

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

SEVENTEENTH CONGRESS
____ Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 5628



INTRODUCED BY HONORABLE GAVINI "APOL" PANCHO

EXPLANATORY NOTE

For the longest time the nation's seat of government and economic development has primarily centered within the National Capital Region (NCR). This has consequently produced a lop-sided non-inclusively development that has constrained and even retarded the progress of majority of provinces in other regions of the country.

Being the center of commerce and political power, access to public services, livelihood opportunities and high paying jobs are primarily found within the NCR and this has encouraged the continuous migration of the provincial population who are seeking better employment, access to government services, education, and other opportunities, in the region.

Consequently this has resulted in overcrowding of the population as well as the influx of informal settlers within the NCR --- with each individual competing for access and their share to basic services from government.

Due to in-migration of provincial population attracted by perceived higher economic opportunities population in the region grew faster than the rest of the country, from 15.4 million in 1980 to 34.6 million in 2010. The population growth rate in the region continues to grow at 1.8% per annually, progressively burdening government capabilities to sustain and provide the needed infrastructure and basic services to serve its local permanent and migrant population; and with a limited land area of 39.5 thousand km² (or 11.5% land area of the entire country), the NCR now hosts more than 1/3 of the country's population and has made it one of the densest populated areas in the world.

The robust development in the NCR has also not only contributed to the coagulation of wealthier residents in the hundreds of high rise condominiums along the business districts in the NCR but has also significantly contributed to increased number of vehicles daily using Epifanio Delos Santos Avenue (EDSA), as well as other main thoroughfares and arterial roads in the Metropolis.

Added to this since the most affordable housing projects available to lower income groups are mostly located in areas outside the NCR, a big segment of the

labor population particularly from the Luzon northern corridor have been forced to commute daily to the Metropolis for their livelihood.

To meet the critical demand for this critical service, numerous operators have deployed a horde of buses particularly along EDSA, there are currently 12,595 buses operating within Metro Manila, or from the province to Metro Manila, which are dispersed over 1,122 operators. Together with buses and urban railways serving the main thoroughfares of the NCR, the numbers of jeepneys, taxis, FXs, vans, multicabs, tricycles, and other localized transport have similarly grown astronomically over time. However the carrying capacities of the road network along the Central Business Districts (CBDs), markets, and schools in the NCR which are limited by space can hardly cope with the increasing volume of vehicles using the network.

Unavoidably the sheer volume of vehicular traffic has heavily affected transit time of its riding population, with both residents with private owned vehicles as well as the commuting public daily burdened with travel stress beginning 4:00 am until 10:00 pm.

Now we find commuters spending too much time making their trips, while bus companies spend more for fuel and maintenance on their vehicles, and members of the transport sector working longer hours to meet their "boundary" for their operators.

The severe traffic congestion has also led to the degradation of the environment, as well as to rising health costs and under-productivity of employees due to a host of illnesses both directly and indirectly resulting from physical stress and the heavily polluted air.

The situation is aggravated by the now ineffective, outdated and overburdened drainage systems of the cities and municipalities in the NCR. As a consequence regular occurrence of flash floods are experienced with the onset of any sudden downpour. Beyond being mere nuisances, these continually put the safety and welfare of residents at risk, and have severely affected business productivity especially during the rainy season.

According to the collaborative study done by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and the Department of Transportation (DOTr), Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH), and the Metro Manila Development Authority (MMDA), if the estimated economic costs traffic congestion in the NCR brings to our national economy is about P2.4 billion daily, and is likely to increase to P6 billion a day in the short term.

Many measures have been tried to relieve this congestion but all have had very limited success, with some even ending up costing the government more of taxpayer's money. Beyond policy interventions, the Metro Manila Development Authority (MMDA) being the default agency for traffic management, has explored a number of measures with limited success including: (i) one-way systems; (ii) reversible traffic lanes; (iii) yellow boxes; (iv) pedestrian barriers; (v) pedestrian overpasses; (vi) EDSA bus lanes; (vii) bus stop separators; (viii) bus stop segregation schemes; (ix) bus waiting sheds; (x) prohibition of provincial buses along EDSA; (xi) odd-even scheme; (xii) unified vehicle volume reduction scheme;

and (xiii) truck ban and truck routes. The MMDA and other government agencies have also built interchanges and the Metro Rail Transit (MRT), traffic lights, lane markings and other enhancements as part of the master plan drawn up for the Metro Manila Urban Transport Integration Project (MMURTRIP) which has funding support from the World Bank. The MMURTRIP covers traffic management improvements of, among others, the EDSA corridor. It also includes improvement of selected secondary roads to better disperse traffic over the road network and reduce congestions in arterial roads.

