

Moving Malaysia in 2020

BY **GOH BOK YEN**

FOR TOO LONG, Malaysians have wished we had public transport systems like those in other important cities of the world. We do have some way to go in building a public transport network that is integrated, efficient, and most importantly, user-friendly.

Judging public transport adequacy on the basis of extent of network coverage, capacity to meet demand, service frequency, travel speed, comfort, safety, reliability and interchange, and walk-in facilities, it is clear that Malaysia has much to improve on. This is especially compared to cities such as Tokyo, Singapore, Hong Kong, London and New York.

It is, however, comforting that plans are underway to address some of these concerns.

For argument's sake, let's attempt to list some of the causes of traffic congestion: too many cars in use at peak periods in excess of road capacity; instances of poor road design ignoring proper lane balance; a subsidised car industry; fuel cost subsidies; ultra generous credit facilities for vehicle purchase; preference for a familiar, every day, comfortable, secure, convenient, weather-proof mode of transport; imbalance between development density approvals and infrastructure capability; and lack of an overall comprehensive land use transport planning approach, resulting in an ad hoc, piecemeal approach to transport.

MRT Corporation has been tasked with upping the public transportation game. They conducted feasibility studies, attempted two-way planning and engagement dialogues, and many other evaluations in order to come up with a plan for the Klang Valley's public transport infrastructure that is as effective as possible when implemented,

and as painless as possible while being implemented.

We do not anticipate MRT Corporation to offer the silver bullet that will resolve all traffic woes. They are, instead, attempting to service areas that are currently under- or un-serviced, and integrate the existing transport resources into a cohesive network of rail-based and road-based transport.

Getting more motorists off the roads is a plus.

So what have other great nations or cities done about it? Best practices start with a comprehensive overall plan that takes into account long-term social and environmental goals, rather than just short-term expedient measures that tend to exacerbate the problem.

It calls for the adoption of a sustainable and publicly acceptable transport planning policy aimed at better efficiency and improved environmental standards. (For example, fixed track systems should be future-proofed to allow for capacity to be added, such as longer station lengths for potentially longer trains.)

It is also interesting to note that the more liveable cities who have introduced modern mass transit systems seem to have avoided miles of unsightly, environmentally intrusive elevated structures.

Can these practices be implemented in Kuala Lumpur? The problems of doing so are many and formidable, but with education, a less selfish approach and a change in mindset, there is no reason why not.

If we're all going to enjoy the benefits of an improved transportation system, we're all going to have to stick it out for the long-term and remember that we're all in this together.

All for one and one for all.

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