EXPLANATORY NOTE

Since the outbreak of COVID-19, the Philippines has taken unprecedented "social distancing" measures to prevent physical interaction in the hope of slowing down the spread of the virus. We have closed schools, malls, restaurants and other recreation centers. We have prohibited public gatherings and strongly advised companies to implement work-from-home arrangements. We have also restricted travel and shut down public transportation in Luzon and other areas seriously affected by the virus.

Admittedly, it is very difficult to harmonize the concepts of social distancing and mass transit. It requires more stringent physical distancing measures and sweeping adjustments that may require a lot of resources which, however, may not be utilized to full capacity. For instance, in other countries where forms of mass transit are still operational, authorities have taken measures both to limit non-essential travel and redirect some of the remaining demand to non-motorized or personal transport modes.\(^1\) In the United Kingdom, its government warned that social distancing would allow only one in ten (10) passengers on parts of public transport once the network resumes full service.\(^2\)

For this purpose, personal and non-motorized transport, such as walking and cycling, can help bridge the gap between the need to transport the public while still observing social distance. Aside from facilitating mobility, these transport modes can also help maintain satisfactory levels of health and promote the well-being of our citizens. For instance, studies show that walking or bicycling is associated with reduced cardiovascular risk and prevention of non-communicable diseases such as hypertension and diabetes.\(^3\) In addition, switching to walking and cycling can help reduce air pollution and curb climate change. Lastly, it may solve the heavy traffic congestion in Metro Manila caused by high volume of vehicles plying the streets. In sum, the benefits to the country of the shift to non-motorized or personal transport modes cannot be underestimated.

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In other countries, for instance, Philadelphia, USA closed a large 6.6-mile road segment to motor vehicles for pedestrians and cyclists to help address the public transportation problem in the city during the COVID-19 pandemic. Meanwhile, Mexico City proposed plans for 80 miles of temporary bike infrastructure to alleviate the role of public transportation use and facilitate mobility in the city. Similarly, Berlin implemented a 1-mile temporary bike lane along a major road and has plans to expand the pop-up infrastructure, along with 133 other German cities. Oakland, Minneapolis, Denver, Louisville, Vancouver, and Calgary have also implemented similar measures. Furthermore, New York City continued to add close to 1 mile of temporary protected bike lanes to segments of Manhattan and Brooklyn, and testing road closures to cars.

In the Philippines, however, we do not have enough safe infrastructures for cyclists and pedestrians to operate safely. Hence, there is a crucial need for legislation that will redefine our policies on transport and urban development, specifically those that are designed to encourage walking and cycling for daily travel.

In view of the foregoing, passage of this bill is strongly sought.

HON. ALLAN BENEDICT S. REYES
Representative, 3rd District, Quezon City

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Since the outbreak of COVID-19, the Philippines has taken unprecedented “social distancing” measures to prevent physical interaction in the hope of slowing down the spread of the virus. We have closed schools, malls, restaurants and other recreation centers. We have prohibited public gatherings and strongly advised companies to implement work-from-home arrangements. We have also restricted travel and shut down public transportation in Luzon and other areas seriously affected by the virus.

Admittedly, it is very difficult to harmonize the concepts of social distancing and mass transit. It requires more stringent physical distancing measures and sweeping adjustments that may require a lot of resources which, however, may not be utilized to full capacity. For instance, in other countries where forms of mass transit are still operational, authorities have taken measures both to limit non-essential travel and redirect some of the remaining demand to non-motorized or personal transport modes.¹ In the United Kingdom, its government warned that social distancing would allow only one in ten (10) passengers on parts of public transport once the network resumes full service.²

For this purpose, personal and non-motorized transport, such as walking and cycling, can help bridge the gap between the need to transport the public while still observing social distance. Aside from facilitating mobility, these transport modes can also help maintain satisfactory levels of health and promote the well-being of our citizens. For instance, studies show that walking or bicycling is associated with reduced cardiovascular risk and prevention of non-communicable diseases such as hypertension and diabetes.³ In addition, switching to walking and cycling can help reduce air pollution and curb climate change. Lastly, it may solve the heavy traffic congestion in Metro Manila caused by high volume of vehicles plying the streets. In sum, the benefits to the country of the shift to non-motorized or personal transport modes cannot be underestimated.

