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MRT EIA report too vague, claims think tank

The worry is instead of improving environmental quality as claimed by the report, the project could actually worsen an already bad situation.

Despite the detailed environmental assessment (DEIA) report for the upcoming mass rapid transit system for Kuala Lumpur, an environmental research group is still not happy.

Calling it 'vague', the Association of Water and Energy Research Malaysia (AWER) slammed the DEIA and said that the report does not prove that the project can improve Kuala Lumpur's environmental quality.

Their main grouses are that the EIA consultants did a non-functional project option comparison.

"The project option comparison should be of the supporting services by the light rail transit (LRT), monorail, MRT and the KTM Komuter," said association president S Piarapakaran.

He also pointed out that the main criterion for the construction of the MRT is to improve air quality based on a study done by the Japan International Cooperation Agency back in 1997, referred to in the DEIA report.

"However, the EIA consultants did not do air quality and traffic modelling during operation of MRT. Therefore, the EIA consultants failed to prove that air quality will improve..Besides this, the increase in traffic congestion directly impacts on public health," he said.

He also said that the group submitted their comments to the Department of Environment yesterday, including their conclusion that the report should have not been approved.

The DEIA had been on public display for three months since Feb 14 at the various affected local councils .

'More air pollution from traffic congestion'

In the belief that an MRT will actually add to the traffic congestion instead of alleviating them, AWER claimed that more carbon dioxide (CO₂, a gas emission as a by-product from combustion. In this case specifically, vehicles) will be released.

In the DEIA, the consultants have claimed that 34,400 tonnes of CO₂ equivalent will be avoided if the MRT is in operation.

However, AWER's study showed that if 100 percent petrol is wasted due to traffic congestion an additional 50,145 tonnes of CO₂ equivalent will be released.

And if 30 percent of diesel and 70 percent of petrol is wasted from traffic congestion, 52,363 tonnes of CO₂ equivalent will be released additionally.

"Either way, there will be an increase in CO₂ emission compared to the claims made by EIA

consultants in the DEIA report," said Piarapakaran.

He added that there will be 45.8 and 52.2 percent extra emission based on petrol, and diesel and petrol combination modelling respectively.

The first sector of the MRT is a 51km line - 9.5km of which will be underground - between Sungai Buloh and Kajang.

The project which will see 35 stations, including four interchange stations, and 11 park-and-ride stations, is expected to take off by July 16, taking five years to be complete.

With an official cost estimation of RM36 billion, the MRT is one of the entry-point projects identified for the Greater Kuala Lumpur/Klang Valley National Key Economic Area under the Economic Transformation Programme.