



**Forum on Improving Pedestrian Facilities and Bikeways:  
Leading to a more sustainable transport system in Metro Manila**

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Auditorium A

**OPENING SPEECH**

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Distinguished Participants, Ladies and Gentlemen.

When I was invited by CAI-Asia to give the Opening Address for this event, I had no difficulty saying “Yes” because the topic of today’s forum – improving pedestrian facilities and bikeways – is one that is very close to my heart. In the years when I was a

student in Milan, I was an active member of the National Cycling Association and organized many events, including cycling Sundays and demonstrations to protest against vehicles that used bikeways or pedestrian pavements as parking space.

I have been a resident of Metro Manila for exactly 10 years as I started working in ADB on 6 September 1995. It is sad that to this day, I have not cycled anywhere in this city. Not even once. There are many reasons for this. There are no bikeways. The air is polluted. Most buildings have no provision for bicycle parking. Unfortunately, this includes ADB. But, I remain a cyclist at heart and today, I am pleased to be in the presence of fellow cyclists and advocates for sustainable transport to discuss ways to promote non-motorized modes of transport including walking and cycling.

To formally open this forum, I would like to share with you a few thoughts on the topic that we will discuss today. As part of my work in the ADB, I have been fortunate to visit many cities in Asia. Cities are important for the development of Asia. ADB estimates that 80 percent of the region's new economic growth will be generated by urban economies. However, while there is strong evidence that urbanization in Asia has strengthened economic productivity, we should also be mindful of the negative impacts of urbanization. In most mega-cities, traffic congestion and air pollution are common problems. The increasing demand for mobility and the strong growth of motor vehicle use have been the main drivers of these problems.

Motorization in Asia is proceeding very rapidly. Vehicle fleets in many cities double every 5 to 7 years and the numbers are expected to grow. Because of the increase in motorized transport in Asian cities, people walk and cycle less. This has resulted in reduced access to transport for the urban poor and other vulnerable groups. It also has contributed to the emergence of generally less people-friendly cities and a loss of social cohesion and esthetic values. Increased use of private motor vehicles, including motorcycles, has reduced the demand for and the overall efficiency of public transport in some cities in Asia.

In line with the topic of this forum, let me first discuss the environmental implications associated with the rapid growth in motorization and second, on the priority efforts required to make urban transport more sustainable.

Nearly all cities in Asia face problems with urban ambient air quality. Transport in most cases is the largest contributor to air pollution. Of main concern are particulate matter (PM), especially PM<sub>10</sub> and PM<sub>2.5</sub> (or particulate matter less than 10 microns and 2.5 microns in diameter), and ozone. PM<sub>10</sub> and PM<sub>2.5</sub> are very small particles; so small that our noses cannot filter them out and so minute that they reach the deepest parts of our lungs. The sources of these fine particles are especially the exhaust emissions from inadequately maintained diesel vehicles and from motorcycles and tricycles powered by two-stroke engines. High levels of fine particulates and ozone have serious health implications. There are estimates that 500,000 persons die prematurely in Asia annually due to exposure to ambient air pollution.

Another environmental problem associated with the transport sector is climate change, which is emerging as an increasingly important global problem. With the growth of the transport sector, the amount of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emissions – a greenhouse gas – also increases.

The rapid increase in the number of motorcycles, cars and trucks in Asia has resulted in increased traffic accidents. Asian countries are now trying to reduce the number of traffic accidents which result in 500,000 deaths and 30 million injuries every year in the Asian region. Estimates for the ASEAN region show that annual economic losses from road accidents amount to over 2 percent of the gross annual domestic product. In most cases, it is the pedestrians and especially the children who are the hardest hit.

Notwithstanding the overall positive contribution brought by urbanization to the development of Asia, it is clear that it also brings serious problems. Asian cities will need to make radical changes in the way that they plan their cities and organize their transport. This is needed to protect the environment, improve the quality of life, improve safety, and reduce the negative economic impact of unsustainable transport systems. Fortunately, if we look at the Asian region, we can already see some changes in thinking and in action.

