

MODERNIZATION AT WHAT COST: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY ON THE PERCEPTIONS OF PUJ DRIVERS AND COMMUTERS ON THE DAVAO PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION MODERNIZATION PROGRAM**Bongato, Lawrence B.**

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ABSTRACT

This study is focused on the attitudes and participation of selected PUJ drivers and commuters on the local policy *Davao Public Transportation Modernization Program* (DPTMP) using the narrative inquiry research design. A set of questions was administered to the participants through face-to-face interviews. The gathered data underwent thematic analysis where it revealed that: 1) Financial prioritization and resistance to change are the attitudes of PUJ drivers towards the DPTMP; 2) Resistance and acceptance of the project implementation are the participation of PUJ drivers towards the DPTMP; 3) Improvement of public transportation and stakeholders' inclusivity are the attitudes of commuters towards the DPTMP; and 4) Willingness to take part in the implementation of the project shows participation of the commuters to DPTMP. Their perceptions were influenced by their personal experiences. These findings collectively informed the researchers recommendation to strengthen the social development component of DPTMP through extensive information dissemination and communication campaigns targeted for PUJ Drivers and commuters, and capacity-building of DPTMP social development program personnel. Ethical considerations were observed in the gathering and utilization of data.

Keywords:

DPTMP, PUJ Drivers, Commuters, Attitudes, Participation

INTRODUCTION

Public land transportation plays a pivotal role in community development, affording transport and mobility to lower to middle-class Filipinos. Along with this idea, land traffic, in which mass transportation comprises a huge part, has been, as characterized by [1] in the Maritime Review, likened to that of a blood flow that propels economic development. Public land transportation maintains the cogs and gears of a nation's economy by transporting from point A to B the labor workforce and goods. As might be expected, inefficiency and/or insufficiency of such an economic circulatory system would feature an effect not only on the country but most importantly on its people.

Eight years ago, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were introduced during a United Nations Summit, seeking to produce sustainable outcomes for development [2]. Among the 17 goals of the SDG is to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable. Dubbed SDG No. 11, this objective also looks at sustainable transportation that enhances economic growth and increases accessibility [3].

In a similar alignment with SDG No. 11, which puts emphasis on sustainable transport, the Department of Transportation (DOTr) of the Philippine Government released Department Order No. 2017-011 also known as the *Omnibus Guidelines on the Planning and Identification of Public Road Transportation Services and Franchise Issuance* which carries the policies and procedures for the Public Utility Vehicle Modernization Program (PUVMP). The PUVMP aspires to transform the country's public transportation landscape by providing safer, more efficient, convenient, affordable, climate-friendly, and environmentally sustainable public land transportation [4].

On a similar note of modernization, the City Government of Davao, also in partnership with the DOTr, introduced the DPTMP or the Davao Public Transportation Modernization Project (previously known as the Davao High Priority Bus System). In 2021, then-Davao City Mayor and now Vice President Sara Z. Duterte signed Executive Order No. 3, Series of 2021 which prompted the creation of the Davao HPBS Inter-agency Task Force. In an identical vein to that of the PUVMP, the DPTMP also endeavors to modernize the public transport system within the city, provide adequate and convenient modes of transportation to the general public, and to improve the current traffic situations in Davao City [5].

With these recent developments of public transportation modernization targeted at national and local levels in the last few years, a diverse array of perceptions emerge from the said projects' immediate stakeholders – the Public Utility Vehicle (PUV) drivers, and the commuters.

Given the above conditions and put together by the researchers' collective initiative, this Qualitative research study specifically sought to explore the varied perceptions of the regular commuters and Public Utility Jeepney (PUJ) drivers on the proposed modernization program here in the Davao City known as the *Davao Public Transportation Modernization Project (DPTMP)* (formerly *Davao High Priority Bus System*). With this, the researchers determined the following in the study:

- The attitude of drivers towards the DPTMP
- The participation of drivers towards the DPTMP
- The attitude of commuters towards the DPTMP
- The participation of commuters towards the DPTMP

Upon analysis of the gathered data, the qualitative themes of the study revealed that: 1) Financial prioritization and resistance to change are the attitudes of PUJ drivers towards the DPTMP; 2) Resistance and acceptance of the project implementation are the participation of PUJ drivers towards the DPTMP; 3) Improvement of public transportation and stakeholders' inclusivity are the attitudes of commuters towards the DPTMP; and 4) Willingness to take part in the implementation of the project shows participation of the commuters to DPTMP.

