Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS
Second Regular Session

COMMITTEE REPORT NO. 638

Submitted by the Committee on Transportation on DEC 09 2020

Re: House Resolution No. 1409

Recommending its adoption, together with the findings and recommendations of the Committee, pursuant to the *motu proprio* inquiry in aid of legislation into the public transportation policies of the government during the COVID-19 pandemic

Sponsor: Rep. Edgar Mary S. Sarmiento

Mr. Speaker:

The Committee on Transportation, after conducting a *motu proprio* inquiry in aid of legislation into the public transportation policies of the government during the COVID-19 pandemic, has the honor to recommend to the House of Representatives that the attached House Resolution No. 1409, entitled:

"RESOLUTION
URGING THE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION TO INCREASE THE NUMBER OF ROADWORTHY PUBLIC UTILITY VEHICLES TO ADDRESS THE TRANSPORTATION SHORTAGE AND PROVIDE THE NECESSARY SUPPORT IN THE GOVERNMENT'S EFFORT TO REVIVE THE ECONOMY, SUBJECT TO EXISTING HEALTH PROTOCOLS AND SUCH OTHER REQUIREMENTS AS MAY BE IMPOSED BY THE INTER-AGENCY TASK FORCE FOR EMERGING INFECTIOUS DISEASES AND THE NATIONAL TASK FORCE AGAINST COVID-19"

be adopted, together with the Committee's findings and recommendations, with Rep. Edgar Mary S. Sarmiento, France L. Castro, Precious Hipolito Castelo, Stella Luz A. Quimbo, Sharon S. Garin, Michael Edgar Y. Aglipay and Claudine Diana D. Bautista, as authors thereof.

Respectfully submitted,

REP. EDGAR MARY S. SARMIENTO
Chairperson
Committee on Transportation

THE HONORABLE SPEAKER
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
QUEZON CITY
REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION ON THE OUTCOME OF ITS INQUIRY IN AID OF LEGISLATION INTO THE PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION POLICIES OF THE GOVERNMENT DURING THE COVID PANDEMIC

PREFATORY STATEMENT

Section 28 (eee) of the Rules of the House of Representatives vests the Committee on Transportation with jurisdiction over all matters directly and principally relating to land, sea, and air transportation and all public utilities and services connected thereto, as well as the establishment, operation, management and regulation of airports, seaports and other mass transportation systems including light and heavy rail systems and roll on-roll of systems (RO-RO), civil aviation, air transport agreements, transportation safety standards, air transport security, maritime security, ballast water management, ship financing, ship mortgage, maritime liens and transportation related insurance.

Pursuant to this mandate, the Committee on Transportation conducted a motu proprio inquiry, in aid of legislation, into the transportation policies of the government in response to the Corona Virus Disease (COVID) – 19 pandemic. The first meeting, after Metro Manila was placed under enhanced community quarantine (ECQ) status, was held on May 9, 2020, the purpose of which was to seek an update on the preparations of the Department of Transportation (DOTr), the transportation agencies and other agencies involved in the implementation of transportation policies during the period of the pandemic. A follow up meeting was conducted on July 22, 2020, jointly with the Committee on Economic Affairs to discuss the economic impact of public transportation after Metro Manila and other areas of the country were placed under general community quarantine. This was followed by another meeting on July 30, 2020.

FACTS

1. On March 8, 2020, President Rodrigo Duterte signed Proclamation No. 922, Declaring a State of Public Health Emergency Throughout the Philippines;

2. On March 13, 2020, the Inter-Agency Task Force (IATF) for the Management of Emerging Infectious Disease issued Resolution No. 12 laying down its recommendations for the management of the COVID-19 situation. The resolution, among others, defined the curtailment of certain activities during the ECQ period that included the suspension of public transportation services;

3. On March 16, 2020, President Duterte placed the entire island of Luzon under ECQ in response to the rising number of COVID-19 cases for the period March 17 - April 12, 2020, unless earlier lifted or extended as circumstances would warrant;

4. On March 25, 2020, President Duterte signed the Bayanihan to Heal as One Act of 2020;

5. On April 24, 2020, President Duterte announced the extension of the ECQ status of Metro Manila and other critical areas until May 15, 2020, and placed
the other areas of the country under general community quarantine (GCQ) starting May 1, 2020;

6. The Land Transportation Franchising and regulatory Board (LTFRB) issued Memorandum Circular No. 2020-017 providing for the Guidelines for Public Transportation for Areas Under GCQ to take effect on May 1, 2020;

