



By Moaz Yusuf Ahmad

First published in [Free Malaysia Today](#)

The members of The Association for the Improvement of Mass-Transit (Transit) have been following the MRT proposal since it was mooted (in fact even earlier than that).

One of our biggest complaints about public transport projects is that we have public displays, not public consultation.

In the case of the MRT project (or any other railway) must follow certain “fixed points” (many of which are also put in place without public consultation) and the operator is only required to share the “optimal” alignment with the public.

This was the way that the LRT and KL monorail were designed, according to the Railways Act.

The recent issue over land acquisition along Jalan Sultan in Kuala Lumpur (part of KL's "Chinatown" for the MRT project, is a clear example of weaknesses in our laws, namely the Railways Act (and its replacement, the Pengangkutan Awam Darat or PAD Act) and the National Land Code.

More importantly, they show us what happens when public consultation is rejected in favour of public display.

No one wants to say that they are "against development" so generally, the public does not pay close attention to government projects unless they are directly affected.

In this case, the issue only came to light when the Form-E notices of land acquisition were “delivered” in the affected areas – even though the station diagrams and maps had been on public display for three months in various government offices and online.

Many people are asking why land must be acquired if the station is underground.

Well, a look at the map of the MRT station alignment (see [here](#)) shows that Jalan Sultan is narrow and curves just east of Jalan Petaling. As a result part of the station box and the tunnel come under existing buildings.

According Section 44 of the National Land Code 1965, in order to build underground you must acquire the land – you cannot simply acquire the underground or above ground portion.

Some of those who object are suggesting that the MRT station should be placed across the river (between Kuala Lumpur railway station and the Pos Malaysia headquarters), or under the parking lot west of Jalan Panggang.

Unfortunately, in either case, the MRT would still run under buildings, necessitating land acquisition.

Other options

Of course we could amend the section of the National Land Code to make land acquisition unnecessary, but that should have been done many years ago as it would have saved a lot of headache and probably got us a better public transport system.

The problem is that it would also place the government in a tough situation if any land located above an underground tunnel were to collapse.

The other issue that people must realize is that the MRT is passing through Jalan Sultan because of what are described as “fixed points” at KL Sentral and the proposed Warisan Merdeka development – the 100-storey tower that many Malaysians have objected to.

Also, what Prasarana is giving us is the “optimal” alignment between those two points.

Perhaps there are other options that may not be as “optimal” but could still be reasonable choices.

But Prasarana does not have to share the other options with the public, thanks to a quirk in Malaysian law (both in the Railways Act and PAD Act) that has unfortunately not been addressed

In the spirit of compromise, we took a look at those options.

One option would be to route the MRT along Jalan Kinabalu instead. This would require the MRT to pass under the north west corner of the Federal Territory Syariah Court, cross under Jalan Sultan Sulaiman, cross under the east parking lot of Kuala Lumpur railway station, and the fountain garden in front of Wisma Tun Sambanthan.

This would allow a station at Kuala Lumpur railway station (providing an important interchange with KTM services which is not part of the current proposal).

There would also be an interchange with the Pasar Seni LRT station (though it would be a bit of a walk, similar to the walk between Dang Wangi LRT station and Bukit Nanas Monorail station).

The MRT would pass near the Maharajalela monorail station (another interchange), then follow Jalan Stadium past Stadium Merdeka, Stadium Negara, and the Warisan Merdeka development, to finally link with Jalan Bukit Bintang as originally planned.

The bus option

Another advantage of this proposal would be to improve public transport access to Klang bus station by opening up the Jalan Kinabalu roundabout (just south of Pasar Seni LRT station) to buses so they can access the Klang bus stand using Jalan Sultan Mohammed without having to travel through Jalan Petaling and Jalan Sultan.

Actually, this is something that should have been done long ago to make it easier for buses to access Klang bus stand without having to face the jams on Jalan Petaling and Jalan Sultan, and no matter what happens with the MRT proposal it should be done anyways!

The other option is a simple and effective one, and would probably not require any land acquisition – simply route the MRT under Jalan Tun Tan Cheng Lock, placing the Pasar Seni MRT station on the west side of the Klang River just south of the Pos Malaysia headquarters and Menara Dayabumi (which would allow better access to Kuala Lumpur station).

The MRT would then travel under Jalan Tun Tan Cheng Lock to Jalan Pudu, and then tunnel underneath the LRT alignment to a new interchange at Plaza Rakyat and Puduraya bus terminal. From Plaza Rakyat the MRT would turn towards Jalan Bukit Bintang as originally proposed.

As you can imagine, Transit would much rather see the government revive Plaza Rakyat instead of building the Warisan Merdeka.

Perhaps they can rename Plaza Rakyat, calling it Plaza Warisan Rakyat instead.

The advantage of this proposal would be an improved connection to Kuala Lumpur railway station (by locating the MRT station on the west side of the river), as well as an improved connection to the Ampang LRT at Plaza Rakyat.

Since the government has said that they intend to use Puduraya bus terminal to replace Kota Raya (once the express buses are moved out to new terminals at Sungai Buloh and Gombak), this would also allow the MRT to interchange with Kuala Lumpur's current and future main bus terminal.

And most importantly, an important piece of Kuala Lumpur's heritage would be preserved.