Attitude of Davaoño PUJ Drivers

As Davao City joins the venture of more sustainable means in public transportation, the drivers, as primary stakeholders, voice out their resistance because of the financial costs. While [6] argued that now is the best time to invest in the modernization of PUJ to minimize risks and loss of opportunities, drivers in Davao City go through untold financial struggles as they strive to make a living every single day.

The Untold Struggles of Davaoño PUJ Drivers

Despite being one of the fronts of the public transportation sector, they are burdened by various realities that make their financial situations worse as the DPTMP nears its full-blast implementation. Driver 2 and Driver 4 shared about the situations of their families.

Driver 2: "Sa amoa man gud, dili parehas ang net. Naay time nga, kanang, maayo ang kita, naa puy time nga dili. Usahay, makalibo pod mi, mao na. So dako na kaayo na og kuan. Unya, ibutang karon kung mag modernization, mag inadlawan nalang mi og 500. Unya, parehas sa akua, anak nako lima. Kaigo ba diay na?"

For us, the net pay is not the same. There are times that the income is good, there are times that are not. Sometimes, we gain a thousand, which we consider a good income. Now, when the modernization of public transportation will be implemented, our daily income will become 500. In my case, I have 5 children, will that income suffice?

"Unya usahay, magdaot-daot pa ang kuan [jeep]. Nuon ang kuan diha, makakaon ra ang pamilya, kanang adlaw unya sunod adlaw lahi naman pod. Pero, mao lagi. Nag-hunahuna na pod ko karon. Parehas karon, gagmay pa akong mga bata, so ako sa gyud ang nagatrabaho. So mao lagi na ginapasabot nako sa akong asawa, bisan elementary pa atong bata, ako lang say kuan [trabaho]. Kay lisod man kaayo magtrabaho ta unya unsaon man nang mga bata nato."

There are even times that our jeepneys malfunction. The thing is, my family is able to eat for the income today, but tomorrow is another story. Right now, my kids are still young, that is why I am the only one working for the family. That is what I am telling my wife, the kids are still in grade school, so I should do all the work because it is difficult for us to both work while nobody oversees the children.

Driver 4: "Halos maglisod na gani mi ug apas anang boundary, unya kulang kaayo nag kanang kuan, ma-uli sa among pamilya. Nag skwela pa akong mga anak unya ako ra nanarbaho kay sa balay lang si misis."

It is difficult for us to meet the boundary for renting the jeepney, and what we take home does not suffice for the family. My kids are still studying and I am the only one working for the family since my wife stays home.

Driver 2 stated that while they struggle with the variations of their daily income, the modernization program for the jeepneys will only make their burden worse, which will not only affect him as an individual, but also the family that he takes care of. Moreover, for Driver 4, since they are not the owners of the jeepneys, the struggle of meeting the boundary is also a burden in addition to the small take-home income for his family needs. These concerns are manifestations of the cost of modernization as argued by [7]. It is suggested that increasing the subsidy and base fares will help in addressing these issues [6].

While some see driving a PUJ as an option for their daily bread and butter, others see it as the only profession that they know how to perform best. Driver 2, Driver 5, and Driver 6 shared about how being a jeepney driver is important to them and how they will respond if, sooner or later, their "only known" livelihood will become impractical in addressing the needs of their families.

Driver 2: "Og makaya sa pamilya. Og kung dili makaya, aw, mangita gyud og kuan (source of income), adjust napod. Mangita og laing trabaho. Mabuhi naman ang pamilya. Ana ra gud."

If the family survives. If not, I should look for another source of income, another adjustment. I will look for other jobs, to sustain my family. That is it.

Driver 5: "Malamang kung kana ipatupad sa kami mga driver wala nami paingnan alang sa among panginabuhian tungod kay wala (relieved) naman mi nga driver."