7. On May 15, 2020, the IATF issued Resolution No. 37 placing Metro Manila and the provinces of Bataan, Bulacan, Nueva Ecija, Pampanga, Zambales, and Laguna under modified enhanced community quarantine (MECQ) while placing the rest of the country under GCQ until May 31, 2020;

8. On June 1, 2020, the DOTr implemented the first phase of the gradual resumption of mass transportation when Metro Manila was placed under GCQ;

9. On June 22, 2020, the second phase of the gradual resumption of mass transportation was implemented and public utility buses (PUBs), modern public utility vehicles (PUVs) and Utility Vehicle (UV) Express Services were allowed to operate;

10. On June 28, 2020, the LTFRB issued Memorandum Circular No. 2020-026, allowing the traditional public utility jeepneys (PUJs) to operate.

**ISSUES**

1. Whether or not there is a sufficient supply of mass transportation to support the government’s effort in reviving the economy;

2. Whether or not there is a necessity to increase the number of public utility vehicles; and

3. Whether or not the increase in number and capacity of public transportation can be done in a manner that does not compromise public health and safety.

**DISCUSSION**

**May 9, 2020 Meeting**

During the meeting, the DOTr shared with the Committee the plans and programs that the Department and the transportation agencies are undertaking in preparation for the transition of Metro Manila from ECQ to GCQ status. Undersecretary Timothy John Batan informed the Committee that the railway sector anticipates a reduction in operating capacity of trains by 10-15% in observance of the social distancing measure that will be implemented. He added that bus augmentation is being looked at as a possible remedy to help cope with the reduced operating capacity. Assistant Secretary Mark De Leon, on the other hand, informed the Committee that the policies needed for the land transportation sector are already in place, and asserted that health and safety concerns were the primordial considerations of the Department.
LTFRB Chairman, Martin Delgra III, meanwhile, explained the agency’s plan of rationalizing the routes of Metro Manila wherein EDSA will be converted into a single route from the previous 61 routes that ply the highway. The EDSA loop, he added, will be served by 600 PUBs while the rest of the buses numbering around 4,000 will serve the other 28 rationalized routes. Chairman Delgra also pointed out that no fare increase is expected as the unrealized revenues due to social distancing will be cushioned by the fuel subsidy program. He also shared that he met with transport leaders to discuss the rationalized PUJ routes in Metro Manila that includes the UV Express Service and other existing modes, and assured the Committee that PUJs will not be displaced under the rationalized routes.

**July 22, 2020 Meeting (Jointly with Committee on Economic Affairs)**

Chairperson Edgar Mary Sarmiento emphasized that public transportation is important in the effort to restart the economy as he expressed his sadness to see millions of commuters suffer due to inefficiency and shortage of public transportation services because of the pandemic. He informed the body that the Committee endorsed to the DOTr the recommendation to provide subsidies to drivers and operators and consider the possibility of service contracting. He likewise requested the Department to work together with the Committee in crafting appropriate laws to address the immediate needs of the transportation industry.

Representative Sharon Garin also underscored the indispensability of transportation in reviving the economy. She presented some data showing the impact of the pandemic on the transportation industry with the land sector incurring an estimated loss of P21 billion monthly. The pandemic, she stressed, resulted in the closure of businesses and loss of jobs affecting the livelihood of displaced workers.

DOTr Secretary Arthur Tugade explained that as far as the land transportation is concerned, the Department follows a gradual, calibrated and partial approach in the resumption of public transportation. He underlined the importance of balancing the economy and the health of the people because of the COVID-19 pandemic. He clarified that PUJs are already allowed to operate provided they are roadworthy and compliant with the health standards set by the IATF.

Assistant Secretary Mark Steven Pastor, meanwhile, elaborated on the initiatives of the DOTr that include service contracting, fuel subsidy and a loan facility with favorable terms. Chairman Delgra acknowledged the appeal of the road sector and House members to increase the number of PUVs in operation. He confirmed that the same is already planned and stated that it shall cover not only Metro Manila but all areas across the country.

