

## **Wee: Time to complete ECRL, state govt and ruler's concerns resolved**

**Malaysiakini**

**05 April 2021**

**Annabelle Lee**

Amid continued opposition from the Selangor government, Transport Minister Wee Ka Siong has insisted that Putrajaya “move on” with constructing the final phase of the East Coast Rail Link (ECRL) project.

He said all of the state government's concerns have been resolved and that he also addressed Sultan Sharafuddin Idris Shah's worries at an audience with the ruler.

At a press conference this morning, Wee (above) showed how the latest “ECRL 3.0” alignment would cost less and carry more cargo. He also said it would have a less negative impact on local communities and the environment.

The minister repeatedly said the Temerloh-Bentong-ITT Gombak-Serendah Baru-Puncak Alam-Kapar-Jalan Kastam Port Klang-Northport/Southport alignment was the best option and would “benefit” Selangor.

“The northern alignment will indirectly bring many benefits to Selangor, especially with the building of many stations (five stations in the state) and economic spillover in Gombak, Serendah and Port Klang,” he added.

Wee shared that the Transport Ministry and ECRL representatives previously held 37 engagement sessions with 17 Selangor government agencies over the past nine months to understand their concerns.

As a result, he said, the alignment was altered to include a tunnel to avoid the Batu Dam and an elevated track to avoid the Klang Gates Quartz Ridge.

The ministry also adjusted the proposed track in response to the state ruler’s comments about the same dam and its impact on Orang Asli villages.

“I must say that all the concerns raised by the Duli Yang Maha Mulia, we have already taken into consideration.

“Even the (Selangor) Menteri Besar’s (Amirudin Shari) concerns and whatnot,” he said.

Wee stressed that the federal government intends to “move on” with this “final” alignment and hoped all state governments will be onboard.

“But we must move on. That’s why it was brought to the cabinet and the cabinet said ‘move on’...

“We are going to work with the states, no matter what. We still have to work with the states. Other states, may not be 100 percent happy with what we planned (so) they talk to us, then we find a way how to do it, how to avoid some of the problems,” he said.

Wee sidestepped questions on what actions Putrajaya would take if Selangor continued to oppose the northern alignment.

He added that Perikatan Nasional is in the midst of drafting a supplementary agreement with the main contractor, China Communications Construction Company Limited (CCCC), but he stopped short of offering a timeline for when it will be signed.

### **ECRL 3.0 is RM50 billion**

With the ECRL 3.0 alignment, Wee said the megaproject will cost RM50 billion in taxpayers' funds.

This, he contended, was the cheapest when compared to both BN and Pakatan

Harapan's proposed tracks.

He further claimed that the former prime minister's special envoy, Daim Zainuddin, had merely disclosed "a portion" of the costs when the latter announced that ECRL price tag had been pared down to RM44 billion.

"I regret to inform the media that this was only a portion of the costs," he said.

Wee said the entire megaproject under Harapan would actually have cost a total of RM52.28 billion when accounting for supplementary costs, abandonment costs plus the cost of constructing the Serendah bypass.

The ECRL 3.0 under PN will cost less, but will still incorporate the Serendah bypass and portions of BN's original northern alignment.

Selangor's 'political' reasons

Costs aside, Wee said the northern alignment would be able to transport 960,000 more passengers and carry 17.12 tons more cargo than the southern alignment.

Despite being 25km longer at 665km, he expected the ECRL 3.0 to also be operational by 2027.

The minister shared that the latest iteration will require less land acquisition - just 4,302 lots rather than 6,038 lots with the southern alignment.

Furthermore, ECRL 3.0 will affect two Orang Asli villages rather than seven villages with the southern alignment. It will cut through two plots of Malay reserve land, one less than ECRL 2.0.

He said both alignments will cut through seven forest reserves including Templer (Selangor), Ulu Gombak (Selangor), Serendah (Selangor) and Rantau Panjang (Kelantan).

With all these changes, Wee regretted that the latest alignment failed to get full support from the Selangor government.

“We tried to convince the state government but unfortunately due to some reasons - or political reasons - we didn't get some of the executive council members to support us, despite the fact that we have answered each and everyone,” he said.

**Copyright © 1999-2012 Mkini Dotcom Sdn. Bhd**

Source: <https://www.malaysiakini.com/news/569509>