



Crisis as Catalyst

Introducing Urban Transport Reforms in the Philippines Amidst the Global Pandemic

JOHN T. SIDEL

September 2022



The Asia Foundation

COALITIONS for CHANGE

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London School of Economics and Political Science

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The Program

Coalitions for Change (CfC) supports key policy reforms that will make a difference in the lives of Filipinos. With Philippine leaders in civil society, academia, the private sector, and the government, CfC aids the pursuit of policy reforms towards inclusive economic growth, social development, improved governance, and peace and stability.

CfC is designed to be adaptive and responsive, especially important while the Philippines recovers from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Coalitions for Change is supported by a partnership between the Australian Government in the Philippines and The Asia Foundation.

For more information about the program, visit:

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Message from The Asia Foundation

The Coalitions for Change (CfC) Research Paper Series aims to provide an independent platform to share perspectives on reforms supported by CfC. Each paper examines a development problem, the reform pursued, and within that, explores the process of change in which CfC took part, as well as its potential impact.

This fourth paper in the Series traced CfC and its local partners' role in urban and active transport reform, which came to a head at a very crucial time, back when lockdowns were imposed in the Philippines to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus.

There are three important aspects of this case in mobility reform that bear some consideration for development practitioners. The first is that a crisis could open opportunities for reform. The health and safety restrictions brought on by the pandemic led to the exploration of alternative modes of mobility. Second, for reform to gain momentum and take root, it helps to have a clear agenda and a diverse coalition to continuously engage not just policymakers, but also current and potential users of these transport options. Lastly, because reform is rarely linear, it helps to have flexibility in pursuing possible solutions.

Overall and keeping in theme with the CfC Research Paper Series, we continue to convey how balancing a reform's technical soundness with political feasibility is an essential strategy in pursuing development outcomes.

We hope you enjoy the mobility coalition's story and more importantly, gain new insights in the process of investing in positive change.

Sam Chittick

Country Representative

The Asia Foundation – Philippines





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DO NOT
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Private and public vehicles fill EDSA, Metro Manila's main thoroughfare, on a daily basis.
Photo by Lance Lozano



Introduction

In March 2020, as President Rodrigo Duterte declared a nationwide state of public health emergency and imposed an “enhanced community quarantine” (ECQ) in Metro Manila and the entire Luzon region¹, the Coalitions for Change (CfC) program in the Philippines moved to advance an agenda for urgent and immediate, but also structural and sustainable, urban transport reforms in the context of the COVID-19 global pandemic.

With the suspension of public transportation, following the enforcement of the ECQ in the National Capital Region (NCR) and other key urban areas, essential workers such as medical practitioners faced unprecedented challenges in their daily commutes to and from work. At the same time, public utility vehicle (PUV) operators experienced the sudden loss of their livelihoods and were faced with the uncertain prospect of major economic and logistical difficulties in coping with severely reduced and restricted service under ‘COVID-safe’ conditions of social distancing once conditions allowed.

In response to this urgent transport crisis, CfC moved to promote a set of concrete policy solutions.

Drawing on its accumulated experience, expertise, access, and influence in the transport policy arena, the team engaged in a multi-pronged reform advocacy strategy. The strategy combined the provision of expert advice to key government agencies and members of Congress with barnstorming and

¹ Community Quarantine Over the Entire Luzon and Further Guidelines for the Management of the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Situation. Memorandum from the Executive Secretary, Office of the President of the Philippines. 16 March 2020. <https://www.officialgazette.gov.ph/downloads/2020/03mar/20200316-MEMORANDUM-FROM-ES-RRD.pdf>

brainstorming forms of (mostly online) activism, which successfully drew a diverse range of urban transport reform advocates and civil society groups into the Move As One coalition.

Over the subsequent months of 2020 and well into 2021, these efforts bore fruit with the introduction of two urban transport reforms in Metro Manila and across the whole Philippines. First, a new network of bike lanes was established and extended across key thoroughfares of the NCR and in urban areas across the country, enabling thousands of cyclists to shift from vehicular traffic to 'active transport' in their daily commutes.

Second, an experiment with government contracting of public utility vehicles to service bus and jeepney routes was undertaken in Metro Manila and elsewhere across the country. The dedicated lanes, fixed bus stops, and regularized schedule of the EDSA Busway provided a highly visible and vital trunk line along the capital's key transport artery, amidst a broader reorganization of Metro Manila bus routes.

Against the backdrop of these developments, this report provides a rigorous independent analysis of CfC's contribution to the birth of urgent and necessary urban transport reforms in the Philippines over the course of 2020 and 2021. The report begins by situating CfC's activities and achievements amidst the challenging conditions of the global pandemic, and the government's lockdown measures against the backdrop of the program's accumulated and accelerating urban transport reform advocacy work over the preceding years of the Duterte administration.

The report then traces the multi-stranded mechanisms and processes through which CfC advanced its reform agenda to show precisely how and precisely how much the program contributed to the introduction of new policies on bike lanes, service contracting, the EDSA Busway, and bus consolidation. In doing so, the report explores the 'null hypothesis' and the counterfactual scenario of urban transport policymaking under conditions of a crisis, but without the involvement of CfC. Finally, the report evaluates the immediate impact of the two reforms in the context of the pandemic, as well as prospects for their self-sustaining endurance and importance in advancing urban transport reform in a post-COVID Philippines.

CfC and Urban Transport Reform Advocacy in the Pre-Pandemic Philippines

In early 2018, the Coalitions for Change (CfC) program in the Philippines initiated a set of exploratory activities in the realm of urban transport reform. CfC's interest in urban transport reform emerged in the context of the program's preceding experiences and achievements in aviation and infrastructure policy reforms. Furthermore, these activities were organized at the time of increasingly acute awareness of the urgency and importance of reforms in addressing the endemic problems associated with traffic congestion in urban areas in the Philippines, most notably in the Metro Manila area.

Media reports regularly noted the human costs of traffic gridlock to commuters, and cited figures from the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) which projected billions of

pesos in daily economic costs due to traffic congestion. The Duterte administration, while committed to a raft of new major infrastructure projects under its Build, Build, Build (BBB) Program, remained largely focused on long-term rail projects. The administration's initial efforts to secure emergency powers to address the NCR's transportation problems failed to win congressional approval or evolve into a coherent strategy for urban transport reform.

As the members of CfC's embryonic Mobility team began to explore possible avenues for urban transport reform advocacy, they soon found themselves in close communication and collaboration with key members of an emerging and expanding network of urban transport and planning specialists in Metro Manila and in other parts of the country.

With rapid economic growth sustained over the first two decades of the twenty-first century came motorization. Hundreds of thousands of new automobiles and motorcycles flooded the roads every year amidst a proliferation of new real-estate development and infrastructure projects in and around the major conurbations of the archipelago.

These trends expanded and enhanced the career opportunities, educational qualifications, and associational and networking activities of a growing community of urban transport and planning specialists. Their credentials, ranging from creative design skills to technical expertise, were needed in ensuring government approval, financing, and eventually, implementation of a myriad of then ongoing and impending projects aimed at transforming the urban and suburban landscape and its transportation system.

By the late 2010s, a growing number of highly-skilled, knowledgeable, and talented young urban transport and planning specialists were taking up positions in real-estate and construction companies, consultancy firms, and local and national government agencies.

Simultaneously, given the impact of these trends on the transportation system, the 2010s also saw the emergence of new transport reform advocacy groups like AltMobility PH, Inclusive Mobility Network, Komyut, and Move Metro Manila. These transport reform advocacy groups helped amplify the voices and enhance the visibility of transportation experts and other public advocates for transport policy reform.

Advocacy work unfolded across a wide range of platforms, from traditional media to social media, eventually bearing fruit in dialogues with members of Congress and policymakers in the Department of Transportation (DOTr) and other local and national government offices. By the late 2010s, the activities of these groups were accompanied by and intermingled with a growing network of cycling activists, whose appreciation of the promotion of 'active transport' in other cities across the world inspired new forms of transport reform activism and advocacy in the Philippines.

Guided by the expertise and analyses of these urban transport experts and activists, CfC's Mobility team identified a clear, coherent agenda for reform advocacy over the course of 2018, 2019, and early 2020. The agenda consisted essentially of three elements which individually and collectively worked to complement the Duterte administration's focus on rail projects. More importantly, the program's agenda

sought to confront the key problem of an urban transportation system organized around — and undermined by — the centrality of privately-owned automotive vehicles, rather than a public mass transit system.

First, CfC promoted the legalization and liberalization of diverse new forms of public vehicular transport, ranging from UV Express units and P2P buses to motorcycle taxis, through the reduction of restrictions on their operations and those of established PUVs (i.e. buses and jeepneys).

Second, CfC advocated the establishment of a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system in Metro Manila and Metro Cebu with dedicated lanes, fixed stations, and regularized service. The BRT system was designed to replace the so-called ‘boundary’ system by incentivizing operations to maximize efficiency for travel, rather than earnings for drivers.

Third, CfC championed various forms of ‘active transport’ through the development and expansion of sidewalks for pedestrians and protected bike lanes for cyclists.

This reform agenda reflected a consensus view among informed local urban transport and planning experts, in line with trends in academic analysis and reform activism in many other countries across the world. But a shared vision did not guarantee effective action. It was

thanks to CfC’s Mobility team’s initiative that a coordinated advocacy campaign emerged and unfolded, leading to concrete changes in government policies and in the country’s transportation system.

This campaign was multi-stranded. On the one hand, CfC’s Mobility team began to engage directly with key policymakers from relevant government agencies such as the DOTr, the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH), and the Metro Manila Development Authority (MMDA), offering advice and assistance through a variety of channels and modes of communication. On the other hand, CfC’s Mobility team also began to explore other avenues of reform advocacy, through traditional media and social media and through its access and influence in both houses of Congress. Through this kind of triangulation, reform advocacy proceeded to unfold and to enfold government policymakers in a dense web of policy briefs, congressional hearings, media stories, and public commentary from various groups in support of urban transport reform.