The road sector renewed their appeal for the resumption of operation of other PUVs in accordance with existing health protocols issued by the IATF. Mr. Mar Valbuena of the Malayan Alyansa ng Bus Employees at Laborers (MANIBELA) offered several solutions to address health and safety issues of public utility operations. Mr. Efren De Luna of Alliance of Concerned Transport Organization (ACTO), while appealing to allow the traditional PUJs to resume operation, suggested the deferment of the DOTr’s PUV Modernization Program. He was joined by Mr. Mody Floranda of Pagkakaisa ng mga Samahan ng Tsoper and Operator Nationwide (PISTON) and Mr. Exequiel Longares of United Transport Alliance of the Philippines (UTAP) in calling for the deferment of PUVMP.
Several members shared their observation of the transportation shortage. Rep. Stella Luz Quimbo questioned the policy on the hierarchy of the modes of public transportation resulting in loss of jobs, risks, inconvenience and additional cost to commuters. Rep. Michael Edgar Aglipay noted that there have been only a few PUJs that are operating despite the apparent need for more transportation services.

Meanwhile, Rep. Onyx Crisollogo inquired on the status of the motorcycle taxi pilot study and the possibility of extending it. Rep. Precious Hipolito Castelo shared the former’s sentiment in asking to allow motorcycle taxis to operate to help alleviate the inadequacy of public transport services due to the reduction in capacity operation of the other modes of transportation.

Rep. Rosanna Vergara, meanwhile, shared the sentiment of Rep. Gabriel Bordado about the plight of bus and jeepney drivers who have lost their jobs and resorted to begging on the streets. Rep. Cristal Bagatsing, on the other hand, questioned the delay in the implementation of the social amelioration program (SAP) intended for the displaced jeepney drivers. In response, Secretary Tugade assured that several programs have been laid down to protect the livelihood of drivers. As far as SAP is concerned, he replied that the agency responsible for implementing the program is the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD). He also clarified that the DOTr, through LTFRB, only provides for the list of qualified driver-beneficiaries to the DSWD.

**July 30, 2020 Meeting**

The meeting focused its discussion on the implementation of transportation policies in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The PUJ groups informed the Committee that some jeepneys were still unable to resume operation due to the difficulty in complying with the LTFRB requirements such as the quick response (QR) codes, PUV modernization and consolidation.

Mr. Robert Siy of the Move as One Coalition pressed for the implementation of service contracting to respond to shortage of PUV services, noting that the operators cannot be compelled to operate under a loss.

On this note, Rep. France Castro moved for the reopening of all jeepney routes, subject to the observance of the health protocols issued by IATF. The motion was duly seconded by Rep. Castelo.

**FINDINGS**

1. The current supply of public transportation services is not enough to address the demand of the gradual opening of the economy. The situation in Metro Manila and other urban centers clearly indicates a transportation shortage.

2. There is a necessity to increase the number of PUVs given the fact that the railway system is operating at an average of not more than 30% of its regular ridership prior to pandemic. In addition to the Bus Augmentation Program that is serving the EDSA Loop, there is an urgent need to add more PUVs thereat.
3. Considering that the transportation policies relating to COVID-19 are already in place, the necessary increase in the number of PUVs operating and routes can be implemented by the concerned agencies without compromising the health and safety of commuters and drivers.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The shortage in public transportation in Metro Manila and other urban centers especially during peak hours cannot be denied.

To move the economy forward, the workforce has to be transported as efficiently as possible. Clearly, the current supply in transportation is not adequate to cater the demands of the industries that were allowed to open during this time of pandemic.

While the Committee acknowledges the need to protect the health and safety of the public, transportation services must be restored to help revive economic activity. Considering the data at hand, the observations of the members and the opinions of reliable resource persons and other information gathered during its series of meetings, the Committee believes that the government and the private sector can work together in devising a plan that will both enable the resumption of transportation services and the continued observation of health and social distancing protocols.

Thus, after assessing all the issues brought before it and hearing the sentiments of a number members of the House of Representatives, including those who authored House Resolution No. 1254 which calls for the immediate and full lifting of the ban on the operation of PUJs, the Committee urges the Department of Transportation to increase the number roadworthy PUVs allowed to operate across the country, subject to existing health protocols and such other requirements as may be imposed by the IATF and the National Task Force Against COVID-19.

Pursuant thereto, the Committee also recommends the adoption of the attached House Resolution numbered 1409.
Republic of the Philippines  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
Quezon City  

EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS  
Second Regular Session  

HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. 1409


RESOLUTION  
URGING THE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION TO INCREASE THE NUMBER OF ROADWORTHY PUBLIC UTILITY VEHICLES TO ADDRESS THE TRANSPORTATION SHORTAGE AND PROVIDE THE NECESSARY SUPPORT IN THE GOVERNMENT'S EFFORT TO REVIVE THE ECONOMY, SUBJECT TO EXISTING HEALTH PROTOCOLS AND SUCH OTHER REQUIREMENTS AS MAY BE IMPOSED BY THE INTER-Agency TASK FORCE FOR EMERGING INFECTIOUS DISEASES AND THE NATIONAL TASK FORCE AGAINST COVID-19

