

PRESIDENTIAL COMMUNICATIONS OFFICE
News and Information Bureau

MALACAÑANG PRESS BRIEFING
HOSTED BY MS. DAPHNE OSEÑA-PAEZ
WITH DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION SECRETARY JAIME BAUTISTA,
LIGHT RAIL MANILA CORPORATION CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER ENRICO BENIPAYO
AND PHILIPPINE COAST GUARD COMMANDANT ADMIRAL RONNIE GIL GAVAN
NOVEMBER 7, 2024 [1:42 P.M. – 2:05 P.M.]

MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ: Good afternoon, Malacañang Press Corps. Welcome to our press briefing today, November 7th.

The Cavite Extension of the Light Rail Transit Line 1 is set to serve the public this month. This project is under a public-private partnership scheme that is expected to reduce travel between Quezon City and Parañaque City to less than an hour.

We'll also be discussing the acquisition of 40 units of fast patrol crafts by the Department of Transportation and the Philippine Coast Guard that was approved by the National Economic and Development Authority or NEDA Board chaired by President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. The initiative is valued at 25.8 billion pesos funded through Official Development Assistance from the French government.

Of the 40 fast patrol crafts, 20 will be assembled in the Philippines. This is in alignment with the Bagong Pilipinas objective of enhancing maritime security by upgrading the capabilities of the Philippine Coast Guard.

And here to discuss these two very important developments in the transportation sector are DOTr Secretary Jaime Bautista, Chief Executive Officer of the Light Rail Manila Corporation Enrico Benipayo and Philippine Coast Guard Commandant Admiral Ronnie Gil Gavan.

Good afternoon, gentlemen. Let's start with Secretary Bautista.

DOTR SEC. BAUTISTA: Good afternoon everyone. We are here to announce the partial opening of the Light Rail Transit Line 1 Extension. This is the Cavite Extension and we will open this line within the next maybe two to three weeks. This is within November 'no. this will be the first railway project to be completed within the administration of President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr.

Our private partner is the Light Rail Manila Corporation and I congratulate them for assisting us, helping us that we will be able to open these lines 'no. It will be with the five stations 'no, from Baclaran to Sucat. We hope that this opening of the extension of Line 1 will help alleviate traffic as it will be able to support thousands of passengers 'no, additional passengers taking LRT Line 1 and this will be our early Christmas gift to the residents of the area.

Maybe we'll ask the president of LRMC to give us more details.

LRMC CEO BENIPAYO: Yeah. Thank you, Mr. Secretary. Yes, as mentioned by the good secretary, we're also very much excited to open the line again within this month. Surely within the month of November, we'll be able to serve an extended area of the metropolis – Five additional stations, six kilometers – and this will allow people to traverse the alignment within a span of less than an hour.

So, again, a little plug: So probably preference for the rail because we would be able to convey people faster and in the same alignment. The total alignment there for LRT 1 will be extended from 20 kilometers to 26, around 26 kilometers so that's for phase 1 of the Cavite extension.

MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ: Thank you, sirs. Now, let's hear from Commandant Admiral Ronnie Gavan regarding the 40 fast crafts to be acquired.

PCG COMMANDANT ADMIRAL GAVAN: Thank you very much, ma'am. Yes, the Philippine Coast Guard will be receiving 40 fast patrol crafts from France. It is the largest, so far, single purchase in the modernization of the Philippine Coast Guard. It is a game changer for us, it will enable the Coast Guard to have at least two patrol boats in every district fast enough to reach the edges of our economic zone, exclusive economic zone to enforce the laws.

This is a game changer for us because this will enable the Coast Guard to hold the position as the youngest fleet in Southeast Asia. In five years' time we foresee that we will become the most respected and the most able coast guard. So, we are really very grateful for this administration for enabling the Coast Guard to become a worthy part of the administration's quest or everybody's quest to achieve the kind of Bagong Pilipinas everybody deserves.

MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ: Thank you and I'm sure you all have a lot of questions but let's organize the question and answer. Let's start first with the topic of the LRT and then we'll go on to the Coast Guard. Okay, let's start with Harley Valbuena, DZME.

HARLEY VALBUENA/DZME: Thank you, Ms. Daphne. Good afternoon, sirs. Lyon pong sa LRT 1 Cavite Extension. Are we open on offering free ride for the public for a certain period of time once the five stations opens, or are we collecting fares right away?

