

Headline	Taking the nation to the next level		
MediaTitle	Focus Malaysia		
Date	05 Jan 2019	Color	Full Color
Section	News	Circulation	16,405
Page No	17,20	Readership	49,215
Language	English	ArticleSize	2197 cm ²
Journalist	JOSEPH WONG	AdValue	RM 37,828
Frequency	Weekly	PR Value	RM 113,484



FocusM | Jan 5-11, 2019

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property

TODs charting the future

Transit-oriented developments (TODs) are fast taking shape in the Klang Valley as the country's public transportation system is undergoing a radical change with the mass rapid transit (MRT) and light rail transit (LRT) changing the way people travel.

These billion-ringgit developments are set to change the way urbanites live, work and play as TODs create their own micro-ecosystems within the city. **P.20-21**



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Taking the nation to the next level

Transit-oriented developments (TODs) are the future of urbanisation in the Klang Valley.

There are already several transit-oriented projects in the Klang Valley and developers are planning for more TODs.

But these projects, valued at billions of ringgit, will not be a replica of one another as each will have its own micro-ecosystem.

Already the mass rapid transit line (MRT) 1 is gradually making an impact on the way the new generation travels.

Also, extended light rail transit (LRT) lines, improved rail services and the emergence of more ride-hailing services are making TOD projects more attractive.

TOD projects have been mushrooming, mimicking and adapting lessons learned from the nation's first transportation hub KL Sentral.

A quick count shows 24 TODs are in working progress in addition to the RM8.3 bil KL Sentral, which has a couple of parcels of undeveloped land yet to be added to the already massive project, says Zerlin Properties Sdn Bhd merger & acquisitions – business space executive Kevin Low.

He tells *FocusM* that Malaysian Resources Corporation Bhd (MRCB), the developer of KL Sentral, is also involved in three other TODs, namely PJ Sentral in Petaling Jaya, Cyberjaya City Centre and Kwasa Sentral in Sungai Buloh, which have a gross development value (GDV) of RM11 bil, RM11 bil and RM10.5 bil respectively.

There are seven TODs along the LRT and Express Rail Link (ERL) routes which are the Subang Jaya LRT station, the Salak Tinggi ERL station, Dang Wangi LRT station, Ara

- **More** TODs are finding its own identity
- **These** compact, walkable, mixed-use developments increase density but are targeted to reduce the dependence on vehicles



by
Joseph Wong

Damansara LRT station, Awan Besar LRT station, Kelana Jaya LRT station and IOI Puchong Jaya LRT station.

"TOD will take the nation's technology hub to the next level. In the near future, we will see six TODs in Bandar Malaysia, near the Tun Razak Exchange, KL Metropolis, DC Residency Kuala Lumpur, Kwasa Damansara and D'Sara Sentral.

"In addition, PR1MA has embarked on several TOD projects in the Klang Valley at various locations – including Cempaka, Pandan Indah, Pandan Jaya, Titiwangsa, Bandar Baru Sentul, Jelatek, Kinrara and Bandar Puteri," Low explains.

And this is not even taking into consideration other mega projects like Eco World Development Group Bhd's RM8.7 bil Bukit Bintang City Centre (BBCC), the RM40 bil Tun Razak Exchange and the yet-to-be revived Bandar Malaysia, which had a GDV of RM160 bil prior to being shelved.

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Why TODs?

"Ideally, the objective of TOD is to foster an ultimate goal that everyone can benefit in our living environment with an efficient public transport system in keeping with the trend of a higher and higher urbanised population," says Veritas Design Group senior architect Lee Chuin Shane.

"Therefore, to classify as a TOD in this sense, as bringing as much benefit as possible to all people by encouraging people to use public transport, we need to continuously explore and improve a well-thought out design and planning strategy [as well as] policies/guidelines for TODs.

"[This is] within the hierarchical setting of the urban context, bringing in true benefits to the people with taxpayer money being spent on the development for stimulating domestic economic growth," he adds.

