditional jeepneys in their designated routes. Moreover, LTFRB issued only provisional authorities instead of certificates of public convenience (CPC) known as franchises. LTFRB took advantage of the pandemic-induced vulnerability of JODs (Aggabao, Belarmino, and Velasco 2022; Dimalanta, Atienza, and Samonte 2023).
5. The government neither recognizes nor values the decades of public transportation advocacy and service provided by JODs and PUV operators and drivers.

6. Instead of addressing and responding to the issues and concerns of affected operators, drivers, and other stakeholders, the government resorts to oppression and coercion.
7. The government acts as sales agents and business managers for the foreign automotive corporations and other private financial institutions/banks (Dimalanta, Atienza, and Samonte 2023).

The involvement of tens of thousands of drivers, operators, commuters in the opposition is sufficient evidence that the policies and processes of the PUVMP and OFG are unacceptable and are unjust. These do not align with the fundamental needs of the transport workers, commuters, and the public. The following are the collated demands of the transport sector:

1. **Suspend the implementation of the PUVMP while the OFG is under review.** Stop the forced franchise consolidation. Establish mechanisms and processes that would facilitate genuine participation in the development of a program for improving the mass public transportation system meaningfully, which would benefit the transport workers, commuters, and the public. The process of such should not be rushed and must attune to the situation and context of the stakeholders especially those of the PUV operators and drivers affected.
2. **Restore the five-year validity of CPCs/franchises** to ensure that JODs and other PUV operators and drivers are able to continue providing public transportation services.
3. **Restore the previous sale-and-transfer mechanism.** This allows the franchise bought by an operator from another to be registered in their name. It is essential to return the sale and transfer mechanism to its previous iteration so that vehicles can be easily registered under the purchaser's name. and not remain tied to the names of the previous owner. While the sale-and-

transfer mechanism has been reopened in September 2023, the provisions have been much stricter.

4. **Review and suspend the ongoing LPTRP implementation** causing route changes and terminations of PUVs. Majority of these changes did not go through the proper consultation or public hearing process. The affected PUVs should be reverted to their previous routes.
5. **Suspend the payment of fines for late filing** as a consideration for operators who have endured much difficulties due to the pandemic.
6. **Provide support and aid to both the operators and drivers** for the maintenance of traditional jeepneys.
7. **Rehabilitate the traditional jeepneys.** The current approach to the assembly and maintenance of traditional jeepneys is still much more affordable and sustainable. JODs have continuously been doing this for more than seven decades even without a modernization program. JODs cannot afford the acquisition cost of the foreign-made and imported modern PUV units, more so the maintenance costs that are required by the various technologies attached to it.

In the context of local manufacturing, it is imperative that the Philippine skilled workforce is fully capable. The problem lies in the absence of local industries, more accurately, the absence of government support in local manufacturers. Ranjo underscored the need for the government to shift away from importing products from foreign private corporations. Government, he reiterated should not be import-dependent. It must instead invest and develop the country's local industry.



Despite the numerous attempts of the government to phase out traditional jeepneys and other PUVs, these were thwarted due to the determination of transport workers in defending their rights. Ranjo concluded his discussion by saying that transport workers have been and will continue to be at the forefront in opposing the profit-driven and import-dependent transport modernization.

6 Post-Summit Developments

Failure of the PUVMP Confirmed

In October 2023, the DOTr, LTFRB, and the Land Transportation Office (LTO) conducted an online multi-stakeholder consultation to present the (1) results of their nationwide stakeholder research on the PUVMP implementation; and (2) revised guidelines for the OFG. Representatives of UP CIDS AltDev, together with PISTON, PARA-AIT, other academic institutions, and civil society organizations, attended the said consultation.

As presented by DOTr and LTFRB, JODs in various regions of the Philippines encountered challenges in procuring expensive modern jeepney units and subsequently struggled to meet the minimum unit requirements for consolidation. (DOTr and LTFRB 2023a). In the National Capital Region (NCR) which is the most densely populated and the second most populated region in the Philippines (PSA 2023), and has the highest concentration of public utility jeepneys (PUJs), only 26% (10,973) of the total PUJs operating in NCR have been consolidated. This means that 30,862 PUJs, constituting 74% of the total PUJs in Metro Manila, may no longer operate in 2024 due to failure to consolidate.

Additionally, there was a lack of clear guidelines for selecting modern jeepney unit providers, and even after the purchase, JODs faced issues such as poor service from suppliers. Another obstacle highlighted was the difficulty in securing facilities for passenger waiting areas and terminals (DOTr and LTFRB 2023a).

Industry Consolidation Status (Nationwide and NCR)

	NCR	Nationwide
Consolidated PUJs	10,973 (26%)	85,461 (57%)
Unconsolidated PUJs	30,862 (74%)	64,639 (43%)
Total Number of PUJs	41,835	150,100
Percentage (%) of Completion	26%	57%
Percentage (%) of Backlog	74%	43%

Source: DOTr and LTFRB 2023b; New5Everywhere 2023

LPTRP Status (Nationwide)

Number of LGUs with Approved LPTRP	155
Number of LGUs with Pending (Submission and/or Approval) LPTRP	1,420
Total Number of LGUs	1,575
Percentage (%) of Completion	9.85%
Percentage (%) of Backlog	90.15%

Source: DOTr and LTFRB 2023b; New5Everywhere 2023

Out of a total of 1575 Local Government Units (LGUs), only 155 had approved Local Public Transport Route Plans (LPTRPs), constituting less than 10% completion of this prerequisite for the PUVMP. The DOTr and LTFRB reported sluggish approval and evaluation processes for the LPTRPs.

