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## An Assessment on the Coordination of the Metro Manila Development Authority with the Local Government Units of Mandaluyong, Makati, Taguig, and Quezon City in Addressing Traffic Congestion

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### **ABSTRACT**

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*Traffic congestion is very much prevalent in many urban cities. Metro Manila is consistently confronted with heavy traffic congestion due to the amount of people using both private and public transportation and the cities implementing their own traffic ordinances. The Metro Manila Development Authority's administrative jurisdiction over the National Capital Region with regard traffic management has been an issue over which agency has the authority in implementing traffic regulations. The overall purpose of this research is to assess the coordination mechanisms and policies of the MMDA with four (4) local government units with large commercial business districts, namely, Mandaluyong, Makati, Taguig, and Quezon City, and to relate such with their traffic management and urban planning. Through the data analysis of comparing and contrasting and the use of the three indicators of the framework of the study, which are socio-legal, socio-technical, and socio-psychological, interviews and data gathered have proven that there were inconsistencies in the traffic ordinances which are reflective to the coordinative mechanism of MMDA with the LGUs. These were shown in the answers of the different interviewees which were found incongruous from each other on the following codes: presence of traffic enforcers on the major roads, program implemented or specifically number coding, monthly meetings and their communication source. This research study concludes then that the present mechanism of MMDA in coordinating with the four (4) LGUs with regard traffic management and*

*urban planning is effective, however, still presents a weak coordinating mechanism between the two.*

**Keywords:** *Local Government Units, Metro Manila Development Authority, traffic management, coordinating mechanism, and administrative jurisdiction.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Metro Manila, being a now highly urbanized region, is consistently confronted with heavy traffic congestion on the roads of its cities. Despite having the Metro Manila Development Authority (MMDA) as a working administrative authority as well as the local government units (LGUs) of each city, traffic congestion still remains to be a big challenge for the region. This paper will serve as a tool to assess the coordination in the traffic management of MMDA and four (4) specifically chosen LGUs in Metro Manila, namely Mandaluyong, Makati, Taguig, and Quezon City, that encompass the congested roads and intersections of EDSA and C-5 roads.

Traffic congestion demands a serious discussion between administrative units and government officials. It is a problem that causes disadvantages, not only to the motorists, but also to the economy of the country as a whole. In a study report from the Japan International Cooperation Agency or JICA (2013), it was mentioned that although the economy of the Philippines is unceasingly growing, if the issue of traffic congestion still continues to worsen, the country may lose up to 6 billion pesos a day by 2030.

The inter-organizational theory of Bachmann and Witteloostuijn (2009) shall be introduced and used in this paper in order to attain preventive measures against a bigger picture of detriments caused by traffic and to address the pressing problems of traffic congestion affecting the region. Moreover, the paper shall also serve as an avenue to assess the coordination of the four chosen LGUs in Metro Manila with that of the MMDA through the use of the three (3) main indicators used in this paper based from the inter-organizational theory (2009) which consists of the following: (1) socio-legal factor or the two institutions' formal arrangement as a coordinating unit; (2) socio-psychological factors or the features of the institutions colliding as a one implementing body and their hierarchical mandated powers; and (3) socio-technical factors or the measurement of the two institutions' consultative mechanisms through communication and information dissemination.

The paper's main aim is to assess the mechanisms and policies of MMDA in consultation with the LGUs of the cities of Metro Manila and to relate such with the traffic management of each of the four cities. This is to analyze if such could help and contribute to the human development of the motorists and to achieve sustainable welfare for the citizens in the region, and if this

study be used, for other communities as well. Upon the writing of this paper, it has been assumed and expected that the coordination arrangement of the mechanisms and policies of MMDA along with the four chosen LGUs in Metro Manila are disorganized and has resulted in an ineffective management of traffic on the roads of the region.

## **BACKGROUNDS**

### **Metropolitan Manila**

According to Boquet (2013) Metro Manila is most likely to be congested, since the density both of roads per square kilometer and roads per resident appears very low, compared to other metropolitan areas. Traffic congestion in the region is caused by the large number of registered vehicles, lack of roads, and overpopulation. Although, it has also been stated by Visconti (2012) to be caused by the policies implemented that create confusion in Metro Manila.

Governance in metropolitan regions is also different and prominent from other government units. In metropolitan regions, the governing strategies, policies, and ordinances are expected to better the lives of the community for it entails economic and social development. Furthermore, cities in such regions coordinate with each other to promote resiliency and stimulate sustainable development goals. In the Philippines, Metro Manila is considered to be the center stage for business, urbanization and modernization. Aside from these, however, cities are also places where problems such as traffic congestions are concentrated. Due to the high rate of progress and development, cities in Metro Manila have become people-concentrated where vehicle ownership is consistently increasing. However, the increase of population in Metro Manila is inversely proportional to the widening of roadways.

