



**The 7 Commandments for Lives and Livelihoods**  
*Amongst the Most Comprehensive Health Measures in the World*  
**16 September 2020**

The undersigned business and professional organizations call for revitalizing the country safely and restoring livelihoods, by gradually increasing public transport capacity, in conjunction with the “The 7 Commandments” of public health measures proposed yesterday by an expert panel of doctors led by former DOH Secretary Dr. Manuel Dayrit (please see attached).

We recognize that most Filipinos still need to move around to reach their workplaces, meet essential daily needs, and provide assistance to the vulnerable sectors. Limiting public transportation encourages more crowding and longer queuing, which lead to further exposure to the virus. People should practice physical distancing where appropriate but be given alternative options to relax this requirement where the risks are manageable.

We believe that the safe and gradual increase in public transport capacity is a critical step towards achieving the long-term objective of building a revitalized and more resilient Philippines. To restart the economy safely, there is a need to immediately focus on rebuilding national confidence through vigilance, discipline, and education through the 5T’s Plan (see below), of which Transportation is at present the key bottleneck.

- A. T3 (Test, Trace, Treat): Public and private collaboration to support the National Task Force’s plan of “Prevent, Detect, Isolate, Treat, and Recover (PDITR) and ensure safety of workplace
- B. Transportation: Safe public transportation to enable mobility of consumers and workers
- C. Transformation: Shifting mindsets to shared responsibility among government, citizens, and the private sector to enable coexistence with the virus

Under Transportation, we must both (a) increase the overall supply of various modes of transport (buses, trains, jeeps, TNVS, motorcycle taxis, walking, cycling, and shuttles), and (b) increase vehicle capacity utilization safely, to ensure that more Filipinos can go back to work.

In this view, we recommend that the government adopts “The 7 Commandments”, which their medical expert proponents believe allow us to manage viral transmissions well even when reducing physical distancing requirements. Backed by science and global best practices, this combination of health measures will be one of the strictest in the world and will enable better public transport:

1. Wearing of proper **face masks**
2. Wearing of **face shields**
3. **No talking** and **no eating**
4. Adequate **ventilation**
5. Frequent and proper **disinfection**
6. **No symptomatic** passengers
7. **Appropriate physical distancing**



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We believe a combination of these measures will be amongst the most comprehensive in the world. By ensuring strict enforcement, we would be able to relax physical distancing requirements in order to increase our current public transport capacity, while minimizing the spread of the virus.

With regards to appropriate physical distancing, the World Health Organization recommends: **“To the extent possible, keep a distance of at least 1 meter from other passengers when purchasing tickets, waiting to board public transport, and moving around public transport stations.”**<sup>1</sup>

We agree with Dr. Dayrit and the expert panel of doctors that “while WHO recommends keeping a distance of 1 meter from other passengers to the extent possible, it allows for adjustments based on context. Given our other recommended health interventions, we propose the gradual reduction of the physical distancing norm **during transit** to 0.5 meters or lower. Based on our review of the scientific literature and the policies and experiences of neighboring countries, we believe the evidence shows physical distancing can be maintained below 1 meter, so long as other health measures are also implemented.”

Given the above recommendations, we support the Department of Transportation’s plans to gradually relax distancing so long as the 7 Commandments are well communicated and strictly enforced alongside it. Its rollout must be done with the proper pace and caution under monitoring and evaluation by public health experts, who can recommend a return to stricter measures should the situation require it. We believe that the issues of safety and supply are both addressed and given equal importance. We need to adopt a holistic mindset in approaching this pandemic situation in order to revitalize the country safely.

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*For further information, please contact Romeo Bernardo, Vice Chairman of Foundation for Economic Freedom at [romeo.lopez.bernardo@gmail.com](mailto:romeo.lopez.bernardo@gmail.com).*

<sup>1</sup> WHO\_Europe. (2020, April 22). 🚶 If you need to use public transport, make sure to practice physical distancing and keep at least one metre from other passengers.#COVID19 #coronavirus [Tweet]. [https://twitter.com/who\\_europe/status/1252902465378430976](https://twitter.com/who_europe/status/1252902465378430976)

**Seven Commandments To Revitalize the Country Safely**  
*Medical Experts Recommend Strict Health Protocols for Public Transportation*  
September 15, 2020

While the efforts of the IATF, the Department of Health, and the One Hospital Command to address the COVID-19 pandemic have successfully increased and improved current hospital capacity, there is now an urgent need to revitalize our country. We need to emerge from the current recession that has severely impacted livelihoods. This will enable our countrymen to work again, so that they can feed their families and support their communities. The economic enablement of Filipinos translates to their health and welfare.

However, we cannot build back the economy without increasing public transport capacity, which has been operating at only 20-30% of pre-pandemic levels due to understandable fears of outbreaks arising from congested public transport spaces.

We write this statement as an expert panel of doctors with diverse backgrounds, including public health, epidemiology and infectious diseases, all with the intention of seeing our country get back on its feet as safely as possible. What we outline below was presented to several IATF members yesterday, September 14, 2020, as part of a more comprehensive set of recommendations to aid the country in reviving the economy while adhering to comprehensive public health standards.

