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Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City, Metro Manila

Thirteenth Congress
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 471



INTRODUCED BY HONORABLE JOSE G. SOLIS

EXPLANATORY NOTE

This bill seeks to Restore, Rehabilitate and Modernize the old and existing Lines of the Philippine National Railways (PNR). The North Line from Manila to the North in San Fernando, La Union and the South Line from Manila to the South in Legaspi City, the construction of the Sorsogon railway extension line from Cumon, Daraga, Albay to Matnog, Sorsogon via Bulan, Sorsogon, the construction of the railway extension line from Calamba City to Batangas City, and the allocation of SEVENTY MILLION DOLLARS ($70,000,000.00) as equity of the Republic of the Philippines from the General Appropriations Act (GAA) for the fiscal year 2002 for the use of the Official Development Assistance

Our railway system has been one of the most neglected areas in government service with dilapidated cars, rustling nails and squatters along the railway lines.

It is imperative that the government undertake and spearhead the Restoration, Rehabilitation, and modernization of the old and existing lines of the PNR, the North Line from Manila to San Fernando, La Union, and the South Line from Manila to Legaspi City, the construction of the Sorsogon extension line from Cumon, Daraga, Albay to Matnog, Sorsogon via Bulan, Sorsogon, and the construction of the railway extension line from Calamba City to Batangas City be undertaken to provide cheaper and faster means of transportation to spur economic activity in the country.

One of the visions of Her Excellency President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo in her State of the Nation Address is the provision of an effective, reliable and affordable transport system. Towards achieving the goal, the PNR should be the major contributor of the existing railway system by providing faster, more comfortable and safer trains to be made available to everyone specially the common tao. The rehabilitation of the PNR lines will enhance the transport services for the various industrial products both in Ilocos, the Bicol Region and the Samar provinces and the mobility of the residents therein.

The PNR has a total route kilometrage of 1,137 kms stretching from as far North as San Fernando, La Union to as far as South as Legaspi City. At present, however, only 491 kms or only 42% of the total route kilometrage is operational, i.e. in the Mainland South or that section from Manila to Legaspi City (478 kms), the branch line to Carmona, Cavite (5 kms) and a small part of Main line North and the Manila Caloocan Line (8 kms).

The proposed Sorsogon Railway Extension (SRE) projects dates back as early as 1956, under the leadership of then Sorsogon Gov. Juan G. Frivaldo who petitioned His Excellency President Ramon Magsaysay for the extension of the Manila Railroad line to the Province of Sorsogon. The envisioned railway line will directly connect the province to the rest of the Bicol Region and the National Capital Region.

In mid-1956, a reconnaissance survey from Comun to Matnog was undertaken and completed by the engineers from the Philippine National Railways (PNR).

On June 13, 1957, Republic Act (RA) 1623 was approved appropriating fifteen million pesos (P15,000,000.00) out of the proceeds of the sales of bonds authorized under RA 1000, supposedly to finance the initial phases of the project. Subsequent activities in the field were carried out to estimate the cost and define the final alignment.

On September 10, 1961, the ground breaking and unveiling of cornerstone ceremony at the proposed Sorsogon station was held,

signaling the start of construction work for the SRE project. The guest of honor was His Excellency President Carlos P. Garcia. Due to lack of funds, construction of works for the Sorsogon and Albay sections were suspended on December 20, 1965 and January 20, 1966, respectively.

Since then, the project was never revived and due to new developments in the automotive industry, was shelved.

In 1982, however, the National Transportation Planning Project (NTPP) examined the PNR proposal to construct the line to Sorsogon to be about P235 M and another P654 M to reach Matnog, Sorsogon via Bulan, Sorsogon section but excluded rolling stock, construction of terminals and a repair yard, and operational costs.

NTTP report proceeded with some preliminary economic evaluation and suggestion that the extension of the railway network to Sorsogon Province should only be seriously considered after 20 years.

After fourteen (14) years however, the world's economy, particularly Asia's and including the Philippines', significantly improved, necessitating an increase in transport infrastructure spending to sustain development. Furthermore, traffic congestion being experienced in the road-based transport has bought a renewed focus on the railways as the better alternative in the provision of a transportation backbone that will link the country's major islands. On March 23, 1996, His Excellency Fidel V. Ramos approved the release of funds for the conduct of a Feasibility Study for the line, initiated jointly by the Department of Transport and Communication (DOTC) and the Philippine National Railways.

Main Line South has been the subject of previous rehabilitation efforts but due to budgetary constraints only the more important aspects has been attended to hence more rehabilitation efforts has to be extended if the line is to accept faster and heavier trains. Current estimates for the additional rehabilitation and strengthening amount to approximately P14.5 Billion for the existing single-track line. To convert to a double track system, another P14.5 Billion would be needed. If the system is to be electrified, it is estimated that a single-

track system will require an additional P14.0 Billion or P31.0 Billion if double tracked.