Public transits have been adopted since 1984 in the Philippines. These consists of light rail transit (LRT) lines in Metro Manila and heavy rail lines in Luzon. These train systems operate on a daily basis and carry estimated passengers of more than 400, 000 where fare structures are based on distance. However, due to inclement delays caused by unexpected stops, long lines of passengers in buying of tickets, overloading, and low-quality trains, transits and trail way, Filipinos in Metro Manila choose to buy their own private cars or take personal modes of transportations (e.g. taxis, Grab) instead. They choose to occupy their own individual space using private vehicles than to squeeze themselves into low-quality public transportation vehicles – hence, further contributing to the traffic congestion in the public roads.

## **Coordination of Institutions**

An institution is described by Ostrom (2007) as organizations and systems where individuals interact and achieve political and policy goals through explicit or implicit rules that eventually evolve via cooperative means. According to Jones (1974), administrative institutions are usually presumed to be able to contribute to modernization processes since such institutions serve as problem-solving mechanism in now changing societies. These can then be applied to the administrative authority that is MMDA.

The most appropriate way to define MMDA is to refer to the rules and regulations of Republic Act 7924 (1996), otherwise known as the law creating the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority. It states that Metro Manila shall be considered as a special development and administrative region and that the MMDA shall be the authority to administer over the cities in Metro Manila (R.A. No. 7924, The Law Creating the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority, 1996). One thing to note is that the MMDA shall be headed by a Chairman and shall be considered as the Chief Executive Officer of the agency, appointed by and shall continue to hold office under the discretion of the President (R.A. No. 7924, The Law Creating the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority, 1996).

MMDA as an agency is vested with the task of overseeing and administering over Metro Manila and to see to it that the basic metro-wide services affecting the region shall be appropriately delivered (R.A. No. 7924, The Law Creating the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority, 1996). According to Number 15, Section 3 of R.A. 7924 (1996), "...the MMDA shall plan, supervise, regulate, monitor, coordinate, or implement, where appropriate, in conformity with the national government policies without the prejudice to the autonomy of the local governments affected." This means that MMDA shall be the one to oversee whether the policies of the national government and its own are properly being implemented to the cities of Metro Manila, without disrupting or affecting that of the LGUs' policies within each of their cities (R.A. No. 7924, The Law Creating the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority, 1996).

Number 22, Section 6 of R.A. 7924 (1996) entails the Scope of Services of MMDA which states that the services to be delivered should transcend that of the local political boundaries or should have huge expenditures to the point that these would not be viable for the LGUs and so shall need the reliance towards MMDA to deliver such metro-wide services. This paper, however, shall only be focusing on the services that are connected to the traffic and transport management within the cities which can be found in Number 24, a. of R.A. 7924 (1996). Number 35, 36, 37 of the same republic act states the powers

and functions of MMDA with regard the traffic and transportation management in Metro Manila. Summarized in Number 37:

...the MMDA shall enforce all traffic laws and regulations in Metro Manila, thru its traffic operation center, and may deputize members of the PNP, traffic enforcers of LGUs, duly licensed security guards, or members of non-governmental organizations to whom may be delegated certain authority, subject to such conditions and requirements as the Authority may impose.

Coordination between institutions is needed even more so when they aim for similar goals which is, in this paper's case, beneficial to that of a whole region. If a problem is to exist between institutions, then the results of their work will be highly affected. The institutions should be able to coordinate with one another even with how they resolve conflicts so they may be able to deliver services towards their target communities in a collaborative manner. Keeling, Underhile, and Wall (2007) stated that the idea of having to create common aims and programs and services that connect with each other shall likely result to areas of strong coupling between the institutions' activities. However, not having the consistency with regard policies and programs might generate problems for the reason that the way the different institutions conduct their services and programs might collide with one another despite having the same outcome and goal in mind.

LGUs are agencies of the government that require coordination with one another. Basing the definition of a local government unit from R.A. No. 7160 (1991), it states that these entities "shall enjoy local autonomy" and that "general supervision" shall be exercised by the President. The Congress had enacted R.A. No. 7160, or the Local Government Code (LGC) of the Philippines in 1991 that is considered as an attempt to involve more regularly the people in governance by decentralizing it and devolving the powers of the LGUs, as well as by strengthening the mechanisms for people's participation in governance (Ravanera, 2004). The responsibilities of local governments were detailed in Section 17 of the LGC which states that local governments shall take responsibility over the facilitation of traffic and road signs which are connected to this study (R.A. No. 7160, An Act Providing for a Local Government Code of 1991, 1991).

In a country case study done by Imperial (2001), he stated that the "development planning done in the country does not always reflect the needs of the people and their communities... and that there is a lack of complementation and integration of the sectorial plans." This constitutes one of the main problems between MMDA and the LGUs of the region: the clashing of the policies of MMDA with that of the cities in Metro Manila with regard traffic management. The question is that why do the cities involved not have

the same traffic congestion problem or traffic management schemes if they are all supposed to be supervised by the MMDA? And since MMDA has been the one tasked and assigned to regulate and oversee the metro-wide services in Metro Manila, including that of traffic management, it may also be safe to assume that there must have been complications in the coordination of MMDA with some of the LGUs to result to such a difference between cities with regard their traffic issues.

