



## UNION OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES OF THE PHILIPPINES INC.

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### **LGUs Take the Lead in Transforming Public Transportation: ULAP and Stakeholders Convene for Mobility Reform**

The Union of Local Authorities of the Philippines (ULAP), in partnership with Commuters 4 Change (C4C), successfully convened local government leaders, transport experts, and key stakeholders for the forum “Enhancing Public Road Transportation and Mobility: The Role of LGUs” at Novotel Manila, Araneta City, on March 7, 2025. The event underscored the critical role of local government units (LGUs) in addressing the country’s worsening public transportation crisis and showcased promising local initiatives that could serve as national models for sustainable mobility.

In his opening remarks, Governor Dax Cua, ULAP National President, emphasized that transportation policies must be decentralized and commuter-centered to address daily mobility challenges effectively. He highlighted the inefficiencies caused by outdated national policies and called for greater LGU autonomy in transport management, urging local leaders to push for reforms that align with the realities on the ground.

The forum featured a deep dive into the current state of Philippine public transport, led by Dr. Robert Siy, a sustainable mobility advocate, columnist, and co-convenor of the Move As One Coalition. He presented data showing a decline in public transport supply over the past decade despite rising commuter demand, pointing to bureaucratic delays, franchise moratoriums, and funding gaps as primary obstacles. Unlike in many countries where local governments oversee public transit systems, the Philippines maintains a highly centralized transport governance model, leaving LGUs with limited control beyond tricycle operations. He stressed that national government agencies must empower LGUs to manage their own public transport networks, particularly in urban centers where local knowledge and responsiveness are crucial.

The event also highlighted city-level innovations in public transport and mobility reform. Quezon City Assistant City Administrator for Operations Alberto Kimpo presented the QCity Bus initiative, which has provided 31.9 million rides since its launch, effectively supplementing traditional transport options and offering a more structured and commuter-friendly alternative. Pasig City’s Project Evaluation Officer IV Engr. Jhon Rhandy B. Cabanes showcased the Libreng Sakay bus service, solar-powered EV charging stations, and cycling infrastructure expansion, proving that city-led mobility programs can reduce congestion and promote greener alternatives. Baguio City Engineering Office’s Traffic and Transportation



Management Division Engineer Jan Vincent V. Niñalga unveiled the Smart Urban Mobility Project, which introduces congestion pricing, adaptive traffic management, and automated parking systems to control vehicle volume in high-traffic areas. Iloilo City Public-Private Partnership (PPP) Office Head Atty. David Garcia reaffirmed Iloilo's leadership in Public Utility Vehicle Modernization (PUVMP) compliance, while continuing to develop its bike lane network and pedestrian-friendly infrastructure. Meanwhile, Clark Development Corporation (CDC) President Agnes VST Devenadera introduced the Clark Loop, a 100% cashless, scheduled bus system designed to support the Freeport's workforce and enhance connectivity to Clark International Airport.

A focus group discussion, moderated by Atty. Rodolfo John Paul Palat III, tackled persistent jurisdictional and regulatory barriers that limit LGU-led transport reforms. Participants identified delays in Local Public Transport Route Plan (LPTRP) approvals, conflicting mandates between national agencies, and inconsistent enforcement of active transport policies as major impediments to progress. National government agencies were urged to streamline processes, clarify LGU authority over local transport policies, and provide greater financial and technical support to ensure the viability of modern mobility solutions. The discussion also emphasized the need for public-private partnerships (PPPs) to expand funding options and sustain long-term transport projects.

The Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) was well-represented, with Director Debbie Torres of the Bureau of Local Government Supervision (BLGS), through BLGS Local Government Relations Division Chief Diana Baldonado, highlighting DILG's role in supporting LGUs through capacity-building programs, policy advocacy, and technical assistance. Atty. Carlo Tan of DILG-BLGS emphasized the importance of aligning local transport policies with national frameworks while ensuring LGUs retain flexibility in implementing localized solutions.

In her closing remarks, ULAP Executive Director Aileen Leycano called on LGUs to continue pushing for transport policies that prioritize people over vehicles. She stressed that while national agencies play a role in setting policy frameworks, the success of urban mobility reforms depends on local leadership, innovation, and strong community engagement. She commended LGUs that have taken bold steps in modernizing transport despite structural challenges and reaffirmed ULAP's commitment to advocating for policies that give LGUs a greater role in shaping the country's transport future.

With an increasing number of LGUs demonstrating that locally led mobility solutions can work, there is growing momentum for transport decentralization and smarter urban planning. The event concluded with a renewed call for national-local collaboration that allows LGUs to take charge of their transport systems while receiving adequate support from the national government.

As the country faces worsening traffic congestion, declining public transport availability, and increasing commuter frustration, LGU-led mobility solutions provide a viable path forward. The success stories from Quezon City, Pasig, Baguio, Iloilo, and Clark prove that progressive transport policies and investments in sustainable mobility can deliver real benefits to commuters and communities alike. With local governments leading the charge, the call for a more efficient, accessible, and commuter-friendly transport system has never been stronger.

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ULAP is the umbrella organization of all leagues of local government units and local government officials in country, serving as the focal representative and mouthpiece of the subnational government in all policy and program platforms to amplify our unified advocacy towards the strengthening of LGUs into able partners in nation-building.

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