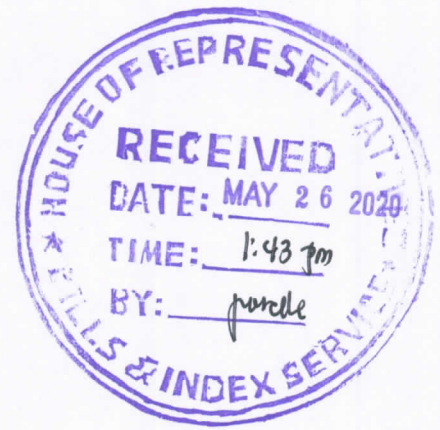


Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City, Metro Manila

EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

House Bill No. 6812



Introduced by Representatives Ria Christina G. Fariñas
and Rudys Caesar G. Fariñas I

EXPLANATORY NOTE

This bill seeks to establish a network of pop-up bicycle lanes and emergency pathways that are people-oriented and pedestrian-friendly to form part of an integral strategy to flatten the curve during the COVID-19 Pandemic. This may also be eventually considered as a permanent mode of travel to promote better health, reduce traffic and air pollution in the country.

In December 2019, a new form of virus known as the Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) shook the lives of everyone all over the world infecting millions and causing the death of hundreds of thousands of individuals. Because of this, the Philippines had to implement the Enhanced Community Quarantine (ECQ) nationwide to limit transmission while waiting for treatment and vaccine.

The COVID-19 pandemic has forced the country into a "New Normal", where physical distancing has become one of the new norms. Once the ECQ is lifted, it will be more difficult to put this in practice especially in the public transportations sector because of thousands of Filipinos that commute daily.

Since the implementation of the ECQ, health workers and other essential workers have been forced to explore other means of travel. Thus, it is imperative for the State to promote other modes of travel if we are to flatten the curve, especially since there is still no guarantee that the Community Quarantine will be lifted anytime soon.

Walking and biking are one of the best choices to continuously practice social distancing while having to travel. However, while walking is free, it is not ideal for people who live far from their work places. Thus, the next best choice would be biking, which is cost-efficient and low maintenance. It promotes physical and mental health in a time of high anxiety, and physical distancing can easily be observed. Biking further requires less resources and will improve air quality due to reduced motorized vehicle use and lessening air toxins which are the leading causes of respiratory infection.

The World Health Organization (WHO) recognizes both health and environmental benefits of biking especially during this time of crisis for people to reach their destinations, run essential errands and provide assistance to the vulnerable sector who is greatly affected by this pandemic. Long before this measure has been drafted, other countries have already established bike lanes to not only decongest traffic but to lessen pollution. Now that the virus has forced most people to change their everyday living, this mode of travel is further adopted and embraced.

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



CHRISTINA G. FARIÑAS



RUDYS CAESAR G. FARIÑAS I

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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 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 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.

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 the Local Government Units (LGUs), shall identify and create a network of 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 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 the 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, non-motorized 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. Repealing Clause. – All provisions of existing laws, presidential decrees or issuances, executive orders, letters of instruction, administrative orders, rules and regulations contrary to or inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed, amended, or modified accordingly.

Sec. 10. Separability Clause. – If any portion of this Act is declared unconstitutional, the same shall not affect the validity and effectivity of the other provisions not affected thereby.

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,