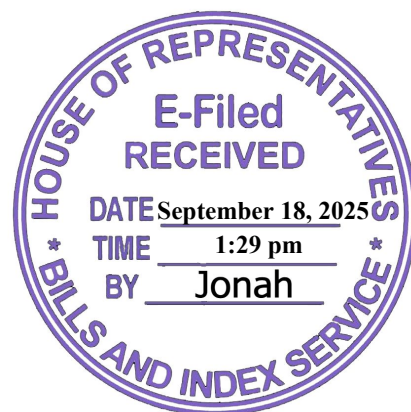




Republic of the Philippines
House of Representatives
Quezon City, Metro Manila

Twentieth Congress
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 4679



Introduced by Representatives Ferdinand Martin G. Romualdez, Yedda Marie K. Romualdez, Andrew Julian K. Romualdez, and Jude A. Acidre

AN ACT
PROVIDING FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A RAILWAY SYSTEM
IN THE EASTERN VISAYAS REGION FROM THE ENTRY OF THE
PROVINCE OF SAMAR TO THE MUNICIPALITY OF SAN RICARDO
IN THE PROVINCE OF SOUTHERN LEYTE, AND APPROPRIATING
FUNDS THEREFOR

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The Eastern Visayas region, comprising the provinces of Samar, Leyte, and Biliran, remains one of the most economically disadvantaged and geographically isolated areas in the Philippines. Despite its vast natural resources, rich cultural heritage, and strong potential in agriculture, tourism, and industry, the region continues to lag in infrastructure development, especially in mass transportation, which hinders its growth.

First, public transport modernization lags due to limited planning. The Land Transportation and Franchising Regulatory Board (LTFRB) has highlighted that the absence of comprehensive local public transport route plans, which are required to be submitted by local government units, impedes modernization efforts. Only a few towns have submitted the Long-Term Public Transport Route Plans necessary for the issuance of public utility vehicle franchises.¹

¹ Amazona, R. (2022, June 27). *Route plans crucial in transport modernization: LTFRB*. Retrieved September 17, 2025, from <https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1177610>

Second, persistent road and connectivity gaps impair economic progress. The Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) confirmed that inadequate infrastructure is a significant barrier to economic growth and poverty reduction in certain regions, including Southern Leyte and Northern Samar.²

Moreover, the region's share of national transportation mass transit funding remains disproportionately low. In 2024, Eastern Visayas is among the poorest regions in terms of Department of Transportation (DOTr) budget allocation for FY 2025, receiving less than one percent (1%), despite its significant infrastructure needs.³

To address these issues, this bill aims to fill critical infrastructure gaps while simultaneously empowering regional growth by establishing a railway system that the major islands of the region, from the entry point of the Province of Samar to the Municipality of San Ricardo in Southern Leyte. The Eastern Visayas Railway System will serve as a backbone for regional connectivity, improving the movement of people and goods, spurring inclusive economic growth, and promoting the development of growth corridors within and among the provinces.

With the railway system, it can enhance regional integration by connecting key municipalities and cities through efficient and reliable mass transport; support agro-industrial development by providing logistics infrastructure for local products to reach larger markets; boost tourism and local enterprise by improving accessibility to natural and cultural attractions; promote environmental sustainability by reducing dependence on road-based transport and lowering carbon emissions; and, foster long-term resiliency and mobility in disaster-prone areas through safe and dependable transportation.

This bill also mandates the DOTr, in coordination with the DPWH and the Philippine National Railways (PNR), to conduct a comprehensive feasibility and technical study that will determine the most optimal and viable route, ensuring safety, efficiency, and maximum socio-economic benefit.

Furthermore, the establishment of the Eastern Visayan Railway Working Group, comprising relevant national and local stakeholders, ensures that

² Philippine News Agency (2021, December 8). *DPWH lays down infra dev't projects for Eastern Visayas*. Retrieved February 17, 2025, from <https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1162200>

³ Rosales, E. F. (2024, September 3). *Poorest regions left out in transport projects – study*. PhilStar Global. Retrieved September 17, 2025, from <https://www.philstar.com/business/2024/09/03/2382374/poorest-regions-left-out-transport-projects-study>

development will be inclusive, transparent, and responsive to local needs and aspirations.

This measure was filed by Southern Leyte, 2nd District Representative Christopherson "Coco" M. Yap during the 19th Congress.

In light of the strategic importance of this infrastructure for national and regional development, the immediate passage of this bill is earnestly sought.



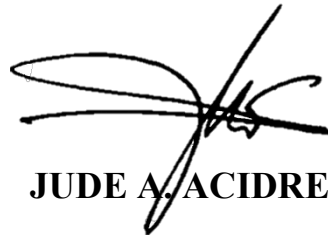
FERDINAND MARTIN G. ROMUALDEZ



YEDDA MARIE K. ROMUALDEZ



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JUDE A. ACIDRE



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

Section 1. *Short Title.* – This Act shall be known as the “*Eastern Visayas Railroad Act.*”

Section 2. *Establishment of the Railway System.* – There shall be established a railway system in the Eastern Visayan Region under the administration of the Philippine National Railways (PNR), connecting the provinces of Samar, Leyte, and Southern Leyte from the entry of the Province of Samar to the Municipality of San Ricardo, Province of Southern Leyte.

Section 3. *Route, Alignment, Safety and Efficiency of the Railway System.* – The Department of Transportation (DoTr), in coordination with the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) and the Philippine National Railways (PNR), shall undertake a comprehensive study of the Visayan Railway System to determine the most feasible and optimal route, taking into consideration the agro-industrial, tourism, and ecozone potentials of the concerned provinces to be serviced by the railroad. The said departments and agency shall also conduct an immediate technical study on the safety, efficiency, and resiliency of the railway system, including the preparation of the necessary land surveys for areas to be acquired under the program, taking into consideration the growth center of population, trade, and commerce of each provinces.

Section 4. *Establishment of the Eastern Visayan Railway Working Group.* – The Secretary of Transportation, in consultation with the DPWH and the PNR shall establish a working group, which shall include, but not limited to, local chief executives of the affected local government units, and lawmakers of the affected districts. This working group shall be consulted on all matters concerning the Eastern Visayan Railway System.

Section 5. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* – The Secretary of Transportation, in consultation with the Eastern Visayan Railway Working Group, shall promulgate the necessary rules and regulations for the effective implementation of this Act.

Section 6. *Appropriations.* – The amount necessary for the conduct of technical studies, shall be sourced from the current budget of the DOTr and the PNR. Other funding mechanisms, such as public-private partnerships, may be

explored as per recommendation of technical studies and the Eastern Visayan Railway Working Group.

Section 7. *Separability Clause.* – If any part or provision of this Act is declared invalid or unconstitutional, the provisions not affected thereby shall remain in full force and effect.

Section 8. *Repealing Clause.* – All laws, presidential decrees, executive orders, presidential proclamations, rules, and regulations or parts thereof contrary to or inconsistent with this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

Section 9. *Effectivity.* – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the *Official Gazette* or in at least two (2) newspapers of general circulation.

Approved,