These measures however, with due credit to the merits of each experts say, is bound to fail in fully meeting its objective and may even cost the government more in terms of taxpayer's money because the root problem of not having enough space have not been addressed. With its continued urbanization NCR residents can expect to increasingly face more traffic congestion, polluted air, unsafe roads and vehicles, the absence of parks, sidewalks, and open spaces, and the realities of more cars and motorcycles in the future, making city living a great burden particularly for the greater population within the lower income strata of society.

Corollary to this, the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (Philvolcs) has announced an impending magnitude 7.2 earthquake that will hit areas in Metro Manila and nearby provinces that are sitting along the West Marikina Valley Fault. It is forecasted this would result in approximately 37,000 deaths; injure 604,000 persons, with 16,000 of these seriously wounded; severely damage 11 million square meters of land area; and bring economic loses to an estimated P2.5-trillion. Since majority of vital public offices and key private sector institutions are concentrated in the NCR, the extent of the aftermath of the impending "big one" would virtually put all these vital public offices "out of commission" and come close to paralyzing the nation.

Taken all together it becomes clearly evident that government should seriously and urgently consider establishing centers of commerce and the relocation of vital public offices in other regions like those in the North. This will alleviate the debilitating traffic congestion in the NCR; encourage more public investments in other regions achieving a more equitable economic development in the whole country; and equally important, the multiplication of private sector centers outside the NCR can strengthen the national disaster mitigation and response strategy and prevent economic, social and political dislocation, if and when massive disaster strikes.

This Bill asserts that choosing the Northern Regions 1, 2 and 3 as an alternative to the NCR is the best option in this direction. For one, these regions already have infrastructure and facilities to support businesses, education, recreation and tourism. They also offer a wider and more affordable space for development compared to the NCR.

Availability of gateway ports and airports in Regions 1-3 can also provide a responsive alternative for the travel and shipping requirements currently concentrated at the NAIA and Manila ports. Further developing these will definitely serve the interests the government, business and private sectors in providing employment opportunities, encouraging robust investments and generating greater

economic activity to empower both formal and informal actors in all sectors not only within the Northern Regions but its adjacent provinces as well.

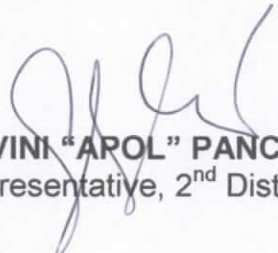
Consequently this will help catalyze more economic investments through the Public Private Partnership Program (PPP) of the government and help manifest the currently untapped potential of the major agricultural zones and export processing zones north of Manila. Through this the wide open spaces of idle land can be transformed into engines of progress geared towards meeting the growing market demand of in the local and global economies. This will likewise allow the provinces in the Northern regions to generate greater income and become less dependent on the national government.

The development of economic hubs in the North will also effectively arrest labor force migration and the influx of informal settlers, and help alleviate the traffic congestion in Metro Manila because businessmen, investors and residents from the North and adjacent provinces will not need to venture all the way to the NCR just to pursue their employment, education, business, travel and other concerns.

It is projected that pursuing a robust development program in the North will reduce the traffic congestion in Metro Manila by more than 40% as the bulk of provincial public buses as well as freight trucks currently using the Manila Ports to or bound for Regions 1-3 will be relocated.

Lastly developing the Northern Regions significantly supports the objectives of the Local Government Code of 1991 and encourages the necessary conditions to achieve this administration's aspirations of establishing a Federal Form of Government to bring equitable development and inclusive growth to all parts of the country.

With this purpose in mind, the immediate approval of this bill is strongly requested.



GAVINI "APOL" PANCHO
Representative, 2nd District Bulacan

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

SEVENTEENTH CONGRESS
_____ Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 5628

INTRODUCED BY HONORABLE GAVINI "APOL" PANCHO

AN ACT FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE NORTHERN CORRIDOR TOGETHER WITH THE CONSTRUCTION OF NEW AIR AND SEA PORT BUILDINGS/ INFRASTRUCTURE, AS A PRIMARY COMPONENT IN SOLVING THE OVERPOPULATION, TRAFFIC CONGESTION, AND HIGH VULNERABILITY TO NATURAL DISASTERS OF VITAL GOVERNMENT OFFICES WITHIN THE NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION (NCR) OR METROPOLITAN MANILA, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES THEREOF.

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

SECTION 1. Short Title. --- This Act shall be known as "Northern Corridor Development Act of 2017".

SECTION 2. Declaration of Policy. (a) It is hereby declared the policy of the State to pursue sustainable development, balancing progress, protection of the environment, and the health and welfare of its people.

(b) It is also the declared policy of the State to ensure that the poorer sectors of society have equitable access to resources, income opportunities, basic and support services and infrastructure.