If the project is implemented, we, drivers, have nowhere to go for our livelihood since drivers will be relieved.

Driver 6: "Pakaon sa among pamilya. Mao kini makahatag og dakong suporta sa edukasyon sa akong mga anak. Daghan kami nga drivers ang maapektuhan sa panahon na ipa-implementar na kini sa atong gobyerno. Dako og adjustment kanamo nga drivers ug sa among tibuok nga pamilya. Dako pod og adjustment sa katawhan."

Food for our family. My driving contributes a lot for the education of my children. Many drivers will be affected once this project is implemented by the government. Big adjustment for us drivers and our families, and the people.

The statement of Driver 2 indicated that his decision to continue driving a jeepney is driven by the financial capacity of the livelihood to meet the needs of his family. Furthermore, the statements of Driver 5 and Driver 6 focused on how being a PUJ driver is of premium value, and its loss will entail how they and their families will be affected. On the other hand, Driver 6 also stated the adjustments that the stakeholders will have to undergo once the policy will be at the peak of its implementation.

In view of the Rational Choice Theory of Homans [8], the current situations of Driver 2 and Driver 4 drive their choice to resist the implementation of the DPTMP. Since they live less fortunately than other income earners, their utmost priority is to bring home their earnings for the needs of their families. Other factors such as driving as their best option

and avenue for livelihood of Driver 5 and Driver 6 also explains how the drivers give premium to said factors because these, one way or another, bring them the greatest benefit and satisfaction, or perhaps value to their lives.

The Pros and Cons of the DPTMP for the Davaoño PUJ Drivers

With the recognized hurdles that will come along the implementation of the DPTMP, it is observed that PUJ drivers acknowledge various reasons as to how DPTMP will personally affect them.

Driver 3: “Ah lisod kaayo na sya, kanang pahirap ba kay dungag gasto na pud na unya, asa akong pagkahibalo, taas kaayo ang proseso ug kuan, kanang dugay kaayo mi ug binayaray ana. Pasabot, utang. Kanang utang, kanang gusto nato na likayan. Unya, mura man nuon ta ug palisod-lisuron ug samot anang pag puli.”

That is difficult, it adds to our financial burden, and as far as I know, it is a long process of payment, meaning loan. We want to avoid loans, yet it seems this change brings more burden to us.

Driver 4: “Wala kaayo ko nasayod sa balaod ana, pero dili ko uyon anang pulihan kay dili man daw na libre, kinahanglan daw namo na bayaran.”

I don't know about the policy on that, but I do not approve the replacement because it is not free, we need to pay for it.

For Driver 3 and Driver 4, the assumed financial burden of the replacement of PUJ units contributes to why they oppose and resist the DPTMP. In contrary to this, Driver 5 and Driver 6 stated that:

Driver 5: “Uyon ako isip usa ka tawhanong nangandoy nga naay kabag-uhan atoang siyudad o musunod kita nga gitawag nga hightech napod ang dagan sa atong komunidad aron usab masinati natong tanan ang bag-o nga dagan sa teknolohiya o bag-ong pamalaod. Aron usab makita sa atong next generation. Uyon aron usab dili ma behind atong siyudad sa bag-ong pama-aagi. Uyon sa ikanindot sa atong unta siyudad uh masundog man nato ang dagan sa uban nasud nga hapsay og dakong tabang sa atong siyudad.”

I approve as a person that aspires for change in our city and follows more hightech systems in the community for us to experience the new trend in technology and policies. This is also for the next generation to see. This is so that our city will not be left behind with the trends, for the improvement of the city and to refer from the practices of other countries for the benefit of our city.

Driver 6: “Kining bag-o karon na pamalakad sa gobyerno maghatag kini og kabag-ohan sa atong dakbyan isip sa pagsunod anang public transportation modernization.”

This new law of the government will bring change to the city, particularly in the public transportation modernization.

Despite the effects of the DPTMP in their personal lives, Driver 5 and Driver 6 recognized that DPTMP will bring positive change and development to Davao City, with hopes to cope up with the development trend for the benefit of the future generations. Driver 1 also shared the same positive outlook. However, he has some hesitations as to his knowledge about guidelines of the policy, along with Driver 4.

