

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

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

House Bill No. 8538



Introduced by Representatives JEFFREY SORIANO and JOCELYN P. TULFO

EXPLANATORY NOTE

This bill seeks to establish a Magna Carta of Commuters that recognizes mobility as a basic human need and guarantees the rights of commuters to safe, convenient, reliable, and affordable transportation. It affirms the State's responsibility to develop an inclusive and efficient public transport system that prioritizes the welfare of commuters and promotes sustainable mobility.

The measure declares that adequate mobility is essential to ensuring access to employment, education, healthcare, and other essential services. To this end, the bill mandates the government to plan and maintain transport systems that respond to the evolving needs of communities. It requires local government units and metropolitan authorities to regularly assess mobility demands and ensure that public transportation services are accessible, connected, and sufficient in frequency and capacity.

The proposed measure also promotes active transport by requiring the development of safe sidewalks, bicycle lanes, and pedestrian-friendly infrastructure in cities and municipalities. It prioritizes public transport, walking, and cycling in road design and traffic management to ensure the efficient movement of people while reducing reliance on private motor vehicles.

To improve commuter welfare and safety, the bill mandates real-time information on public transport services, the installation of monitoring devices in public transport vehicles, and the adoption of road safety measures aligned with international standards. It likewise promotes clean air by requiring compliance with emission standards and encouraging the use of environmentally sustainable transport modes.

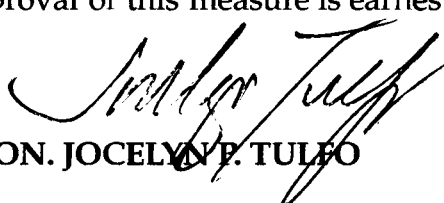
Furthermore, the measure establishes mechanisms for commuter participation in policymaking, including advance notice and consultation on transport-related initiatives.

By institutionalizing a comprehensive framework that upholds commuter rights and promotes efficient, safe, and sustainable mobility, this measure aims to significantly improve the daily travel experience of millions of Filipinos.

In view of the foregoing, the immediate approval of this measure is earnestly sought.



HON. JEFFREY SORIANO



HON. JOCELYN P. TULFO

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AN ACT
PROVIDING FOR A MAGNA CARTA OF COMMUTERS

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 “*Magna Carta of Commuters*”.

SEC. 2. *Declaration of Policy.* — The State recognizes mobility as a basic human need essential to an adequate standard of living. It upholds every commuter’s right to safe, convenient, and reliable travel, giving priority to public welfare over private interests. Citizens shall have the right to participate in planning and managing mobility-related programs. To this end, the State shall establish the necessary infrastructure, resources, and legal measures to promote and protect commuter welfare.

SEC. 3. *Definition of Terms.* — For purposes in this Act, the following terms shall mean:

- a. Active transport refers to non-motorized means of travel, including walking or using a bicycle;
- b. Activity Center refers to a place in a city or municipality where people gather *regularly for work, worship, education, social events, trade, exercise, leisure, or other common interests and purposes*;
- c. Advance Notice refers to the provision of early information regarding any consultations with stakeholders, for which the period from the announcement or delivery of the invitation to the consultation event will be a minimum of ten (10) working days;
- d. Commuter refers to a person that needs to travel from one place to another, often using a combination of transportation modes to get to their destination;

- e. Greenway refers to a road, street, or path with ample greenery and shade where private motorized transport is not allowed to welcome and encourage environmentally sustainable transportation modes, especially walking and cycling;
- f. High-Volume Transport Corridor refers to walkways, paths, roads, bridges, streets, or mass transportation terminals where the flow of people is at least 2,000 persons per hour per direction during peak travel periods;
- g. Mobility refers to the ability of a person to travel from one place to another to conduct daily and extraordinary activities and business;
- h. Mobility Infrastructure refers to physical facilities, such as foot paths, bicycle lanes, roads, public utility vehicle (PUV) loading and unloading bays, PUV terminals, and public transport systems that support and enhance a person's mobility;
- i. Private Motorized Transport refers to motorized vehicles weighing more than 100 kilograms; and
- j. Public Transport refers to public sector and franchised private sector services that transport people over land or water, including jeepneys, UV Express, buses, minibuses, railways, ferries, taxis, and tricycles.

