

BELOW THE LINE

# Drive thru with Taiwan telematics



By JOSÉ ABETO ZAIDE

**T**AIPEI, Taiwan. One notable thing about Taiwan's expressways is that you are able to drive thru because there are no toll booths. Here's how they did it in two steps:

## STAGE 1: SLFF tolling since 2006

- 141 ETC lanes in 23 toll plaza stations.
- ETC lanes launched with infra-red OBUs in 2006.
- In May, 2012, migrated to RFID and eTags raising ETC usage to 94% in Jan 2014

## STAGE 2: MLFF tolling since 2014

- 321 gantries (1,307 ETC lanes) on mainlines.
- ETC combines devices on single gantry (open standard ISO 180006C RFID, enforcement modules and ALPR systems and audit modules.

Dr. Y. C. Chang, managing director of Far Eastern Electronic Toll Collection Co. Ltd. (FETC), explained the gobbledygook when I visited the company at one of Taipei's science parks in search of answer to our daily traffic snarl at skyway and SLEX and the nightmarish 12-hour Manila-to-Baguio ordeal last Christmas. The FETC solution in a nutshell:

- There are tollways. But no need to slow down because high-tech cameras clock in your entry and exit w/o your lifting foot from gas pedal.
- Government builds all freeways (no individual franchises); and FETC collects toll.
- There is automatic license plate recognition (ALPR).
- Motorists don't have to buy cumbersome gizmo since FETC just stick a headlamp/windshield eTag on motorcar.
- Motorists are billed by daily accumulated mileage.

**CAVEAT.** When I told this to a Filipino motorist, he asked how accurate our data would be if we rely on LTFRB and LTO registration. That's a sine qua non question. But if the system is implemented, we should have 99.99% effective collection. (As bonus, the high tech can even spot smoke belchers and carnappers.)

**SOCIAL BENEFITS FOR TAIWAN** (since the start in 2014 until early this year 2015):

- Petrol savings – 120 million liters. (For PH, at ₱50/liter, that's ₱6 billion saved).
- CO2 reduction – 290,000 tons. (Invaluable for the air we breathe).
- Time saving – 375,000 hours/day (Quality time with the family).

**REMEMBER OUR TRAFFIC ADVISORY DECEMBER 2014?** Metro Pacific Investments Corp. (MPIC), which operates NLEX, SCTEX, and CAVITEX, advised motorists to start

trooping back to Metro Manila as early as New Year's Day to avoid anticipated gridlock on the expressways with everyone returning to Manila after the Christmas holidays.

**BAND AID SOLUTION IN THIRD WORLD.** Rodrigo Franco, president of MPIC's Manila North Tollways Corp. (MNTC), said motorists at the NLEX and SCTEX should carefully plan their trips from and back to Manila during long holidays to avoid the bumper-to-bumper traffic. Moreover, they should approach tollways with EXACT CHANGE.

**SENATORIAL UMBRAGE.** Senate President Franklin Drilon, stuck in traffic during the Christmas season, bewailed the inefficiency of the tollways after it took him 11 hours to reach Baguio. (Lines as long as 3 kms.) "I became confused with NLEX, SCTEX, and so many TEXs... why are so many collecting toll from motorists where only one should?" the Senate President fumed over DzBB. "I will personally look into this matter in the Senate. I will call a hearing exclusively for this purpose so that we could come up with a solution!"

FETC can provide the system and users can source the hardware anywhere. If you think the system is expensive, note that the FETC rate for ground expressway or skyway is about US\$1.00 per 30 kms. BTW, Thailand, Malaysia, and Vietnam are looking at the FETC system.

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While they are at it, the Senate may also want to see for itself, in aid of legislation, why Taipei's mass transit system works and gets commuters on time (unlike our perchance MRT), thereby easing motoring traffic and CO2 ingestion.

Taiwan is not only a potential partner in the fishing industry. It is our closest neighboring source for high-tech solutions and technology transfer.

**SPORTS.** The Philippine Dragon Boat team entry Ampphi (Amateur Paddlers of the Philippines) from Lungsod Lucena placed 4th in this year's Dragon Boat race in Taipei.

**PARLIAMENTARY MEETING.** Emma de Jesus represented Gabriela party-list at the meeting of the Asia Pacific chapter of Women Parliamentarians in Taipei 24-27 June 2015. **FEEDBACK:** joseabetozzaide@gmail.com