



Engaging business, government to keep competitiveness up in Laguna



Heavy traffic slows down production. Business, as a return, suffers from high production costs, less earnings, stymied expansion, and less employment.

This sums up heavy traffic as a complex issue in Laguna, leading to a loop of causes and effects that redound to competitiveness issues in the province.

Yazaki-Torres, one of the leading manufacturers in Laguna, raised to the DILG the traffic gridlock along six kilometers in Maharlika Highway. The traffic snarl stretches from Barangay Turbina, Tulo and Makiling, Calamba City, Laguna up to the boundary of Sto. Tomas, Batangas, hurting the competitiveness of industries in the province.

Along this strip, the flow of vehicles slows down to a snail's pace. Commuters pray to high heavens to stretch their patience as a result of heavy traffic caused by *tricycles* and *pedicabs*. In addition, illegal sidewalk vendors in front of Carmelray Industrial Park occupied road margins, choking the flow of traffic and contributing to high congestion.



This complex issue required collaboration from all stakeholders. Easing the flow of traffic along the Maharlika necessitated political and administrative will on the part of the local and national government, as well as some counterpart resources from the private sector.

The roles and responsibilities of each partner were spelled out and coordinated under an inter-agency and multi-sectoral program led by DILG with the city government of Calamba as local partner. DOTC-LTO was responsible for traffic enforcement, while DPWH widened roads and removed obstructions. DTI and PEZA focused on private sector concerns. Meanwhile the private sector contributed resources to the overall efforts. Yazaki Torres, for example, donated a vehicle to the LGU to be used to patrol the area, among other purposes.

PD Lionel Dalope of DILG-Laguna chaired the Executive Committee, which is the central monitor behind the faithful adherence of all parties concerned to their respective commitments.

Since this is a big issue involving different agencies and the private sector, it was important for us to coordinate as much as to communicate with one another, says PD Dalope.

And the results are felt: Traffic along Maharlika Highway has eased. Illegal obstructions along road shoulders and gutters were cleared. *Tricycles* and *pedicabs* have been designated with plying routes to minimize access to the Maharlika Highway. And businesses and commuters are happy.

In a community issue affecting various stakeholders, it is important to involve all parties concerned and agree on common solutions and clear commitments, reflects PD Dalope. Everyone has a role to play in solving the complex issue, he said.

And one significant commitment is for key stakeholders from the government and the private sector to continue working together in monitoring and evaluating the program to sustain the gains of light traffic and keep businesses competitive in Laguna.