



DBKL is in the process of deciding the fate of this pedestrian bridge and lift shaft along Jalan Tun Sambanthan. – Filepic

Preventing next white elephant

Seek stakeholders' views on projects so funds do not go to waste



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Citycism

"THERE can be no taxation without representation. If you take bread from the people, you must be accountable to them."

What one angry resident said almost 15 years ago remains in my mind and still holds true today.

I have heard different versions repeated to me by disgruntled people throughout my years as a journalist.

Most of the time, it was aimed at local authorities like Kuala Lumpur City Hall (DBKL) with the recurring theme: "Why was I not consulted about this project?"

As a ratepayer, you should be informed about developments in your neighborhood.

If there is a project happening in your backyard, be it road widening, a new kindergarten or upcoming housing project, you should be invited to give feedback.

After all, a fundamental tenet of good governance is the right to pre-consultation as per Section 12A of the Town and Country Planning (Amendment) Act 2001, which requires DBKL to notify the public of any development plans in their township.

The need for public engagement is essential, especially for something intended to benefit the community.

One project that comes to mind is the RM110mil traffic dispersal scheme in Brickfields and Bangsar in 2010.

It involved the construction of five bridges in Jalan Tun Sambanthan and Jalan Sultan Abdul Samad.

These bridges cost RM11mil

and were touted as a project that would benefit the community, especially the visually impaired and the disabled.

However, from the moment it was mooted to the point of construction, many groups including the Malaysian Association for the Blind (MAB) as well as Selangor and Federal Territory Association for the Mentally Handicapped were opposed to the project.

They and other stakeholders predicted it would become white elephants.

In June this year, the bridge near MAB was demolished and the lift shaft at the Wisma Harapan bridge was removed as well.

These stakeholders had asked for a signalised pedestrian or zebra crossing, but what they got were structures that benefitted nobody.

Not only were the bridges not used, they were taken over by vagrants and drug addicts.

Three of the bridges with lift shafts became a rubbish dumping ground and were under lock and key for years.

And now, the fate of a third bridge is being discussed.

Would these bridges have been built if stakeholders were consulted and their views taken into account? Probably not.

Another issue that upsets the city's residents is the cutting down of mature trees.

In many cases, no prior notice was given by DBKL.

Residents in Taman Seputeh and Damansara Heights claimed that they were not informed before contractors showed up.

They said no proof was shown to them on the need to cut down these trees, many of which had stood for decades.

Unfortunately, no one is, has or will be held accountable for these bad decisions.

Until and unless DBKL takes the views of stakeholders seriously, the only certainty is that more bad decisions will be made, and more public funds wasted.