

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

House Bill No. 6915



Introduced by **Representative EDWARD VERA PEREZ MACEDA**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The lessons brought about by our experiences amid the COVID-19 health crisis has led our Government to craft and compose a number of commendable policies and legislations that could definitely guide our country towards full recovery and more resilient future. The New Normal Bill, the PESA Bill and the Balik-Probinsya Program are among the many praiseworthy proposals designed as responses to the various problems we faced during this pandemic. To further these aspirations, it is also necessary to address the unceasing issue on transportation now that the country is starting its transition from strict community rules to slightly flexible regulations.


Embracing new changes is never easy but with the implementation of the general community quarantine (GCQ) in Metro Manila, most of our countrymen have been left with no other choice but to welcome the "new normal" despite the presence of danger and uncertainties. Particularly, we witnessed how our dedicated workers braved our major roads through riding bicycles - an alternative to public transport that may pose numerous risks. Accordingly, these perils may be reduced or even avoided by having permanent bike lanes to ensure the safety of our riding citizens.

According to studies, cycling promotes significant benefits to the environment, health and economy. World Resource Institute (WRI) found that investing in infrastructure to support biking — from protected lanes, to mass parking facilities to bikeshare programs — is exactly the type of win-win investment that will help economies recover while curbing climate change, reducing air pollution and protecting human health. By providing special and safe lanes for bicycles, we can effectively reduce the use of vehicles that burns fossil fuels thereby effectively reducing air and noise pollution. Also according to World Health Organization (WHO), cycling is a healthier option of transportation as regular cyclists enjoy the benefits of consistent exercise and in effect lower the chances of getting cancer, diabetes, stroke and heart disease. And as social distancing eases and people can soon return to patronizing local shops, cafes and restaurants in-person, bicycle use can also provide proven stimulus to economic activity on main streets and

commercial areas. Thus, by promoting cycling through the construction of safe bicycle pathways, the Government can methodically address environmental, health and economic issues all at once.

Also, contrary to the fear of many that bicycling is inherently dangerous on its own, a research by the University of Colorado found otherwise. According to the study, building safe facilities for cyclists turned out to be one of the biggest factors in road safety as it acts as "calming" mechanisms on traffic, slowing cars and reducing fatalities. The effect is similar to the effect of grid blocks found in cities with higher intersection density.

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


EDWARD VERA PEREZ MACEDA
Representative
4th District, City of Manila

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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.¹

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.

¹ 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 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 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. 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,