Driver 1: “Para sa amoa, as a driver, okay gyud siya kay syempre kay bag-o nga kuan – safety nga kuan. Pero kuan man gud, kanang panginabuhian ba. Wala pod mi kabalo kung unsay patakaran napod, bag-o napod, diba”

For us, as PUJ drivers, it [DPTMP] is really okay because it is new and safe. However, it is a threat to our livelihood. We also do not know what the rules will be. Everything is unfamiliar.

Driver 4: “Wala kaayo ko nasayod sa balaod ana.”

I am not really familiar with the rules of DPTMP.

Furthermore, Driver 5 and Driver 6 expressed their resistance over DPTMP, mainly because the project will have an effect on their livelihood.

Driver 5: *“Isip munulupyo dinhi sa Toril, ang akong rason sa dili pag uyon tungod kay dako kini epekto sa among panginabuhian nga mao lang kini among gisaligan.”*

As residents of Toril, the reason why I am not for DPTMP is because it will have an effect on our livelihood which we solely depend on.

Driver 6: *“Para sa akoo, isip usa ka driver, dili ko uyon tungod kay dako kaayo kini nga epekto sa amoa isip mga driver kay kini among panginabuhian.”*

For me, as a PUJ driver, I do not agree with the implementation of this project because it has a huge impact on us, especially since this is our only livelihood.

For most of the participants, evident change is one of the main contributors as to why the drivers, in spite of the development promised, resist in the implementation of the DPTMP. The Theory of Planned Behavior of Ajzen [9] stated that norms influence the intentions of an individual's behavior. Since driving the traditional “Pinoy” jeepney has been the trend in Davao for many decades, it is expected for them to express their resistance.

Participation of the Davaoño PUJ Drivers

The participation of the Public Utility Jeepney drivers on the Davao Public Transportation Modernization Project (DPTMP) is greatly influenced by the driver's personal experience and the information they received from different sources of media.

The participation of PUJ drivers towards the Davao Public Transportation Modernization Project (DPTMP) is divided into two (2) categories resistance and acceptance and further subdivided into four (4) subcategories for resistance and three (3) subcategories for acceptance.

Results showed that the primary concern of the drivers' behavior to participate is directly associated with:

- Job security and income. Driver 7 and 2 said:
“Aw, lisod gyud sa amoa nga kulob among kaldero. Nindot ang tumong pero walaon naman mi dili gihapon maayo.”
It is hard because we will not be able to have food. The goal is good, yet it will displace us so it is till bad.
“Sa amoa man gud, dili parehas ang net. Naay time nga, kanang, maayo ang kita, naa puy time nga dili. Usahay, makalibo pod mi, mao na. So dako na kaayo na og kuan. Unya, ibutang karon kung mag modernization, mag inadlawan nalang mi og 500. Unya, parehas sa akoo, anak nako lima. Kaigo ba diay na?”
For us, the net pay is not the same. There are times that the income is good, there are times that are not. Sometimes, we gain a thousand, which we consider a good income. Now, when the modernization of public transportation will be implemented, our daily income will become 500. In my case, I have 5 children, will that income suffice?
- Customary practice. Driver 3 said:
“Kasabot ko anang makatabang gyud na sya kay gwapo lagi tuod ang sakyanan, limpyo, wa nay kalas gasolina pero mao na man gud unta ni na-andan, dili na lang unta ni, kuan, i-phase out ba.”
I understand that it will help because it will improve the vehicle, clean and fuel-efficient, but this is what we are used to, I hope this will not be phased out.
- Expensive loan terms. Driver 3 said:
“Ah lisod kaayo na sya, kanang pahirap ba kay dungag gasto na pud na unya, asa akong pagkahibalo, taas kaayo ang proseso ug kuan, kanang dugay kaayo mi ug binayaray ana. Pasabot, utang. Kanang utang, kanang gusto nato na likayan. Unya, mura man nuon ta ug palisod-lisuron ug samot anang pag puli.”
That is difficult, it adds to our financial burden, and as far as I know, it is a long process of payment, meaning loan. We want to avoid loans, yet it seems this change brings more burden to us.
- Quality of modernized transportation. Driver 2 said:

“Ilisan ang units. Gwapo dili ilisan kay dili ko uyon ana. Kay giguyod man gani sa Manila tung bag-o [Modernized units], giguyod sa karaan [Traditional PUJ units].”