But as of early 2020, the efforts of CfC’s Mobility team had yet to generate much movement toward concrete policy reform. In 2019, the DOTr’s ban on motorcycle taxis was grudgingly suspended in favor of a temporary pilot scheme, and there appeared to be some receptivity toward other policies that would ease restrictions on various kinds of public utility vehicles.

CfC's Mobility Agenda

1



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3



Third, CfC **championed various forms of active transport** through the development and expansion of sidewalks for pedestrians and protected bike lanes for cyclists.

However, the DOTr and other agencies remained hesitant to commit to the introduction of a BRT system in Metro Manila. In addition, the enthusiasm for new pedestrian walkways and bike lanes remained confined to a select set of local government officials in a handful of cities.

It would take the "perfect storm" of a global pandemic, a government lockdown, and a public health and economic crisis to enable real advancement of urban transport reform in the Philippines over the course of 2020 and 2021.

The Onset of the COVID-19 Pandemic in the Philippines: Exigencies and Opportunities

In mid-March 2020, amidst increasing evidence and awareness of the spread of the global COVID-19 pandemic in the Philippines, President Rodrigo Duterte announced the imposition of an “enhanced community quarantine” (ECQ) over Metro Manila and the region of Luzon. This measure was then extended to certain areas of the Visayas and Mindanao regions in early May.² This form of lockdown entailed a curfew and a generalized stay-at-home order, the closure of non-essential businesses, restrictions on movement, and suspension of public transportation.

While the ECQ was modified in May 2020 to allow for more economic activities and forms of movement, serious questions and challenges remained as to the possibilities surrounding the resumption of public transportation. The suspension of public transportation had drastically constrained economic activity, as seen in the enormous and observable difficulties experienced by medical personnel and other essential workers in their day-to-day commutes to work in the first few months of the lockdown.

Although essential and beneficial to individuals and companies, the resumption of public transportation threatened to enable and accelerate the transmission of the virus. The urban mass transit systems in Metro Manila and other major conurbations could potentially serve as ‘super-spreaders’ among commuters, shoppers, and employees boarding buses, jeepneys, and other PUVs.

As previously mentioned, modifications to restrictions were set for May. The enforcement of a general community quarantine (GCQ) in certain areas in the country signaled the resumption of public transportation services. However, operators had to comply with strict physical-distancing policies for public transport, which reduced passenger-carrying capacities. These conditions left the operations of many PUVs financially unviable.

From early-mid 2020, the Duterte administration introduced reforms, from new bike lanes across Metro Manila and other cities to PUV service contracting, the EDSA Busway, and bus route consolidation. These reforms could conceivably be interpreted and understood as the inevitable and automatic response of the government to the exigencies brought about by the pandemic, and the accompanying public health and economic crisis in the Philippines.

By this logic, the introduction and implementation of these urban transport reforms arguably owed nothing to the reform advocacy work supported by CfC’s Mobility team or the mobilization and mediation of the Move As One coalition, established in early May 2020. Government policymakers simply did what they had to do, on their own steam.

Alternatively, or perhaps, even within the rubric of this interpretation of the reforms, government policymakers proceeded in ways which were informed, inspired, and impelled by a wide range of voices. Policymakers considered the input of urban transport experts and reform advocates, cycling activists, and other sources of policy advice. Policymakers were prompted by political pressure emanating from the realms of civil

² Imposing an Enhanced Community Quarantine in High-Risk Geographic Areas of the Philippines and a General Community Quarantine in the Rest of the Country from 1 to 15 May 2020, Adopting the Omnibus Guidelines on the Implementation Thereof, and for Other Purposes. Executive Order No. 112. Office of the President of the Philippines. 30 April 2020. <https://www.officialgazette.gov.ph/downloads/2020/04apr/2020030-EO-112-RRD.pdf>

society, traditional media and social media, and the blogosphere. Viewed from this perspective, the efforts of CfC itself were superfluous, and the actual impact of its work was essentially nugatory.

But looking back at the government's response to the public health and economic crisis in early–mid 2020, two striking features of the policymaking process undermine confidence in interpretations, framed along either narrowly top–down or broadly bottom–up lines. First, as acknowledged by policymaking insiders and evidenced by policymaking outcomes over the weeks and months of early–mid 2020, the Philippine government lacked a coherent plan – or even a coherent policymaking framework or process – for restarting public transport in the context of the pandemic. The administration favored stopgap measures such as shuttle buses for medical practitioners and temporary “pop–up” bike lanes rather than more systemic forms of urban transport reform.

Second, as lamented by urban transport reform advocates, both during these months, and in retrospect thereafter, the actual introduction and implementation of key urban transport reforms unfolded in fits and starts, with considerable delays and difficulties in the face of various forms of foot–dragging and frontal resistance from a range of different government agencies. The obstacles to the adoption of systemic reforms stemmed not only from the aversion or hesitation of key policymakers in the DOTr and MMDA, but also from the complexity and diversity of institutional arrangements and interests governing urban transportation in the Philippines.

Alongside DOTr with its limited *plantilla* and effective control over a welter of ancillary and attached government agencies, the introduction and implementation of urban transport reforms required the active participation of the Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board (LTFRB), DPWH, MMDA, local government units (LGUs), and Congress in its role in approving budgets and enacting new laws. This highly fragmented and, at times, fractious field of policymaking was hardly fertile ground for the cultivation and harvesting of urban transport reforms. Even if some kind of government response to the challenges of restarting urban public transport was arguably inevitable, the precise nature of this response and its actual coherence and effectiveness must be understood as highly contingent and contested.

Indeed, in reviewing the developments leading to the introduction and implementation of major urban transport reforms in mid–late 2020 and 2021, the complexity and contentiousness of the policymaking process becomes readily apparent, as does the important role of the reform advocacy work supported and spearheaded by CfC. A multiplicity of actors, influences, and institutions was involved in the making of the reforms. But a close, careful process–tracing exercise illuminates both the precise causal pathways through which CfC's advocacy work advanced urban transport reforms and the actual substantive content of CfC's contribution to their formulation and implementation. Thanks to internal CfC records, interviews with key participants, media coverage, and government policy documents, it is possible to demonstrate how crucial a role CfC played in the creation and promotion of urban transport reforms in the Philippines from 2020–2021.



Cyclists traverse the stretch of EDSA along Guadalupe Bridge, utilizing the installed bike lane. Photo by Leandro Mangubat



Active Transport:

Building Bike Lanes, Protecting Cyclists

The first and most successful reform introduced in 2020–2021 was the establishment of a network of bike lanes across parts of Metro Manila and other major urban areas in the Philippines, together with the institutionalization of a set of budgetary provisions and bureaucratic procedures for the construction of new bike lanes across the country over the years ahead. Beginning in April 2019, CfC’s Mobility team had initiated exploratory efforts to promote the establishment of a network of bike lanes and pedestrian walkways across Metro Manila. The team also did the same for the promotion of bike lanes and sidewalks in urban areas elsewhere across the Philippines.³

Over the course of 2019, the team began to focus on the internal metrics and procedures of the DPWH for the construction, maintenance, and upgrade of roads. Careful technical analysis by experts recruited by the team identified DPWH’s standard operating procedures as essentially oblivious and inhospitable to bike lanes and sidewalks. The team concluded that embedding bike lanes and sidewalks within the bureaucracy responsible for road building, upkeep, and improvement across the country would be essential for the institutionalization of reform.

In early 2020, the team worked with DPWH officials on new design specifications for bike lanes and sidewalks to be incorporated into bureaucratic procedures and budgetary provisions for the department’s road projects. While this reform was technically sound, the team remained unsure

³ Such as in cities like Iloilo, Mandaue, and Naga

as to whether it was also politically possible. Discussions remained confined to mid-level officials in the DPWH, and a clear strategy to expand the reform advocacy work had yet to be developed.

March–May 2020: Engineering the Policy Shift

Against this backdrop, the government's imposition of the ECQ in Metro Manila and across Luzon in mid-March 2020 stimulated an immediate intensification and escalation of the CfC Mobility team's advocacy efforts. The team's confidence and credibility were boosted by the sudden surge of pedestrian and bicycle traffic on the streets of Metro Manila and other cities amidst the suspension of public transport. Thousands of medical practitioners and other essential workers began to walk and cycle to work on the streets of Metro Manila and other major cities, creating a sudden boom in bike sales and unprecedented visibility for bikers. Cycling activists played a crucial role in this development through their efforts in the preceding years to promote biking in the Philippines and through their work in the early weeks of the lockdown, providing encouragement, assistance, and information to bikers through social media.

With cyclists flooding the streets in record numbers, CfC adopted a multi-pronged approach in the promotion of new government policies favoring bike lanes. On the one hand, the CfC Mobility team launched a very public campaign through coalition-building in civil society and a coordinated communication strategy in traditional media, social media, and the blogosphere. Mid-April 2020 saw CfC's Mobility team draft and disseminate a position paper endorsed by organizations representing transport planning

professionals, commuter advocates, cycling enthusiasts, persons with disabilities (PWDs), and urban poor communities, combining forces under the rubric of a newly-formed coalition for transport reform: Move As One.

The position paper offered a coherent blueprint and a set of concrete recommendations for measures to enable mobility under conditions of an anticipated Modified Enhanced Community Quarantine (MECQ) and then, a General Community Quarantine (GCQ). These recommendations emphasized walking and cycling to allow for socially-distanced, COVID-safe commuting, and to relieve pressure on public vehicular transport under the conditions of the pandemic.

The set of recommendations included a "dense network of safe footpaths and bike lanes" and "protected bicycle lanes" on major roads and national highways. The recommendations were presented and promoted in online fora organized by the CfC partner COVID-19 Action Network (CAN) Philippines and by the American Chamber of Commerce in the Philippines, in webinars sponsored by the Dutch Cycling Embassy, on social media, and in the *Manila Times* column of the eminent transport specialist Dr. Robert 'Robie' Siy, Jr., a key member of CfC's Mobility team.

