

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

House Bill No. 6801



Introduced by the Honorable Precious Hipolito Castelo

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The world is currently facing the defining health crisis of our time – the COVID-19 pandemic. It has been difficult to fight this war, in which the enemy is a virus that has taken the lives of many people around the world already. Current statistics show that there is no stopping this virus from spreading until a vaccine is discovered and developed for mass distribution.

In response to the COVID-19 crisis, the government has stepped in and implemented drastic social distancing measures to slow the spread of the virus. Since March 15, 2020, parts of the country have been under a “community quarantine” which was later escalated to “enhanced community quarantine” due to the surge of new cases.

In preparation for the easing of quarantine restrictions, it is necessary to address the problem of transportation. Available modes of travel may not meet the demand for safe commute of passengers, as social distancing measures will still be enforced in public utility vehicles (PUVs) and in all railway systems in the country.

Thus, it is the intent of this bill to promote walking and the use of bicycles and other non-motorized vehicles as alternative modes of transportation during the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic.

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 workplaces, medical facilities, and other similar places that may be identified. This network may then be adopted permanently even after the COVID-19 pandemic, as may be appropriate and practicable under the circumstances, as a solution to decongest roads and to alleviate the problem of pollution plaguing the country.

The immediate passage of this bill is most earnestly sought.


PRECIOUS HIPOLITO CASTELO

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AN ACT
ESTABLISHING A NETWORK OF POP-UP BICYCLE LANES AND EMERGENCY
PATHWAYS FOR USE DURING THE DURATION OF THE CORONAVIRUS DISEASE 2019
(COVID-19 PANDEMIC)

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 "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.

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 the use of bicycles and other non-motorized vehicles, and to provide safe and convenient pathways and walkways for pedestrians and non-motorized travel. It also recognizes the urgency of this need during the COVID-19 pandemic, to ensure physical distancing and to provide alternative modes of transportation especially to the frontliners and essential workers.

Prioritizing walking, biking and the use of non-motorized vehicles will result in reduced carbon emissions, reduced mobility, less use of energy and resources, and increased quality of life.

These are also in line with the State's commitment to 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, 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 locations and create a network for 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 non-motorized vehicles only, and shall connect users to essential destinations such as medical facilities, public and private establishments frequented by people and other similar places that may be identified. The lanes may be marked with removable tapes and mobile signs, which can be easily removed as necessary. The use of physical barriers is highly encouraged to prevent the occurrence of accidents.

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 pathways along local roads that will provide pedestrians and users of bicycles and other non-motorized vehicles 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 of 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 which shall likewise comply with physical distancing measures.

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, parking spaces and other infrastructures for bicycles and other non-motorized vehicles shall also be made permanent as far as practicable.

SEC. 7. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* – Within thirty (30) days from the effectivity of this Act, the DOTr shall promulgate the necessary rules and regulations to effectively implement the provisions of this Act.

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 or part hereof is held invalid or unconstitutional, the remainder of the law or the provision not otherwise affected shall remain valid and subsisting.

SEC. 10. *Repealing Clause.* – Any law, presidential decree or issuance, executive order, letter of instruction, administrative order, rule or regulation contrary to or inconsistent with, the provisions of this Act is hereby repealed, modified, or amended accordingly.

SEC. 11. *Effectivity Clause.* – 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,