1 WHEREAS, the Corona Virus Disease (COVID) - 19 pandemic worst health crisis that has affected the world not only because of the millions of persons that have been afflicted by it but also for its debilitating effects on the world economy;

2 WHEREAS, the Philippines, in an effort to suppress the widespread contagion, suspended the operation of all modes of transportation by the middle of March 2020 when the country was placed under enhanced community quarantine (ECQ) status and travel was restricted;

3 WHEREAS, ECQ measures have resulted to a major cessation of economic activities except for essential services, prompting the policymakers to adopt measures aimed at preventing the local economy from slumping to an irreversible level such as when the government, on June 1, 2020, placed almost all the areas in the country, including Metro Manila, under a less-restrictive general community quarantine (GCQ) status and allowed several industries and offices to operate under strict regulation and at a reduced capacity;
WHEREAS, consistent with the country’s plan to revive the economy, the Department of Transportation (DOTr) implemented the gradual and calibrated resumption of public transportation services, the first phase of which started on June 1, 2020, when the Philippine National Railways, Light Rail Transit 1 and 2, and Metro Rail Transit 3 were allowed to operate at reduced capacity to ensure the observance of the social-distancing protocol;

WHEREAS, to support the operation of trains, bus augmentation was implemented along with other modes of transportation such as taxis, transport network vehicle service (TNVS), shuttle services, point-to-point buses, and bicycles.

WHEREAS, on June 22, 2020, public utility buses (PUBs), modern public utility vehicles (PUVs) and UV Express services were allowed to operate as the program went into its second phase;

WHEREAS, on June 28, 2020, by virtue of Memorandum Circular No. 2020-026 providing for the Guidelines for the Operation of Traditional Public Utility Jeepneys (PUJs) During the Period of GCQ in Metro Manila, the Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board (LTFRB) allowed the resumption of the operation of 6,002 PUJs to cover 49 routes, which subsequently expanded to 17,372 as of September 18, 2020 out of the around 75,000 units regularly operating in Metro Manila before the lockdown;

WHEREAS, the current number of PUVs on the road is not commensurate to the requirements of the plan to revive the economy as evidenced by the long queues of commuters during peak hours waiting for public transport;

WHEREAS, in response to the continuing public clamor, the Committee on Transportation conducted several meetings to inquire into the implementation of the policies of the DOTr and other relevant agencies in the hope of finding a solution to the issue of transportation shortage;

WHEREAS, in said meetings, the government’s economic managers and transport regulators, PUV operators, commuter groups, and the academe were allowed to air their positions and submit their recommendations to the problem taking into consideration the public health crisis;

WHEREAS, during the meetings, government representatives maintained that public health and safety are the main considerations of economic recovery plans while the transport operators’ group expressed their willingness to operate at reduced capacity
to subscribe to health protocols and requirements mandated by government transport
regulators provided that a subsidy will be given to them to allow them to operate viably;

WHEREAS, under Republic Act No. 11494 or the “Bayanihan to Recover As
One Act”, a portion of the P9.5 billion budget for DOTr is intended to fund the fuel
subsidy or cash grant for PUV drivers and the service contracting program;

WHEREAS, on September 25, 2020, several members of the House of
Representatives filed House Resolution No. 1254 calling for the immediate and full
lifting of the ban on the operation of PUJs, a resolution co-authored by one hundred
sixty-two (162) House members;

WHEREAS, pursuant to its motu proprio inquiry, the Committee on
Transportation, on October 13, 2020, filed House Resolution No. 1286 urging the
resumption of the Pilot Study Program on the Operation of Motorcycle Taxis in order
for the government to assess the viability of allowing the operation of motorcycle taxis
and to aid the Committee in crafting legislation, if necessary;

WHEREAS, these series of events clearly showed that all the stakeholders –
economic managers, government regulators, operators, legislators, commuters and the
academe – share the view that adequate transportation services to ferry the workforce
should be provided so that the nation can pursue economic recovery, provided that all
requisites to ensure prevention of the spread of the virus are put in place and complied
with;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the House of Representatives
urge the Department of Transportation to increase the number of roadworthy public
utility vehicles to address the transportation shortage and provide the necessary support
in the government’s effort to revive the economy, subject to existing health protocols
and such other requirements as may be imposed by the Inter-Agency Task Force for
Emerging Infectious Diseases and the National Task Force Against COVID-19.

Adopted,