Mid-May 2020 witnessed the enhancement and expansion of this coalition-building and communication strategy with the formation of the Move As One coalition, and the publication of a manifesto-like statement diagnosing the transport problems of the country in the context of the pandemic. The statement also delineated a strategy for the partial, phased restoration of public transport, alongside a set of structural transport reforms such as the establishment of bike lanes.

Move As One extended its coalition to incorporate more than 60 organizations and dozens of prominent individuals, including leading doctors, scientists, and other healthcare workers, economic reform advocates, student groups, as well as associations of jeepney drivers.

When the Philippine government first released its plans for the Philippine COVID-19 recovery, CfC's Mobility team identified potential problems for the then heavily restricted transportation sector. Should the economy re-open, the safety and mobility of commuters and transport workers would be compromised. To address this issue, senior team member Dr. Robie Siy, Jr. and other team members reached out to sectoral groups. These included established transport reform advocacy groups such as AltMobility PH, Komyut, Bayanihan sa Daan, Affiliated Network for Social Accountability in East Asia and the Pacific (ANSA-EAP), and disability sector groups such as Alyansa ng may Kapansanang Pinoy, Inc. (AKAP-Pinoy). This collaboration led to the creation of the Move As One coalition on May 9, 2020, with the name designed to ensure its memorability and its synergy with the government's call to "Recover As One" and "Heal As One" from the virus.

Working together, this coalition of reform advocates crafted and released a public statement describing the post-pandemic public transportation system as a "ticking time bomb" and published a three-year urban mobility proposal of PhP 110 billion (AUD 2.98 billion) to support reforms for safe public transport, active transportation infrastructure, and other post-pandemic and recovery plans. The petition garnered support from 140 informal and formal organizations and 22,000 individual signatories through active social media engagement.

Positioning itself as a pandemic recovery coalition for transportation, the Move As One coalition joined critical public and active transportation discussions through consistent engagement on social media with other advocacy groups and a range of government agencies. Since May 2020, the coalition has issued hundreds of statements and communication products and has mentored young mobility advocates. The coalition's taglines "Moving People, Not Cars," "Transportation that is Safe, Humane, and Inclusive," and #ProtectedBikeLanesNow continue to be relevant to transport reform advocacy in the Philippines to this day.

As of late 2022, the Move As One coalition counts among its members some 77,000 individual advocates from the health sector, local transport and commuter groups, the persons with disabilities and youth sectors, budget transparency advocacy groups, labor groups, and government agencies. The coalition has been able to extend its network from Metro Manila to other provinces in the country, such as Naga, Cebu, Davao, and Iloilo. Move As One is supported by the Australian Embassy in the Philippines, The Asia Foundation, The Netherlands Embassy, the National Endowment for Democracy, Siptiani Foundation, and various individual donors.

Over subsequent weeks and months, the Move As One coalition's briefing papers, press releases, and other statements provided important points of reference in media coverage, congressional hearings, and government pronouncements concerning urban transport issues. Move As One thus emerged and entrenched itself as a readily identifiable, authoritative, and ubiquitous voice in discussions and debates on urban transport issues in the public sphere.⁴ At the same time, webinars and social media facilitated communication and coordination across the diverse range of individuals and groups affiliated with the coalition, while sustaining and strengthening a shared sense of purpose and promise amidst the difficult conditions of the pandemic.

On the other hand, CfC's Mobility team coupled this very public and participatory mode of reform advocacy work with behind-the-scenes liaising with top policymakers in key government agencies and in Congress, exerting direct influence on — and offering direct input into — the formulation and implementation of transport policy reforms. As early as April 8, 2020, for example, the team submitted a set of recommendations to the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) Forward Planning Team. This list of recommendations included provisions for bike lanes alongside other reforms.

By early May 2020, the team began to engage with the Inter-Agency Task Force (IATF) for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases, with the appointment by President Duterte of Vivencio 'Vince' Dizon as the new deputy chief implementer of the government's response to the pandemic. Dizon turned for advice on

transport issues to Julia Nebrija, a prominent cycling activist and urban planning and transport specialist who had been advising Dizon on plans for New Clark City in the context of Dizon's role as President and CEO of the Bases Conversion and Development Authority (BCDA). CfC's Mobility team had been consulting closely with Nebrija in its exploratory work on bike lanes and pedestrian walkways over 2019 and early 2020 and had come to rely heavily on her expertise and access in this realm of public policy.

At the same time, senior CfC Mobility team member Dr. Robie Siy, Jr. provided an additional point of policy access and influence within the IATF. The international consulting firm McKinsey & Company had been contracted by the Ayala Corporation, a diversified conglomerate with interests in real estate, retail, banking, transport infrastructure, and other sectors of the Philippine economy, to undertake analysis and provide strategic advice with regard to the pandemic. Ayala Corporation CEO and Chairman Jaime Zobel de Ayala extended McKinsey's contract to provide its services to the IATF upon its formation. Seeking specialist knowledge on Philippine transport issues, McKinsey's team soon began to consult with Siy and drew extensively on his expertise and input as it began to advise the IATF on government policies to deal with the pandemic.

Meanwhile, AltMobility PH, an established transport reform advocacy group that had been working closely with CfC's Mobility team since 2019 and joined the Move As One coalition in early May 2020, provided further access and input to the policy process. Working closely with officials in the Department of Health (DOH), AltMobility PH began work in early May

⁴ It should be noted that in the course of its advocacy work and expanding network, Move As One also progressed from being solely funded by the Australian Embassy to also receiving support from other streams, including the Netherlands Embassy.

2020, drafting a Joint Administrative Order that provided “Guidelines on the Proper Use and Promotion of Active Transport During and After the COVID-19 Pandemic.”

These guidelines included clear specifications for bike lanes and pedestrian sidewalks as well as clear responsibilities for the four signatory agencies — the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG), DOH, DPWH, and DOTr. At the same time, working closely with Julia Nebrija, CfC’s Mobility team drafted a Memorandum Circular for the DILG to guide LGUs in the establishment of bike lanes and pedestrian sidewalks in cities and towns across the country. Thus by early May 2020, CfC’s Mobility team had expanded its points of direct access beyond mid-level officials in the DOTr and DPWH to policymakers in the uppermost echelons of the Philippine government working on a coordinated response to the challenges posed by the pandemic.

Alongside these avenues of access to policymakers in the executive branch, CfC’s Mobility team also made ample use of additional channels of communication with key legislators in both houses of Congress over the weeks following the imposition of the ECQ by President Duterte in mid-March 2020. In April and May 2020, for example, the team had already contacted Congress Representatives Joey Salceda and Stella Quimbo, both of whom served as members of a key subcommittee of the Defeat COVID-19 Ad Hoc Committee in the House of Representatives. The committee was tasked with the passage of an emergency economic stimulus package in response to the public health and economic crisis caused by the pandemic.

The team passed on to Salceda and Quimbo the Move As One coalition’s recommendations for promoting ‘active transport’ as part of the proposed relaxation of transport restrictions to accompany the anticipated easing of the ECQ in the months ahead. These members of Congress also received Move As One’s estimates for the costs of new bike lane infrastructure in its provision of technical assistance and advice on budgetary provisions for transport in the economic stimulus package. The team likewise conveyed its recommendations and estimates to Senator Grace Poe, Chairperson of the Senate Committee on Public Services.

By mid-May 2020, these points of contact and communication were already beginning to bear fruit, as indicated by public statements issued by leading legislators and government officials. Rep. Salceda and Senator Poe began to cite the Move As One coalition’s position paper in their pronouncements on transport. Moreover, Senate President Vicente ‘Tito’ Sotto III announced that the upper house of Congress would be supporting proposals promoting the use of bicycles and walking as means of travel.

Within days, DOTr had signaled a sudden, surprising policy shift after years of unreceptiveness toward reforms in favor of ‘active transport’. On May 15, the DOTr’s Facebook page offered the following announcement⁵:

“The DOTr recognizes that cycling and personal mobility devices (PMDs) as alternative travel modes would be useful in maintaining physical distancing, while [at the] same time deliver substantial environmental and health benefits while achieving efficient use of road space.

⁵ Also in a shared communication from DOTr Assistant Secretary Goddes Libiran to Dr. Robie Siy, Jr.

We recommend for the Inter-Agency Task Force (IATF) to issue instructions to appropriate national and local authorities to undertake the following to support utilization of NMT [non-motorized transport] and PMD:

- LGUs shall design and implement a local and metropolis-wide safe bicycle lane network (i.e., 'Mabuhay Lanes for Bicycles') that will connect key activity areas;
- Provide maps, signage, lane markings and physical separation for bicycle lanes; where possible, designate roads within the network as 'car-free' to be utilized exclusively by bicycles and PMDs;
- Establish bicycle lending and sharing schemes at city and barangay levels;
- Deployment of personnel to enforce bicycle and PMD routes while ensuring observance of physical distancing guidelines;
- Require owners of buildings and activity centers to assign sufficient space for bicycle parking and bike racks; and
- Promote bicycle and PMD activities through a communications campaign."

A week later, the Move As One coalition found its statement featured on the DOTr Facebook page, and its members co-hosting a webinar with a senior DOTr official and the CfC-supported COVID-19 Action Network (CAN) Philippines.

The official's webinar presentation conveyed DOTr's support for "non-motorized transport," presenting designs for bike lanes on major roads, including Metro Manila's key artery, Epifanio de los Santos Avenue (EDSA), a 24-kilometer thoroughfare stretching from Pasay City in the south to Caloocan City in the north.

“ [B]y the end of May 2020, the Philippine government had already begun to accept and to appropriate the proposed introduction of bicycle lanes. This policy shift was intimately intertwined with, and actively informed and impelled by, the reform advocacy efforts of CfC’s Mobility team and the CfC-supported Move As One coalition.”