If coordination seems to lack between organizations, agencies, or institutions, they would most likely encounter a problem of disharmonized policies that clash with one another and might, most likely, have a negative effect towards that of their services and programs that are supposed to be beneficial for the people. Akl, et al. (2015) mentions the term 'information coordination' which is important between actors working together especially if they aim towards the same goal. Through information coordination, MMDA and LGUs may be able to improve their work on traffic management for the cities involved.

Additionally, there should not be a lack of information coordination between MMDA and LGUs since there is the existence of the Metro Manila Council (MMC) which is considered as the governing board and policy-making body of MMDA (R.A. No. 7924, The Law Creating the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority, 1996). The Chairman of MMDA acts as the presiding officer whenever the Council conducts its meetings. The Council's powers and functions are stated in Section 9 of the R.A. 7924 (1996), however, this paper will only be mentioning that of Number 54 and 55 which are to "approve metro-wide plans, as well as metro significant plans, programs and projects and issue rules and regulations and resolutions deemed necessary to carry out the purposes of the Act."

It can then be inferred that MMC is responsible for the metro-wide services that are to be carried out to the cities within the region and these metro-wide services are planned and discussed by the MMDA Chairman and the mayors of the LGUs. Therefore, the two institutions should have a clear understanding of each other's policies and programs and should thus, not collide or clash with one another. Despite the existence of MMC, which is considered as the one connecting MMDA and the LGUs, it is implied that there is an issue of incoherence between the policies and programs that these different institutions aim to provide.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

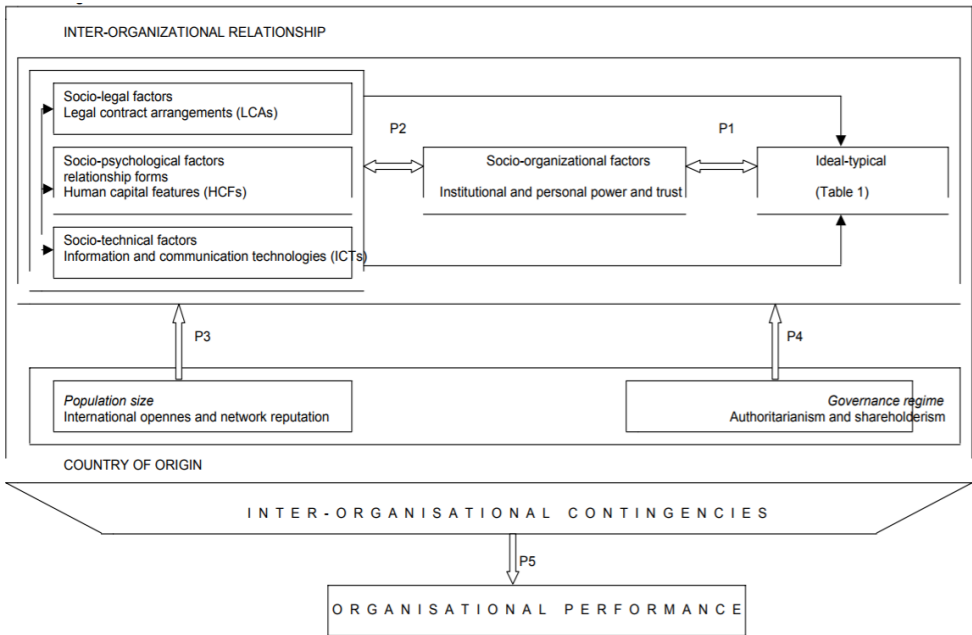
The inter-organizational theory, a framework based on a study by Bachmann and Witteloostuijn (2009) entitled "Analyzing Inter-Organizational

Relationships in the Context of Their Business Systems” was used by the authors for the theoretical framework of this paper.

This approach focuses on the coordination and the relationship of the government units and agencies involved and how they commit to attain the same goal through coordination. Inter-organizational theory entails a comprehensive multilevel framework where it analyzes the control, coordination, and performance potential of inter-organizational relationships in dealing with issues and goals (Bachmann & Witteloostuijn, 2009). This approach was used in the paper to pertain to the coordinating mechanisms and the relationship standard between the four LGUs and MMDA in solving traffic congestion in the cities of Metro Manila.

Inter-organizational relationships can be defined as producing and combining resources of two or more “legally independent” institutions. One of the key elements of this theory is the socio-organizational factor. This factor consists of various forms of inter-organizational relationships that can be illustrated from the two networks’ virtual authority which are control and coordination. In this element, power and trust are integrated through “institutional arrangements and inter-personal contact” (Bachmann & Witteloostuijn, 2009).

**Figure 1.** Inter-organizational Theory (Bachmann & Witteloostuijn, 2009)



A second key element would be the socio-legal factor. This element entails the agreements that are considered to be the foundation of the relationship of the two independent institutions. These contracts serve as a uniting body that commit the two organizations into a relationship. These are in various forms, such as "duties, responsibilities and also the expectations of each party in the relationship" (Bachmann & Witteloostuijn, 2009). In this paper, R.A. 7924, which states the MMDA's functions and powers, can be considered as the socio-legal factor.

