

Castelo: BRT has no reason not to push through

By Rio N. Araja

QUEZON City's District 2 Councilor Winston Castelo is asking the Department of Transportation for shelving the proposed Metro Manila bus rapid transit projects despite fund allocation.

He said the 17th Congress had already allocated funds for the construction of two bus rapid transit projects: Line 1 to and from Manila City Hall to PhilCoA on Elliptical Road, Diliman via Quezon Avenue, and Line 2 linking Epifanio delos Santos Avenue to Taguig City's Bonifacio Global City, Pasig City's Ortigas Center, Makati City's Ayala Avenue and Pasay City's Senator Gil Puyat Avenue.

Despite the approval of the House of Representatives, DoTR did not proceed with the implementation of the projects for no apparent reason, the former three-term congressman said.

"The reasons behind the deferment and delays remain mysterious," Castelo said in a statement.

Even the Department of Finance and National Economic Development Authority board had already approved the proposed bus rapid transit projects, he said.

Meanwhile, Quezon City Police District Chief Supt. Joselito Esquivel Jr. has ordered the immediate creation and activation of a Special Investigation Task Group dubbed "SITG Lacson" to probe the shooting incident that killed a police officer assigned at the Anonas Police Station in Project 2.

"SITG Lacson" is headed by Deputy District Director for Operations Enrico Vargas with nine members to facilitate the investigation and speedy resolution of the death of M/Sgt. Anthony Lacson, 40, the desk officer at the Anonas Police Station 9.

The incident took place on Saturday (Aug. 17) at 6 p.m. along Anonas Road corner Pajo Street Barangay. Quirino 2A, Project 2.

Castelo, a three-term lawmaker who chaired the House committee on Metro Manila development, said he sees no more reasons why the projects should not push through.

He said the bus rapid transit projects are "cheaper and faster to construct and will entail minimal traffic during the construction."

"We regret this has happened because the last Congress fought hard for the budget of bus rapid transit, but unfortunately despite the effort, it will only be disregarded. DoTr should explain why they deferred the implementation of these project(s)," the councilor said.

He raised concern over the findings of the Japan International Cooperation Agency that the Philippines was losing P3.5 billion a day due to traffic congestion in the National Capital Region.