Several cities are starting to question the relevance of automobile-driven mobility scenarios. They are starting to pay more attention to public transport systems and, in

some cases, restoring the importance of non-motorized transport. Singapore has set a global example with the introduction of congestion pricing to reduce the number of kilometers driven by private vehicles and to encourage car users to switch to public transport. It has also successfully limited the growth of the vehicle fleet through ownership controls. In Seoul, Korea, the city government is in the process of demolishing an elevated highway in the city center to restore 5.8 kilometers of the Cheonggyecheon stream, which was once the central waterway in the city and a defining part of Seoul's environment. The restored waterway will be accompanied by biking lanes, footpaths and green spaces. In Marikina, 30 kilometers of bikeways have been constructed and 16 kilometers more will be finished this year, servicing 10,000 bike commuters daily.

There are a growing number of cities which have initiated pedestrianization schemes. They have found that removing the vehicles will actually promote business opportunities rather than reduce them. We need not look far for examples. Manila and Makati City have started pedestrianizing areas in certain parts of their cities. We need more of these initiatives.

Asian countries and cities urgently need a policy framework which prioritizes the movement of goods and persons instead of vehicles. A sustainable transport system is a prerequisite for sustainable economic growth. Improved access for all sectors of society especially those living below the poverty line, to places of work, educational, and health services, can help these groups to better their lives.

Such a major policy reorientation will require the building of new institutional capacities and regulatory frameworks, a land-use planning concept which integrates affordable, environment friendly public transport and which respects non-motorized transport. Changes of this magnitude do not come easily. Sustained political will is required to see such changes through. Divided and conflicting institutional responsibilities for transports will need to be tackled. Revised and improved institutional mandates need to be followed by a comprehensive capacity building program for all organizations involved.

ADB is currently revising both its transport and urban sector strategy. While ADB will continue to provide advice for all modes of transport, the relative scale of the work that the countries face, the difficulties they encounter, and the significance for the poor suggest that the predominance of the effort should not only be on highways and rural roads, but also on sustainable urban transport including the promotion of non-motorized transport, low-cost public transport, and on addressing safety and environmental issues.

The stakeholders involved in transport in Asian cities are many and often with diverse interests. ADB places high importance on activities which promote dialogues involving all stakeholders. It is in this context that ADB provides support for important regional multi-stakeholder initiatives such as the Clean Air Initiative for Asian Cities (CAI-Asia). CAI-Asia is a regional initiative of cities, government agencies, private sector, civil society and development agencies which promotes and demonstrates innovative ways to improve the air quality management of Asian cities. Its main goals include (i) sharing

knowledge and experiences, (ii) improving policy and regulatory frameworks and their implementation, (iii) building capacity of Asian cities, and (iv) encouraging innovation through pilot projects. CAI-Asia will increasingly focus not only on end-of-pipe solutions to reduce air pollution but also demand-side management measures such as promoting sustainable urban transport including pedestrianization and cycling, land use planning, travel demand management, and transport planning.

At the recent International Conference on Environment and Transport in Aichi, Japan in August 2005, Dr. Bindu Lohani, the Director General of ADB's Regional and Sustainable Development Department expressed ADB's commitment to promote sustainable urban transport. In his speech, Dr. Lohani mentioned 4 key measures that could be taken towards making transport more sustainable in Asian cities including Metro Manila.

First, cities should make an active attempt to calculate the economic costs of air pollution, road accidents, and congestion. This will help to raise awareness and provide the economic rationale for effective action.

Second, cities need to develop pro-public transport policies. As part of this, they need to ensure that road user taxes, charges and other fees are not subsidizing private car users at the expense of public transport and non-motorized transport. This needs to be part of an overall financing plan for sustainable urban transport.

Third, cities need to emphasize the importance of non-motorized (NMT) transport, formulate an NMT action plan and set an example by creating high profile pedestrianized areas.

Fourth, and this is probably a more long-term action, cities need to develop sustainable land-use plans which prioritizes the movement of goods and persons and not of vehicles. In so doing, cities need to develop the required regulatory frameworks, the institutional and organizational capacity, to implement such sustainable land-use plans.

I hope this forum will encourage the different stakeholders to work together and make real changes happen and ultimately improve the quality of life of all the residents of Metro Manila.

Thank you very much.