

## **Third Party Evaluator's Opinion on LRT Line 1 Capacity Expansion Project**

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### **Relevance**

The Light Rail Transit Line 1 Rehabilitation and Expansion Project is highly relevant to the needs of the ordinary Filipinos in Metro Manila. The project addresses a most valid and pressing concern of mass transport and is in line with the goals and priorities of the Philippines under its Medium Term Development Plan. The Project aimed to expand the transport capacity of LRT Line 1 and improve the provision of efficient, affordable and comfortable mass transport system in Metro Manila. The project has a key role in connecting key cities, decongesting a main road artery and improving the urban environment.

### **Effectiveness**

Unfortunately, the statistics of the LRT Authority shows that there was a decline in the number of passengers availing Line 1 from 145 million passengers in 1994 to only 107 million passengers in 2003.<sup>1</sup> The JBIC evaluation pointed out that this is due to the country's economic slowdown and the construction of Metro Rail Transit (MRT) which competes with LRT Line 1. The economic slump could be one of the reasons; however, the MRT cannot sufficiently explain the decrease in the number of passengers because the MRT is servicing a different route altogether. Also, LRT Line 1 operations have been hounded by efficiency problems including a labor dispute. Other likely reasons for the project's inability to fully achieve its objectives are the absence of policies necessary to ensure a comprehensive and integrated support for the many aspects of the project (economic, management, political, governance and cultural) and the lack of participation of key stakeholders. An example of policy that should have complemented the project is the regulation of the number of public and private vehicles in Metro Manila, particularly the public vehicles traversing the LRT Line 1 route. This could have strongly encouraged the riding public to take the LRT and consequently decongest the route from Baclaran to Monumento. This would have lessened the vehicles and the road would have been decongested thus improving environmental conditions in the area.

### **Efficiency**

The project was treated largely from an infrastructure sector perspective only, ignoring the more social dimension of the project. Thus other stakeholders such as the local government units (LGU), the Metro Manila Development Authority (MMDA) and the civil society organizations had no clear participation in the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the project. There is much room for improvement to make the project more customer-friendly. There are still many complaints from its clients about the lack or absence of air-conditioning, unreliable train schedule, unexpected stoppages and impolite personnel<sup>2</sup>. A "convergence approach" or multi-sectoral / inter-agency participation in infrastructure projects would have helped in the synchronization and complementation of the project. The participation of stakeholders could have helped promote transparency and accountability in project implementation. Experience has shown that provision for defined participation of stakeholders in some point of project cycle management often results in

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<sup>1</sup> Light Rail Transit Authority website: [www.lrta.gov.ph](http://www.lrta.gov.ph).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. The air-conditioning facilities will be installed in the phase 2 project.

improved efficiency and systems effectiveness.

**Sustainability**

Furthermore, the riding public, being the immediate users of the project, is crucial in promoting sustainability of the project in terms of not only financial and technical aspects but more so in the users' willingness to help in the maintenance, preservation and improvement of the facilities. The users would have a strong sense of ownership of the facilities so that they use them properly and patronize them with loyalty. Over-all, one can say that the project is highly relevant and responds to a most urgent need of Metro Manila. However, there are still more to be done to ensure that the project delivers the best service to the public.