

# JAPAN FIRMS TO START FIXING MRT 3 IN JUNE

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The busy Metro Rail Transit Line 3, which had grabbed headlines for constant breakdowns in recent years, could be restored to its original condition in two and a half years, the Department of Transportation said on Tuesday.

The DOTr, for the first time, released details of a plan to tap Japanese companies to rehabilitate and maintain the almost two decades-old MRT3, which runs along the crucial Edsa in Metro Manila.

The DOTr said it hosted last week officials from the Japan International Cooperation Agency (Jica) during a so-called appraisal mission. The event covered technical matters on the size, scope and project cost of the MRT-3 rehabilitation project. Based on those discussions, the DOTr said the project would cost an estimated 34.48 billion yen or close to P17 billion.

The rehabilitation and maintenance will take some 43 months. It said 31 months were allocated “for the simultaneous rehabilitation and maintenance works to restore MRT3 to its original design condition and capacity.” The remaining 12 months would be for a so-called defect liability period.

The DOTr said the new maintenance and rehabilitation provider would begin work starting this June. The loan signing is also targeted for next month.

While it did not name the provider, the DOTr in previous statements said they were considering the tandem of Sumitomo Corp. and Mitsubishi Heavy Industries. Mitsubishi-Sumitomo handled maintenance operations for the MRT3’s first 12 years of operations.

The project scope will include the MRT3’s power supply system, overhead catenary system, radio system, CCTV system, public address system, signaling system, rail tracks, road rail vehicles, depot equipment, elevators and escalators and other station building equipment, the DOTr noted.

The DOTr may eventually allow the private sector to assume operations of the MRT3. Metro Pacific Investments Corp. last year bagged original proponent status for its P12.5-billion offer to rehabilitate, operate and maintain the MRT3 for a period of 30 years.

Once approved by the National Economic and Development Authority, Metro Pacific's offer will be subjected to a competitive challenge.

The DOTr is finalizing the results of an audit to determine whether it could use 48 train coaches supplied by Chinese company CRRC Dalian. It earlier tapped Germany's TUV Rheinland as independent consultant for the audit.

John Batan, DOTr undersecretary for railways, said previously that the TUV Rheinland results would "guide" the DOTr in the scope of works to be undertaken by the Japanese providers.