

**MMDA's PERSPECTIVE ON HOW TO REDUCE THE IMPACT OF THE
CURRENT ENERGY ISSUES¹**
(Discussion Paper)

Robert C. Nacienceno
General Manager, MMDA

Introduction

Based on the data obtained from the Land Transportation Office, there are already around 1.6 million vehicles that were registered in 2007. This figure represents more than 30 percent of the country's annual vehicle registration. The LTO statistics also indicate an annual average of 3 percent growth of vehicle population. Motorcycles and Utility Vehicles registration were observed to post higher growth trends compared with the other classes of vehicles.

The continuing growth in vehicle population raises much concern especially for agencies involved with traffic and transport management like MMDA. We do not have the luxury of expanding the available road spaces to meet the demand for mobility of the increasing number of motor vehicles and people. What compounds the situation is the apathetic behavior of some of our fellow Filipinos in constricting further what remaining road space we have left for the other classes of users – pedestrians, commuters, and motorists.

The indiscriminate and illegal use of sidewalks and roads in Metro Manila proliferated in the recent past before MMDA embarked on its Metro GWAPO Program had really put a lot of strain on our traffic and commuters. Studies have shown that all of us suffer from indirect losses and compounds our environmental and health situation. It most definitely has its impact on the energy sector due to fuel inefficiency and wastage. We estimate that traffic congestion results to around 5 to 10 percent fuel loss for every liter. This translates into a loss of roughly around a million liters of fuel daily for all the commuters.

The average vehicle travel speed in the streets of Metro is around 18 to 22 kph way back in 2002. Somehow, despite the annual increase in the number of vehicles, we managed to maintain it at that rate and there were areas where we have managed to improve it to 22 to 26 kph.

We are unrelenting in our efforts to further increase these speeds despite the odds. We have invested on training our people to think of better and doable solutions to the problems. Likewise, MMDA invested on better tools to aid us with our gargantuan task. Most of our activities are simple enough that they require less financial resources to implement.

¹ Delivered by Usec. Robert C. Nacienceno, General Manager, Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) during the Energy Summit, 29-30 January 2008, SM Mall of Asia, Pasay City, Metro Manila

What MMDA is doing to Mitigate the impact of traffic to the Transport and Energy Sector

Among the activities that we have significantly achieved the desired changes on how our constituents should use our streets to ease traffic congestion are:

- 1. Sidewalk Clearing and Improvement.** This endeavor costs less than putting up new roads. What we had in mind is to regain the space that is rightfully for the use of pedestrians and commuters. This way, walking becomes safer and more convenient. People also do not eat up the space intended for motor vehicles that is the primary cause of traffic congestion.
- 2. Reducing Conflict at Major Intersections through the implementation of U-Turns.** The U-turn slots can be likened to the rotunda concept where vehicles move continuously and uninterrupted. Not only long idling at major stops wastes a lot of fuel and contributes to pollution, they are also the cause of irritants among motorists.
- 3. Parking Discipline Program.** Under this program, MMDA has prescribed the manner of correctly parking vehicles within designated easements. We are also unrelenting with our campaign to apprehend violators. Alongside our sidewalk improvement project is the declaration of the 'nose-in, nose-out' policy on parking especially along major roads like EDSA. The project aims to retain the space for pedestrians to walk on and ease the ingress and egress of vehicles without too much interruption of traffic along the main carriageway.
- 4. Installation of Signs and Information.** We have a low ration of manpower complement versus the commuters and motorists thus, we compensate for this by installing the necessary traffic and informative signs. If people are advised early enough, then it enables them to reduce hampering other motorists in the course of navigating roads.
- 5. Establishment of Clearways.** This program is a conglomeration of the various activities I have mentioned earlier. The ultimate aim is to impress upon the public that MMDA considers it as a serious business to maintain free-flowing traffic along these routes. We will ensure that all policies, rules, and regulations are followed and enforced in these areas.
- 6. Road Emergency Program.** This is MMDA's quick response version to swiftly remove obstructions along the thoroughfare caused by stalled vehicles and accidents. We have set a target that all obstructions of this nature are removed at all cause within 15 minutes from the time of receipt of call. This is complemented by our effort to equip our field personnel with 1000 mobile phones so that they can immediately report to our

control center any sightings of obstruction for our emergency crew to respond.

- 7. Continuous Flood Mitigation Measures.** Our Flood Control Office implements a year-round drainage maintenance activity to ensure that motorists can move unhampered by floods during rainy days.
- 8. Pink Fences and Footbridges.** These components ensure safe and unimpeded movements for both pedestrians and motorists. They are designed to remove roadside friction between these two clienteles.
- 9. Enhancement of the Organized Bus Route Project with the Radio Frequency Identification Technology or RFID.** The use of RFID is envisioned to provide the desired efficiency we want to improve the dispatch and control of the buses plying EDSA. The project may generate an annual savings of 35 million liters of diesel fuel for the 3,500 city buses operators. It can also help decongest the traffic congestion generated along the major intersection of EDSA due to long queues of buses with no passengers especially at non-peak times thereby further save on fuel consumption facilities that you now see along EDSA plus the delineation and assignment of bus in each of the Public Utility Vehicle or PUV lanes based on their destinations. The project is our version of the BRT or Bus Rapid Transit System being implemented in other cities of the world.

Conclusion

The activities I mentioned are all on-going and continuing activities to ensure their sustainability. We can cite additional related activities that our agency is undertaking to achieve our visions and comply with our mandate but please allow me to emphasize on a particular very important point that has been overlooked for some time now.

MMDA's CLEAR ROADS Program is a very basic ingredient in our quest to identify measures on how to save on energy.

The Metro Manila Council adopted Resolution No. 02-28 in 2002 to rid the thoroughfares of Metro Manila of all types of obstructions. There are around 5,000 kilometers of road that need to be cleared of all kinds of obstructions and so far we have accomplished doing this along 2,000 or so kilometers of streets. The Metro Manila LGUs have also supported this activity in a related Resolution and we have all agreed that we would do this and complete the clearing activities by 2010.

Our experience in clearing the Aguinaldo Highway leading to the province of Cavite indicate the travel time along that stretch has been reduced by as much as 50%. This is a positive indication that the measure is effective and can be

accomplished with least cost and can be done in a very short period of time – it only took a week to notice the difference. On the average, a vehicle consumes 2 liters of fuel for every hour of idling. Just imagine what amount of savings millions of motorists can generate out of the program.

The benefits of the Cavite experience have drawn the interest of Laguna and Rizal and similar activities are now taking place in these provinces.

MMDA's contribution to this forum, therefore, is to propose the adoption of this advocacy and program for the entire country. The solution to our current concerns is basic, cheaper and faster to undertake.

Thank you very much for giving us the opportunity to share with your own experience and this information in order that we can all address our current energy woes.