This public commitment was reiterated by no less than DOTr Secretary Arthur Tugade in his report to President Duterte in a press conference and cabinet meeting televised on May 28, with Tugade announcing that DOTr was working with other government agencies on the construction of permanent structures for bicycle lanes on EDSA and elsewhere. Just a few weeks later, President Duterte reported to Congress that, “[w]ith the aim of increasing mobility during the new normal, the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) has created a Technical Working Group to directly coordinate with the DOTr (Department of Transportation) and MMDA (Metropolitan Manila Development Authority) for the preparation of a conceptual design and construction of a Metro Manila-wide bicycle lane for national and local roads.”

Thus, by the end of May 2020, the Philippine government had already begun to accept and to appropriate the proposed introduction of bicycle lanes. This policy shift was intimately intertwined with, and actively informed and impelled by, the reform advocacy efforts of CfC’s Mobility team and the CfC-supported Move As One coalition.

June–September 2020: Securing the Budget, Ensuring Implementation

These signs of a major policy shift on the part of the government emboldened and enabled further actions by CfC's Mobility team and the Move As One coalition to consolidate and concretize the proposals for bicycle lanes through further advocacy work with government agencies and in Congress over June–September 2020. Similar to the work in the preceding period of March–May 2020, these advocacy efforts proceeded along multiple tracks.

On the one hand, CfC's Mobility team and the broader Move As One coalition continued to monitor the progress of the emergency stimulus package as it proceeded through Congress over the summer months of 2020. The team and the broader coalition made use of their access and influence among key legislators in both houses, and their visibility and voice in the traditional media and social media to ensure that bicycle lanes and pedestrian walkways were allocated appropriate funding.

Both the House and Senate versions of the bill included a provision for “the development of accessible sidewalks and protected bicycle lanes, procurement of bicycles and related safety equipment for bicycle distribution, sharing and lending programs, and procurement of bicycle racks.” Funding for such infrastructure was covered within the lump sum to be awarded to the DOTr from the stimulus package, PhP 10 billion total in the House version, and a more generous PhP 17 billion in the Senate version. The language, it is worth highlighting, was lifted verbatim from the list of recommendations that CfC's Mobility team had submitted to key legislators and senior government policymakers back in May 2020.

In the end, PhP 1.316 billion were officially earmarked and ringfenced for the promotion of active transport, alongside other separate funding streams for transportation, amounting to PhP 15.08 billion in total in the final Bayanihan to Recover as One Act (R.A. 11494 or “Bayanihan 2”), which was signed into law on September 11. With this, by September 2020, CfC's Mobility team had helped secure government funding specially allocated for the construction of protected bicycle lanes and pedestrian walkways.

On the other hand, from June–September 2020, CfC's Mobility team and the growing Move As One coalition devoted most of their time and energy to the wide range of complex and critical technical problems and challenges entailed in the actual implementation of ‘active transport’ reform. Even with the public endorsements of the reform by DOTr and other government agencies, and leading legislators by late May 2020, early signs of trouble were already apparent in early June 2020, as MMDA continued to reject and resist the introduction of bicycle lanes on EDSA and other major thoroughfares.

While MMDA appeared to relent by mid-June in the face of a barrage of criticism from reform advocates in the media, a burst of communication from DOTr, and a bit of personal diplomacy on the part of CfC's Mobility team, concerns remained regarding crucial details such as the actual construction schedule, layout and dimensions, and forms of protection for the bicycle lanes to be introduced.

CfC's Mobility team encountered similar concerns in its contributions to the technical working group set up by the DPWH to develop and delineate technical specifications and standards for the construction of bicycle lanes, most notably with regard to their proposed width. Initial MMDA design specifications included a

width of only 1.22 meters for bicycle lanes, far less than the width of those in other cities around the world or even the bare minimum recommended by experts in the field. Thus, even as the apparent policy gains of April–May 2020 were boosting the confidence of CfC’s Mobility team and the Move As One coalition, further policy advocacy work remained to ensure that the reform would really be effectively implemented on the ground.

The subsequent months of July, August, and September saw a series of intensive initiatives in highly technical policy advocacy brought to fruition. In mid–July, for example, the DILG issued a Memorandum Circular on the “Guidelines for the Establishment of a Network of Cycling Lanes and Walking Paths to Support People’s Mobility” which drew heavily on input and advice from CfC’s Mobility team. These guidelines called on local governments to take on the following responsibilities:

- To review and revise local public transport route plans to incorporate bike lanes and pedestrian walkways;
- To designate personnel and devote budgetary resources;
- To disseminate local ordinances, issuances, and information necessary for the construction and maintenance of these bike lanes and pedestrian walkways; and
- To engage in other policies to promote and protect cycling and walking in their localities.

The guidelines further called on local governments to identify and adopt traffic engineering and infrastructure solutions to ensure the delineation, protection, and effective usage and enjoyment of cycling lanes and sidewalks, while maintaining close attention to the safety

of cyclists and pedestrians at intersections. While the guidelines did not include some of the recommendations made by CfC’s Mobility team, such as specific street designs, designated funding streams, and special programs (e.g. bicycle parking facilities in government buildings), key elements of the team’s input were incorporated into the policy document in the end, including the ordinance template for local governments to use.

Meanwhile, urban transport experts and cycling activists from AltMobility PH and other affiliates of the Move As One coalition worked with officials of the DOH on more detailed guidelines for LGUs to follow in establishing local networks of protected bike lanes and pedestrian walkways. In mid–August 2020, the DOH began to work on these guidelines under the rubric of a 51–page “Active Transport Playbook.” The Playbook, officially launched in December 2020⁶, included a seven–page local ordinance template with densely detailed instructions on local government policies for the bike lanes and walkways. Other useful resources included a set of designs for safe road intersections, plans for implementation, communication, and monitoring and evaluation, costings for the construction and maintenance of infrastructure, communication materials, traffic rules, and a few pages addressing frequently asked questions (FAQs).

The DOH Playbook complemented the DILG memorandum by providing much more detailed guidance for LGUs to further enable the implementation of the reform. The inclusion of the logos of AltMobility PH and the Move As One coalition alongside that of DOH on the front cover of the Playbook signaled public recognition of the extent of expert input, advice, and assistance provided by these advocacy groups.

⁶ DOH, DILG, DOTr, DPWH Present Plans on Implementing Active Transport. Press Release. 2 December 2020. <https://doh.gov.ph/press-release/DOH-DILG-DOTr-DPWH-present-plans-on-implementing-active-transport>

Continuing their active role in policy reform assistance to government institutions, AltMobility PH and other affiliates of the Move As One coalition also offered input and advice in the drafting of a Joint Administrative Order by the DOH, DOTr, DILG, and DPWH, which was issued just a few days after the DOH Active Transport Playbook in mid-August 2020.

As previously discussed, as early as May 2020, AltMobility PH had been working on the draft of the DOH-DOTr-DILG-DPWH Joint Administrative Order. The Joint Administrative Order provided the “Guidelines on the Proper Use and Promotion of Active Transport During and After the COVID-19 Pandemic,” which committed all national government agencies and local governments “to promote the use of active transport such as walking, cycling, or using other forms of light mobility for transportation, during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.”

The guidelines enjoined local governments to “provide a community-wide network of safe walking paths, bicycle lanes, and roads to enable travel entirely by foot, by bicycle, or by other forms of light mobility through their ordinances,” while delineating the roles and responsibilities of the four signatory departments in the implementation of the new policy. The guidelines included the same local government ordinance template which was appended to the DOH Active Transport Playbook, and “strongly enjoined” local governments to assume a range of roles and responsibilities in the introduction and promotion of ‘active transport’.

Finally, CfC’s Mobility team provided extensive technical input and advice to the DPWH from June–September on the design of bicycle lanes, leading to the issuance of DPWH Department Order No. 88 in late September 2020. The Department Order prescribed guidelines for the design of bicycle lanes on national roads

throughout the Philippines. The 64-page document provided detailed specifications and standards for the width, direction, protection, and maintenance of the lanes, as well as for intersections, crossings, driveways, bridges and tunnels, and for road signs, pavement markings, and parking facilities. These design specifications and standards, and the illustrations provided, were based, in no small measure, on the expert technical input provided by the team.

Overall, by the end of September 2020, both budgetary provisions and bureaucratic procedures had been put in place by the Philippine government for the establishment of a network of bicycle lanes and pedestrian walkways in cities and other localities across the country, with CfC’s Mobility team and the Move As One coalition providing substantial contributions to each and every element of this dramatic policy shift in favor of active transport.

October 2020–July 2021: Dismantling Roadblocks, Laying Concrete

While a new policy architecture was, thus, essentially in place by the beginning of October 2020, the concrete infrastructure for active transport was yet to be constructed, leaving more reform advocacy work for CfC’s Mobility team and the Move As One coalition for the remaining months of 2020 and early 2021. Over the preceding months, the design for a network of bike lanes across Metro Manila had been developed by experts from AltMobility PH, the Institute for Climate and Sustainable Cities (ICSC), the University of Twente in the Netherlands, and MNL Moves, a cycling activist group affiliated with the Move As One coalition, and essentially adopted by the DOTr for implementation.

By this time, across eight cities in Metro Manila⁷, local officials were actively engaged in laying the groundwork for bike lanes and pedestrian sidewalks. These local governments participated in online planning workshops and webinars led by cycling activist groups and other active transport reform advocates affiliated with Move As One. Similar initiatives were underway in Metro Cebu and Metro Davao.

With much publicity, experimental ‘pop-up’ bicycle lanes were trialed, led by other local cycling groups, on EDSA and other major thoroughfares in Metro Manila in August 2020. But the construction of protected lanes based on the DPWH’s newly-established design specifications had yet to commence.

Against this backdrop, CfC’s Mobility team and the Move As One coalition continued to press for the implementation of the new policies on active transport as 2020 drew to a close and 2021 began under conditions of continuing public health and economic crisis in the Philippines. Communication with the DOTr and DPWH focused on the finer points of implementation, although energies were also devoted to ensuring inclusion of funding streams for bike lanes and pedestrian walkways in the General Appropriations Act (GAA) for 2021, which was passed by Congress in late December 2020.

