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**SPEECH BY PRESIDENT FERDINAND R. MARCOS JR. AT THE GROUNDBREAKING
CEREMONY FOR THE CEBU BUS RAPID TRANSIT PROJECT CIVIL WORKS PACKAGE I**

[Delivered at Fuente Osmeña Circle in Cebu City | 27 February 2023]

Thank you, our Transportation Secretary Jimmy Bautista for your message and introduction. *[Please sit down.]*

He has joined us -- I think he is here to see where his money is going, so the House Speaker Martin Romualdez. Naninigurado siya na 'yung in-appropriate nila ay mapunta sa tamang lugar and so far I think he is happy with the results. *[applause]* Madame Ambassador of the French Embassy to the Philippines Her Excellency Michèle Boccoz; the members of the Cabinet who are here today; Cebu Province Governor Gwen Garcia, who has inspired us with her passion and her energy in the way that she runs Cebu Province and we use it as an example of a way to run the rest of the country *[applause]*; Cebu City Mayor Mike Rama, if you saw us we were talking because this has been something that we have been discussing also for a very, very long time. Well, Mayor Mike, here we are now in the groundbreaking. *[applause]* My fellow workers in government; other distinguished guests who are here with us today; ladies and gentlemen, good morning, maayong adlaw, Cebu. *[applause]*

It is an honor to be with you for this groundbreaking ceremony of the Civil Works Package I of the Cebu Bus Rapid Transit or CBRT Project.

First of all, we must commend the Department of Transportation for initiating the first bus rapid transit (BRT) project in the Philippines. *[applause]* As usual, nauna na naman ang Cebu – Cebu once again leads the way.

We would not be here without their dedication, their hard work, and persistence in this endeavor. As the Secretary mentioned in his message, it involved a great deal of very meticulous planning to get it absolutely correct. And I think that they have done a good job and that is why we are here today.

So my kudos to you for breaking ground on this project after more than a decade since it was first envisioned. Today, we are finally here to implement this plan and recalibrate the transport system of Metro Cebu.

Thank you for helping provide the Filipino with more efficient, reliable, comfortable, and safer travel alternatives.

There is no doubt that the fruits of your hard work will result in building modern and sustainable transit mechanisms that advance our citizenry's quality of life.

Secondly, I convey my gratitude to our partners from the World Bank and the French Development Agency for being the active partners that they have to be able to realize this project, the modern public transport system in Cebu and the first one in the Philippines.

I thank also our partners *[applause]* our partners from the Hunan Road and Bridge Construction Group Co., Ltd., *[applause]* for working with our government for this CBRT Project. I know that I have seen the work that they do at maaasahan natin when the Secretary assures us that we will start at least – start operations by December at I think that they will be able to do it on time as their record speaks for itself. *[applause]*

So we thank you all for your assistances that will surely translate to a better quality of life for Cebuanos.

I want to remind the DOTr to ensure the just compensation of the property owners who will be affected by the CBRT Project. I also urge you to find ways to properly relocate the affected informal settler families. *[applause]* Sec. Jimmy, kailangan tama ang gawin natin kung 'di kakatukan tayo ni Gov. Gwen at saka ni Mayor Mike. *[laughter]*

On this note, I also take the opportunity to *[call]* on the DOTr and other stakeholders to finish this project within the target completion timeline. *[applause]* I think that if we in fact start operations in December, that will be the best possible Christmas gift that we can give to Cebu. *[applause]*

At this juncture, let me assure all the Filipinos that this BRT system has been planned thoroughly and studied by both the national and the local governments of Cebu. This has spanned years and many administrations and it is modeled after other BRT systems such as the ones that we see in Seoul in South Korea and Guangzhou in China, amongst others.

And this is Package I that we are breaking ground on today. Package I that will construct a 2.38-kilometer segregated bus lane with four bus stations. It will also include a 1.15-kilometer pedestrian improvement, which will link the CBRT System to the Port of Cebu.

The entire CBRT system — there are three phases – the entire CBRT system which comprises three packages—is designed to accommodate 83 12-meter buses by its opening year. In the future, this will be increased and expanded to accommodate more and longer buses.

Apart from the greater convenience that it will bring to our people, I am sure it will also provide greater opportunities and improve the conditions of our current public transport drivers.

I trust it will also support economic development through travel time savings, environmental improvements, and reduction of accidents among residents and visitors of the city.

As part of this endeavor, we will also pursue the Urban Realm Enhancement projects for the beautification of the city along the BRT corridor. *[applause]*

This will include the building of structures that promote non-motorized modes of travel, like walking, like bicycle lanes.

And as we begin this project, I know that there will be slight inconveniences and traffic congestion -- as if Cebu does not have enough – but we will have to accommodate the construction process for the greater benefits that will come in the future.

I invite everyone to remain patient, to be considerate, as these temporary disturbances and interruptions are aimed at pushing long-term benefits for the city and for the province.

Rest assured that the national government remains committed to improving economic activities in the many parts of our country through the introduction of innovative solutions to public transport and the improvement of mobility infrastructure, amongst others.

My administration resolutely supports you in exploring ways to improve our public transport systems and in forging partnerships that will help the Philippines keep up with the innovative interventions of other progressive countries.

Together, let us accelerate our drive for a better and brighter Philippines by pushing for more holistic approaches that will enable us to build a much better and more comfortable future for all Filipinos.

Daghang salamat. Mabuhay po kayong lahat. Maraming salamat at magandang umaga po. *[applause]*

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