

Davao, Philippines

Technical Assistance

Ongoing

Basic information

Urban area	→	2,444 km ²
Population	→	1.9 million (2023) ¹
Growth rate	→	2.21% (2000-2020)
GDP per capita	→	USD 4,480 (2022)
National GHG emissions per capita	→	1.2 tCO ₂ eq (2022)
Exposure to climate change	→	HIGH



Context

Davao City, located on Mindanao Island, is the third-largest city in the Philippines, with a population of approximately 1.8 million. As the capital of the Davao Region, it serves as the primary urban centre and economic hub on Mindanao Island, playing a key role in the national economy. The Davao Region experienced an impressive annual economic growth rate of 8.1% between 2014 and 2019, exceeding the national average of 6.6%.

Davao City's population grew at an annual rate of about 2.2% from 2000 to 2020. The rapid growth has intensified several urban mobility challenges, particularly traffic congestion. The rapid increase in private vehicles, including cars and motorbikes, combined with the lack of reliable public transport and inadequate infrastructure for non-motorised transport, significantly contributes to congestion in the city's urbanised areas while deteriorating air quality and the urban environment.

Over the past decade, the city has implemented several initiatives to modernise its road network and public transport system. In 2017, Davao City developed a comprehensive Transport Roadmap to address its urban mobility challenges. This roadmap outlines strategies for enhancing the city's transport system, including infrastructure development and traffic management improvements.

In 2023, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) approved a USD 1 billion loan to support the establishment of the Davao Public Transport Modernisation Project (DPTMP). It aims to implement a modern public transport system in Davao City, with modern electric buses and Euro-5 standard diesel buses, standardised operations and reliable timetables, an intelligent transport system to support bus operations, designated bus stops with shelters and lighting, and designated bus lanes in selected road sections. Complementing this major investment, MobiliseYourCity will be supporting a "Complete Streets"² Concept Design Study in 2025. This initiative aims to improve access to public transport, promote active modes, and improve residents' quality of urban life while reducing GHG emissions.

Support from the Partnership

Technical Assistance: Project preparation - Complete streets concept design study

Funded by: Agence Française de Développement (AFD)

Funding amount: EUR 260,000

Implemented by: AFD and ADB through MobiliseYourCity Asia

Local counterpart: Davao City Local Government Unit, DPTMP Project Management Office (PMO) from the Department of Transportation, DPTMP Project Management Unit (PMU) or Davao Bus Office

Supported activities:

The Concept Design Study aims to complement the ongoing DPTMP and introduce a multimodal, inclusive Complete Streets approach through:

1. Non-motorised transport and junction surveys

- Identifying pedestrian and cycling needs
- Mapping safety issues and accessibility gaps

2. Concept design applying Complete Streets principles

- Safe crossings
- Prioritised access to public transport
- Inclusive mobility for users of all abilities

3. Preliminary design of a pilot transit corridor

- Pedestrian and cycling facilities
- Transit access improvements
- Roadway and parking (re)organisation
- Drainage, lighting, and signage upgrades
- Cable car technical review and advisory consultancy

This approach aims to improve safety, accessibility, equity, environmental quality, and connectivity.

Status of project implementation

Project start: 2025 Q4

Expected project completion: 2026 Q3

¹ https://asiantransportobservatory.org/documents/334/Davao_City_urban_state_of_play.pdf

² "Complete streets" is a multimodal approach to roadway design and safety that considers all users of transportation infrastructure. A street is considered complete if it facilitates the safe movement of users of all ages, abilities, and transportation modes. This approach allows urban communities to reach safety, accessibility, equity, connectivity, mobility, and environmental goals.

Insights from practice: lessons learned from the project

The project redesigns the corridor using a complete streets approach while minimising disruption and avoiding land acquisition to ensure timely implementation.

The project introduces a new approach to road user sharing, with particular attention to minimising disruption to all road users and to people living or operating businesses along the corridor. The road will be redesigned according to a complete streets approach, while avoiding land acquisition to prevent delays to future civil works. While operations are on track for 2026, particular attention should be paid to ensuring that the preliminary design for a pilot corridor can be implemented immediately after design completion; this will require close coordination among a complex set of stakeholders. Other sources (July 2025) note that the pilot operations may now start in 2027, after earlier delays.

Highlights in the past year

Embedding sustainability into DPTMP modernisation

The partnership among AFD, ADB, and MobiliseYourCity is structured to integrate sustainability and multimodality into the Davao Public Transport Modernisation Project (DPTMP). While ADB leads large-scale public transport investments, MobiliseYourCity provides targeted technical assistance to ensure these investments support inclusive, climate-aligned, and people-centred mobility outcomes.

Key lessons from planning and implementation

Ongoing DPTMP planning has underscored the importance of strong local stakeholder engagement, the need for flexible planning and design solutions adapted to corridor-level constraints, and the value of introducing innovative concepts on active mobility alongside public transport upgrades.

A milestone and the way forward

In August 2024, Davao officially joined the MobiliseYourCity Partnership, marking a key step in its sustainable mobility transition. Building on this momentum, the 2025–2026 Complete Streets Study will play a central role in ensuring that public transport modernisation is fully integrated with accessible, inclusive, and multimodal street design.

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