



Persatuan Pengguna Pulau Pinang Consumers Association of Penang

檳城消費人協會 பிளாங்கு பயனீட்டாளர் சங்கம்

Websites:
www.consumer.org.my

10 Jalan Masjid Negeri, 11600 Pulau Pinang, Malaysia
Tel: 604-8299511 Fax: 604-8298109
email: consumerofpenang@gmail.com

Press Release

13 July 2017

Proposed three major road projects in Penang: Not a solution to traffic problems

Many Penangites may not be aware that the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) for the proposed three major road projects in Penang has been displayed for public comments since 19 June 2017.

The Consumers' Association of Penang (CAP) and Sahabat Alam Malaysia (SAM) have written to the Department of Environment (DOE) to request an extension of time for public feedback (which is due on 19 July 2017). We are awaiting a response.

Normally, EIA reports will be displayed for a month and another two weeks will be allocated to submit comments. But not in this case, although it involves a large population of Penang.

Many of those potentially affected by this project may not even know that the road will be very close to their homes, offices, businesses or that it will cut across forested areas and rivers. Some of the impacts are irreversible, such as clearing of forests, cutting of hills and acquisition of houses and land.

What is at stake here? Following is a brief description of the projects as stated in the EIA:

- > **Package 1: North Coastal Paired Road from Tanjung Bungah to Teluk Bahang** covering length of 10.53km of which 2.275km is elevated. The last 3.3km traverses through Bukit Kerajaan Forest Reserve and Teluk Bahang Forest Reserve and ends at the connection to Jalan Teluk Bahang, near the Sekolah Kebangsaan Teluk Bahang.
- > **Package 2: Air Itam – Lebuhraya Tun Dr. Lim Chong Eu By-Pass** covering length of 5.7km of which 3.8km is elevated. The proposed roads are dual two lane carriageway (four lanes). The route from Lebuhraya Thean Teik skirts around forested and hilly area towards Jalan Bukit Gambir.
- > **Package 3: Persiaran Gurney – Lebuhraya Tun Dr. Lim Chong Eu By-Pass** covering length of 4.075km with 2.025km double deck elevated road, and 2.050km double deck tunnel.

Land use along the alignment

A total of 238 plots of land will be acquired for the three road projects. These involve 3.34 hectares (ha) in two permanent reserved forests, 34.5ha state land forest, 16.5ha of forested land, private land, state and federal land. Total area acquired for Package 1 is 600,555 square metres. Package 2 involves acquisition of 216,606 square metres, and Package 3 involves 9,792 square metres.

Land use distribution along the road corridor (right of way - ROW) in Package 1 covers 348,651 square metres of forests or nearly 52% of the total area. Package 2 ROW covers nearly 45% of forest area (165,334 square metres). Package 3 runs through the town centre consisting of residential, commercial and industrial areas.

Forests and Hills

The alignment of Package 1 passing through the Teluk Bahang forested areas will include removal of one endemic and unique species of tree i.e *Atuna penangiana* (Kerusing gasing) which is listed as vulnerable. Among other flora, a total of 253 species of trees has been recorded here. Removal of these vegetation will bring about habitat degradation, fragmentation, transformation or complete loss.

Package 1 and Package 2 traverses through hilly areas with maximum elevation on 159m (near Moonlight Bay) and 110m (near Menara Greenview) respectively.

Landslides and Faults

The road construction will involve cutting of slopes and rock blasting. According to records of the Jabatan Kerja Raya, landslides have occurred near areas along the alignment of Package 1 and Package 2.

It is stated in the EIA report that according to the Feasibility Study Report, the alignment for Package 1 crosses over several inferred geological faults, for example Sungai Satu Faults and Sungai Kelian - Sungai Pinang Faults and spanning over the Sungai Siru Fault.

Rivers and Flood Prone Areas

The proposed project will traverse through various river catchments. A total of 21 rivers may be affected due to earthworks for the road project. This will lead to soil erosion and sedimentation of the rivers downstream if proper mitigation measures are not in place.

Package 1 will cross seven rivers and the largest catchment areas are Sungai Batu Ferringhi (11.546 square kilometres) and Sungai Teluk Bahang (12.273 square kilometres). Package 2 crosses part of Paya Terubong and Sungai Dondang towards Gelugor area. Part of the alignment falls within the Sungai Pinang and Sungai Gelugor river basins, which finally drains into the sea.

Package 2 and Package 3 fall within a flood prone area. The entire alignment for Package 3, which includes the tunnel component, falls within the flood prone area of the Sungai Pinang catchment.

Sungai Pinang is a river highly prone to overflowing, and historical data of water level since 1985 show that maximum water level recorded each year till now surpasses the danger level of 2.70 metres, except for 1988, recording 2.47 metres but way above warning level of 2.10 metres. The highest flood occurred in 1995 at 3.79 metres.

Noise, air pollution, vibration

Residents along the proposed road corridor will be affected by air pollution, dust, noise and vibration. The EIA states that residents in the high rise buildings will no longer see clear sky but in place, an elevated road passing near their homes and change the visual aesthetics in the area.

Need for proper public consultation of people affected by major roads

The project proponent i.e the State government should hold a public exhibition at major residential areas that will be affected by the road alignment because many of them may not know about these proposed projects. Genuine public opinion should be sought, and not merely rely on the survey carried out by the EIA consultants.

More roads not a solution to traffic

Besides the environmental, health and socio-economic impacts arising from construction of all the three roads, CAP & SAM had stated numerous times that the road projects are not needed.

A number of studies have shown that, while new road projects or road widening may offer temporary relief in the short run, it is no real solution to traffic congestion.

New roads create new traffic. Once a new road is fully operational, it will invariably attract more traffic. While some of this may be traffic diverted from more congested roads, the rest will be, new motorised traffic as a result of an increase in the use of cars.

The three major road projects proposed now is the revival of the Penang Outer Ring Road (PORR) project served in a different plate. The PORR then was vehemently opposed by the people of Penang. Now the people have to decide whether they want more highways traversing through environmentally sensitive areas and residential areas. Public comments to the DOE is vital.

We reiterate that Penang does not need more road projects that is going to compromise sustainable transport options. There must be a comprehensive and rational transport strategy for Penang. The thrust must be on reducing private vehicles on the island instead of encouraging the same.

Say no to more roads.

S. M. Mohamed Idris
President
Consumers' Association of Penang
& Sahabat Alam Malaysia

Note: The executive summary of the EIA report can be viewed in the Penang government's portal at <https://www.penang.gov.my/component/flippingbook/book/14?page=1>