Another key element would be the socio-psychological factors. This states that inter-organizational alliances are run by human beings (Bachmann & Witteloostuijn, 2009). Therefore, the control, coordination and performance of inter-organizational relationship should be measured on the features of the organization itself. Lastly, the socio-technical factors entails that the distribution of knowledge is an imperative feature in inter-organizational networks (Bachmann & Witteloostuijn, 2009). Here, communication is vital in the relationship of the two institutions. Henceforth, communication and information are an essential role with regard to the control, coordination, and performance of inter-organizational relationships. The paper shall only be focusing on these four key elements, thus, the remaining parts of the inter-organizational theory shall not be mentioned nor discussed any further.

## **CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

The authors have created a conceptual framework basing from Bachmann and Witteloostuijn's inter-organizational theory which shows the relationship of the main actors of the study, which are MMDA and the LGUs of Mandaluyong, Makati, Taguig, and Quezon City.

In between the two boxes where the two actors are inputted is a two-pointed arrow which signifies how the two institutions are working together through coordination. There can also be seen a box that is connected to the two-lined arrow in the middle. This text box contains three (3) of the aforementioned factors from the inter-organizational theory, namely the socio-legal, socio-technical, and socio-psychological factors – these are the basis of the coordination for the MMDA and the LGUs. If these three factors shall be seen between the two institutions, it shall be implied that there is coordination between them. The large, thin-lined box contains the main actors of the framework that is involved with the coordination of the institutions that are concerned with the traffic management in Metro Manila. Under this can be found an arrow pointing downwards to a box that entails "Coordinated Traffic Mechanisms." This simply means that after resulting to a successful coordination between the MMDA and the LGUs, with the guide of the three



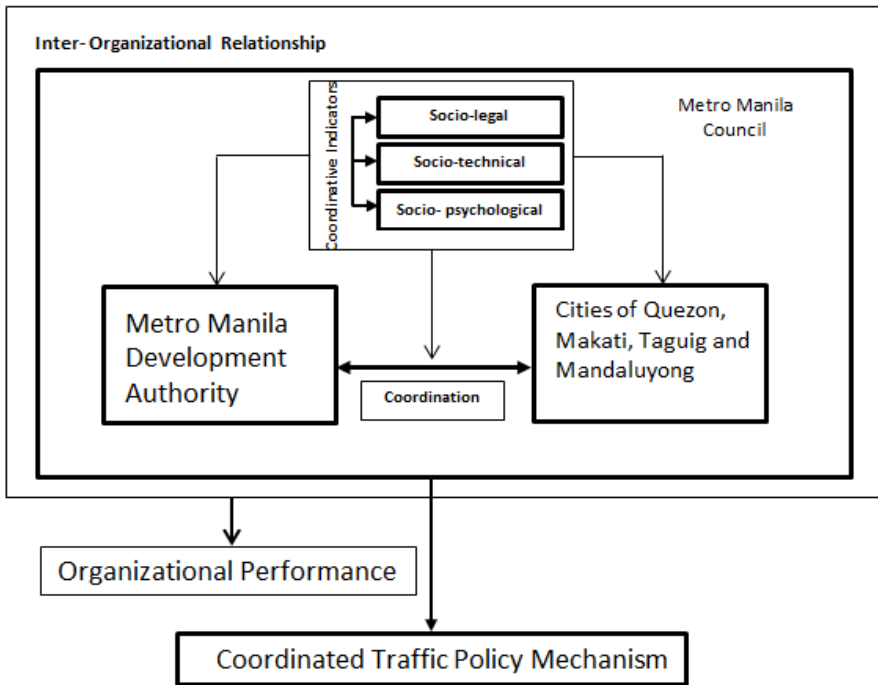
factors inside the textbox, it will then result to the outcome which are coordinated traffic mechanisms.

In summary, this conceptual framework displays the coordination of MMDA with the four specifically chosen LGUs, showing that they consist the MMC and how their successful coordination is shaped by socio-legal, socio-technical, and socio-psychological factors. It also entails how such coordination will result to smooth flowing traffic management and a feedback feature to keep the framework improving for its own betterment.

**INSTRUMENTALITY OF THE MMDA**

Table 1 shows the compiled analysis of the data gathered by the authors from the interviews conducted with the actors involved and affected as well as the analyses of the files and documents gathered during the entire conduct of the study. The analyses of the authors are compiled and assembled here to compare and contrast the findings in this paper in order to transparently analyze the data gathered.