The units will be replaced, It is better to not replace it. In Manila, I knew of a modernized unit that was towed by a traditional PUJ unit.

While the willingness of the PUJ drivers to accept the DPTMP are associated with:

- Desire for change. Driver 5 said:
“Uyon ako isip usa ka tawhanong nangandoy nga naay kabag-uhan atoang siyudad...”
I approve as a person that aspires for change in our city.
- Technological advancement. Driver 5 said:
“...musunod kita nga gitawag nga hightech napod ang dagan sa atong komunidad aron usab masinati natong tanan ang bag-o nga dagan sa teknolohiya...”
Let us follow a more hightech system in the community for us to experience the new trend in technology.
- Public transport efficiency. Driver 5 said:
“Uyon sa ikanindot sa atong unta siyudad uh masundog man nato ang dagan sa uban nasud nga hapsay og dakong tabang sa atong siyudad.”
For the improvement of our city and to refer from the practices of other countries for the benefit of our city.

Attitude of the Davaoño Commuters toward DPTMP

Soaring traffic congestion is a global problem that both developed and developing countries collectively face today [15]. The Philippines is no exception. In 2015, according to Hegina, as cited in Fallaria [10], Metro Manila was hailed to have the 'worst traffic on Earth' this is in accordance with the 2015 Global Driver Satisfaction Index initiated by Waze. Highly urbanized Davao City also grapples with the same challenge.

Regular commuters in the city share the same struggle of longer commute hours even before the onset of the pandemic. Also taking into account the inevitable effects of the spread of the COVID-19 virus not many years ago, the traffic surge is now seen as a looming pandemic aftermath.

With the emergence of the post-pandemic 'new normal', people all over the globe rush to return to schools and workplaces, ultimately adapting to hybrid setups. For an average Davaoño, this scene entails the revival of the usually taxing, hours-long commute to and from school or work.

Given such conditions, commuters' attitudes on DPTMP are often influenced by: 1) their day-to-day ordeal brought about by the inefficiency of the current public transportation system, specifically: a) insufficiency of the PUJs, b) traffic congestion in the city; 2) seeing DPTMP as an avenue to improve the public transportation in the city. This will be further explained in detail in the following sections.

The Day-to-day Ordeal of Regular Davaoño Commuters

In a clean, organized, and economically advantageous local government such as Davao City, one would suppose it truly lives up to its battle cry—that 'life is here'. Yet, this is not the case for some. Regular commuters who brave the city's peak hours and deal with the insufficiency of public transportation, especially in the downtown area, on a daily basis, continue to urge government functionaries to remedy the worsening traffic conditions.

During the data gathering segment of this study, wherein the researchers conducted face-to-face interviews, Commuter 3, a resident of Davao City and a regular commuter, explained her experience as an average commuter. She claimed that the public transportation landscape had not improved since the 1990s. In the following statement, she expressed:

“My experience in commuting with our public jeepneys since the 90s never improved, and it got worse! I even had experiences plenty of times na na-late ko sa work kay tungod hinay mudagan ang sakyanan and traffic.”

My experience in commuting with our public jeepneys since the '90s never improved, and it got worse! I even had experiences plenty of times of being late at work because the vehicle was so slow.

As individuals who heavily rely on a cost-effective means of transportation for their mobility needs, regular commuters have no other option but to endure the price they have to pay when it comes to taking public transit. This means

waiting at the side of Davao City roads during peak hours to hail a vehicle, and eventually, if one is lucky enough, squeezing in alongside other commuters inside the cramped jeepney.

In this regard, Commuter 2 described the public utility jeepneys (PUJs) as "...*grabe na ka daan ug kalawangon na, black ang gina-emit na smoke, um, dugay mudagan.*" (*An excerpt from Commuter2 interview transcript*) (...the units [jeepney] are rusty, emit black smoke, and very slow).