(c) It is likewise the policy of the State to support the provisions of the Local Government Code of 1991 in order that the territorial and political subdivisions of the State can enjoy genuine and meaningful local autonomy to enable them to attain their fullest development as self-reliant communities and make them more effective partners in the attainment of national goals.

(d) Moreover it is the declared policy of the State to uphold the people's constitutional rights to life and property by addressing the root causes of vulnerabilities to disasters, strengthening the country's institutional capacity for disaster risk reduction and management and building the resilience of local communities to disasters including climate change impacts as a concrete expression of the country's commitment to overcome human sufferings due to recurring disasters;

Towards this end, the State shall pursue the development of the Northern Regions together with the construction of new air and sea port buildings/ infrastructure under the PPP, as a primary component in solving the overpopulation, traffic congestion, and high vulnerability to natural disasters of vital government offices within the National Capital Region (NCR).

SECTION 3. Purposes and Objectives - It is the purpose, intent and objective of this Act:

(a) To promote, and accelerate the development and balanced growth of the Regions 1, 2 and 3, hereinafter referred to as the Northern Corridor, within the context of the national and regional plans and policies for social and economic development and to carry out the development of the Northern Corridor with due regard and adequate provisions for environmental management and control, preservation of the quality of human life and ecological systems, and the prevention of undue ecological disturbances, deterioration and pollution.

(b) To transform the Northern Corridor into highly developed agro industrial, industrial, commercial, tourist, banking, investment, and financial centers, where highly trained workers and efficient services will be available to commercial enterprises;

(c) To promote the flow of investors, both foreign and local, into the Northern Corridor to generate employment opportunities and establish backward and forward linkages among industries in and around the Northern Corridor;

(d) To stimulate the repatriation of Filipino capital, arrest in-migration and influx of informal settlers by providing attractive climate and incentives for economic activity in the Northern Corridor;

(e) To divert the concentration of political and economic power from the NCR to the Northern Corridor and provide greater autonomy of the LGUs in these Regions;

(e) To help solve the severe traffic congestion in the NCR; and

(f) To ensure that the operations of vital government institutions will not be paralyzed and can continue to function in the aftermath of the impending 7.2 magnitude earthquake forecasted to hit the NCR and adjacent areas that are within the Marikina Valley fault line.

SECTION 4. Definition of Terms. For purposes of this Act the following terms are hereby defined as:

(a) **"Northern Corridor"**. Relative to the provisions of this Bill, refer to Regions 1, 2 and 3.

(b) **Marikina Valley Fault line.** Also known as the West Valley Fault line. The 100- km West Valley Fault Line transects at least 57 residential villages and subdivisions. This fault generates big quakes every 400 to 600 years, according to PHIVOLCS. The last major quake occurred more than 3 centuries ago, in 1658. Within 50 years which within this generation, another big quake might happen.

(c) **Special Purpose Funds (SPFs).** The Department of Budget and Management (DBM) defines SPFs as "items in the budget categorized by use or type but with a specific purpose and legal bases. These budgets contain both disaggregated and lump sum allocations, as defined by their intended purpose." These appropriations include the Contingent Fund, Miscellaneous Personnel Benefits Fund, Pension and Gratuity Fund, National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Fund, budgetary support to government corporations, allocations to local government units, customs duties and taxes, and debt interest payments.

SECTION 5. Scope. Unless specified herein this Act shall apply to the robust development of the Northern Corridor and the relocation of vital government agencies and the diversion of economic activity from the current concentration within the NCR, to the provinces within Northern Corridor.

SECTION 6. Role of the National Economic Development Authority (NEDA) and other National Government Agencies – The NEDA, with corresponding support from all relevant national government agencies, will take the lead in pursuing the robust development of the Northern Corridor within the context of the national and regional plans and policies for social and economic development from the short to medium term.

SECTION 7. Appropriations. The amount necessary to carry out the provisions of this Act shall be charged against the current year's appropriation under the Special Funds of the Office of the President. Thereafter, such sums as may be necessary for the operation and maintenance of this Act shall be included in the General Appropriations Act.

SECTION 8. Implementing Rules and Regulations. Within ninety (90) days after the effectivity of this Act, the NEDA together with Philippine Ports Authority, the Department of Interior and Local Government, Department of Transportation, Department of Budget and Management, along with provincial governments within the Northern Corridor, shall promulgate the implementing rules and regulations governing this Act.

SECTION 9. Separability Clause. If for any reason, any provision of part hereof is declared invalid, the other provisions not affected thereby shall remain in full force and effect.

SECTION 10. Repealing Clause. – Any provision of the law, presidential decree, executive orders, rules and regulations contrary to the provision of this Act is hereby repealed, amended or modified accordingly.

SECTION 11. Effectivity. – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its complete publication in the Official Gazette or in at least two (2) newspapers of general circulation, whichever comes earlier.

Approved,