SEC. 4. *Right to Public Transportation Services that Meet Commuters' Mobility Requirements.* – The State shall ensure that adequate public transportation services are available to meet the needs of its citizens. Public transportation services and infrastructure plans and programs should be prepared and updated on an annual basis in order to satisfy the evolving mobility requirements in our communities, especially in urban areas.

It will be the responsibility of metropolitan authorities and local government units to measure, analyze, and update the mobility requirements in each locality and to develop plans and programs to address the mobility requirements of their citizens.

The State shall ensure that:

- a. Every town and municipality will have a community-wide network of safe sidewalks, bicycle lanes, and roads to enable travel around the city entirely by foot, bicycle, or by other forms of light mobility;
- b. Public Transport services are available within a 500-meter walk from any residence or Activity Center in a city;
- c. Public Transport services are connected to another public service within a 300-meter walk to promote seamless connectivity;
- d. Public Transport services are in sufficient quantity and frequency so that commuter waiting time at stops and terminals do not exceed 10 minutes during peak demand periods;

- e. Public Transport is accorded priority in the use of road space and traffic signal operation so that it is able to traverse 15 kilometers within 1 hour, including all scheduled stops;
- f. Public Transport services are supported by properly equipped, adequately-sized and well-maintained terminals and stops, with attention to the safety and comfort of commuters;
- g. Every road with a speed limit of over 20 kilometers per hour (kph) and under 60 kph shall feature dedicated pedestrian infrastructure, in the form of and unobstructed walking path of at least 2.5 meters wide in each direction; and
- h. Every road with a speed limit of under 60 kph shall feature dedicated bike lanes which are wide enough to comfortably accommodate at least two (2) bikes side by side.

The State Shall ensure that Transport Services are inclusive, so that they are accessible to persons of all ages and abilities. Public Transport infrastructure and vehicles shall be designed and implemented so that persons with disabilities or special needs are not excluded from their use.

The State shall ensure that in all renovations of existing infrastructure or construction of new infrastructure, preserving or improving the travel time impact on Public Transport, bicycles, and pedestrians shall be prioritized over preserving or improving travel time impact on private motorized transport. The State shall generally avoid implementing projects that improve travel time for private vehicle users if such projects significantly disadvantage public transport, cyclists, or pedestrians.

SEC. 5. Right to Safe, Convenient, and Affordable Public Transport Services. — The State shall ensure that Public Transport services are safe, dignified, convenient, comfortable, and reliable while remaining affordable to the general public.

Concessional or discounted fares shall be offered for disadvantaged or special groups, such as students, senior citizens, and persons with disabilities.

The State shall provide subsidies to compensate for discounts offered to special or disadvantaged groups other than the incentives provided under existing laws. The State shall also reward the use of Public Transport through financial and non-financial incentives to promote the frequent use of Public Transport. The State shall ensure that it is more economical for commuters to use Active Transport or Public Transport than to use private motorized transport.

During periods when transportation services are deficient, the State shall employ alternative approaches for enabling additional mobility options for its citizens, including through the use of public resources to fill temporary gaps in services, such as through government-owned vehicles or through the government charter or lease of private vehicles.

The State shall ensure safe and efficient driving by Public Transport drivers through required training. All Public Transport vehicles will be required to install electronic vehicle tracking devices and Closed-circuit televisions that will enable concerned authorities to conduct real-time monitoring of vehicle location, vehicle speed, and driver status. Streets must be designed in accordance with international best practices in road safety design to reduce the occurrence of dangerous driving behavior.

SEC. 6. *Right to Infrastructure for Pedestrians, Cyclists, and Persons with Disabilities.* — The State shall accord priority to the development of adequate sidewalk and networks of bicycle lanes that encourage Active Transport and that provide safe and direct access to priority destinations such as housing, education, and business centers, as well as Public Transport nodes.

The State shall ensure that all Public Transport stops are accessible to persons with disabilities and impaired movement. The State shall ensure that ease of access by pedestrians especially at Public Transport stops and government facilities is prioritized over mobility of private motorized transport.

The State shall ensure that safe and adequate walking and cycling infrastructure is incorporated in the design and implementation of road transport projects at national and local government levels. The State shall ensure that the Comprehensive Land Use Plan of every city and municipality includes the development of a city or municipality-wide network of safe sidewalks, bicycle lanes, and road lanes to enable travel around the city entirely by foot, bicycle, or by other forms of light mobility.