LRMC CEO BENIPAYO: For the moment, we don't have any discussion yet to provide free rides at this point in time. So, we're focusing on making sure that the travel would be safe for the moment, so we're concentrating more operational and safety matters. But probably we'll discuss that question with the good secretary.

MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ: Okay. Question from Christian Yosores, Teleradyo 630.

CHRISTIAN YOSORES/TELERADYO 630 DWPM: Good morning, sir. Can you confirm lang, sir, kung kailan iyong specific date ng start kasi may report na kanina na November 16?

DOTR SEC. BAUTISTA: Actually, wala pang specific date ano. Iyong November 16 kanina, it was asked if it's November 16 and I told them it's possible 'no. But it will be within the month of November.

CHRISTIAN YOSORES/TELERADYO 630 DWPM: For LRMC, sir. Earlier this year parang may study or plans na magkaroon ng panibagong fare hike sa pamasaha ng LRT. If ever, sir, maapektuhan na po ba nito iyong magiging pamasaha ng extension project?

LRMC CEO BENIPAYO: Iyong pamasaha po natin ngayon will be status quo in as far as the boarding fares and the fares per kilometer. So iyong current trip natin ngayon from Fernando Poe Jr. to Baclaran, that's a total of I think 35 pesos total. Now, because of this additional six kilometers and additional five stations, then there's a corresponding increment in terms of distance. So we're

looking at around, I think, it's going to be 45 pesos, so additional—yeah, the full stretch of 26 kilometers.

MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ: Okay. Mariz Umali, GMA 7.

MARIZ UMALI/GMA 7: Hi! Good afternoon, sirs. I'd just like to ask you, sirs, to please elaborate on the anticipated economic and social benefits for the residents of Metro Manila and the commuters, and especially for our economy, once this extension is operational considering that there is a study by JICA that we lose a lot, billions or millions of pesos, in the traffic in Metro Manila?

DOTR SEC. BAUTISTA: As you mentioned, traffic is costing us a lot of money 'no. The JICA Study shows that we spent, or the cost, the economic cost of traffic in Metro Manila is around 3.5 million pesos a day. Of course, with the operations of LRT 1 extension, there will be part of Parañaque and Pasay that will benefit and there'll be some reduction in traffic.

We cannot give you an estimate yet of how much more or less is the economic benefit, but one thing for sure is that the travel time will be reduced 'no. Easily, this can be reduced by 30 minutes 'no, 30 minutes from Baclaran to Santos Avenue.

Q: [Off mic]

DOTR SEC. BAUTISTA: Dr. Santos Avenue.

LRMC CEO BENIPAYO: Dr. Santos Station, yes.

MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ: Okay, any more questions about the LRT? Okay, Alvin Baltazar, Radyo Pilipinas.

ALVIN BALTAZAR/RADYO PILIPINAS: Secretary, clarification lang doon sa fare, doon sa train fare natin. Tama ba na iyong full stretch from FPJ Station hanggang Sucat ay magiging 45 pesos, full stretch iyon?

LRMC CEO BENIPAYO: Yes, kapag bumili po kayo ng single journey, so that's the first product, its 45 pesos. Pero we're pushing the stored value. If you use stored value, it's cheaper by two pesos for end to end.

ALVIN BALTAZAR/RADYO PILIPINAS: Since magdaragdag tayo ng five new stations, simultaneous ba or automatic ba na magdaragdag tayo ng mga bibiyaheng trains?

LRMC CEO BENIPAYO: Sa ngayon po iyong intervals between trains, if you'll notice, during peak, it's around four minutes; and that interval will be maintained.

ALVIN BALTAZAR/RADYO PILIPINAS: Will the President attend the inauguration?

DOTR SEC. BAUTISTA: We don't know yet.

MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ: Okay. Pia Gutierrez, ABS-CBN.

PIA GUTIERREZ/ABS-CBN: Itatanong lang, sir, how many additional passengers are we expecting to serve with the extension?

LRMC CEO BENIPAYO: Actually now, the average daily passengers that we carry is around 320,000. So we expect when we open, we'll be able to bump up the ridership to around ... by an additional 80,000. But we are anticipating, probably after five years we'll be doubling the number of passengers along that line; so that's probably in 2028 or 2029, madodoble po iyong 320 to around 650.

PIA GUTIERREZ/ABS-CBN: That's per day, sir?

LRMC CEO BENIPAYO: Yes, average daily ridership, yes.

MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ: Okay, thank you. Eden Santos, NET 25.