We advocate strictly implementing what we call the **7 Commandments**, for all public transportation:

1. Wearing of proper **face masks**
2. Wearing of **face shields**
3. **No talking** and **no eating**
4. Adequate **ventilation**
5. Frequent and proper **disinfection**
6. **No symptomatic** passengers
7. **Appropriate physical distancing**

We believe that the combination of these measures will be amongst the most comprehensive in the world, based on our consultation with international experts. These 7 Commandments need to be strictly enforced and independently monitored in their implementation. By imposing these strict measures, we believe we can gradually relax social distancing rules, in order to double or even triple our current public transport capacity, without compromising public health.

A recent study from Duke University<sup>2</sup>, for example, shows that surgical masks reduce droplet transmission by up to 99%, and that the simple act of not talking can reduce droplet counts by up to 4x. In addition, a meta-analysis published on June 22, 2020 in *The Lancets*, a leading

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<sup>2</sup> Fischer, E.P., Fischer, M.C., Grass, D., Henrion, I., Warren, S.W., Westman, E. (2020, Sept 2). *Low-cost measurement of face mask efficacy for filtering expelled droplets during speech*. *ScienceAdvances*. <https://advances.sciencemag.org/content/6/36/eabd3083>

<sup>3</sup> Chu, D.K., Akl, A., Duda, S., Solo, K., Yaacoub, S., Schünemann, H., et al. (2020, June 1). *Physical distancing, face masks, and eye protection to prevent person-to-person transmission of SARS-CoV-2 and COVID-19: a systematic*

international medical journal, shows that face masks and face shields can independently reduce the chance of viral transmission by up to 5-fold and 3-fold, respectively. In China, Japan, Korea, Singapore, Taiwan, Vietnam, and other countries, passengers wear face masks while sitting side-by-side in trains, while COVID cases remain manageable.

With regards to appropriate physical distancing, the World Health Organization recommends: **“To the extent possible, keep a distance of at least 1 meter from other passengers when purchasing tickets, waiting to board public transport, and moving around public transport stations.”**<sup>4</sup>

While WHO recommends keeping a distance of 1 meter from other passengers to the extent possible, it allows for adjustments based on context. Given our other recommended health interventions, we propose the gradual reduction of the physical distancing norm **during transit** to 0.5 meters or lower. Based on our review of the scientific literature and the policies and experiences of neighboring countries, we believe the evidence shows physical distancing can be maintained below 1 meter, so long as other health measures are also implemented.

To be clear, there are many more layers to our proposal and the studies we are reviewing. Public policy has no quick-and-easy solutions, and addressing the transport crisis in this pandemic is no exception. Where possible, we would like to engage in further dialogue with the IATF, medical and transportation experts, and other stakeholders, about our proposal. We also encourage a discussion of other groups’ thoughts on health and other matters, including the overall increase of the supply of safe public transportation such as rail, buses, jeepneys, motorcycle taxis, and Transport Network Vehicle Services (TNVS), and the use of other options such as cycling, walking, and private shuttles. We also recommend the full institutionalization of private sector expert consultation to further improve our overall management of the economy and public health.

The comparative toll on Filipinos from a further prolonged recession is much more devastating than the manageable risks entailed in our plan. We believe that there is a way forward that carefully balances a careful reopening of public transport capacity, with public health, while allowing purposeful flexibility to re-adjust measures based on actual and evolving data from the ground.

The success of this plan is by no means guaranteed. It relies on the proper implementation and enforcement of these measures by the relevant agencies. Critically, it also requires the education of the public, who must take full responsibility for compliance with the 7 Commandments. This plan’s success also rests on continuous monitoring and data-driven evaluation by public health experts.

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*review and meta-analysis.* The Lancet. [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(20\)31142-9/fulltext#seccestitle170](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(20)31142-9/fulltext#seccestitle170)

<sup>4</sup> WHO\_Europe. (2020, April 22). 🗺️ If you need to use public transport, make sure to practice physical distancing and keep at least one metre from other passengers.#COVID19 #coronavirus [Tweet]. [https://twitter.com/who\\_europe/status/1252902465378430976](https://twitter.com/who_europe/status/1252902465378430976)

It is our hope that by working together, we can implement these public health measures to revitalize our country safely and give Filipinos their lives back.

Respectfully,

Dr. Manuel M. Dayrit  
Former Secretary  
Department of Health

Dr. Vicente Belizario, Jr.  
Dean  
College of Public Health  
UP Manila

Dr. Teodoro Herbosa  
Special Advisor  
NTF against COVID-19  
Former Undersecretary  
Department of Health

Dr. Manuel Francisco T. Roxas  
Director  
Philippine College of Surgeons Cancer Commission

Dr. Esperanza Cabral  
Former Secretary  
Department of Health

Dr. Ma. Dominga Padilla  
Founder and CEO of Eye Bank Foundation of the Philippines

Dr. Rontgene Solante  
Infectious Disease Specialist

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*Dr. Manuel M. Dayrit is leading the medical panel of experts that has submitted its recommendations to the IATF. For further information please contact him at 0925 – 514 – 0495 or mdayrit@ateneo.edu.*