Given the current state of transportation in the city, commuters are compelled to adapt to the routinary challenges posed by the unavailability of jeepneys as well as the worsening traffic conditions in the city. Commuter 1, an employee and law student, remarked:

"Bale ako man gud kay nag-dorm nako, so nag-adjust gyud ko sa katraffic sa Davao so nag-dorm nako diri sa Obrero and naga-tricycle nalang ko kay very traffic jud."

As for me I decided to live in a dorm, so I really did adjust myself to the heavy traffic in Davao. I am living in a dorm here in Obrero and I take a tricycle because the traffic is very heavy.

This statement holds true for a number of regular commuters, but does not necessarily apply to many. Those who have the means to transfer residence to adjust to the burden of inefficient public transportation can easily do so. This accords with Azjen & Fishbein's Theory of Planned Behavior [9].

The normative beliefs of the commuters about the inaccessibility of public transportation lead to societal pressure for acceptance and adoption. The commuters have grown accustomed to the inadequacy of public transportation and the worsening traffic situation; hence, they acclimate themselves, especially with what little means they have. For some, this meant relocating to transport-feasible areas.

DPTMP as an Avenue to Improve Public Land Transportation in Davao City

In the findings of the ethnographic research of Fallaria [10] it was revealed that Metro Manila commuters want greater enforcement of existing traffic and transportation rules, more time-efficient transit, and a well-organized public transportation system. A similar outcome is being extracted from the analysis of this research study.

In the context of DPTMP, Commuter 3 expressed the ideal public transportation facet that is being ensured under DPTMP. He says:

"Kanang modernization sa atong public transport, it's high time na mapatuman na. Kumbaga, there's no other way but up. The improvement will surely help the public to have a much more comfortable experience in terms of commuting... With the modernization, I believe na dili na ta maglisod mag commute, and ma-encourage pa nato ang car owners to commute para mas ma-decongest pa gyud ang atong roads. Ultimately, dili lang ni siya a matter of lisod, kapoy, gasto.. but rather a matter of innovation and sustainability."

On the modernization of our public transportation, it is high time for it to be implemented. In other words, there is no way but up. The improvement will surely help the public to have a much more comfortable commuting experience. I believe, with modernization, we will no longer have a difficult time commuting and we can encourage car owners to commute to decongest the roads. Ultimately, this is not about being difficult, hassle, and expensive... but rather a matter of innovation and sustainability.

Moreover, interviewed respondents displayed an informed perspective on DPTMP, sharing their grasp and view on the possible effects of the project. Commuter 5 expressed her understanding of DPTMP. She recounts:

"Ang akoang pagsabot sa Davao Public Transportation Modernization Project kay mao ang pamaagi sa government to address and enhance the current systems and quality of public transportation."

My understanding of the Davao Public Transportation Modernization Project is that this is the government's avenue to address and enhance the current systems and quality of public transportation.

In a similar vein, Commuter 4 also said "the project will support the establishment of a modern urban bus system in Davao City to improve the current unreliable, unsafe, not accessible for all, and environmentally challenging public transport."

Commuter 2 and Commuter 6 further asserted that the implementation of the project brings positive and lasting change for the transport sector in the community. They declare:

“Para nako maayo nga ipa-implementar dinhi sa atong dakbayan kay aron dako kini og kausaban sa dagan sa atong siyudad.”

For me, it is good that it [DPTMP] is being implemented in our city because it will initiate a remarkable change in the management of our city.

“Isa pa, kanang pag upgrade sa jeepneys kay maka cause na sya nga mas mu-gamay ang mga sakyanan so dili na kaayo mag-traffic.”

Another thing, the upgrade of jeepneys lessens the number of vehicles plying the road so the traffic will also lessen.

The code ‘improvement’ has also emerged under this theme from the accounts of the respondents. Commuters 1 and 2 divulged that, for them, DPTMP translates into an improvement of the public transportation landscape in Davao City. This means that through the DPTMP, Davao City will have improved public transit and an organized public transportation system, in accordance with the findings of Fallaria [10]. Commuters 1 and 2 expressed, respectively:

“For me, improvement siya sa transportation system diri sa Davao kay we all know, dati pa man na nga issue nang traffic... Modernization is improvement or betterment sa atong Dakbayan so I am looking forward na okay ra pod ang HPBS.”

