



Headline	For a pedestrian-friendly city
MediaTitle	The Star
Date	30 May 2017
Section	Metro
Page No	1T03
Language	English
Journalist	Stories by SHALINIRAVINDRAN
Frequency	Daily



**Smoother traffic flow:** Kuala Lumpur City Hall (DBKL) plans to disallow parking bays in future developments in the Central Business District. Wider and safer pedestrian walkways such as this upgraded one in Jalan Tuanku Abdul Rahman are needed to encourage people to use public transport instead of driving into the city. — AZMAN GHANI / The Star

## For a pedestrian-friendly city

The idea to do away with parking bays in future KL developments is good as it will encourage other means of movement. But all-round efforts to reduce congestion and improve the public transport system must come first. > 2&3



This is a typical scenario for most car parks in Kuala Lumpur which is unable to cater to the high demand for parking bays. — Photos: AZMAN GHANI / The Star

Stories by **SHALINI RAVINDRAN**  
shalinravindran@thestar.com.my

REDUCING or limiting the number of indoor parking bays in future developments of commercial buildings may not be a bad thing, but the idea needs corresponding infrastructure and policy, say experts.

The issue was hotly debated among Malaysians when it was reported that Kuala Lumpur City Hall (DBKL) proposed to limit the construction of parking bays, in future developments, in the Central Business District (CBD).

Kuala Lumpur's CBD comprises Bukit Bintang and Imbi and those around the Kuala Lumpur City Centre (KLCC).

This idea was put forward by Federal Territories Minister Datuk Seri Tengku Adnan Tengku Mansor to address congestion in Kuala Lumpur and encourage the use of public transportation.

He said it was a trend in developed cities around the world not to have parking bays in buildings, and it was time Kuala Lumpur followed suit.

Kuala Lumpur mayor Datuk Mohd Amin Nordin Abdul Aziz said the move would only be implemented once the Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) network was ready. Malaysian Institute of Planners

## Steering people from driving into the city

Mayor says limiting the number of parking bays will only be implemented once the MRT network is ready

president (MIP) Ihsan Zainal Mokhtar said discouraging cars from entering the CBD could be a good idea as long as it was looked at more comprehensively.

"The school of thought is that we want to encourage people to walk and cycle more and have fewer cars in the city centre.

"But, reducing carpark bays can only be one component of the idea.

"For example, if the idea is to move people away from using their personal vehicles to commute to work, we must have alternatives in place.

"The thinking of the public is that it is still more practical to be in a car when the public transport system was not up to the mark yet.

"Also, it is still cheaper to travel by car to our destinations as carpark rates are still affordable," he said, adding that the emphasis was on the commuting public as most were single-occupancy vehicles (SOV).

### Gearing up towards pedestrianisation

The general consensus is that while the idea of limiting the number of carpark bays could be good, other components – more importantly, making the streets pedestrian-friendly – need to be looked at.

"The city is working towards it," Ihsan said.

At Jalan Tuanku Abdul Rahman, for example, DBKL has widened

pedestrian walkways and beautified it with landscaping.

"This is a high foot-traffic area and near several train stations. If people are expected to walk the streets must be comfortable and safe.

"If we have a foot path that is only a metre wide, that is not ideal. Kerbs that are too high are not conducive for those with disability," he said.

He added that studies have shown that people walked comfortably within a 400m distance, but this could be increased with the right elements.

"It is not just designating the walkway; the journey should be pleasing. This could mean good materials used for the pavement,



One of the main causes of traffic congestion are single-occupancy vehicles. In an effort to reduce traffic jams, DBKL plans to stop the construction of parking bays in new developments in the city's CBD.

“If the idea is to move people away from using their personal vehicles to commute to work, we must have alternatives in place.”

Ihsan Zainal Mokhtar



“Once you provide all the solutions and have addressed the issues, then the proposal is feasible.”

Hamdan Abdul Majeed



providing seating every few hundred metres and that too should not be exposed to the elements.

“We can make the walk itself enjoyable, especially in the city centre with water features, landscaping or murals,” said Ihsan.

Ihsan agreed that vehicular traffic should be removed from certain parts of the city to make it exclusive to pedestrians.

“It has been proven in many cities that when some streets are closed to traffic or made semi-pedestrian, businesses flourish.

“In Kuala Lumpur in the early days, streets were designed to be narrow as they were not intended for the number of cars that we have now. So these streets can be considered to be closed to traffic,” he said citing Petaling Street, Jalan Sultan and Masjid India as prime examples for this exercise.

### The carpark challenge

According to the Malaysian Automotive Association, 580,124 new passenger and commercial vehicles were registered in Malaysia last year alone.

Expecting to provide parking space for each driver into the city was not feasible, said Think City executive director Hamdan Abdul Majeed.

“There is a growing supply of

cars and the solution is not to keep increasing parking spaces as there is a limit to how much space can be provided.

“We are seeing a shift in the mobility to city from private transport to public transport.

“Investments in public transportation system has increased significantly over the last decade and there continues to be further effort in improving it.

“Once you provide all the solutions and have addressed the issues, then the proposal is feasible.

“Only then you have proactive policies to discourage people from driving, such as limiting the number of parking bays.

“It does not mean that there will not be any, but the supply would not be as it is today,” he said.

Ihsan concurred saying that another option was to create a parking fee system with zones to reduce traffic in urban areas.

“It makes parking in different zones expensive, and the longer you park, the more expensive it gets,” he said.

In a bold move last year, DBKL increased the charges at council-owned parking bays within the CBD by 150%.

The hike went from 80sen an hour to RM1.50 for the first hour,

and RM2.50 for subsequent hours. Rates were also increased in zones outside the city, from 50sen an hour to 80sen.

DBKL defended the increase saying that the parking rate had not been reviewed for the past 40 years and the charges were still lower than other Asian countries.

“Parking spaces are also valuable real estate and have potential to be utilised for many different functions,” Hamdan said, adding that existing parking structures could be reused adaptively.

Hamdan pointed out that for a variety of reasons, from higher gas prices to greater densification, to better transit options, city residents would drive fewer cars.

### Tweaking existing transport infrastructure

The current state of public transportation is not up to par for consistent travel into the city centre, was one of the arguments put forward in the debate against the idea.

Ihsan, however, said some of these issues could be solved by refining the existing infrastructure.

“We already have basic public transportation especially buses. But, for buses to be on time, there

must be less cars on the road so they are not caught in traffic - this is a catch-22 situation,” he said.

“But, we can incorporate examples from other cities where this has proven successful, like Curitiba in Brazil.”

Bus stops, in many other cities, may consist of just a signage and perhaps a bench but they do it differently in Curitiba.

In the middle of the street are two tube-shaped stations, raised from ground level and protected from the elements, that open on to two-way express lanes.

These lanes are reserved for long buses, which zip past slower vehicles and quickly shuttle passengers on and off at the stations on outward-folding ramps.

“Stations placed on medians along the routes allows the bus to run at speeds comparable to light rail, while dramatically reducing cost.

“This does not mean that only one policy is applicable to all streets, but what we can do is restudy the bus lane system to improve public transportation,” Ihsan said.

He added that even simple measures like having a universal ticketing system, like London's Oyster card, would allow for more seamless travel.