**Figure 2.** Inter-Organizational Relationship of MMDA and the LGUs in solving traffic congestion in Metro Manila (Mangahas and Medes, 2018)



	<b>Mandaluyong City</b>	<b>Makati City</b>	<b>Taguig City</b>	<b>Quezon City</b>	<b>MMDA</b>	<b>Bus Line (Five Star)</b>
<b>Coordination</b>	Not enough coordination	There is enough coordination	Not enough coordinating framework	Not enough coordinating framework  Lack of MMDA traffic enforcers	There is enough coordination  Sees the LGUs as part of their organization	None.  They move independent with one another
<b>Communication</b>	Through the Metro Manila Council  Invitations for meeting from the MMDA  Sending request letters to MMDA for infrastructure development  No other social media accounts to communicate with MMDA  No regular meeting with traffic chiefs	Through the Metro Manila Council	Through the Metro Manila Council  Presence of I-ACT	Through the Metro Manila Council  Via text messaging  Presence of I-ACT	Through the Metro Manila Council	Presence of I-ACT

	<b>Mandaluyong City</b>	<b>Makati City</b>	<b>Taguig City</b>	<b>Quezon City</b>	<b>MMDA</b>	<b>Bus Line (Five Star)</b>
<b>Meetings</b>	<p>Monthly meetings through the MMC</p> <p>Used to meet with I-ACT weekly, but lately not anymore</p> <p>Minutes are not distributed</p>	<p>Monthly meetings through the MMC</p> <p>Invitations for meeting from the MMDA</p>	<p>Monthly meetings through MMC</p> <p>Presence of MMDA representative</p>	<p>Monthly meetings through the MMC</p>	<p>Monthly meetings through the MMC</p>	<p>None stated</p>
<b>Sanctions / Penalties</b>	<p>500 imposed penalty on number coding</p>	<p>None stated</p>	<p>None stated</p>	<p>350 imposed penalty on number coding</p>	<p>300 imposed penalty on number coding</p>	<p>None stated</p>

**Table 1.** Comparison of the interviews of the traffic chiefs of the four (4) local government units, MMDA, and representative from the Bus Union Group

### **Coordination of MMDA with the Local Government Units**

As an administrative body appointed by the President, MMDA exercises mandates that coincide with the promulgation of the LGUs' power in Metro Manila. MMDA has been exercising various steps in managing traffic in Metro Manila, one of which is the execution of legislated traffic ordinances, programs, and schemes made through and by the MMC, which is known to be the legislative body of MMDA. In here, ordinances are used to solve, if not, lessen traffic congestion in the main roads of the region. Before such policies or ordinances are executed, however, MMC firstly conducts meetings that contain a specific number of agenda and proposed MMDA issuances. The mentioned issuances shall then be deliberated and revised or amended during the council meeting. After such, the approved MMDA issuances shall be circulated to members for their signatures and shall afterwards be published in newspapers.

Another step made by MMDA with regard traffic management is their coordination with LGUs and other government and non-government agencies. The LGUs are responsible for the small or minor roads within their city while the MMDA regulates the major roads that pass through different cities. With this kind of simple scheme being followed, coordination is expected to result between MMDA and the LGUs. However, there still seems to be a lack in coordination between the two in areas of concern such as varying traffic ordinances per city, lack of communication besides the monthly meetings, and lack of information dissemination.

### **Consultative Monthly Meetings of Metro Manila Council**

Table 2 presents that the MMC went beyond the target accomplishments in 2017. The accomplishment rate of MMC as of December 2017 ranges only from 225%-250%, which can be stated as a positive review with regard the capability of the Council, not only in conducting meetings, but also with regard other related agendas such as the preparation and revisions of their issuances. With such, it can be derived that the MMC, which is composed of the LGUs' city mayors, the MMDA Chairman, and head representatives of other government agencies involved, is properly functioning in terms of their accomplishment report for the year 2017, specifically noting here their monthly meetings which is an important indicator for the coordination between the LGUs and MMDA.

### **LIMITATIONS ENCOUNTERED BY MMDA**

To emphasize on the policy that gives mandate to MMDA, the agency is expected to deliver efficient and well-planned metro-wide basic services that affect or involve Metro Manila. The scope of MMDA in terms of traffic management has been limited to formulation, coordination, and monitoring of policies, programs and projects created through the MMC.

### **Number Coding across LGUs: Effective or not?**

The number coding scheme or formally known as the Unified Vehicular Volume Reduction Program (UVVRP) has been famously known as a traffic policy solution found in Metro Manila. This traffic policy, which was spearheaded by MMDA, is considered as one of the most significant policies in solving traffic since it forbids a specific set of vehicles to be driven on a certain day in a week, not just in national roads, but in all roads in the committed cities. This policy was used in this paper to show how MMC's output policy can be changed in accordance to the LGU's choice, despite the fact that each city's mayors are part of the MMC itself. It also evidently shows the cities

deviation from MMDA's version of the UVVRP. Referring to Table 3, it can be stated that the four LGUs added and changed specific details in the UVVRP of MMDA for it to become more applicable in each of their respective cities.

