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Published May 11, 2020, 1:54 PM

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Senator Pia Cayetano is now pushing for a bill that will promote biking and walking as an alternative mode of transportation or as a primary means of travel in the time of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.



Senate Pia Cayetano

(Senate of the Philippines / MANILA BULLETIN FILE PHOTO)

Cayetano said the measure aims to promote biking and walking as a better option to travel under a safer and healthier “new normal” environment as this can help dispel well-founded fear of the public in riding buses, jeeps, and trains which could be considered COVID-19 hot spots.

The senator said the creation of “people-oriented and pedestrian-friendly” bike lanes and emergency pathways will help augment the limited forms of transportation and mobility allowed under the community quarantines.

It may also be adopted in the long term to help decongest roads and reduce pollution in the country, according to Cayetano.

“As we adjust to the new normal, it is inconceivable to just go back to the way we were,” Cayetano said in filing Senate Bill No. 1518, the proposed “Safe Pathways Act.”

“This health crisis forces us to rethink our way of life and explore changes that will improve our overall health and quality of life. Planning our cities and transport system require a future thinking frame of mind,” she said.

She pointed out that as cities see air quality improve during lockdowns, there must be an incentive to motivate citizens to shun pre-lockdown air pollution levels.

Environment experts have reported a 180 percent decrease in particulate matter (PM2.5) in the National Capital Region (NCR) since the enhanced community quarantine (ECQ) was imposed last March 16.

Particulate matter or PM pertains to the mixture of all solid particles and liquid droplets suspended in the atmosphere, many of which are hazardous.

Cayetano said walking, biking, and the use of other non-motorized vehicles will help reduce carbon emissions, use less energy and resources, and provide multiple health benefits that increase people’s quality of life.

The measure tasks the Department of Transportation (DOTr) and the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH), in coordination with local government units (LGUs), to establish pop-up bike lanes with necessary space to accommodate the one-meter physical distancing rule.

LGUs shall also be mandated to create designated emergency pathways along local roads to give pedestrians, cyclists, and other non-motorized vehicle users access to frequented destinations by restricting motorized vehicle passage during peak hours.

Moreover, the bill also seeks adequate parking spaces for bicycles and non-motorized vehicles to be set up in all public places, government offices, schools, places of work, and commercial establishments, including malls, banks, and hospitals.

Those in the private sector are also encouraged to develop infrastructure and programs for the same purposes.

In addition, the bill also mandates the DOTR and DPWH, in coordination with appropriate agencies, to prepare the permanent adoption of the established bike lanes, emergency pathways, non-motorized parking spaces, and other appropriate infrastructure, even after the coronavirus ceases to be a global threat.

<https://news.mb.com.ph/2020/05/11/sen-cayetano-to-promote-biking-walking-as-covid-mode-of-transport-in-new-bill/>