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Manila's Traffic Problems

by herb mantawe

Road traffic conditions in Manila have deteriorated with each passing year. The ultimate cause of this is that there are too many people in Manila.

Most of Manila's population surfeit originates from the provinces. Provincianos have historically flocked to Manila in order to escape poverty and stagnation in their home provinces.

As its traffic problems mount, Manila responds by spending freely on traffic infrastructure. Elevated highways. Interchanges and grade separations. Subcircumferential roads. Mass transit railways. Computerized signalization. Multi-billion peso white elephants all.

Who pays for the loans that fund the above? In large part, the provincianos do. Ironically, the provincianos' cash contribution serves to strengthen Manila's attractiveness as a migrant destination while further weakening the provinces economically.

It really is a bottomless pit in the sense that the more they spend on alleviating Manila's traffic problems the worse it will become. Construction folk sense tells us that "build a highway and people will come". In Manila's case, more and more people will just come and come. Already, Manila is exhausting the private car plate series N, P, T, U and W while the provincial regions have barely scratched

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the available permutations of their respective series. For example, is Region 2 anywhere near to issuing BMW-501?

Can we afford to construct progressively more expensive yet merely palliative traffic projects for Manila? It is the reverse that should be done. Revert all development funding to provincial infrastructure and in time all traffic in Manila will disappear.

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Jed Pensar and Herb Mantawe. Philippines.