In other countries, for instance, Philadelphia, USA closed a large 4.4-mile road segment to motor vehicles for pedestrians and cyclists to help address the public transport problem in the city during the COVID-19 pandemic. Meanwhile, Mexico City proposed plans for 80 miles of temporary bike infrastructure to alleviate the risks of public transportation use and facilitate mobility in the city. Similarly, Berlin implemented a 1-mile temporary bike lane along a major road and has plans to expand the pop-up infrastructure, along with 133 other German cities. Oakland, Minneapolis, Denver, Louisville, Vancouver and Calgary have also implemented similar measures. Furthermore, New York City committed to adding close to 1 mile of temporary protected bike lanes to segments of Manhattan and Brooklyn, and testing road closures to cars.

In the Philippines, however, we do not have enough safe infrastructures for cyclists and pedestrians to operate safely. Hence, there is a crucial need for legislation that will redefine our policies on transport and urban development, specifically those that are designed to encourage walking and cycling for daily travel.\(^4\)

In view of the foregoing, passage of this bill is earnestly sought.

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Republic of the Philippines

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 6799

Introduced By Representative ALLAN BENEDICT S. REYES

AN ACT ESTABLISHING PROTECTED BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN LANES AND OTHER RELATED INFRASTRUCTURES IN METRO MANILA, APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the Philippines in Congress assembled

SECTION 1. Short Title. – This Act shall be known as the “Bike Lanes Act of 2020.”

SECTION 2. Declaration of Policy. – Section 15, Article II of the 1987 Constitution mandates the State to protect and promote the right to health of the people and instill health consciousness among them.

Moreover, the WHO Constitution (1946) envisages “…the highest attainable standard of health as a fundamental right of every human being.” Hence, the State has a legal obligation “to ensure access to timely, acceptable, and affordable health care of appropriate quality as well as to providing for the underlying determinants of health, such as safe and potable water, sanitation, food, housing, health-related information and education, and gender equality.”

The State has the responsibility to protect and advance the interests of society in preventing the spread of COVID-19 and ensure that the right of the citizens to health is well-protected during the pandemic. One way to do so is by providing safe alternative means of transportation to its citizens that also help maintain satisfactory levels of health and promote their well-being. For this purpose, the State shall encourage the use of personal and non-motorized transport, such as walking and cycling, by establishing the necessary infrastructures for the safe and secure use thereof.

6 Id.
SECTION 3. Coverage. – This Act shall cover all cities and municipality of Metro Manila, particularly: the city of Manila, Quezon City, Caloocan, Las Piñas, Makati, Malabon, Mandaluyong, Marikina, Muntinlupa, Navotas, Parañaque, Pasay, Pasig, San Juan, Taguig, and Valenzuela, and the municipality of Pateros.

SECTION 4. Protected Bicycle and Pedestrian Lanes. – The Department of Transportation (DOTr), the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) and the Metro Manila Development Authority (MMDA), in coordination with the local government units (LGUs) of Metro Manila, shall identify, prioritize and build a network of protected bicycle and pedestrian lanes within Metro Manila for the exclusive use of pedestrians, cyclists and other individuals using non-motorized vehicles, such as skateboards, scooters, carts, and the like. Existing lanes, if there are any, may be further developed for this purpose and be connected to the said network of protected bicycle and pedestrian lanes.

During the COVID-19 quarantine period, whether enhanced, modified enhanced or general, or as long as public transportation is suspended, temporary bicycle and pedestrian lanes may be set up using visible markers and signages. Priority routes shall be identified, particularly those leading to hospitals, drugstores, public markets, and other establishments offering essential products and services. Safety measures and emergency stations shall likewise be provided.

SECTION 5. Parking Spaces. – All government offices, buildings, schools, and other public establishments shall provide adequate and secure parking spaces for bicycles and other non-motorized vehicles.

SECTION 6. Implementing Rules and Regulations and Standard Forms. - Within sixty (60) days from the promulgation of this Act, the necessary rules and regulations for the proper implementation of its provisions shall be formulated by the appropriate government office or agency in coordination with all the stakeholders and covered establishments and institutions.

SECTION 7. Repealing Clause. – All laws, executive orders, administrative orders, rules, regulations, decrees, and other issuances or parts thereof, which are inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby revoked, repealed, or modified accordingly.

SECTION 8. Separability Clause. – If any provision of this Act is held unconstitutional or invalid, the other provisions not affected thereby shall continue in operation and remain in full force and effect.

SECTION 9. Effectivity Clause. – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication the Official Gazette or in the two (2) national newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,