

Viability of the Proposed SM MOA to SM North EDSA Skyway in Solving Metro Manila's Traffic Problem in the Philippines

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Abstract

Long been a metaphor of extreme urban congestion and incompetence, Metro Manila's EDSA corridor now stands for this. The SM MOA to SM North Skyway project, an elevated highway over MRT Line 3, is meant to completely change transportation in the city by significantly cutting travel time and boosting economic development. Using urban mobility, socioeconomic returns, sustainability, and planning obstacles, this study looks at the viability of the suggested infrastructure. Using a policy analysis approach and stakeholder evaluation, this study assesses whether the project has the potential to be a long-term answer for the Metro Manila traffic problem. Although there are valid issues about induced demand and visual pollution, this Skyway project, if properly incorporated into a wider multimodal strategy, offers a hopeful step toward solving a decades-old transportation problem.

Keywords: Metro Manila, elevated highway, public-private partnership, infrastructure, transportation planning, sustainability, urban traffic

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I. Introduction

For more than twenty years, EDSA has served as the poster road for Metro Manila's traffic congestion. Over 400,000 cars go through it every day and millions of commuters depend on its path; thus, decongesting the route has involved road widenings, MRT-3 railway, and car coding programs. Still, the issue lingers (JICA, 2018). Under a Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model led by SM Prime Holdings and the Department of Transportation, the ₱120-billion project is scheduled to be finished by 2029 with a 20-kilometer elevated "Mini-Skyway" linking SM Mall of Asia (MOA) in Pasay to SM North EDSA in Quezon City.

Considering its financial, environmental, and urban planning consequences, this study attempts to critically assess the practicality of this infrastructure project.

Statement of the Problem

The main issue raised in this study is: Will the suggested 2029 SM MOA to SM North Skyway be a practical response to EDSA's long-standing traffic problem?

Among the sub-questions are:

2. From an urban planning and environmental point of view, how sustainable is the projected infrastructure?
3. What possible risks or obstacles could impede the progress of the Skyway project?
4. Is the Skyway a temporary respite or a long-term fix?

Areas of Consideration

1. Financial Effect

Because of lost productivity, fuel waste, and postponed logistics (JICA, 2018), traffic congestion in Metro Manila is said to cause daily losses of ₱3.5 billion. If the travel time between MOA and North EDSA is cut from 2.5 hours to only 20 minutes, as suggested, the combined productivity savings alone might change regional economic dynamics. Especially probable to benefit are industries depending on logistics, retail, and services.

Furthermore, the route is expected to see increased economic activity, which will spur commercial growth and property building (ADB, 2020).

2. Relief in the transportation system

Pressure on MRT-3 could be greatly reduced by routing private vehicles and point-to-point (P2P) buses onto the Skyway. Furthermore, the opening of committed express bus lanes provides reasonably priced transportation choices for commuters, maybe raising the standard of living of working-class Filipinos and fostering inclusive mobility (Llanto, 2019).

This fits worldwide norms where railroads and elevated highways have coexisted to maximize transportation flow. (Litman, 2021)

3. Promotion of Employment and Economic Growth

Over 35,000 jobs are predicted to be generated by the project during its building, ranging from administrative and service-based positions to engineering and construction. This could help to lower unemployment in the urban poor areas of Metro Manila.

Thousands more would be employed in post-construction toll operations, security, and maintenance, therefore supporting long-term economic activity (DOLE, 2022).

4. Sustainable Planning and Urban Design

Contrary to conventional wisdom, elevated expressways provide environmentally friendly substitutes when combined with green design elements such as EV lanes, solar panels, and green walls.

Reducing vehicle idling and stop-and-go traffic could cut carbon emissions by up to 25% in some regions (Litman, 2021).

Still, opponents claim that car-centric initiatives go against sustainable urban mobility paradigms, which gives rail, non-motorized transportation, and mixed-use development priority. (Santos and Cervero, 2020)

Alternative Courses of Action

Alternative 1: Improve and Extend the MRT Network

Funds may be used to expand rail capacity instead of being largely spent on car-based infrastructure. MRT-3 has long struggled with inefficiency, congestion, and upkeep problems. Modernizing the system by increasing capacity, purchasing fresh train sets, and coordinating with LRT and provincial lines may offer a more long-lasting, sustainable response to mass transit needs.

Still, this would not help alleviate private car congestion, which still makes up more than 70% of road users (NEDA, 2020).

Alternate 2: Introduce congestion pricing and car reduction efforts.

Singapore and London have effectively installed congestion pricing to discourage non-essential vehicle usage during busy times. Along with higher car ownership taxes and parking fees, this might be applied in Metro Manila. Although this would not call for significant infrastructure expenditure, such initiatives call for political will, strict enforcement, and practical mass transit options for relocated car users. (World Bank, 2021)

Alternative 3 calls for the building of integrated transport hubs.

Major multimodal hubs at MOA and North EDSA could guarantee easy transfers between train, bus, and ride-share networks. This approach would highlight a move toward public transportation rather than a designated automotive highway.

Long-term, this choice calls for thorough coordination across LGUs, government organizations, and private operators—which has traditionally proven difficult in the Philippine context. (Manila Development Institute, 2021)

Recommendation:

The planned SM MOA to North EDSA Skyway should go ahead but with several serious qualifications. First, the Skyway must be totally linked into Metro Manila's multimodal transportation system—not as a stand-alone solution but rather as one component of a phased strategy that includes MRT improvements, last-mile connectivity, and incentives for sustainable public transportation. (ADB, 2020)

Second, public engagement, clearly defined project timetables, and open procurement will help the PPP structure to guarantee accountability. Government oversight would be critical in avoiding cost overruns and right-of-way conflicts. (Litman, 2021)

Third, to guarantee its long-run environmental sustainability, the Skyway must include smart mobility elements like traffic sensors, electric vehicle charging stations, and solar power installations in addition to green infrastructure.

At last, a public feedback loop must be formally established to assess consumer happiness, track induced demand, and guarantee ongoing improvement.

II. Conclusion

Though it cannot fix all of Metro Manila's urban transportation problems on its own, the suggested SM MOA for North EDSA Mini-Skyway can serve as a crucial undertaking within a larger change strategy. Ensuring that it acts as a catalyst rather than a crutch for a modern, integrated, and sustainable mobility network is essential.

Properly built and supported by institutional changes and multimodal improvements, the Skyway could signal the end of EDSA's 25-year traffic curse and usher in a new age of dynamic urban connectivity. (Llanto, 2019)

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