EDEN SANTOS/NET 25: Sir, aasahan din po ba natin na magkakaroon ng mga mahabang pila sa mga stations na ito kapag po nag-start na iyong operation ng five new stations?

LRMC CEO BENIPAYO: Oo, so iyong pila 'no, isa iyan sa mga senyales kung kulang iyong tren na pinapasok natin 'no. For the moment, as mentioned a while ago where our intervals are four minutes, so every four minutes ay may darating na bagong tren. Pero kapag humahaba po iyong pila, we have a capability to decrease the intervals to two and a half minutes. So that way, we will be able to manage the queuing.

EDEN SANTOS/NET 25: Mga ilang bagon po ba mayroon tayo?

LRMC CEO BENIPAYO: Marami pong salamat sa tanong. Actually, we'd like to thank our partners because they've delivered a total of 30 additional 4-car trains. And of the 30, we're able to use 19 for the moment. The remaining are still under testing and commissioning.

So kapag na-hand over na po sa amin, lahat po ng mga ipinagkaloob po ng gobyerno na mga tren, then all the more the service will be improved.

MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ: Okay. Racquel Bayan, Radyo Pilipinas.

RACQUEL BAYAN/RADYO PILIPINAS: Sir, quick follow-up lang doon sa question kanina. You mentioned 80,000 passengers per day po. How about doon sa traffic congestion natin sa baba, mayroon po ba tayong projected or expected na mga sasakyan na mababawas once na maging operational.

LRMC CEO BENIPAYO: Ito very rough, very rough calculation. So we engaged a consultant just to provide us some estimates 'no. So iyong 80,000 passengers a day could actually translate to around 6,000 vehicles a day that can be off at grid and it's composed of, we assumed, 70% of that would be private and the 30% would be public.

RACQUEL BAYAN/RADYO PILIPINAS: Last na lang, sir. Are we expecting na makakapagbukas po tayo ng job dahil sa pagbubukas or sa operational nito?

LRMC CEO BENIPAYO: Yes, definitely. Again, just related to the question on economic, so it would provide some benefits especially in the area where we serve. So because of the increased economic activity, even if it's not directly related to LRT 1, definitely, I think it would produce more opportunities for the people in the vicinity, yes.

MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ: Okay, thank you. Let's give some time for questions regarding the Philippine Coast Guard. Okay, Harley Valbuena again, DZME.

HARLEY VALBUENA/DZME: Hi, Admiral Gavan. May we know how many patrol boats are we going to deploy in the West Philippine Sea area sa 40 noong patrol crafts that we will acquire?

PCG COMMANDANT ADMIRAL GAVAN: Definitely some will be deployed there. But to how many, determine muna natin at the right time.

HARLEY VALBUENA/DZME: Follow up lang, sir, can you enlighten us more with the specifications, the features or the capabilities of the fast patrol crafts, like can this withstand any harassments or aggressions in the sea like water cannon, or ramming, tailing and other aggressions?

PCG COMMANDANT ADM GAVAN: This will form part of the mix of capabilities we have. As to their specific capabilities, I think we should leave it with us for the moment. But rest assured that this will form part of the force mix that we need to address the threats in the area.

MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ: Okay. Mariz Umali, GMA 7.

MARIZ UMALI/GMA 7: Sir Gavan, just a follow up. Just for the record, can you tell us what are the specific threats or challenges these fast patrol crafts are intended to address in the Philippine waters?

PCG COMMANDANT ADMIRAL GAVAN: Yes, marami po ranging from smuggling to drug trafficking, piracy, illegal fishing – all forms of maritime crimes because enforcement of laws requires us to be there so we need the boats. This will also be engaged in search and rescue and environmental protection and surveillance operations.

MARIZ UMALI/GMA 7: But of course, it will also be used for the West Philippine Sea tensions?

PCG COMMANDANT ADMIRAL GAVAN: Yes, it will form part of the mix of capabilities that we'll be employing there.

MARIZ UMALI/GMA 7: Thank you.

MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ: Okay. Any more questions?

MARIZ UMALI/GMA 7: Makikipagsabayan tayo doon sa mga paghahabol ng China? Kasi we've seen from the previous tensions na talagang hinahabol iyong mga mababagal na boats ng mga mangingisda ng mga fast crafts ng mga Chinese. Now that we have these fast crafts..?

PCG COMMANDANT ADMIRAL GAVAN: Giving protection to our fishermen is a fundamental duty of the Coast Guard, so that can be part of the task of the Coast Guards with these boats. But not only that, not only securing our fishermen; ginagawa naman natin iyan kahit na wala pa itong 35-meter patrol boats.

MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ: Okay. Jean Mangaluz, Philippine Star.

JEAN MANGALUZ/PHILIPPINE STAR: Hi, Admiral. We want to be one of the most respected Coast Guards in Asia, are you planning to acquire larger boats in the future?

PCG COMMANDANT ADMIRAL GAVAN: Yes. Actually, the President has already approved the acquisition of five 97-meter boats or ships from Japan. Once delivered, we will have around eight large ships.

MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ: Okay. Alvin Baltazar, Radyo Pilipinas.

ALVIN BALTAZAR/RADYO PILIPINAS: Admiral, I believe tuluy-tuloy pa rin iyong relief operations natin doon sa mga nabiktima ng kalamidad.

PCG COMMANDANT ADMIRAL GAVAN: Yes.

ALVIN BALTAZAR/RADYO PILIPINAS: Ginagamit ba itong mga fast patrol crafts natin and ilan iyong mga naka-deploy as of this moment?

PCG COMMANDANT ADMIRAL GAVAN: Yes. I have to clarify, itong 40 parating pa lang ito and the first delivery will happen in 2026. But the existing fleet is involved – seven of our ships are engaged in relief operations. As we speak, one is loading additional family food packs in Manila and one is unloading family food packs in Legazpi – the big ones. Iyong 8301, iyong Gabriela Silang is in Manila right now loading cargos; iyong 9701 naman, si Teresa Magbanua is in Legazpi City unloading cargos; and the smaller ones are awaiting for cargos to be loaded.

ALVIN BALTAZAR/RADYO PILIPINAS: Any directive from the President kung hanggang kailan natin gagamitin iyong assets natin for relief operations?

PCG COMMANDANT ADMIRAL GAVAN: Walang specific guidance hanggang kailan but the Coast Guard is always ready to provide transport as long as necessary.

MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ: Admiral Gavan, would you like to maybe share the relevance of assembling half of the fleet in the Philippines? Is this something that was discussed at the NEDA Board meeting?

PCG COMMANDANT ADMIRAL GAVAN: Yes. No maritime country can be strong if it doesn't have a strong shipbuilding industry. So, the acquisition of these vessels along with the one which will be built in Cebu, iyong 60 meters, locally funded patrol vessel. It will be generating not only jobs but it will be providing opportunities for our talents to exercise their best. This will enable the country to be competitive with the rest of the maritime world and it can better sustain us in projecting our national security interest at sea.

The issue in the past is the local defense industry can't hardly compete with others – for one, wala namang demand and I think, they lack incentives. Sa ngayon, mayroon na tayong Philippine Defense Industry Development Act providing incentives to local shipbuilders. So, with this demand to be provided by the Coast Guard through its acquisition, some shipbuilders can really kickstart their operations. So, malaking bagay ito; aside from job generation, iyong talent development will be a bigger thing as well.

MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ: Okay. Pia Gutierrez, ABS-CBN.

PIA GUTIERREZ/ABS-CBN: Admiral, could you give us details doon sa pag-assemble noong kalahating 40 – will this be assembled by a Filipino company at kailan po mag-i-start?

PCG COMMANDANT ADM GAVAN: Yes. Will be done by a Filipino company in partnership with the French builder – so, there will be transfer of technology but definitely Filipino workers will be involved.

PIA GUTIERREZ/ABS-CBN: Kailan po ang start nito at kailan ang projected na completion po?

PCG COMMANDANT ADM GAVAN: The local shipbuilding component will start in 48 months, so roughly around in the fourth year.

The first delivery will happen after 24 months – iyong from France.

MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ: Okay. Jean Mangaluz.

JEAN MANGALUZ/PHILIPPINE STAR: I would like to follow up on my question earlier. The approval for the five ships was last year, were we able to receive them already?

PCG COMMANDANT ADMIRAL GAVAN: We will start to receive it in 2027. Their completion date is 2028.

JEAN MANGALUZ/PHILIPPINE STAR: So, there's [unclear]?

PCG COMMANDANT ADMIRAL GAVAN: Yeah, we're yet to receive. Ginagawa pa sa Japan.

MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ: Okay. I think, we are good. Done with the questions? Well, thank you so much for the good news, Secretary Bautista, Mr. Benipayo, and Admiral Gavan. Maraming salamat, Malacañang Press Corps. This concludes our press briefing.

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