

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 6810



Introduced by **HON. JOY MYRA S. TAMBUNTING**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

As we enter the "New Normal" brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, we are faced with numerous challenges and constraints in the effective implementation of measures to avoid transmission of the virus. Public transportation, which is already terribly congested prior to COVID-19, is a particular weak spot for physical distancing measures. Even private cars will find it difficult to keep their passengers one (1) meter apart.

Without public transportation during the ECQ, health workers and other essential workers were forced to explore other means of getting to their places of work. This is expected to continue after the ECQ due to limited mobility. Further, the expected economic downturn to follow the pandemic will mean less income for people to use on travel and transportation. In addition, there is a well-founded fear that the cramped buses, jeeps and trains are hot-spots for the spread of COVID-19.

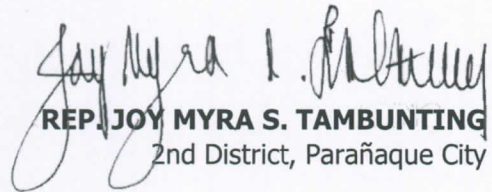
It is then imperative for the State to promote other modes of travel if we are to avoid a spike in COVID-19 cases after the ECQ is lifted. Walking and biking stand out in this regard. Walking and biking are cheaper modes of travel that also promote physical and mental health in a time of high anxiety. Further, they use less resources and will raise air quality due to reduced motorized vehicle use, lessening air toxins which are a leading cause of respiratory infection.¹ Other non-motorized vehicles also offer the same advantages.

It is the State's responsibility to put in place infrastructures that will enable people to use these alternative modes of travel. In this regard, this measure seeks to create a network of pop-up bicycle lanes and emergency pathways that are people-oriented and pedestrian-friendly, which shall connect users to essential destinations such as work, school, medical facilities, and other similar places that may be identified. This network may then be adopted permanently even after COVID-19, as may be appropriate, as a solution to the congested roads and pollution plaguing the country even before the pandemic.

¹ "Air Pollution." World Health Organization, World Health Organization, 15 Aug. 2017, www.who.int/ceh/risks/cehair/en/.

This proposed measure is a counterpart bill of Senate Bill No. 1518 filed by Senator Pia Cayetano during this 18th Congress.

On behalf of the people of Parañaque City's Second District, and for the common good of the Filipino people, the approval of the said measure is earnestly sought.


REP. JOY MYRA S. TAMBUNTING
2nd District, Parañaque City

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HOUSE BILL NO. _____

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AN ACT
ESTABLISHING A NETWORK OF POP-UP BICYCLE LANES AND EMERGENCY
PATHWAYS FOR USE DURING THE DURATION OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC, AND
FOR OTHER PURPOSES

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

Section 1. Short Title. – This Act shall be known as the "Safe Pathways Act".

Sec. 2. Declaration of Policy. – The Constitution mandates the State to protect and advance the right of the Filipino people to a balanced and healthful ecology in accord with the rhythm and harmony of nature, and to protect and promote the right to health of the people and instill health consciousness among them.

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, the National Action Plan Against COVID-19 provides that the State shall mitigate the consequences and impact of the COVID-19 pandemic to the social, economic, and personal security of the Filipino people.²

The State recognizes that the current transportation system does not address the need for physical distancing.

The State likewise acknowledges the need for infrastructure and a change in mindset to encourage and accommodate alternative modes of transportation such as walking, bicycles and other non-motorized vehicles, and to provide safe and convenient pathways for pedestrians and non-motorized travel. It also recognizes the urgency of this need during the COVID-19 pandemic, to ensure physical distancing and given the limited forms of transportation available to frontliners and essential workers for so long as there is reduced mobility.

² Section A (4), Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Disease (IATF) Resolution No. 15, 24 March 2020.

Prioritizing walking, biking and the use of non-motorized vehicles will result in reduced carbon emissions, less use of energy and resources, and provide multiple health benefits and increase quality of life.

These are also in line with the State's commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in particular: SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-Being); SDG 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy); SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure); SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities); SDG 13 (Climate Action); and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals).

For purposes of this Act, "Non-Motorized Vehicles" includes all forms of travel that do not rely on an engine or motor for movement. This includes, but is not limited to, walking, bicycles, and small-wheeled non-motorized transport (skates, skateboards, push scooters and hand carts).

Sec. 3. Safe Pathways Network. – Immediately upon the effectivity of this Act, the Department of Transportation (DOTr) with the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH), and in coordination with Local Government Units (LGUs), shall identify and create a network of pop-up bicycle lanes that may be used during the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic. The pop-up bicycle lanes are strictly for bicycles and other nonmotorized vehicles only, and shall connect users to essential destinations such as medical facilities, public and private facilities frequented by people, school, when they do open, and other similar places that may be identified. The lanes may be marked with removable tapes and mobile signs, which can easily be placed and removed as necessary. Other physical barriers may also be used.

The pop-up bicycle lanes must have the necessary space to accommodate the expected increase of users and the need for physical distancing at least one (1) meter apart.

To complement the network of pop-up bicycle lanes, LGUs shall create a designated network of people-oriented emergency pathways along local roads that will provide pedestrians and bicycle and non-motorized vehicle users safe, convenient access to frequented destinations by restricting motorized vehicle passage in these pathways during peak hours. The emergency pathways shall be clearly marked with signage containing restrictions.

The DOTr and DPWH shall identify priority areas for implementation.

Sec. 4. Non-Motorized Vehicle Parking Spaces. – All public places, government offices, schools, places of work and major commercial establishments, including malls, banks, hospitals, and the like, shall provide adequate parking spaces for bicycles and other non-motorized vehicles as far as practicable.

Sec. 5. Role of the Public and Private Sectors. – Both the public and private sectors shall promote walking and using bicycles and other non-motorized vehicles as an alternative means of travel. They shall develop the necessary infrastructure, facilities and programs for its implementation, including showers and changing areas and shall continue following physical distancing measures during travel.

Sec. 6. Permanent Adoption of Safe Pathways Network. – The DOTr and DPWH, in coordination with the appropriate agencies, shall prepare to permanently adopt the established bicycle lanes and emergency pathways, as may be appropriate, once COVID-19 is no longer a

threat as declared by the proper authorities. Pursuant to this, nonmotorized parking spaces and other infrastructure shall also be made permanent as may be appropriate and practicable.

Sec. 7. Implementing Rules and Regulations. – Within thirty (30) days from the effectivity of this Act, the DOTr shall promulgate and issue the necessary guidelines for the effective implementation of this Act. The implementing rules and regulations issued pursuant to this Section shall take effect thirty (30) days after its publication in two (2) national newspapers of general circulation.

Sec. 8. Appropriations. – The funds necessary for the initial implementation of this Act shall be charged against the appropriations of the DOTr, DPWH, and LGUs as needed. Thereafter, funding shall be included in the budget of the DOTr and DPWH under the annual General Appropriations Act.

Sec. 9. Separability Clause. – If any provision of this Act is declared unconstitutional or otherwise invalid, the validity of the other provisions shall not be affected thereby.

Sec. 10. Repealing Clause. – All other laws, decrees, orders, rules and regulations, other issuances, or parts thereof inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

Sec. 11. Effectivity. – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,