In January 2021, however, progress toward implementation in Metro Manila hit a bump in the road. Newly appointed MMDA Chairman Benjamin ‘Benhur’ Abalos, Jr. expressed reservations about the plans for bicycle lanes across Metro Manila, especially on major thoroughfares like EDSA, and called for a review of the plans in the interest of public safety.

As in their reform advocacy work over the preceding months, the response of CfC’s Mobility team and the Move As One coalition was multi-pronged. On the one hand, some groups affiliated with the coalition waged a public campaign, criticizing the government for continuing delays in the construction of cycling lanes across Metro Manila and calling for the immediate commencement of roadworks to this end. The coalition’s formal statements remained strikingly restrained in the tone and phrasing of its criticisms, avoiding explicit attacks on MMDA and Abalos himself, emanating from some cycling activist groups.

On the other hand, the team continued to work in close communication with the DOTr, DPWH, and other government officials, and once again, enlisted its own personal intermediaries to help persuade Abalos to move forward expeditiously and commence construction of bike lanes on EDSA and areas across Metro Manila. By mid-February 2021, MMDA’s resistance had essentially been overcome, and construction had eventually begun to unfold across major thoroughfares of Metro Manila, including EDSA. Over subsequent months, considerable progress was made on the construction of bike lanes across Metro Manila and other major cities in the Philippines. In mid-July 2021, DOTr announced that nearly 500 kilometers of protected bicycle lanes had been constructed across Metro Manila (313 km), Metro Cebu (129 km), and Metro Davao (55km), while media reports revealed that movement in this direction was well underway in other cities across the country.

In late July 2021, DOTr announced that the construction of the Metropolitan Bike Lane Network had been completed and held an official inauguration of the Network at Rizal Park

⁷ Cities of Parañaque, Makati, Pasig, Quezon, San Juan, Taguig, Caloocan, and Marikina

in Manila. CfC Mobility team leader and Move As One coalition member Toix Cerna attended and spoke at the event, alongside senior government officials. In addition, the coalition's branding was included on the posters for the event, alongside that of the DOTr and MMDA, in recognition of the key role the coalition had played in the introduction and implementation of the reform.

Figure 1. A Timeline of the Introduction and Establishment of Accessible Sidewalks and Protected Bicycle Lanes

Period	Events and Actions
2019	
April	CfC's Mobility team started exploratory efforts to establish a network of bike lanes and pedestrian walkways across Metro Manila.
2020	
Early April	Submitted recommendations on transport policy reforms, including provisions for bike lanes to the NEDA Forward Planning Team.
Mid-April	A widely-endorsed position paper introducing mobility-enabling measures for the anticipated MECQ and GCQ was disseminated.
Early May	AltMobility PH started working with the DOH on the draft Joint Administrative Order that provided guidelines on the use of active transport during the pandemic.
Mid-May	Enhancement and expansion of coalition-building and communication strategy with the formation of the Move As One coalition.
End of May	The national government began to accept the proposal to implement local and metropolis-wide bicycle lane network.
Mid-July	DILG issued a Memorandum Order on "Guidelines for the Establishment of a Network of Cycling Lanes and Walking Paths to Support People's Mobility."
August	Pop-up bicycle lanes were trialled on EDSA and other major thoroughfares in Metro Manila. The DOTr, DOH, DPWH, and DILG issued a Joint Administrative Order on the "Guidelines on the Proper Use and Promotion of Active Transport During and After the COVID-19 Pandemic."
September	Budgetary provisions for different forms of active transport were secured through R.A. 11494 or Bayanihan 2. DPWH issued Department Order No. 88, containing the team's recommendations on design specifications and standards for bicycle lanes, among other technical input.
December	The team and the Move As One coalition advocated the inclusion of funding for bike lanes and pedestrian walkways in the 2021 General Appropriations Act.
2021	
February	The government started the construction of bike lanes across major thoroughfares of Metro Manila, including EDSA.
July	Almost 500 kilometers of protected bicycle lanes across Metro Manila, Metro Cebu, and Metro Davao have been completed. The DOTr announced the completion of the Metropolitan Bike Lane Network.



Passengers, each wearing a face mask and a face shield, sit one seat apart per COVID-safe commuting guidelines. Photo by Michael Varcas, The Philippine Star



BRT by Stealth?

PUV Service Contracting, EDSA Busway, and Bus Consolidation

While CfC's work in promoting active transport only began in early 2019 and had made only limited inroads into the policymaking arena by the onset of the global COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020, the program's advocacy in other realms of road transport reform dates back to early 2018. More importantly, this pre-pandemic advocacy work appeared to be finally gaining momentum and even some traction in the months leading up to the imposition of the ECQ in mid-March 2020.

From the outset, CfC's Mobility team identified the introduction of a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system as an essential reform for Metro Manila and Metro Cebu, in line with an established consensus among urban transport specialists in the Philippines and elsewhere across the world. The proposed BRT promised a shift from the so-called 'boundary system,' passenger-based profit margins, and among rival bus firms for curbside competition of passengers to a system of rationalized franchises, regularized schedules, salaried drivers, performance-based contracts, and dedicated lanes and fixed stops. The system was determined to have the capacity to dramatically improve and accelerate mass public transit on the roadways of Metro Manila, Metro Cebu, and potentially in other urban areas.

In principle and on paper, DOTr was not only receptive to such BRT schemes but committed to them for implementation on EDSA and Quezon Avenue in Metro Manila, and across Metro Cebu. This is evidenced by the feasibility and design

studies, loans from the World Bank, and other key elements of preparatory policy work already undertaken and accomplished. A BRT system for Metro Manila and Metro Cebu, on the face of it, was both technically sound and politically possible.

But over the course of 2018 and 2019, it became clear to the team that little real progress toward the shift to a BRT system was actually in prospect, whether in Metro Manila or Metro Cebu. The lion's share of DOTr's budget, and a commensurate portion of DOTr Secretary Tugade's time, attention, and energy, were devoted to rail projects, given the costliness, complexity, and combination of interests involved.

Moreover, evidence continued to accumulate in support of the theory that the strong emphasis on rail transport development within the Philippine government, overseas development agencies (e.g. JICA), and multilateral financial institutions (e.g. Asian Development Bank) rendered BRT schemes potential competitors with, rather than complements to, existing and anticipated rail lines in the eyes of key transport policymakers. Plans to create key trunk lines of a BRT system in Metro Manila reportedly ran up against concerns regarding the possible impact on the Metro Rail Transit 3 (MRT3) line on EDSA, and on the proposed MRT8 line on Quezon Avenue. Similarly, plans for the Cebu BRT System, developed under the Aquino administration, were reportedly stalled in the face of the efforts to promote the Cebu Monorail Transit System.

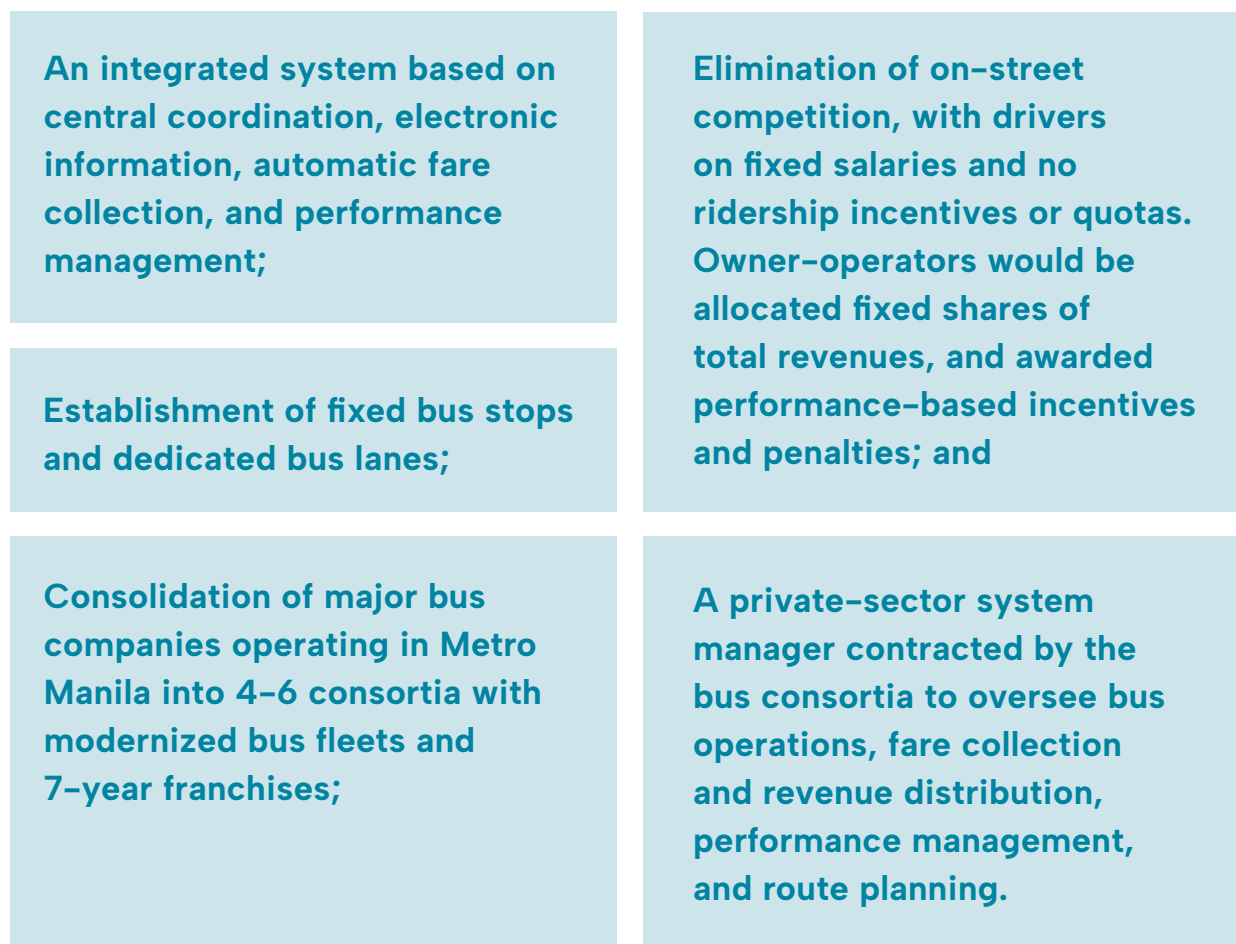
Against the backdrop of continuing delays and difficulties in achieving movement toward the implementation of BRT schemes in Metro

Manila and Metro Cebu, CfC's Mobility team eventually identified a 'Plan B' in the form of a bus consolidation scheme for Metro Manila. In September 2019, the House of Representatives Committee on Transportation Chairman Edgar Sarmiento unveiled a proposal for such a scheme centered on EDSA.