For me, DPTMP is an improvement of the transportation system here in Davao. We all know, even before, that heavy traffic is an issue. Modernization is an improvement or improvement for our city, so I am looking forward that HPBS [DPTMP] will be executed well.

“What I know about anang modernization is that ma-improve ana ang atong public transport system, especially sa mga jeep na naa pay existing na grabe na ka daan ug kalawangan na, black ang gina-emit na smoke, um, dugay mudagan. So nindot gyud kaayo sya na move sa atong government.”

What I know about modernization is that it will improve our public transportation system, especially the replacement of old, slow jeepneys emitting air pollutants. So, this is a really strategic move of our government.

The Pros and Cons of DPTMP for the Davaoño Commuters

The introduction and implementation of government projects yield both advantages and disadvantages for their stakeholders and constituents. With regards to such projects, the data gathering for this study acquired commuters’ perspectives on the benefits and drawbacks of the DPTMP.

Commuter 7 communicated the transformative benefit of DPTMP in the public transportation scene in Davao City. She states:

“For me advantage para sa atong komunidad kay kini maghatag og dakong kabag-ohan sama sa ma-less na ang traffic, ma disiplinado na ang mga katawhan kay tungod naa naman kini terminal or proper asa ang bus stop terminal. Dili napod siguro kini aborido lantawon nato sa kadalanan, unya strikto ug disiplinado na ang franchise sa ilahang policy na mugna. Dili lang kana, environment friendly pod ang bus as public vehicle.”

For me, it is an advantage for our community because this transforms [our city] in a way that there is less traffic; disciplined commuters because of the presence of terminals and bus stops. This would also not be an eyesore and stricter implementation since the franchise is created under their policy. Not only that, the Buses are also environmentally friendly.

Moreover, Commuter 3 and 5 noted advantages of DPTMP in terms of easing the traffic, lowering travel times. They share the below accounts:

"I think mas mubaba na pud ang time sa byahe padulong ug pauli gikan work, which means more time with family. Kung dugay man ang byahe, at least komportable. Anyway, mu-shorten na man sad ang travel kay mas lesser na man ang vehicles sa atong mga dalan."

I think travel time will be lowered when going to and coming home from work, which means more time with family. If the travel time takes long, then at least it is a comfortable ride. Anyway, the travel time will also shorten because there will be fewer vehicles on the road.

"Mas dali na para sa akua nga commuter nga makasakay ug dili na ko maghulat ug dugay para lang makasakay. Kung ma implementar na kini, ug kon maayo man ang outcome niini, akoang ginalook forward nga dili na kaayo nako kinahanglan mag mata ug sayo ug mag dali-dali aron dili ko malate sa trabaho."

As a commuter, it will be accessible for me and I no longer have to wait long just to hail jeepneys going home. If this [DPTMP] will be implemented, I look forward to no longer having to wake up early to rush to work so I would not be late.

While the interviewed commuter-respondents idealized DPTMP generally as an 'improvement' of the current state of public transportation in the city, Commuter 1 circumspectly narrated her reservations on the project. She claims:

"For the benefit of the displaced jeepney drivers... dili pod nato sila basta-basta ma pinakalit og "Oy, undangi na na ninyo og drive og PUJ kay mag-convert na ta sa High Priority Bus System"

For the benefit of the displaced jeepney drivers, I think we should not easily dismiss their livelihood to convert to the High Priority Bus System [DPTMP].

Further, Commuter 1 added that the government should be considerate and open to the ideas of the displaced drivers. Given this, the government needs to consider the plight of the displaced drivers and involve them in planning for social development. Through this intervention, the government should craft effective and more inclusive social development packages for the transport workers that will be affected by the implementation of DPTMP. Commuter 1 explains:

"Kay wala jud ko kabalo sa issues on the ground sa mga mulo sa jeepney drivers. Syempre, dugay na pod baya – pila na ka tuig na sila ga drive og jeep. Gamay nga pagsabot lang pod because as I said a while ago, dugay naman gud na sila PUJ drivers ba. Mao gyud ilahang panginabuhian ba, dili lang jud nato sila basta-basta mapugos labi na of dili gyud maklaro sa ilaha kung unsa ning HPBS diay."

