

**PRESIDENTIAL COMMUNICATIONS OFFICE
PRESIDENTIAL NEWS DESK**

**SPEECH OF PRESIDENT FERDINAND R. MARCOS JR. AT THE DOTR's 125TH FOUNDING
ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION AND CEREMONIAL SIGNING OF THE CIVIL WORKS
CONTRACTS FOR THE DAVAO PUBLIC TRANSPORT MODERNIZATION PROJECT**

[Delivered at the Waterfront Insular Hotel, Davao City] 07 February 2024]

Maraming salamat sa ating Pangalawang Pangulo at Kalihim ng Department of Education, Sara Duterte, for your kind introduction.

[Please take your seats.]

The lead agency in this very forward-looking and progressive project, our Transportation Secretary, Secretary Jimmy Bautista, *[Applause]*

And quietly sitting here on the end is the...but playing an important role is the Secretary of Department of Budget and Management, Secretary Mina Pangandaman. Mayroon kang fans club dito ah.

The members of the Cabinet who are here today. We have come because we have gone to several...we have made several stops. The first of which was the Apo Agua, the big water purification project that we just inaugurated and that is—that is another very important development for Davao--the city, in particular, and Davao in general. And the reason we brought---we asked the Cabinet secretaries to join us is because this exemplifies the approach that we have taken to the challenges that we face and the initiatives that we would like to pursue, and that we are using what we refer to as a whole-of-government approach.

Because even a project that is very specific to the DOTr, nonetheless, requires support from many of the other agencies of government. And it is only this way that we are able to maximize the effect that people will feel when it comes to the ground level.

Of course, very much as a partner of that are our private sector partners because we have now--we now have put in front and center, together with the government, the private sector has been a necessary part of the development of the Philippines in the different sectors that we are hoping to improve.

My fellow workers in government,
All the distinguished guests here today,
Ladies and gentlemen,
Good afternoon!

Today, we launched a project that will not only move people and hardworking people around with ease, but to transport their progressive city to a modern future with certainty.

The words that describe this project – safe, reliable, and efficient – are in fact the same traits all Filipinos aspire to see in the communities that they live in.

This project is more than bringing people and their products to their destinations safe and sound.

It should be rightly viewed as a major vehicle that will bring us to a better tomorrow.

This is more than just the Ceremonial Signing for the Civil Works Contracts for the Davao Public Transport Modernization Project or the DPTMP.

It is a strong reaffirmation of our commitment to develop the Davao Region.

It is a demonstration of our resolve to deliver what people in all regions deserve: a mass transportation system that can move commuters and commerce efficiently.

There is no better, there is no better place than this city to renew the pledge that —there is no better time than today, the 125th anniversary of the founding of the Department of Transportation.

The DOTr has a proud heritage, being gifted with the DNA to stand at the forefront of development, to surge forward to frontiers of innovation.

In 1899, the first DOTr Secretary, Maximo Paterno, rode a train to the inauguration of the First Philippine Republic in Malolos, Bulacan, on the same carriages that ferried our heroes to their places of honor.

Those trains were the official carriers of the revolution. The railways we are building today are inspired by the same vision that they held, that a mass transport system is essential to propelling our nation to progress.

For the past one and a quarter century, the DOTr has built a network which has linked our islands, has eased mobility, democratized travel, fostered prosperity, and connected our people with stronger ties.

In an archipelago of 7,000 plus islands and many diverse cultures, the DOTr supplied the adhesive towards national unity.

The DPTMP is envisioned in the same mold of breaking barriers, enhancing accessibility, and boosting productivity.

The DPTMP will field 400 articulated battery electric buses and more than 500 diesel buses with 29 interconnected routes around the locality.

So once completed, this is certainly, as they call it, a game-changer. This project will become the template for public transport systems in other cities in our country.

As a mass transport system, this people mover will provide faster and more comfortable commutes whilst decongesting streets filled with private vehicles, and improve road traffic.

As an affordable and clean mode of transport, it will neither burn a hole in the pockets of our people, nor a bigger one in our ozone layer.

As a catalyst for lifestyle change, it shows by example that there are feasible alternatives to commuting by private vehicles, that these can be left behind at homes, without having to be late for work, for school or for whatever you need around and about the places that you live.

This is not a project of the DOTr alone. Its success does not entirely hinge on the agency's own—only the agency's own capacity.

In whatever era, great undertakings like these are never solo performances.

To succeed, it requires the support of the local government, the informed consent of the people, and the backing of parties will help us bankroll this dream.

As to the first, I would like to express my deepest appreciation to our local leaders for fully backing this project.

Daghang salamat. *[Applause]*

As a matter of fact, this project was first envisioned in the time when it was under the auspices of Mayor Sara Duterte. *[Applause]*

As to the second, let me assure you that we treat people as joint venture partners, actively soliciting as much of their opinion and their views as possible to accommodate their sentiments into this and every other project.

Our call for equitability and inclusivity covers those who will be temporarily inconvenienced by the project.

On that note, we assure you that we will attend to the needs of those who will be affected during its construction.

As to the third, I would like to express our gratitude to the people of the Asian Development Bank for believing and investing in our vision.

Maraming, maraming salamat po.

And I was point out that this is not only the large-scale program or project that we are undertaking together with the assistance from the ADB and other financing institutions that have come to help the Philippines

So, their support will be repaid with work that does not scrimp on the budget, nor cut corners on workmanship, nor block feedback, nor disregard deadlines.

My instructions concerning projects across the board, all over the country, are very clear: Deliver on time, on spec, and on budget.

There is another instruction to all agencies that I need to have fully complied with, of which the recent flooding in Mindanao has emphatically shown.

The infrastructure we are building must not only wipe out arrears of the past, but must respond to the needs of the present, and anticipate circumstances in the future.

We must build while bearing in mind the worst the future will bring, of the earth getting hotter, getting wetter, and not on outdated assumptions that no longer apply.

We cannot build climate-resistant infrastructure for our children based on the rainfall and temperature records during our parents' time.

The same sensitivity to emerging trends, and best practices should define our pivot to commuter- and commuter -friendly transit systems.

And that is why I am ordering the Secretary of Transportation and the Secretary of Finance to work in tandem to explore financing sources for the 103-kilometer Tagum-Davao-Digos railway. *[Applause]*

Thus far, this ambitious project has been stalled by lack of funding, so let us go and hunt for the right funding engine that will pull this project to the finish line.

I have been briefed that financing railway models can be creatively packaged in a hybrid way with each component of the project undertaken, underwritten by different stakeholders.

Civil works, for instance, can be tendered to private investors, rolling stocks can be shouldered by official development assistance, or vice versa. There are some examples of ways we can explore different modes of financing to accelerate delivery. Of course, right-of-way is a deliverable entrusted to the government.

I have mentioned these to illustrate one cardinal rule in transportation management, of always being in the driver's seat of innovation.

So, when it comes to mobility, not all kinds of modernization require high-tech and deep pockets, such as walkable pedestrian lanes, to give us an example.

In the meantime, let us move at full speed in modernizing our airports, railways, seaports, roads, transportation hubs, and active mobility structures.

This is the mission that the DOTr has ahead of it. This is our ticket to a brighter future. This is an opportunity we should not miss on our way to a Bagong Pilipinas.

Congratulations once again to the DOTr on their anniversary.

Maayong hapon sa inyo—kaninyong tanan and thank you very much, and good afternoon to you all. *[Applause]*

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