

QC mayor says subway permits to be issued after required papers

Business World · 21 Feb 2020 · SI/1 · By Arjay L. Balinbin Reporter

QUEZON CITY Mayor Maria Josefina “Joy” G. Belmonte vowed to grant necessary permits for the construction of the Metro Manila subway “after compliance with all the application requirements.”

She was reacting to recent reports that the Quezon City government has decided to suspend the issuance of permits for the construction of the subway project.

“Not true. All we did was to issue a cease-and-desist order on the construction of the above ground MRT-7 Quezon Memorial Circle Station super structure because of its inappropriate design that, if allowed, would engulf the pylon and affect the integrity of the park,” Ms. Belmonte told Business World in a phone message on Wednesday evening.

The P356-billion subway project involves the construction of 15 stations between Mindanao Avenue in Quezon City and the Ninoy Aquino International Airport in Pasay City. It will also link up with Metro Manila’s other railways at the common station being built along North Avenue in Quezon City.

“The Quezon City government will be happy to grant them the necessary permits after compliance with all the application requirements,” Ms. Belmonte added. Asked if Quezon City has issues with the construction of the subway project, she said: “We in the Executive Department have no problems with it, and have in fact already formed a task force to work with various local and national agencies to put in place mitigating measures to lessen the burden and inconvenience to commuters during the construction phase. It is the Quezon City Council led by Councilors Winston Castelo and Jun Ferrer that are against the subway alignment and are proposing an EDSA line instead [of Katipunan].”

“We in the Executive do not share their sentiments and are fully supportive,” Ms. Belmonte added.

For his part, Transportation Undersecretary for Railways Timothy John R. Batan denied reports that a realignment of stations was made that could have been delaying the construction of the project.

“There’s no truth to the statement na nagkaroon ng (that there was a) realignment,” he said in a press conference on Wednesday afternoon.

He said the current alignment of the subway project was decided in December 2016. The board of the National Economic and Development Authority approved the project in September 2017.

He said during the conduct of the feasibility study for the subway project in 2015, the EDSA route was one of the options. But he said doing so means six subway sta-

tions would be under MRT-3. He doubts whether investing in another railway line would be efficient when MRT-3 already exists, saying not everyone are on EDSA. “We wanted to spread it and that’s the reason why itong alignment ng subway natin (the alignment of our subway) runs almost parallel to EDSA towards the eastern side,” he added.

TUNNELLING STARTS THIS YEAR

Mr. Batan said the Transportation department will formally unveil the tunnel boring machines soon as it targets to start the tunnelling works within the year.

The government broke ground for the first three stations (Quirino Highway, Tandang Sora and North Avenue) of the subway project in February last year after the Department of Transportation signed a P51-billion deal for that package with the Shimizu joint venture, which is comprised of Shimizu Corp., Fujita Corp., Takenaka Civil Engineering Co. Ltd. and EEI Corp.

The Philippines and Japan signed in March 2018 the first tranche of the P355.6-billion loan for the Metro Manila subway project.

While the public will have to wait until 2025 for full operations of the 36-kilometer subway, the government targets partial operations — covering the first three stations — by 2022.