The State shall ensure that travel by walking or cycling is no less direct to destinations than travel by private motorized transport. No commuter shall be made to travel above or below street level to cross any street or intersection if it is possible to implement an at-grade crossing. No commuter, when traveling or walking or cycling, shall be made to diverge from his or her route of travel if a commuter traveling by private motorized vehicle would have enjoyed a more direct trip.

In cities and municipalities, the State shall ensure that the infrastructure of each barangay includes:

- a. Safe foot paths or sidewalks, free of obstruction, well-protected from automobiles, compliant with universal design guidelines, and accessible to pregnant women, elderly, and persons with strollers or wheel chairs; networks of greenways to encourage active transport modes (walking and cycling);
- b. Proper lighting on all roads and footpaths to allow safe travel even after dark;
- c. Tactile paving on sidewalks of high-volume transport corridors for the benefit of pedestrians who are visually-impaired;
- d. Bicycle racks in every transportation hub or terminal and in every commercial, community, and activity center; and

- e. Safe intersections and pedestrian crossings such as provision of raised pedestrian platforms, highly visible advance warning signages, adequate streetlighting, mid-crossing refuges, traffic calming for motorized vehicles and curb outstands to reduce road pavement crossing width.

The State shall not require parking for cars to be built in any buildings, and shall encourage commercial development and the built environment to accommodate non-car travel. The State promotes light mobility by requiring that buildings provide bicycle racks that can accommodate ten percent (10%) of the anticipated users of any building.

The State shall adopt the Vision Zero in road safety and ensure that road crashes are eliminated particularly those of vulnerable road users. The State shall implement a comprehensive road safety program and will allocate funding to implement activities under the five pillars of the Philippine Road Safety Action Plan, namely: Road Safety Management, Safer Roads, Safer Vehicles, Safer Road Users, and Post-Crash Response. The State shall also create a National Road Safety Unit under the Department of Transportation (DOTr) and shall also implement a national road crash database for effective road safety planning.

SEC. 7. *Right to a Fair Share of Public Road Space.* — The State shall ensure that public road space is used in a manner that delivers the greatest socio-economic benefit. The State shall ensure that the safety of road users, especially non-motorized and vulnerable users, shall be prioritized over the mobility of motorized modes of transport. The State shall employ treatments to the design, engineering, and operation of road infrastructure in order to achieve the goal of road safety and access for non-motorized and vulnerable users.

Because roads are a scarce public asset, the State shall ensure that road space is prioritized for modes of travel, such as public transport, walking, cycling, that move more people and maximize the productivity and social benefit of the public asset. The planning and design of roads must prioritize the needs of private motor vehicles. Public Transport shall have priority use of road space over private motor vehicles. The State shall ensure that there will be no private appropriation of public road space and foot paths for parking, commerce, or other activities that will restrict public use of, or access to, the road.

SEC. 8. *Right to Breathe Clean Air during Travel.* — The State shall take measures to ensure that commuters are able to travel using Public Transport or Active Transport without compromising their health.

The State shall ensure that all Public Transport vehicles comply with the emission standards set by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), and/or the Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board (LTFRB), whichever is more stringent.

The State shall provide programs which reduce the volume of motorized vehicles to reduce vehicle-related pollution emissions. The State shall also provide facilities and programs which support and incentivize the use of cleaner alternative

fuels. Recognizing that non-exhaust emissions make up a significant portion of total pollutant emissions and that the levels of such emissions are dependent on vehicle weight, the State shall provide programs that encourage the reduction of average vehicle weight and encourage citizens to commute using cycling or other lighter vehicles.

The State shall measure air quality along the major transport corridors in all cities and municipalities and provide this information to the public in real time. When air quality exceeds safe levels according to internationally-accepted standards, particularly from the World Health Organization (WHO), the State shall activate emergency procedures with the aim of reducing the exposure of the public, especially the young and the elderly, to unclean air.

SEC. 9. Right to Information for Efficient and Convenient Travel. — The State shall provide timely and adequate information so that commuters are able to make good travel plans and choices about modes and routes. The State shall make publicly available information on all Public Transport services, including route maps, fares, schedules, and real time vehicle location and availability, for the convenience of commuters. The State shall ensure that such information is prominently displayed at all stops of public transport services and at other locations deemed necessary or beneficial to commuters.