**Table 2.** Metro Manila Council's Performance Accomplishment for the year 2017

Performance Indicators	Department FY 2016 Actual Accomplishment	Department FY 2017 Target	Department FY 2017 Actual Accomplishment	Accomplishment Rate as of December 2017
Preparation of Agenda, proposed MMDA Issuance/s	8 sets of Agenda	4 sets of Agenda per year	10 sets of Agenda	250%
	22 Issuances	12 per year proposed MMDA Issuance/s	24 Resolution <u>7 Regulation</u> 31 Issuances	250%
MMC Meeting	8 meetings	4 meetings per year	10 meetings	250%
Revised MMDA Issuance	22 issuances	12 issuances per year	31 Issuances	250%
Routing of Approved MMDA Issuances to voting members for signatures	8	4 routings per year	9 routings	225%

The number coding scheme applied to the major roads within Metro Manila are those of the MMDA's, while the LGUs' version of the UVVRP is used on the minor roads within their jurisdiction. This does not, however, remove the presence of conflicts between the LGUs and MMDA. Due to the fact that the streets and thoroughfares are connected with one another, the number coding scheme applied to such are different and, therefore, brings conflict and confusion to the motorists that use these intersecting roads and streets.

Under the old number coding scheme, banned cars could still be driven during the so called “window hours,” from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. on the version of MMDA. According to Virgilio Nemis, one of the interviewees who contributed to the data of this paper who is a chief representative from Five Star Bus Company and a member of the Bus Transport Group, the variation of number coding scheme in the roads that his company’s bus drivers were driving confused the drivers, and even himself as a private car owner. The mere presence of different number coding scheme and different window hours in the roads in the Metro is a symbol of an unordered scheme in Metro Manila. Alex Santos, the chief of Traffic Management Office in Mandaluyong City, also stated that the fact that Mandaluyong does not have window hours, while the others do, made the motorists flock to the city’s roads.

**Table 3.** The breakdown of elements of Unified Vehicular Volume Reduction Program of MMDA and of Taguig, Makati, Mandaluyong, and Quezon City.

Unified Vehicle Volume Reduction Program in the Institutions in Metro Manila	MMDA	Makati City	Mandaluyong City	Taguig City	Quezon City
Schedule of Number Coding	7:00am-8:00pm	7:00am-7:00pm	7:00am-8:00pm	7:00am-7:00pm	7:00am-8:00pm
Exempted Vehicles	Emergency vehicles and other exempted vehicles.	Emergency vehicles, and other exempted vehicles..	Emergency vehicles, and other exempted vehicles.	Emergency vehicles, and other exempted vehicles.	Emergency vehicles, and other exempted vehicles.
Exempted Thoroughfares	None	EDSA; C-5; South Super-highway	a) Tow-away zone b) busy road declared by Traffic Enforcement Division of TPMD	On secondary roads	a) Tow-away zone b) busy road declared by Traffic Enforcement Division of TPMD
Window Hours	None	None	None	On secondary roads	On secondary roads
Exempted Vehicles by City Mayors	present	present	present	present	present
Exemption of Saturday, Sunday, Holidays	present	present	present	present	present
Truck Ban	present	Present	present	present	present

Observing from Table 3, the schedule of the number coding scheme of Makati and Taguig differ from the version of MMDA and also with those of Mandaluyong and Quezon City's. Additionally, the presence of exempted thoroughfares on the LGUs that the original version of MMDA does not have, concludes that some of the elements of the scheme made the LGUs cancel out those of the MMDA's as well as with the other LGUs'. With this, limitations of the MMDA are very evident for the reason that the LGUs have the power and authority to legislate their own city ordinances that best suit their local communities. There is also case of the different and often conflicting assignment of their respective jurisdictions when it comes to the roads that they have authority to manage over.

### **Unified Ticketing System: To what extent?**

In showing MMC's goal on how cooperation may solve the worsening traffic problem in the region, the Inter-Agency Council on Traffic (I-ACT), which is a super-agency that is composed of the MMDA, MMC, Philippine National Police-Highway Patrol Group, Land Transportation, Franchising and Regulatory Board, Land Transportation Office (LTO), Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG), and Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), has been put up by the government to focus on the traffic management within Metro Manila and nearby provinces (The Philippine Star, 2018). Together with I-ACT, the Metro Manila mayors agreed to come up with a unified ticketing system for traffic violations. Under the current setup, MMDA, LGUs, LTO, and Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board (LTFRB) have different rates for different traffic violations. Apprehended motorists and drivers would have to pay different fines for their traffic violations, depending on who flagged them and where, which brings conflict and confusion to the motorist. The continuing existence of such varying fee rates results to the persisting presence of discrepancies in the coordination of MMDA and the four LGUs.

It can be inferred that MMDA is still unable to produce a unified ticketing system, or even if it can, the existence of the varying penalties of the cities hinders such. The inability of the MMDA to regulate the LGUs to compel to only one or unified list of penalties will remain a constant challenge to the coordination of the two and shall, in turn, result to a confusion among the motorists using the various roads of Metro Manila due to the differing ordinances and policies.

### **TAGUIG, MANDALUYONG, MAKATI, AND QUEZON CITY'S ENGAGEMENT WITH MMDA Inter-Agency Council on Traffic (I-ACT)**

According to the interviews conducted by the authors, I-ACT has only recently been put up under the current Duterte administration and has been working as a council for traffic since then. The interviewees, however, have different perceptions and levels of relationship with the said traffic agency.