It is important that TOD is public transport-driven and that its mixed development components are well-connected to the



A draft guideline is being prepared by the authorities for TODs, says Low



Liu: The main aim of TODs is to enhance mobility and productivity



Lee stresses that public transportation must be cheaper and more convenient at a TOD

public transportation stations, Lee says.

With so many developers trying to leverage their properties as TODs, the question is how a property development can qualify as a viable TOD.

The main objective of a TOD is to enhance mobility and productivity of the urban population

as well optimise the land usage around the transit station, explains Mount Assets Solutions Sdn Bhd managing director David Liu.

Property developments that happen to be too far away from transit stations cannot be considered as TODs as they are not directly linked to the stations and

therefore most people will not enjoy the benefit of an effective public transportation system, he says.

"A typical TOD shall ideally be within 400m to 800m to a station which represents a pedestrian's walking distance of five to 10 minutes," he explains.

Unfortunately, there is no universal definition for a TOD as the property need not contain every component, namely residential, commercial, office, retail and hotel, to qualify as one, says a property analyst.

"If you look at iUtama Shopping Centre and iPowerhouse, there is no residential component to these TODs and yet they are classified as such," he notes.

"A property can be just one component and still be called a TOD for the fact that it is connected to a transit station."

That said, there are guidelines regarding such developments. "There is a draft guideline that is being prepared by the FDTCP (Federal Department of Town and Country Planning)," says Zerlin's Low.

It is believed to be in line with the National Physical Plan

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Policy that states that "high priority shall be given to achieve energy-efficient compact cities," he adds.

"Here 'liveable compact development' is described as a method that places a mix of high intensity uses within a 400m radius of rail- or bus-based transit station, and where public transport, walking and cycling are the main modes of transportation," he explains.

Any distance further may not be beneficial for users or buyers of units more than 500m without other amenities such as covered walkway or elevated pedestrian bridge over busy roads, adds Lee.

There are also pedestrian or cyclist safety concerns to be considered, he says.

Nevertheless, Liu believes

that moving forward, TODs is a trend as it is relevant to market needs.

"For example, [in the past] residential developments did not focus on security features as it was not what the market or people needed during that time," he points out.

"Now, gated and guarded as well nice landscaping are important features to be considered in landed residential development. As the city develops, it becomes very relevant to have TODs to cater to the modern needs especially in the city."

Ridership must increase

But having the property developed as a TOD is only one part of the puzzle. There are other challenges like ensuring public trans-

portation is cheaper and more convenient than private cars and motorcycles, says Veritas' Lee.

People must see public transportation as the best choice or option for this to take off, he explains.

"On the other hand, private residential developments within the defined TOD zones have become less and less affordable to the majority of the lower income groups and [due to the] slower rise in salaries [versus the price hikes of such properties]," he says.

The question is, are the various income groups benefiting from the TOD master plan, he asks.

Considering that TODs are destined to be a driver of the Malaysian economy, the analyst

says all the aspects of such development do not seem to have been thought out properly.

"The prices of the residential units in TODs are still too high so they are out of reach for the income groups that should be benefiting from the transit stations," he points out.

"Who are the users? If you look at cities around the world, the users of the MRTs and LRTs are the middle income group – the lower side of the M40. The rich won't take public transportation. They have chauffeurs. They have expensive cars.

"If you look at the demographics, the middle-class uses the MRT and LRT while the lower income group generally uses the bus," he says.

This has to be made right if the government is to encourage more people to use public transportation to increase ridership, he contends.

"The future development of transit corridors and associated terminals and stations are the new centres of urban activity and economic catalysts. That also means that the TODs have to be less dependent on vehicles and instigators of pedestrian and transit friendly TODs.

"These compact, walkable, mixed-use developments increase density and in turn reduce the dependence on vehicles," he says.

On the whole, TODs create a thriving ecosystem within a city, and ultimately become a place for residents to create a community, says the analyst.

There are appealing elements of the urban core when integrated into a suburban context that creates a true sense of place that can work in a micro-environment like a TOD, he says.



An artist's impression of the RM8.7 bil Bukit Bintang City Centre (BBCC) project

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