



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 Statement

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Penang's Car-Centrism Sacrificing our Trees

The Consumers' Association of Penang (CAP) is infuriated with the Penang Island City Council (MBPP)'s road widening projects that involve relocating 16 roadside trees in Green Lane. We reiterate our objections to the "sentence" akin to "death knell" imposed on these trees.

Trees are one of the most natural valuable assets of any streetscape. An iconic image of Penang is its beautiful tree lined roads. Remove them, and you remove the charm and character of Penang. However, the MBPP gives scant regard to these roadside trees.

Out of the sixteen affected trees along a stretch of Jalan Masjid Negeri, the MBPP had already given a death sentence to at least three of them as it was projected that the soon to be relocated trees have an 80 percent chance of survival. Is this the future for Penang that the MBPP and the State government envisage – more cars, more roads and no trees?

An established tree, one that has been planted for three or more years, has roots that branch out and extend well beyond the drip line of the tree. Regardless of the size or age of the tree, removing it and pruning its roots during translocation will bring about physiological changes that affect it.

We are despaired over the stress that the trees have to undergo during removal and re-establishing in their new home. Why torture these trees when the solution is simple – do not widen the road. This car-centric development pursued by the state has huge implications to the environment, public health and increases our carbon footprint. We need transformative change i.e. from car-oriented growth to low-carbon mobility.

Besides not solving the traffic problem in the long-run, the introduction of faster traffic through widening this stretch of the road is going to impact the largely residential, school and commercial zone here. Safety concerns arise as pedestrians will have a tough time crossing the road and road-users will find it difficult to enter and exit the many intersections.

The overhead pedestrian crossing near Penang Free School is also not practical. You can often see pedestrians risking their life crossing the road here rather than taking the overpass.

Trees greatly improve the quality of our lives. Loss of this natural asset from the roadsides is inconceivable. We are appalled over the apathy towards trees shown by the authorities and those who remain silent over the desecration of Penang's trees and hills.

We call upon the Penang state government and MBPP to stay true to its "Green" mantra.

Do not condemn the trees by relocating them. Let the Trees Be.

S. M. Mohamed Idris
President
Consumers Association of Penang