DOTr and LTFRB acknowledged financial challenges, citing issues such as the LPTRP requirement for Government Financial Institutions (GFIs) loan applications and additional requirements. These challenges include insufficient subsidies for modern jeepney unit acquisition, and inadequate funds to support the PUVMP. In an attempt to expedite loan applications, the LTFRB issued Alternative Certificates to JODs. However, these were not recognized by GFIs providing loans for the PUVMP. (DOTr and LTFRB 2023a).

DOTr and LTFRB also pointed out the inadequacy in seminars and training for cooperatives and corporations. Furthermore, JOD participants in the DOTr and LTFRB report also raised the issue of the lack of regular consultation between the stakeholders and government agencies.

Despite acknowledged shortcomings, DOTr maintains its December 31, 2023 deadline for franchise consolidation, wherein traditional jeepney operators are compelled to surrender their individual franchises and lose their livelihood in the process. Senator Grace Poe, Chairperson of the Senate Committee on Public Services, has emphatically pointed out this failure (Legaspi 2023). Questioning why the DOTr is imposing a strict deadline on JODs when LPTRPs have not yet been completed, she said:

Bakit maraming deadline at requirements sa driver samantalang ang mga deadline ng DOTr at LTFRB para sa ruta nila ay hindi naman natutupad? Ang lakas ng loob ng DoTr mag-deadline, wala naman maitulong.

(Why are there many deadlines and requirements for drivers when the deadlines of the DOTr and LTFRB for their routes are not being fulfilled? The DOTr has the audacity to set deadlines, but it does not contribute anything meaningful.)

PISTON expressed dissatisfaction with the proposed amendments to the OFG, asserting that the primary concerns of transport workers, particularly the call to repeal the franchise consolidation component and suspend the entire PUVMP, remain unaddressed. The consequence of forced consolidation is the exacerbation of the transportation crisis, leading to over 140,000 drivers and nearly 60,000 operators facing a loss of livelihood (IBON Foundation 2023).

The Fight Continues⁹

In November 2023, PISTON organized a three-day nationwide transport strike from November 20 to November 22, protesting against the government's insistence on the December 31, 2023 deadline for franchise consolidation. In support of the strike, another transport group, The Samahang Manibela Mananakay at Nagkaisang Terminal ng Transportasyon or MANIBELA¹⁰, also called for a transport strike from November 22 to November 24, extending the strikes for two additional days.

The urgent demands of the strike include (1) the immediate junking of the December 31 deadline for franchise consolidation and the removal of the entire requirement of franchise consolidation; and (2) the repeal of the entire PUVMP. In the bigger picture, the strike advocates for (3) government subsidy for the rehabilitation of PUJs and PUVs, and (4) a pro-people, worker-led, and just transition towards a genuinely sustainable mass public transport system anchored on national industrialization, rather than overreliance on importation of foreign-made vehicles.

⁹ This section is largely derived from PISTON, 2023.

¹⁰ The Samahang Manibela Mananakay at Nagkaisang Terminal ng Transportasyon (MANIBELA) translates to The United Drivers and Operators Association and the Unified Transportation Terminal.



Transport workers with their families having lunch at the strike center

Source: Mayday Multimedia

Seventeen strike centers were established along major routes in Metro Manila, serving as venues for picket protests, educational discussions, cultural activities, spaces for advocates, among others. These were similarly organized in other regions, particularly in the Southern Tagalog Region, Bicol Region, Western Visayas Region, and Central Visayas Region. Protests were also held in Baguio City and in Davao City as part of the nationwide transport strike.

PISTON reported that the strike paralyzed around 90% of major routes in Metro Manila. In the Southern Tagalog Region, three provinces experienced 60-90% paralysis. Albay in the Bicol Region recorded a 100% paralysis at the peak of the strike. In the Western Visayas Region, 100% of traditional jeepneys and around 60% of modern jeepneys participated in the strike. Meanwhile, the Central Visayas Region reported a 60% paralysis during the strike. Although the strike turnout compelled the LTFRB to dialogue with PISTON

on the first day of the strike, there was no concrete response to the strike's demands, fueling the transport workers to continue the strike.

A notable development during the strike was the participation of local PUV cooperatives that had initially adhered to the PUVMP and its franchise consolidation requirement. These groups reached out to PISTON and has since publicly exposed the hardships modern JODs faced due to the PUVMP. Hence, their denouncement of the PUVMP. Their involvement broadened the strike's base of support and legitimized its demands, emphasizing that even initial program adherents were now grappling with its shortcomings. Their participation highlighted the PUVMP's negative impacts beyond those who had yet to comply and thus, amplified and further legitimized the strike's demands.

The three-day strike concluded with a march to Mendiola, where over a thousand transport workers and advocates directly demanded Philippine President Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr. to act on the strike's demands. Despite the looming December 31 deadline, transport workers and the public remain determined to continue the fight for significant change.

Thousands of transport workers and advocates marching towards Mendiola

Source: Mayday Multimedia



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