

Why Bigger or More Roads Do Not Improve Traffic

Monday, 13 September 2021, Kuching - Kuching Urban Transportation System ("KUTS") aims to minimize traffic congestion and spur economic growth. Yet why is Sarawak investing in a public transportation system rather than building more roads for our Kuching city?

According to the concept of 'induced demand', the increase of a supply (like roads) leads to people wanting it even more. Thus, having bigger or more roads will only result in worse traffic congestion.

In 2009, two economists conducted a study to investigate the relationship between the number of new roads and highways and the total number of miles driven in the areas of study. Their findings revealed a perfect one-to-one relationship – cities with 10 percent new roads recorded 10 percent more driving.

Along with the fundamental law of road congestion, this discovery revealed that new roads create new drivers resulting in no improvement to traffic.

Roads serve to allow more mobility for people. More roads will encourage more movement, resulting in more businesses which come with trucks and shipment, hence traffic congestion.

Contrary to 'common sense' the solution lies in a dependable public transit system and maintaining existing roads. Many countries have explored this option to varying success – Paris and San Francisco have reduced sections of the road without worsening traffic, while Seoul has even reduced its carbon footprint and brought pollution down.

However, this phenomenon is not absolute - extreme measures will lead to dire consequences: drastically removing roads will lead to a standstill instead of better traffic.

Therefore, developing a reliable transportation system such as the Kuching Urban Transportation System is crucial to improve urban mobility which is not only a key feature of a Smart City but also to spur productivity and economic growth.



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