The State shall establish technical standards and regulation for the display of street maps at strategic locations in each neighborhood, for the reference of residents and visitors.

The State shall ensure that, at all ports and terminals, a 24-hour information or assistance counter will be available to serve the needs of travelers.

The State shall establish a National Transport Data and Planning Center (NTDPC) which will collect and process the mobility data for evidence-based transport planning which can quickly adapt to the evolving mobility requirements in our communities. The NTDPC shall ensure that data in aid of policy and research on mobility be open and available to the public. The data shall include reliable and accurate road crash data, air pollution levels, public transport routes, and travel time information, among others.

SEC. 10. Right to Special Attention during Service Breakdowns and to Compensation for Deficiencies in Service. — The State shall ensure that in case of a breakdown in a Public Transport service, passengers shall be entitled to receive from the transport operator a full refund of the fare and assistance in securing onward journeys.

Any student or employee should not be penalized for arriving late by their school or employer if the reason for their tardiness was a disruption in a Public Transport service.

SEC. 11. Right to Representation and Participation. — The State shall ensure that the welfare and interest of commuters are considered in all decision-making related to mobility and transportation services. To this end, commuters have a right to

advance notice and information on any proposed policy, regulation, project, or service at local or national level that affect their mobility, including full details on how they will be affected by the proposed initiative. Affected commuters have a right to provide their comments and suggestions of the proposed initiative. Affected commuters must receive a response to such comments from the concerned public official within twenty (20) working days.

If a public consultation will be held regarding any initiative affecting the mobility of commuters, the consultation meeting shall be held at any time, even on a weekend or after office hours, and at a convenient and accessible venue that will maximize the participation and feedback from affected commuters. In parallel, commuter feedback shall be solicited through social media and other channels for information exchange.

SEC. 12. *Establishment of the Office of Commuter Affairs.* – An Office of Commuter Affairs shall be established at the DOTr at the national level, as well as in all city and municipal government units. The Office of Commuter Affairs shall be under the direct supervision of an Assistant Secretary at the national level, and a city or municipal administrator at the local level.

SEC. 13. *Functions and Responsibilities of the Office of Commuter Affairs.* – The Office of Commuter Affairs shall be tasked to perform the following functions and responsibilities:

- a. Coordinate with the respective government agencies dealing with transportation policy to ensure safe, efficient, and comfortable travel of commuters;
- b. Operate Help Desks for the riding public;
- c. Assist commuters whenever the safety and efficiency of travel is compromised;
- d. Undertake massive commuter education programs for the travelling public to know their rights and responsibilities;
- e. Ensure legal assistance for commuters, when necessary; and
- f. Ensure adequate representation of commuters in any public consultation that will impact on the welfare and interest of commuters.

SEC. 14. *Penal Provisions* – Any person or government agency who has been found to have violated any of the provisions of this Act shall be fined not less than two hundred thousand pesos (P200,000.00), but not more than five hundred thousand pesos (P500,000.00).

If the offender is a public official, they shall be dismissed from government service, in addition to the penalties above stated.

SEC. 15. *Implementing Agencies.* – The DOTr, the Department of Public Works and Highways, the Department of Interior and Local Government, Metropolitan Manila Development Authority, DENR, DTI, and concerned LGUs shall be the implementing agency with responsibility for coordinating and monitoring all implementation activities.

The State shall ensure that the Implementing Agencies will annually be allocated a budget to strengthen organizational capacities and to sufficiently fund the establishment and operations of the NTDPC, the Offices of Commuter Affairs, and other related offices. The State shall ensure that relevant technical standards, guidelines, and manuals of national and local agencies are amended to incorporate all requirements under this Act.

SEC. 16. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* – Within one hundred and eighty (180) days from the effectivity of this Act, the DOTr and other implementing agencies will prepare the IRR of this Act, with the participation of non-government organizations, and academic institutions that champion the welfare or commuters, when applicable

SEC. 17. *Separability Clause.* – If any portion or provision of this Act is declared invalid or unconstitutional, other provisions hereof shall remain in full force and effect.

SEC. 18. *Repealing Clause.* – All laws, presidential decrees, executive orders, rules and regulations which are inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed or amended accordingly.

SEC. 19. *Effectivity.* – This Act shall take effect fifteen days (15) after its publication in the Official Gazette or in a national newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,