The proposal envisaged a set of centralized, synchronized bus dispatching and automated fare collection systems, operating in a carousel fashion between the Parañaque Integrated Bus Terminal (PITX) and the Valenzuela Integrated Bus Terminal (VITX) along dedicated lanes of EDSA and other thoroughfares, with a fixed number of designated stops aligned with MRT3 stations. Such a scheme appeared to enjoy support among some senior officials in DOTr, if not Secretary Tugade himself, and at the highest levels of the LTFRB. Over the final months of 2019 and early 2020, support for such a scheme seemed to be growing within the DOTr, but without much evidence of progress on its conceptualization or concrete plans for its operationalization.

It was in this context that CfC's Mobility team finally found traction in its reform advocacy work. In mid-February 2020, senior team member Dr. Robie Siy, Jr. was invited to present his ideas on bus consolidation to a select audience of senior officials from the DOTr and the LTFRB, including LTFRB Chairman Martin Delgra III. An eminent urban transport specialist who had worked for many years for the ADB and was regularly consulted by DOTr, Dr. Siy had been plugging bus consolidation in his regular *Manila Times* column as well as in his other private and public communication on urban transport reform.

In a detailed presentation in mid-February 2020, Dr. Siy provided a cogent justification for a Metro Manila-wide bus consolidation scheme and offered a comprehensive account of how it would operate:



Clearly impressed by the clarity and cogency of Dr. Siy's proposed new bus consolidation scheme and plans for implementation, DOTr officials asked him and the team to draft a policy on bus consolidation for possible issuance by President Duterte. In short order, the team produced three different versions of an Executive Order, and on March 10, the team held an extended meeting with key DOTr and LTFRB officials to refine their plans.

It was thus amidst increasingly productive and promising communication and coordination between CfC's Mobility team and key government transport policymakers that the ECQ was imposed in mid-March 2020, leading to an immediate suspension of public transportation in Metro Manila and other regions of the Philippines.

March–November 2020: From BRT and Bus Consolidation to Service Contracting and EDSA Busway

The reform advocacy efforts of CfC’s Mobility team over the course of almost three years — from the promotion of a BRT system in Metro Manila and Metro Cebu to the provision of advice and assistance in the introduction of an EDSA-centred bus consolidation scheme in Metro Manila — left the team with both advantages and disadvantages in terms of the opportunities for advancing its agenda in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

On the one hand, the team enjoyed considerable access, credibility, and goodwill among senior DOTr officials as well as a shared sense of purpose and promise with regard to the broad outline of a bus consolidation scheme for Metro Manila. A major reform that enjoyed support within the DOTr and LTFRB and promised an integrated, modernized, and rationalized system of road-based mass transit — i.e. ‘technically sound, politically possible’ — appeared to be in prospect.

“ Even as the epidemiological, economic, logistical, and social crisis induced sudden speedy movement in favor of active transport, it interrupted the accelerating momentum building up behind bus consolidation, and threatened to divert energies into short-term, emergency palliative measures rather than structural and systemic reform.”

On the other hand, the abrupt onset of the pandemic, the imposition of the ECQ, and the resultant suspension of public transportation in Metro Manila and the Luzon region suddenly shifted priorities. These conditions completely altered the parameters of the politically and logistically possible, from an ambitious overhaul and radical restructuring of bus operations, to the urgent task of enabling the resumption of rail- and road-based public transportation along COVID-safe lines. Among the considerations in the resumption of public transport was ensuring social distancing to minimize transmission of the virus, while also aiding PUV owners and operators whose livelihoods were threatened by the pandemic.

Even as the epidemiological, economic, logistical, and social crisis induced sudden speedy movement in favor of active transport, it interrupted the accelerating momentum building up behind bus consolidation, and threatened to divert energies into short-term, emergency palliative measures rather than structural and systemic reform.

In this context, CfC’s Mobility team quickly identified a rubric and a set of mechanisms for addressing the immediate exigencies and imperatives of the crisis, while advancing the longer-term goal of reorganizing road-based public transport in Metro Manila and other cities: service contracting.

The idea of ‘service contracting’ encapsulated a key element associated with BRT systems and bus consolidation, namely a shift away from the so-called ‘boundary system’. As previously noted, this system incentivized unwaged drivers to compete curbside for passengers to pocket fares above the daily ‘boundary’ (i.e. rent) paid to the owners of their vehicles.

Under service contracting arrangements, by contrast, the government would contract bus companies and jeepneys to service specified routes, with drivers paid wages for kilometers driven, thus promoting more timely movement along routes, faster flow of PUV traffic, and greater overall efficiency in road-based public transport. Under conditions of the pandemic, a 50% reduction in passenger-carrying capacity to ensure social distancing could thus be more effectively enforced. Faster movement along routes would also prevent passenger overcrowding and allow for ventilation, with the government subsidizing and partially shouldering the costs of otherwise unprofitable and unsustainable bus and jeepney operations.

As with the BRT and bus consolidation schemes, service contracting would also entail the enlistment of a private-sector online, platform-based 'system manager' to monitor performance and oversee automatic fare collection. These arrangements introduced and promoted elements of the technological and procedural infrastructure needed for an integrated system of information, fare collection and revenue distribution, performance, and route management.

From early April 2020, CfC's Mobility team and, from early May 2020, the Move As One coalition engaged in diverse forms of advocacy for service contracting along the multi-pronged lines pursued in support of bicycle lanes and pedestrian walkways as described earlier. On the one hand, service contracting was actively, assiduously promoted in public statements, briefing papers, and various presentational materials through traditional media and social media, and online workshops and webinars sponsored by the CfC-supported COVID-19

Action Network (CAN) Philippines and other organizations, and in public testimony before congressional committees.

Echoing the broader chorus of voices of cycling enthusiasts in support of the public campaign for bike lanes over the spring and summer months of 2020, associations and labor activists representing jeepney drivers articulated and amplified the call for service contracting over the same period. The call carried traces of the hardships the jeepney drivers were suffering under heavy restrictions on PUV traffic, further reflecting the urgency and legitimacy of their demand for government action and assistance.

The case for service contracting was articulated in terms of public health, economic necessity, and social justice: ensuring COVID-safe mobility for essential workers, enabling a broader resumption of movement and economic activity among the population at large, and offering much-needed assistance (*ayuda*) to jeepney owners and operators, and bus drivers struggling to feed themselves and their families under conditions of dramatically restricted PUV operations and drastically reduced earnings.

On the other hand, as with the promotion of bicycle lanes and pedestrian walkways, advocacy efforts for service contracting involved behind-the-scenes liaising with senior officials in DOTr and other government agencies, as well as key legislators in both houses of Congress.

Service contracting featured prominently in the list of recommendations submitted by CfC's Mobility team to NEDA Secretary Karl Chua, and in suggestions to key members of Congress, most notably Senator Grace Poe, Chair of the

Senate Public Services Committee. From April 2020, the team began pushing other officials and legislators for the inclusion of service contracting in the economic stimulus package, and the team's advocacy efforts continued up until the passage of the Bayanihan 2 law in late August of the same year.

The input of CfC's Mobility team and activists affiliated with the Move As One coalition included careful computation of budgetary requirements for the service contracting program as well as diligent drafting and redrafting of bureaucratic provisions and procedures for its implementation and operations.

By the latter part of 2020, the essential architecture of the service contracting program was already in place. September 2020 witnessed the signing into law of the Bayanihan 2 law, which allocated nearly PhP 5.6 billion for service contracting. The same month also saw the DOTr's issuance of a Department Order for the implementation of the program, instructing the LTFRB to serve as the implementing agency.

The months of October and November 2020 subsequently witnessed the promulgation of two Memorandum Circulars by the LTFRB which spelled out the guidelines for service contracting and specified the rates of initial subsidy and daily payment to drivers under the program. Much like the various policy instruments issued by the government in preceding months on 'active transport,' these documents bore ample traces of the drafting hands of members of CfC's Mobility team and the broader Move As One coalition, albeit with far less technical detail.

Meanwhile, alongside movement toward the introduction of service contracting of PUVs from March–November 2020, even more accelerated progress unfolded on the introduction of the EDSA Busway, with operations already beginning in July of the same year.

In early May 2020 a proposal for the establishment of a BRT on EDSA was laid out by Julia Nebrija to the IATF in a lengthy and technically sophisticated presentation. The presentation provided detailed descriptions of plans for the overall network, for the design and layout of lanes, stations, and key intersections, and for dispatching, fare collection, scheduling, and traffic enforcement. The proposal drew on the accumulated planning materials developed by BRT experts and advocates over the years, preceding the onset of the pandemic.

At the same time, communications between CfC's Mobility team and officials in the DOTr and LTFRB on bus consolidation over the months of late 2019 and early 2020 provided the basis for further movement on this front, as seen in the continuing inclusion of senior team member Dr. Robie Siy, Jr. in discussions about bus consolidation over April and May 2020.