The traffic operations head of Quezon City, Dexter Cardenas, mentions that they were in constant interaction with I-ACT through meetings and communication via SMS. In the interview with Taguig chief of traffic management, Danny Canaveral, I-ACT was said to be an able platform where the different LGUs of Metro Manila were able to voice out and talk about the traffic problems in each of their jurisdiction. In the case of Mandaluyong, on the other hand, Alex Santos indicated that they were able to attend meetings with I-ACT in the past, yet they are now barely called for meetings nor are they even contacted. It can be inferred that there is a difference in how I-ACT interacts with its members – with the case of the LGU traffic division heads' being the main example. It may also be assumed here that the major cities have a more secure relationship with the traffic management council.

### **Attending Meetings hosted by MMDA / MMC**

The 4 local government units' traffic divisions are well-aware of the meetings being conducted by the MMDA / MMC and all are also able to participate in the said monthly meetings. The MMC has also been able to conduct its meetings more than the expected number of times in the past year. This may then signify that there is a consistent interaction with MMDA and LGUs when it comes the monthly meetings, which is also a significant indicator on the coordination of the two.

However, the different LGUs still amend or change those schemes or issuances that they have discussed in the MMC meetings. They modify it to their liking and to the applicability of the schemes towards their respective cities. The resolutions that the LGUs have talked and decided upon in their meetings are still changed once they disseminate it in their cities.

Another problem can be seen in the authors' interview with the traffic head of Mandaluyong wherein he stated that the agendas that have been discussed in the meetings are not distributed nor given to them. That despite being a part of the MMC, if one is not able to attend a specific meeting, that representative or member will not be able to receive any information nor updates with what had transpired. As such, all they are able to do is to wait for the newspaper in order to see the published issuances or ordinances that had been discussed in the meetings, with them neither having a say nor awareness even regarding the matter.

Although, it is the responsibility of the specific members to be consistently present in the MMC meetings, the MMDA should also be



responsible in informing or updating the absent members of what had transpired in order for the latter to have knowledge of what important concerns they have missed during their absence.

### **POSSIBILITY OF RESTRUCTURING MMDA**

Due to the fact that traffic congestion is still increasing, and despite the regularity of meetings conducted by the MMC as well as the communication of the traffic chiefs of the LGUs, coordination between MMDA and the LGUs has been analyzed to be evident and in practice, however, still not enough.

The interviewees have different perceptions about the coordinating mechanism of MMDA. The traffic chief of Mandaluyong views MMDA's coordinating mechanism as not enough and needs to be improved in certain areas. The head of the traffic management office in Taguig indicated that MMDA is doing well for the past months upon the conduct of this study in terms of coordinating with the LGUs in managing traffic in Metro Manila. However, he also insists that these mechanisms are not enough for the reason that MMDA cannot compel the traffic policies enacted by the LGUs to be unified and united. For Quezon City, the chief of traffic management stated that the coordinating framework of MMDA is not enough and that there is a lack of presence of MMDA traffic officers in the national roads such as EDSA and C-5. On the other hand, in contrast with these, Makati City's traffic chief stated that the coordinating mechanism of MMDA with the LGUs are enough and gets better as time passes by. A more detailed and organized set of data regarding these can be seen on Table 3.

The possibility of restructuring MMDA for the traffic chiefs seem impossible since MMDA was created by the President and can only be reformed through a mandate. However, the cities' traffic chiefs are open in suggesting to change the coordinating mechanisms that MMDA engages with. This concludes that the MMDA still lacks a better mechanism in order to promote a unified system of managing traffic amongst the local government units.

In sum, this paper aimed to determine the coexisting and conflicting policies in the implemented traffic regulations of the different cities in Metro Manila. Despite having 14 out of 17 LGUs adopting a uniform traffic code, minor differences still occurred in between because of the added or omitted sections and articles that allows the LGUs to focus on the problems encountered in their respective cities. In addition to this, the interview from the respondents of the study proved that there are also differences in the traffic codes and management capabilities of the MMDA and the LGUs which becomes a problem to the motorists since the varying policies and ordinances per LGU brings confusion to those who use and regulate the roads within

Metro Manila. This confusion results to multiple cases of violations of road users and clogging of roads in Metro Manila.

Despite differences, however, it is important to note that there is still a sense of coordination between the two institutions. MMDA and the LGUs' question of road jurisdiction has been answered in the interviews wherein major and national roads are under the former, and minor city roads for the latter. It was also observed from the interviews that most of the traffic chiefs from the four LGUs, are well-aware of the powers that their local governments have, specifically with regard traffic management. The respondents also showed to have knowledge with regard the R.A. Nos. 7924 and 7160 which are the establishment and creation of the MMDA and LGC, respectively.

Meanwhile, MMC was able to prove via their achievement reports last 2017 that they were able to efficiently conduct meetings more than they were required to do so. However, the regularity of meetings does not mean that issues were resolved or that coordination is strengthened. It entails that the agendas tackled and solved within the council meetings, the issuances proposed, and the papers that mayors and MMDA officers have signed, does not automatically mean that it was put into practice as has been discussed inside the council. The LGUs have tendencies to alter the traffic policies and programs that they have produced inside MMC meetings and create their own versions that are attuned to their respective cities. The same could also be said for I-ACT, that although it could also be seen as a contributor to the interaction of the LGUs with regard traffic management, it was also made known via the interviews that there are still inconsistencies within it. Despite it being an inter-agency relationship, I-ACT has been acting without the knowledge or confirmation from the LGUs that are also its members.

