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Last month national newspapers reported that the MRT might replace the Transjakarta Busway corridor concept. According to a report, the Transportation Ministry proposed discontinuation of the Transjakarta Busway Corridor 1 (Blok M – Kota) in 2015 because it will overlap the MRT Phase 1 (Lebak Bulus-Dukuh Atas) route. This proposal is based on expectations of 200,000 — 300,000 future MRT passengers per day. Is it really necessary to discontinue the busway service? Further analysis of potential passengers (demand) along Lebak Bulus-Dukuh Atas route is necessary, especially considering that last year vice minister for transportation Bambang Susantono warned that the services of both the busway and the MRT may not persuade commuters to stop using their personal vehicles in favor of public transportation.

According to a 2008 Intran (Institute for Transportation Studies) survey sample, it was estimated that the number of cars passing the Sudirman — Thamrin area presently covered by the Transjakarta Busway, and by the MRT in the future, will soon reach more than 200,000 vehicles. If each car carries an average of two passengers, this would indicate at least 400,000 potential public transportation users. This number does not include motorcyclists and people who travel by non-busway public transportation.

It's not likely that all private vehicle passengers will become Transjakarta Busway and MRT passengers, but even if 50 percent opted to use the busway and MRT services, there would be a potential demand of 200,000 new passengers.

It is now being suggested that this demand should be met by the MRT alone, at the expense of the Transjakarta Busway, which would no longer be able to provide service to its regular passengers. "Busway will remain an attractive public transportation alternative if the MRT fares are more expensive."

As a result, there could be another public transportation shortage if the Transjakarta Busway Corridor 1 (Blok M-Kota) route is discontinued. Elimination of the Busway Corridor 1 service should be rejected for three reasons. Demand along Lebak Bulus-Kota route is very high and cannot be accommodated by the MRT alone. It is important to re-emphasize the existence of Busway Corridor 1 after the MRT is in operation, especially because initially the MRT plans included plans to improve, not exclude, the corridor. The new proposal comes at a time when the Jakarta administration is working to increase the Busway Corridor 1 load capacity by replacing single carriage busses with articulated busses in 2011, the corridor's 7th year anniversary, and the end of the existing contract with the corridor's current operator.

The proposal to discontinue the Corridor 1 service could push the Jakarta administration to reconsider their plans to increase busway capacity.

Officials are hesitant to commit to massive investments in articulated busses if the corridor is expected to be closed to make way for the MRT. The need to continue the Busway Corridor 1 service after the MRT needs to be re-emphasized to assure that the government's investments will not go to waste. Jakarta needs various modes of mass public transportation that are

comfortable, safe, punctual and affordable, so that residents have options when deciding to use public transportation.

If the government is worried that its mass public transportation endeavors will lack passengers, it needs to better educate the public — especially owners of private vehicles. Educating the public is an often neglected necessity. In the past, plans to build infrastructure often overlooked public participation and education. The public was regularly unaware of government services and activities being offered, and had little knowledge of the funding behind various projects. This may have been a result of past technocratic dominance over the processes of drafting plans for infrastructure projects.

Busway will remain an attractive public transportation alternative if the MRT fares are more expensive. This mode of transportation will attract different market segments based on affordability and destination. There are passengers who would choose to ride the busway because it is more affordable, and there are those who will choose the MRT because it fits their travel destinations. Last but not the least, a multi-mode transfer station needs to be constructed so that it will be easier for passengers to switch from the busway to the MRT, and vice versa. Synergy between modes of transportation in many other cities around the world has proven effective in encouraging broader use of mass public transportation.

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Link:

<http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2010/09/25/integrating-busway-and-mrt.html>