In mid-May, LTFRB Chairman Martin Delgra III announced plans to restrict bus service on EDSA to a single lane and to reorganize bus operations across Metro Manila along the lines of the bus consolidation scheme. This move reflected the advocacy of CfC's Mobility team in anticipation of the easing of restrictions on public transportation. The LTFRB quickly and quietly issued a Memorandum Circular detailing this reorganization of bus routes, with a total of 30 routes to be serviced by some 4,000 buses, plus an 'EDSA Carousel' route to be serviced by 550 buses.

“ On May 29, Secretary Tugade provided a public confirmation and, crucially, commitment of DOTr’s plans to introduce what he termed a “bus augmentation system” on EDSA, with dedicated lanes for the buses along the median of the thoroughfare.”

The reorganization of these bus routes was to be introduced as part of the anticipated shift from the ECQ to a Modified Enhanced Community Quarantine (MECQ) and then to a GCQ, and it required the adoption of a range of COVID-safe procedures, requirements, and standards of service. The reorganization and rationalization of bus routes also entailed the consolidation of bus companies into a single consortium to service each route, with integrated fleet management, dispatching, global navigation satellite system (GNSS)-based monitoring, automatic fare collection, revenue sharing, and fixed salaries for drivers and conductors. These features of the bus reorganization scheme followed the recommendations of Dr. Siy in the proposal he presented back in February 2020.

Less than two weeks later, a high-ranking DOTr official joined the Move As One coalition members in a COVID-19 Action Network (CAN) Philippines-sponsored webinar, in which the official presented the government’s plans for transportation in the context of the pandemic. The presentation described in broad brush strokes a scheme for rationalization of bus routes across Metro Manila, with EDSA at the heart of the new transit system and with the location and design of dedicated lanes and stations clearly delineated.

When the team learned of continuing hesitation and contestation within DOTr over the plans outlined in the presentation, the Move As One coalition and its constituent member organizations responded by issuing a public statement expressing their support for what was tagged as the “EDSA bus transformation,” presenting the policy shift as if it had already been fully embraced and formally approved by the government. In the statement sent to various media outlets and quoted in subsequent news reports, the Move As One coalition expressed confidence that the new scheme would “rationalize the bus routes in high volume corridors in Metro Manila, especially EDSA.”

On May 29, Secretary Tugade provided a public confirmation and, crucially, commitment of DOTr’s plans to introduce what he termed a “bus augmentation system” on EDSA, with dedicated lanes for the buses along the median of the thoroughfare. The next day, media stories detailed DOTr’s “transformation of EDSA,” including the dedicated bus lanes as well as the bicycle lanes. Within a week’s time, media stories and other reports indicated that movement toward the construction of new bus stops and other fixtures on EDSA by DPWH and the MMDA was underway.

Implementation accelerated over the course of June 2020. By mid-June, virtually all the ‘rationalized’ new bus routes had been opened by the LTFRB, in line with the easing of restrictions on public transportation. By early July, the EDSA Busway commenced operations, albeit in rather restricted form in terms of the number of buses operating and the number of stations opened. This situation, however, improved over subsequent months with the number of buses operating and stations opened doubling by October of the same year.

Meanwhile, jeepney routes were gradually reopened over the same period, with nearly 28,000 jeepneys operating across Metro Manila, alongside more than 4,000 buses plus well over 3,000 UV Express units and P2P buses. Thus, as of November 2020, as implementation of the service contracting program was beginning to unfold, elements of the BRT and bus consolidation schemes — which CfC’s Mobility team had been promoting from 2018 to early 2020 — were already in place, alongside a partially restored status quo in PUV traffic across Metro Manila as a whole.

December 2020–July 2021: Resumption of PUV Traffic, Return to Policy Gridlock?

Following the adoption of PUV service contracting, the rationalization of the Metro Manila bus route, and the implementation of EDSA Busway over March–November 2020, the introduction of these new programs continued to unfold over the remaining weeks of 2020 and the first half of 2021, but with increasing evidence of difficulties and disappointments in actual implementation.

In terms of service contracting, for example, the number of PUV drivers benefiting from the program grew slowly over late 2020 and the first half of 2021, with reports indicating that only 36,000 drivers were enrolled as of April 2021. This figure represented a mere 20% of the roughly 180,000 jeepney drivers registered in the country and perhaps, as little as 10% of the actual total. As of June 30, 2021, even with an extended expiration date for the spending of funds appropriated under the Bayanihan 2 law passed in September 2020, only an estimated PhP 1 billion of the PhP 5.58 billion allocated to the program had actually been disbursed, less than 20% of the total.

Moreover, in terms of PUV service provision, the LTFRB’s implementation of bus route rationalization entailed a dramatic reduction of both bus and jeepney routes across Metro Manila. This move drastically constricted the supply of PUVs while commuter demand began to return to pre-pandemic levels, leading to rising dissatisfaction among both bus and jeepney drivers, and the public at large.

Over the course of late 2020 and early 2021, CfC’s Mobility team and the Move As One coalition worked strenuously to promote the effective implementation of the service contracting program. December 2020 saw intensive advocacy work amidst congressional deliberations over the 2021 GAA, which was passed and signed into law by President Duterte just a few days before the onset of the new year. Budgetary provisions for service contracting were cut nearly in half to PhP 3 billion, a disappointing outcome that diminished expectations of the program even before implementation had gotten off the ground.

As the early months of 2021 unfolded, the team and the broader Move As One coalition began to raise questions, both publicly and privately, about the slow pace of enrollment in the service contracting program, and about reports of difficulties with registration and delays in remuneration. At the same time, the coalition amplified calls by affiliated jeepney associations and labor activists for the LTFRB to open more routes and allow more PUVs to operate across Metro Manila. Such pressures did bear fruit with the LTFRB’s introduction of new incentives for jeepney drivers to enlist in the service contracting program, along with the opening of more jeepney routes.

But the combination of onerous registration requirements, less than generous and often delayed payouts, and the difficulties, dangers, and other disincentives of operating under the restricted conditions of the pandemic discouraged many drivers from enrolling in the service contracting program. Thus, overall, the LTFRB's policies proved woefully ineffective in terms of their immediate impact, whether in terms of providing assistance (*ayuda*) to drivers idled by the pandemic, or in terms of enabling the full resumption of PUV service for commuters immobilized by lockdown restrictions across Metro Manila and elsewhere.

“ [T]he introduction of the EDSA Busway and the implementation of bus route rationalization across Metro Manila... have provided the basis for more optimism with regard to the sustainability of these reforms beyond the pandemic.”

In terms of longer-term impact and implications, the most important legacy of this first experiment with service contracting may lie in the gains made by the private-sector 'system manager'—the online platform Sakay.ph—contracted to manage the program. This 'system manager' engaged in the computerization, consolidation, and 'cleansing' of the LTFRB's PUV franchise and route records, promising greater transparency and efficiency, and pointing the way toward a more fully integrated system of urban road-based mass transit. Another potentially significant legacy may be the unprecedented exposure of policymakers and PUV owner-operators alike to a different model for organizing public road transport, in which the government assumes some of the costs and risks of service provision.

Meanwhile, the introduction of the EDSA Busway and the implementation of bus route rationalization across Metro Manila over the latter half of 2020 and the first six months of 2021 have provided the basis for more optimism with regard to the sustainability of these reforms beyond the pandemic.

The establishment of dedicated lanes and a fixed set of bus stations along EDSA, and the installation of necessary infrastructure have enhanced the visibility and illustrated the viability of a BRT-like system centered on Metro Manila's major transport artery. This created an image and understanding of the 'new normal' that included the EDSA Busway. Private sector investments soon followed, as seen most notably in the commencement of construction work on three new concourses linking the new stations to malls owned by SM Prime Holdings, with the company devoting an estimated PhP 120 million to the project.

At the same time, the consolidation of bus routes across Metro Manila, and the creation of two major bus consortia have arguably institutionalized key elements of a BRT system and incentivized bus company owners to move forward toward a more fully integrated system with dedicated lanes extending beyond EDSA, across other routes in Metro Manila and beyond.

Despite positive takeaways from the program, there have been continuing problems with the EDSA Busway, which have necessitated further reform advocacy work. With the current design of the EDSA Busway restricting passenger flow to an estimated maximum of 150,000 per day, the need for innovation to expand carrying capacity is increasingly urgent, as evidenced by the long queues and lengthy waits for buses at stations along the thoroughfare.

As of late 2021, senior CfC Mobility team member Dr. Robie Siy, Jr. was actively promoting proposals for a systematic upgrading of the EDSA Busway, calling for extended franchises, expanded stations, and improved buses and lanes. All these proposals were aimed to enhance service quality and, crucially, increase passenger capacity in the direction of a daily passenger flow of 2 million on 1,500–1,800 buses envisaged in the original plans and projections for an EDSA BRT.

Thus, overall, alongside the introduction of bicycle lanes across Metro Manila, Metro Cebu, and other cities, CfC's Mobility team and the Move As One coalition made important contributions to a second set of major urban transport reforms under pandemic conditions over 2020–2021.

These reforms — the PUV service contracting program, the EDSA Busway, and the Metro Manila bus consolidation scheme — have remained imperfect, incomplete, and in some ways woefully inadequate for purposes of addressing the immediate exigencies of the continuing epidemiological and economic crisis in the Philippines.

But taken together, these three programs have arguably established and in some measure institutionalized key elements of the kind of integrated road-based mass transit system the coalition and a wide range of urban transport experts had been advocating for years before the onset of the pandemic in early 2020. As with the introduction of bike lanes, reform advocacy on this front had made limited progress and enjoyed little prospect of imminent success as of the eve of the first national lockdown in mid-March 2020.

The pandemic and the economic, logistical, and social problems it generated produced unprecedented — and hitherto unanticipated — opportunities to bring these reforms to fruition. But it also took considerable technical expertise, political aptitude and agility, and logistical effort on the part of CfC's Mobility team and the broader Move As One coalition to avail of these opportunities to help engineer major urban transport policy reforms.