Because we do not necessarily understand the issues on the ground, especially the concerns of the affected jeepney drivers. They have been in the industry for so many years. We should at least give them consideration because, as I said a while ago, they have been PUJ drivers most of their lives. That is their primary source of livelihood and we cannot just force them, especially if the HPBS [DPTMP] itself is not clear to them.

The Willingness of Davaoño Commuters to Participate to DPTMP

The interviews conducted with the commuter respondents in this study show that commuters are willing to participate in DPTMP. In the previous portion, DPTMP was collectively seen by commuters as an avenue to improve the public transportation system in Davao City, which demonstrates a favorable perspective on the project.

Confronted on a daily basis with the challenges of traffic congestion and PUJ insufficiency, the commuters believe that DPTMP enhances the efficiency and accessibility of public land transportation, easing traffic congestion and decreasing air pollution. This view of the project translates to their willingness to take part in and be involved in this local government program.

As detailed in the Rational Choice Theory [8], "individuals use rational calculations to make rational choices and achieve outcomes that are aligned with their own personal objectives." In this sense, the commuters deem DPTMP an

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initiative from the local government that could potentially provide positive outcomes that will enhance their experience as commuters, hence their willingness to participate in the said project.

Further, as public transportation users, Commuter 4 elaborated that as soon as DPTMP is fully implemented, it is necessary to familiarize oneself with the components of DPTMP, such as trip scheduling, location of terminals, etc. She said:

“As a commuter paningkamutan mahibal.an asa ang mga location and schedule sa loading/unloading station sa mga bus para dili ma delay sa mga lakawan. Paningkamutan sad mahibal.an unsa ang mga rules and regulation aron maiwasan ma-violate rules and regulation. Mamahimong responsible commuter.”

As commuters, we need to do our part in determining where the [bus] locations are and schedules of loading/unloading stations of the buses so that we will not be delayed in our travels. We also need to strive to know the rules and regulations to prevent violating the rules and regulations. We need to be responsible commuters.

METHODOLOGY

The method adopted in this paper is narrative inquiry research design - a procedure in which the researchers analyze individuals' lived experiences, as well as collecting and narrating stories of such. A narrative is suited to addressing complex and subtle experiences of individuals; focusing on critical events in life while, at the same time, traversing an all-encompassing perspective of the matter. It helps grasp the entire story through the form of storytelling which leads to a perspective that the research is the construction and reconstruction of personal and social stories [13].

Face-to-face interviews were conducted to the drivers and commuters of PUJs in Davao City to seek their perspectives on the implementation of the DPTMP. The participants narrated their attitudes and participation, particularly on their knowledge about DPTMP and how they will respond in the full-blast implementation of the DPTMP. Ethical considerations were observed in the gathering and utilization of data.

CONCLUSION

Based on the gathered data from the participants, it can be concluded that various factors influenced their attitudes and participation towards the DPTMP. First are the economic factors. For the commuters, their participation in the project is driven by the implementation of an efficient public land transportation that will make their commuting experiences easier; while the PUJ drivers' participation showed more resistance as they perceive the impending economic loss.

While economic factors resulted in a differing perceptive outcome towards their participation the implementation of the DPTMP, both the commuters and PUJ drivers showed a resistive attitude in the implementation of project when customary practice is factored in on both ends, since both respondents perceive jeepneys as the icon of public transportation in Davao City. In addition, both groups showed the same attitude in the implementation of the project in view of the adaptation to modern technology which will provide a more efficient transport system and a better commuting experience for all.

Overall, this study shed light on the importance of considering the needs and perspective of the commuters and PUJ drivers in the policies and interventions aimed at promoting sustainable transportation and enhancing the quality of life in urban areas. The following are the recommendations undertaken from the results of this study: 1) Strengthen the social development component of DPTMP through a) extensive information dissemination and formulation of communication campaigns on DPTMP that is targeted at PUJ drivers and commuters and b) capacity-building of DPTMP social development program personnel.

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