With all these in consideration, it may be stated the MMDA and the LGUs do coordinate and interact with one another but inconsistencies between the two can still be found – which, eventually, may result to them having weak coordinating mechanisms with one another and continue to contribute to the rising problem of traffic and incoordination in the region.

## **CONCLUSION**

Based on the findings of this paper, if the unification of traffic policies of the LGUs in Metro Manila is still not evident and existing, the responsibility of the coordinating mechanism would primarily be relegated to the MMDA. The local governments would also be accountable but only because they are given the power and autonomy on their own cities as per mentioned in the LGC. MMDA would be held responsible because of their failure to create a better coordinating mechanism with the local governments in solving traffic

congestion in EDSA and C-5. Although, it has also been found out that traffic congestion is not that much a result of incoordination between the LGUS and MMDA, but also due to the confusion and conflict that the lack of coordination between the institutions involved gives to the motorists and other groups affected.

The coordinating mechanism presently used by the MMDA with the LGUs in solving traffic congestion achieved mixed results when observed through the indicators used in this paper. In the socio-legal factor, both MMDA and the LGUs know where they stand – they know their own and the other's mandates and institutional framework. Secondly, in the socio-technical factor, communication through regular monthly meetings among the LGUs is an evident factor that there is a communication scheme. However, in regards to the existence of i-ACT, only MMDA, Taguig, Makati, and Quezon City are said to have successful communication schemes.

Finally, in the socio-psychological indicator, MMDA is aware that they are an administrative body that should create a step towards an inter-organizational relationship between them and the LGUs in Metro Manila. On the other hand, the LGUs are also knowledgeable of their power as autonomous bodies that are granted authority to create and alter policies based upon the needs and situation of their local communities. However, due to the fact that they are working separately and deviate from the unified traffic schemes they created through the MMC, they have difficulties in identifying which institution should be followed on specific roads.

These results show that the coordinating mechanism exercised by the MMDA with the four chosen LGUs in addressing traffic congestion in specific Metro Manila roads were partially effective but still have significant flaws. While MMDA is on the right track in terms of MMC holding regular monthly meetings, there are still some gaps in their coordinating mechanism which is essentially needs to be addressed.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Practical Recommendation**

In regards to the coordination concerning traffic management in Metro Manila, traffic chiefs or heads of the local government units should also conduct meetings, at least once a month, to discuss with one another the current situation of the management of traffic and roads within their respective cities. This will not only strengthen the connection between the LGUs but may also lessen the inconsistencies and conflicts in traffic management experienced by the motorists.

MMDA and LGUs, despite being well-aware of the powers that they independently hold, should also consider that such were granted to them for the purpose to serve the citizens that they preside over. Thus, coordination between them is necessary. Establishment of proper communication lines, such as meetings, social media communication, and the like, are thus recommended in order to further improve the connection of the institutions.

A specific example here would be the use of social media applications in order to easily interact with the other officials. This is easier, more convenient, and faster way of connecting with others in today's day and age, compared to that of sending letters via post-offices. Emails are also an option and are more formal but social media accounts are easier to access, especially if there are emergencies that needs to be addressed as soon as possible.

MMC should also provide the minutes of every meeting with regard the traffic management in Metro Manila to the traffic chiefs and heads, whether they be present in the said meetings or not. MMC should be obligated to deliver or send these files either via emails or physical documents in order to remove the lack of information with those actors that are involved. This will eventually give way to proper information dissemination.

### **Policy Recommendation**

A policy has been recommended by the authors in order to implement stricter implementation of coordination and communication between the LGUs in Metro Manila and MMDA in terms of traffic management. This policy shall entail the creation of a "Traffic Management Commission" that shall serve as an institution that has the power to formulate, implement, and execute ordinances and policies regarding traffic, therefore, having administrative, legislative, and police power. This commission shall be the sole authority in the region in managing traffic with the main goal of a united Metro Manila Traffic Management. Hence, the creation of this commission will mitigate the authority of LGUs in their power to create and execute traffic ordinances within their community and will remove MMDA's mandate with regard traffic management.

A "Traffic Coordination Policy" shall be yielded in the MMC and then be ratified in the Congress. This policy shall include the indicators mentioned in this paper which are the socio-legal, socio-technical, and socio-psychological factors, which shall also be the testing measures in the coordination of the created commission and the institutions included.

This policy also aims to remove the hierarchy of authority among the LGUs in terms of traffic policy formulation and implementation in the thoroughfares in Metro Manila. This shall solve the uncoordinated traffic

management in the region and shall instill respect of authority in the newly created Commission in managing traffic. These are all recommended by the authors in order to have coordinated traffic policies and management to solve the undying problems of traffic in Metro Manila.

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