Figure 2. A Timeline of the Introduction of the Service Contracting Program

Period	Events and Actions
April 2020	<p>Service contracting concept promoted across various channels.</p> <p>Campaigned for the inclusion of service contracting in the government's economic stimulus package with key members of Congress.</p>
September 2020	<p>Budget provisions for service contracting were achieved through the approval of R.A. 11494 or Bayanihan 2.</p> <p>DOTr issued a Department Order for service contracting program implementation.</p>
October–November 2020	<p>LTFRB promulgated two Memorandum Circulars that provided guidelines for service contracting.</p>
December 2020	<p>Advocacy efforts to fund the service contracting program under the 2021 national budget.</p>



Kat Moreno, Move As One member and active transport advocate, speaks in a gathering of cycling enthusiasts to assess bike lanes along EDSA. Photo by Leandro Mangubat



Conclusion

Looking back at the key urban transport reforms which unfolded over 2020–2021, it seems clear that the global COVID-19 pandemic, government-imposed restrictions on mobility and public transport, and a deep epidemiological, economic, logistical, and social crisis in the Philippines provided enabling conditions for accelerated urban transport reforms, especially in Metro Manila. The imperatives of providing ‘socially distanced’ and otherwise ‘COVID-safe’ public transport, first to essential workers and then to a broader set of commuters, impelled movement toward experimentation and innovation.

Indeed, thousands of medical practitioners and other workers took to the streets on foot and on bicycles for the first time, both in Metro Manila and in other towns and cities across the Philippines. Local governments, national government agencies, and private companies organized special free shuttle services. In addition, temporary ‘pop-up’ bike lanes appeared on roads and thoroughfares in Metro Manila and elsewhere. In a country with an amply long history and abundant recent experiences of economic crises, natural disasters, and other forms of collective hardship, such public-spiritedness, resilience, resourcefulness, and creativity on the part of Filipinos in the face of the pandemic, was arguably to be expected and is certainly to be admired.

That said, what seems so striking and so surprising in retrospect is the nature and extent of the transformations of urban public transport introduced over the course of 2020–2021 amidst the pandemic and the broader crisis across the Philippines and around the world. These changes to the system of urban public transport seem to exceed, and seem likely to outlast, this conjuncture.

Hundreds of kilometers of protected bicycle lanes were installed across Metro Manila, Metro Cebu, Metro Davao, and other cities across the Philippines. Procedures for the design, installation, and maintenance of bicycle lanes were institutionalized. The Philippine government assumed (provisional) responsibility for the contracting of public utility vehicles and the payment of jeepney and bus drivers on the basis of hi-tech ('smart') monitoring of service provision, rather than the 'boundary' system. Bus routes across Metro Manila were dramatically consolidated, and other elements of an integrated BRT-like system were put in place, most notably and visibly the dedicated lanes, fixed stations, automatic fare collection, and centralized dispatching system of the EDSA Busway.

All of this — *all of it* — was new. Taken together, these new policies added up to something substantial and sustainable, perhaps even structural and systemic, in terms of urban transport reform. These were hardly just emergency measures for crisis management.

How, then, to explain the nature and extent of the urban transport reforms introduced over the course of 2020–2021? As suggested in the pages above, these reforms cannot be fully understood in terms of a self-congratulatory retrospective account on the part of policymakers in the DOTr and other government agencies, or in terms of a celebratory account of activist-led pressure politics. These reforms did not provide immediate or fully effective solutions to the myriad problems at hand. Policymakers produced these reforms neither entirely on their own nor in nervous, knee-jerk response to demands from civil society. The policy processes leading to these reforms were messy and multi-stranded, with plenty of contentiousness, contestation, and crucially, contingency as to the outcomes observed.

It is within this realm of contingent outcomes that the role of the Coalitions for Change program in the introduction of urban transport reforms in the Philippines in 2020–2021 should be understood. As argued and evidenced in the pages above, CfC's Mobility team and the broader Move As One coalition played diverse and decisive roles in driving forward urban transport reform policy processes and in determining their eventual outcomes in terms of policy adoption and implementation. Here, we can identify three different forms of influence and impact on the policymaking process.

First, CfC's Mobility team and the Move As One coalition worked together to aggregate and articulate a clear and coherent agenda for policy reform and concrete, detailed plans for implementation. This enabled cooperation and coordination among a wide range of urban transport experts and other urban transport reform advocates, amplifying their voice and visibility in coalitional form.

“ CfC’s ability to operate effectively along these different lines in the course of 2020–2021 owed much to both the exigencies and imperatives of the pandemic and the broader crisis it induced, on the one hand, and CfC’s urban transport reform advocacy work over the years preceding the onset of the pandemic, on the other.”

Second, CfC's Mobility team members worked closely with policymakers in the DOTr and other government agencies, and with key legislators in both houses of Congress to provide technical 'input' for the reforms. This input was visible in

the computation of budgetary requirements, the designing of new infrastructure, and the drafting of Department Orders, Joint Administrative Orders, Memorandum Circulars, and the provisions of laws.

Third and finally, CfC's Mobility team and the Move As One coalition triangulated between government policymakers, legislators, and the broader public through traditional media and social media to push the policy process forward, with sympathetic insiders quietly encouraging them to "make noise" (*mag-ingay*) and appreciating the effect on senior policymakers highly sensitive to public opinion. In all of these ways, CfC helped determine the actual nature of the reforms introduced and the extent of their implementation and impact.

CfC's ability to operate effectively along these different lines in the course of 2020–2021 owed much to both the exigencies and imperatives of the pandemic and the broader crisis it induced, on the one hand, and CfC's urban transport reform advocacy work over the years preceding the onset of the pandemic, on the other.

By early 2020, CfC's Mobility team had made considerable progress in terms of coalition-building, as seen in its role in the formation of new urban transport reform advocacy groups like Komyut and Move Metro Manila and in increasing vocality and visibility of these groups in the traditional media and social media. In the same period, CfC's Mobility team had likewise made considerable progress in terms of its access, influence, and input in the policymaking arena through its contacts and communication with senior officials at the DOTr, DPWH, LTFRB, and MMDA, and with key legislators in both houses of Congress.

By early 2020, moreover, consensus and coordination had been established among a coalition of urban transport reform advocacy groups, and communication and credibility had been established among urban transportation policymakers. Without its work over 2018–2019, CfC's Mobility team would have been unable to play much of a role in the introduction of urban transport reforms over 2020–2021.

Against this backdrop, it could be argued that the contributions of CfC's Mobility team and the broader Move As One coalition to the processes of urban transport reform over 2020–2021 have in and of themselves constituted a subtle but significant and potentially self-sustaining kind of transformation, beyond the concrete reforms introduced during this conjuncture. That is, through diverse forms of reform advocacy work in 2020–2021, CfC's Mobility team and the Move As One coalition helped to establish urban transport reform advocacy groups as key players in the policymaking process in ways which transcended and transformed the previous mechanisms and modalities for incorporating transport specialists and forms of technical expertise through consultancies, feasibility studies, and the like.

By mid-2021, the momentum behind urban transport reform had clearly decelerated from the frenetic, fast-paced months of mid-2020, but alongside the concrete reforms put in place were also new fixtures in the infrastructure of transport policymaking. It is now an established practice for DOTr policymaking discussions, congressional hearings, and media stories to include independent voices understood to embody both narrowly technical expertise and the broad-based interests of the public at large.

What, then, should CfC's Mobility team and the Move As One coalition do now to promote further urban transport reforms in the Philippines in the post-pandemic and post-Duterte years ahead?

In terms of bicycle lanes, pedestrian walkways, and other forms of active transport infrastructure, the issuance of multiple policy guidelines by various national government agencies combines with the implications of the Supreme Court's Mandanas ruling to suggest that further reform advocacy should shift to the subnational level, with local initiatives focused on local governments, perhaps beyond the remit and rubric of CfC.

But there may well be further need for additional policy reforms at the national level, within the DPWH, for example, and other national government agencies, to ensure and incentivize the expansion of existing bike lanes into broader networks — and even a national network — of protected lanes for cycling. Here, the overarching goal is the incorporation of active transport infrastructure into DPWH budgets, standard operating procedures, and performance metrics.

In terms of the EDSA Busway and bus route consolidation across Metro Manila, there is clearly the opportunity and the imperative to push for the joining up of the embryonic elements of Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) into a more fully integrated and efficient urban road-based public transit system. CfC's Mobility team has already begun to identify and to advocate for ways to enhance the service and expand the passenger-carrying capacity of the EDSA Busway. The extension of key elements of the EDSA Busway to Metro Manila's other new bus routes would also enable movement toward the greater efficiencies and other advantages of a proper BRT system across the NCR and beyond.

Finally, the proven limitations and prospective lapsing of the service contracting program raise additional challenges for CfC's Mobility team and the broader Move As One coalition. The service contracting program, after all, largely failed to provide even the short-term assistance (*ayuda*) it promised to jeepney drivers idled by the pandemic and the restrictions on PUV operations, as seen in the disappointingly low level of enrollment in the program and the delays in disbursement of the very modest payments awarded to those drivers enrolled.

According to the research and analysis of Sakay.ph, moreover, the LTFRB's reorganization of bus routes and its hesitant and halting of resumption of PUV operations in general across Metro Manila in 2020 and early 2021 unfolded in ways which produced an expansion of bus operations at the expense of jeepneys, undoubtedly effecting a dramatic reduction in the number of jeepney drivers in the NCR overall. Beyond the potential efficiency gains and other advantages of a properly implemented bus route rationalization, thorny questions remain as to the social impact of urban transport reforms, questions already raised by the partial implementation of the DOTr's Public Utility Vehicle Modernization Program (PUVMP) since 2017.

Thus, as CfC's Mobility team continues to advance urban transport reforms, it should consider not only their consequences for traffic and the economy as a whole, but also possible strategies to offset or alleviate the highly unequal distribution of economic and social costs accompanying the dramatic changes brought by the global pandemic and the ongoing economic crisis in the Philippines and across the world.

