

2004/08/05

Hon. Felix Perera MP,
The Minister of Transport,
Ministry of Transport,
Colombo-10.

Dear Sir,

Construction of MRT/LRT to Ease the Traffic in Colombo

This is regarding the above topic also discussed in the web page <http://www.uda.lk/mrt/index.htm> of the Urban Development Authority. I hope that you are sufficiently aware of the traffic problems in Colombo and their repercussions in order to readily understand the need to quickly implement this kind of system.

However, according to the trace drawn on the map at the above site, I note that the stretch of the LRT would run parallel to the rail track along the coastal belt. Since, beyond Dehiwala, the rail track runs a considerable distance away from the Galle road and the business establishments situated mostly beside the Galle road, this may not fully serve the needs of the people who use vehicles to come to work, etc.

As, the basic requirement for such a system is to reduce the number of vehicles coming to the city, it would be good if this could be built along the existing highway corridor towards Ratmalana (i.e. Galle road). I believe that the modern technology used in constructing light railway systems would render it possible to raise a structure using the middle strip of the pavement (that dividing the two sections of road) which is quite broad up to Wellawatte-Dehiwala bridge. Building this way, the section of the LRT between Fort and Ratmalana could be completed first before proceeding onto other sections. Some information about a similar system to be constructed in India could be found at this link:

<http://www.mid-day.com/metro/ghatkopar/2003/may/52014.htm>

Finally, I would like to list in point form the advantages, as I see, of going for this kind of railway system for Colombo.

- 1) The need to clear less existing constructions – as you may have already noted, work on the Marine Drive is getting delayed by years due to this problem which arises as a result of lawsuits.
- 2) The ability to attract more people, who now use vehicles, if built above existing roads. This is the big bonus of LRT. If the number of vehicles on the roads are reduced, it will greatly reduce the travelling time of buses even.

3) Since LRT uses no fuel (it uses electricity for traction), it will be environmentally good too.

4) In a matter of a few years, the Southern Highway will be completed. This will cause a greater influx of traffic along the High Level. An LRT crossing the High Level at Pannipitiya would be immensely useful in that people who have sped along the Highway from the South can cruise through the suburbs with equal ease. A massive car park could be built somewhere around Pannipitiya/Kottawa for people to keep their vehicles. The LRT could save their time, fuel and nerves (in driving through the city traffic) for a little bit of additional expenditure for parking fees (which, all things considered, would be a saving at the end of the day).


The same way, acres of unused land of the Ratmalana railway workshop could be utilised for the benefit of vehicle owners switching to and fro the LRT at Ratmalana where the LRT reaches the Galle road. I recall there was some attempt recently to sell some of the property of this workshop. By using that land this way, the CGR could constantly get some revenue instead of getting a few million rupees for a land lost forever.

5) There is no reason why anybody should object this LRT project (in ideal case). Bus operators will not lose anything since LRT would attract mostly vehicle owners in large numbers (due to the prices in travelling comparable to, but less than, the fuel consumption expenditure, etc. of vehicles). Also, less protests by people due to the removal of constructions, inter alia.

Attached you could also find a handbill that we intend to print in order to create some awareness among the public for this project. Therein, you could observe how an LRT built above the existing road would look like.

I hope that the contents of my letter would receive your urgent and favourable consideration.

Thanking you,
Yours truly,

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