



PRESS STATEMENT

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Sarawak Metro set to reach more milestones for KUTS project this year

KUCHING: Sarawak Metro Sdn Bhd (Sarawak Metro) is looking forward to reaching more milestones this year, particularly in the development of Phase 1 of the Kuching Urban Transportation System (KUTS) Project.

According to KUTS Project Director, Zafrin Zakaria, one of the most significant milestones expected for 2023 would be the implementation of the proof-of-concept (POC) exercise for the ART in Kuching, scheduled in the third quarter of this year.

“This will also be the first opportunity for locals to have a look at the ART vehicle,” Zafrin said during his presentation at the ‘Sustainable Future Conference’ organised by Curtin Academy at the Curtin University, Malaysia campus in Miri, today.

He added that the milestones expected to be charted in 2023 will build upon last year’s achievements, which included signing of letters of award for the KUTS Project’s System Package 1 and System Package 2 in July and November, respectively; as well as the start of construction works that began with the advanced works for the ART depot in Rembus, Kota Samarahan in the fourth quarter of last year. The official launch of Phase 1 of the KUTS Project was also held last December, to coincide with the start of the advanced works for the Rembus Depot.

Zafrin also highlighted that Sarawak Metro’s efforts in modernising the public transport system in Kuching was also in tandem with the Sarawak Government’s initiative to decarbonise public transportation through the adoption of zero emission vehicles.

“The ART vehicle will be powered by hydrogen fuel cells; an effort that we are aligning with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) on climate change,” he said, adding that the move is also in support of the Government’s initiative to advance the hydrogen economy as part of Sarawak’s transformation into an advanced State by 2030.

Sarawak Metro, which is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Sarawak Economic Development Corporation (SEDC) is developing three lines under Phase 1 of the KUTS Project, namely: the Blue Line from Rembus in Kota Samarahan to Hikmah Exchange in Kuching city, covering a distance of 27.6km); the Red Line from Kuching Sentral to Pending (12.3km); and the Green Line from Pending to Damai Central in Santubong (30km). The proposed routes for the three lines, totalling 69.9km, will be constructed mostly at road level (at-grade), while less than 20 per cent of the alignment will be elevated.

Apart from easing traffic congestion in Greater Kuching, the aim of developing a modern public transportation network is also to support the Government’s future development plans, said Zafrin, citing the Green Line as an example of aligning the goals of the project with the aspirations to realise the full potential of the Damai Peninsula Master Plan, which will be implemented by SEDC.

“The ART will support the major development in this seaside resort area and we expect greater ridership demand in the area in the future.”

The participants of the Sustainable Future Conference were also informed that the ART vehicle is a hybrid vehicle – a cross between a train, a bus and a tram – powered by hydrogen fuel cells, uses rubber tyres and runs on virtual tracks on dedicated lanes.

“The ART that we will use for the KUTS project will have three car coaches and each can accommodate 100 passengers.

“The ART is designed with multi-axles and can move bi-directionally, allowing for a higher degree of flexibility to manoeuvre,” Zafrin explained.

He also disclosed that the ART can run on normal road surfaces and has a design speed of up to 70km per hour.

“Although our ART is autonomous to a certain degree, the current legislations do not allow driverless operations of any vehicle on the roads. Hence, we will still have a person at the wheel of our ART.

“And since our ART vehicles are trackless, this also allows us the opportunity to create special routes, to further improve convenience for our passengers.”

As for the ART depot in Rembus, Zafrin explained that it will be built on an 80-acre site and will have facilities like stabling yard, administration & operation control centre, mechanical workshop, infrastructure workshop and refuelling facilities.

“We will also have the feeder bus depot and a hydrogen production plant on the same site,” Zafrin said.

Sarawak Metro’s hydrogen powered feeder buses will operate within a 3km radius from the ART stations; to complement the ART, in providing the first-mile and last-mile connectivity.

Another of SEDC’s wholly-owned subsidiaries – SEDC Energy Sdn Bhd – has been entrusted to construct and operate the hydrogen production plant next to the ART and feeder bus depot, to ensure sufficient supply of green hydrogen for the ART and feeder buses operation.

While Sarawak Metro focuses on providing a modern and reliable public transportation system for Greater Kuching, it also aims to add value to the project by creating a platform for the transfer of technology and know-how through its Socio-Economic Enhancement Development (SEED) Programme and the Transit Oriented Development (TOD) approach, to generate greater economic opportunities for local businesses.

Zafrin said a few locations along the alignment had already been identified as potential TOD areas and these included areas near the Pending station and the interchange station at Simpang Tiga.

As for the SEED Programme, the three key focus areas are the assembly plant and localisation initiative; the centre of excellence initiative, and the readiness programme initiative.

End.

Caption:



Zafrin (fifth left) together with Sarawak Metro's Project Manager (Rolling Stock) Mohd Aizat Mohd Azizan (fourth left) posing for group photograph with other speakers.



Zafrin (seated centre) during the Industry Round Table Plenary session entitled Connecting Sarawak.

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