Main Line North extends from Manila to San Fernando, La Union with a route kilometrage of 226 kms. Train operations along this route ceased as far back as 1988 due to shortage of locomotives and rolling stock as well as due to several catastrophic events, which washed away tracks and bridges. Considering the present state of the line, the approximate amount of P5.8 Billion would be required to reopen it along the existing PNR alignment. If, however, the line is diverted west of Mt. Arayat to avoid that portion of the line which has been affected by the eruption of Mt. Pinatubo, that amount will increase to P6.9 Billion. Should the realignment be along the Cabanatuan and San Jose Branches, P7.3 Billion would be necessary. To double track the entire length, P11.3 Billion would be required. Should the line be electrified, an additional P2.0 Billion would be needed for a single-track system, a double track system would have a price tag of P3.7 Billion.

With the economic boom in the CALABARZON area and the projected conversion of the Batangas Port from the domestic to international, it would be a good business move if the Batangas Line is reopened. The 57 km line starts from Calamba City and runs southwest to Batangas City and on to Bauan, Batangas. The right of way is still intact but it would need P2.0 Billion if the line is reopened as single-track line and P4.6 Billion if double tracked. Electrification would need an additional P2.0 Billion if single tracked or P3.7 Billion if double tracked.

To really make the PNR the backbone for mass movements and heavy lifts stretching down the whole length of the Island of Luzon, extending Main Line South to Matnog, Sorsogon would be most necessary. Such an extension will be advantageous to the traveling public in the Samar and Leyte provinces while those in the rest of Visayas Region and even those in Mindanao island itself will likewise be benefited if it will be single tracked or P12.8 Billion if double tracked. Electrification would further add to the cost, i.e., P4.0 Billion for single and P8.7 Billion if double tracked.

One important aspect in the rehabilitation of the lines that has been often taken for granted is the need for railway maintenance machines. Manual maintenance, as practiced in the PNR right now is inadequate and ineffective. The present configuration of the tracks is such that the pre-war maintenance philosophy is no longer valid. The much heavier tracks of today require track tampers to tamp, align and level the tracks, ballast regulators for reballasting, consolidators to consolidate tracks and other machines like excavators, cranes, etc. for other track works. Initially, P150 Million will be required to really maintain the line presently in operation.

All the above proposed projects will require the massive relocation of the informal dwellers that have occupied major portions of the right-of-way. It is estimated that along Main Line South, there are about 70,000 families, while Main Line North and the branch lines have as much as 110,000 families. This would require an estimated amount of P1.8 Billion for Main Line South while Main Line North needs P2.8 Billion.

The Restoration, Rehabilitation and the Modernization of the old and existing PNR lines and the construction of new line in Bicol and the Calamba-Batangas Line truly will enhance the transport services for the various industrial products in the Ilocos and in the Bicol Region including Samar provinces and the mobility of the residents therein.

In view of the foregoing, approval of this bill is earnestly recommended.

JOSE G. SOLIS

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HOUSE BILL NO. 471

INTRODUCED BY HONORABLE JOSE G. SOLIS

AN ACT
RESTORING, REHABILITATING AND MODERNIZING THE OLD AND EXISTING LINES OF THE PHILIPPINE NATIONAL RAILWAYS (PNR), THE NORTH LINES FROM MANILA TO SAN FERNANDO, LA UNION, THE SOUTH LINES FROM MANILA TO LEGASPI CITY, THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE SORSOGON EXTENSION LINE FROM CUMON, DARAGA, ALBAY TO MATNOG, SORSOGON VIA BULAN, SORSOGON, THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE RAILWAY EXTENSION LINE FROM CALAMBA CITY TO BATANGAS CITY, AND THE ALLOCATION OF SEVENTY MILLION U.S. DOLLARS ($ 70,000,000.00) AS EQUITY OF THE REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES FROM THE GENERAL APPROPRIATIONS ACT (GAA) FOR THE FISCAL YEAR 2002 FOR THE USE OF THE OFFICIAL DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE (ODA)

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

SECTION 1. The Restoration, Rehabilitation and the Modernization of the old and existing lines of the Philippine National Railways (PNR), the North Line from Manila to San Fernando, La Union, the South Line from Manila to Legaspi City, the Construction of the Sorsogon Extension Line from Cumon, Daraga, Albay to Matnog, Sorsogon via Bulan, Sorsogon, the construction of the extension line from Calamba City to Batangas City, and the allocation of SEVENTY MILLION U.S. DOLLARS ($70,000,000.00) as equity of

the Republic of The Philippines from the GAA for the Fiscal Year 2002 for the use of the Official Development Assistance (ODA).

SECTION 2. The Department of Transportation and Communication, in coordination with the Department of Public Works and Highways, have already undertaken a comprehensive study of the Extension of Sorsogon Railway System and expansion programs, taking into consideration the tourism and eco-zone potentials including agro-industrial centers of the area serviced and to be serviced by said railway.

SECTION 3. The Secretary of Transportation and Communication shall promulgate the necessary rules and regulations for the proper implementation of this Act.

SECTION 4. This Act shall take effect immediately upon its approval.

Approved.