

# FROM YAYASAN TO AIRPORT BY LIGHT RAIL TRANSIT



Some of the participants looking at the proposed plan for BSB expansion during the BSB Masterplan workshop at BSB Information Centre. Picture: BT/Saifulizam

FITRI SHAHMINAN  
BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN

Thursday, May 20, 2010

CONSULTANTS of the Bandar Seri Begawan (BSB) Masterplan have identified light rail transit (LRT) as one of the key land-based public transport systems to create a sustainable capital city in the long run.

During a BSB Development Masterplan workshop yesterday, the consultant overseeing the transportation aspect in the masterplanning, Francis N L Sootoo, said the introduction of LRT was among the steps needed to create a sustainable city.

Having a LRT system in Brunei would also invite more tourists to come to the Sultanate as it will help them to get around, said the executive director of MVA Asia Limited.

"No one needs a car when they go to a foreign country. I live in Hong Kong and I don't need a car," Sootoo said, while highlighting Hong Kong's efficient and convenient public transportation system.

He added that the use of sky trams in the city centre would not be viable as they have fixed stations while LRTs have interchangeable and flexible stops.

He explained that the proposed transportation system was also be appropriate as it would establish an interaction at ground level.

"LRT interacts with the pedestrians," Sootoo said, adding that the interaction would be more exciting for the people.

From initial plans, the proposed LRT system could cover a distance of about 10km around the capital. One end of the LRT would originate from the Yayasan Shopping Complex up to possibly Brunei International Airport.

Important stops along the way could include the Taman Sir Omar 'Ali Saifuddien (SOAS) and

the Sultan Omar 'Ali Saifuddien Mosque, Raja Isteri Pengiran Anak Saleha (Ripas) Hospital, Jame Asr' Hassanil Bolkuah Mosque, Kiulap and Gadong commercial areas, the future government district and the Serusop commercial area.

However, the fare structure and other features that will lead to the realisation of this system should still be discussed with the government, he pointed out.

HOK Planning Group regional director and project director of the capital's masterplan, Steven Townsend said a LRT system was also about creating attractions.

He said that the system might take a while to generate revenue. However, he noted that in the long run, it will generate interest not only among the locals, but also tourists who are familiar with the use of LRTs in their countries.

With this new interest, more people will come to Brunei and use the system and thus, bring about economic returns to the country, he added.

Townsend shared that LRTs might take three to five years to construct. The operation and construction of the LRTs could be awarded to capable and credible foreign investors through public-private partnership.

"Outside experts could operate under a contract," Townsend said, adding that foreign investments will also generate income for the country.

This suggestion was supported by Deputy Chairman of BSB Municipal Board Mohd Ramli Hj Zulkifli, who said that foreign investors were welcome to venture into these possible business opportunities.

"By having a good transportation system, we are going for a bigger agenda," he told The Brunei Times.

He elaborated that the BSB masterplan should be geared towards obtaining revenues from non-oil economic sectors through knowledge, skills and hospitality, in line with Brunei's vision of diversifying its economy.

LRTs provide the connectivity to key areas in BSB, he said, and it also provides an option to take a linear route.

"Forget about what we want now, the benefit is in the long run," Mohd Ramli said.

The deputy chairman added: "Man's desire is rather unique. Sometimes, we don't even understand ourselves. If we have this (LRT) system put in place, I'm sure people will opt for it."

A water-based transportation system that uses water buses to transport people around Brunei River and the commercial centres was also another mode of transportation proposed under the BSB masterplan.

The BSB Development Masterplan workshop will continue today with discussions on the Riverfront Eco Corridor concept. The Brunei Times

**Source:** The Brunei Times (<http://www.bt.com.bn/news-national/2010/05/20/yayasan-airport-light-rail-transit> )