

Two become one - Can we merge the ERL and HSR?

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Earlier this week, Tiger happened upon a report that suggested that the government was considering a proposal to expand the Express Rail Link (ERL) to include stops in Seremban and Malacca. If you remember, there is also a proposal to build a high speed rail link to Singapore which will stop in those two cities. Seems a bit redundant to Tiger, which made her wonder if maybe two can become one.

Tiger has heard that too much of a good thing is bad, and she does agree. As such, Tiger's attention was piqued a few days ago, when she read that the Express Rail Link (ERL) might be extended all the way to Malacca, via Seremban.

The news story caught this cat's attention for several reasons, but mainly because Tiger has always been a tad wary about cross-country rail links, having had to give up precious acres of her pristine jungle before.

The report also just plain confused her, and let me assure you that Tiger does not enjoy being confused unless it is when choosing between a prime kancil steak or a juicy rusa shank.

You see, the ERL will not be the first rail link to make stops in Seremban and Malacca, as the KTM's double tracking railway already stops by those fine destinations. Mind you, it will not be the last either, as it is believed that the High Speed Rail (HSR) link will also call at the two cities.

To Tiger's count this makes three links all boasting to be high speed or fast speed and the such - heading down the same or similar routes. Oh, and zero publicly available feasibility studies to back up these proposals of course - those are still pending.

Fear not though, the Land Public Transport Commission (SPAD) are studiously in the process of carrying them out...probably.

Back to the possible ERL expansion, chief executive officer of Express Rail Link Sdn Bhd (ERLSB) Noormah Mohd Noor justified the plan, saying that it was a good idea as it would ease the congestion on the highways.

She said rather than building more roads, it would be prudent to for the government to channel the funds towards rail development. Now even Tiger cannot argue with that logic, no matter how much as she fears that the alignment of new railway links might encroach into her jungle.

Yet, just as there can be too many roads, there also can be too many railway tracks.

Remember that the HSR link which is expected to cost at least RM40 billion, and which very much appears to be the current pet project of the government will also call at stations in Seremban and Malacca.

For those without elephant capacity memory, allow Tiger to recap the quick facts of the HSR.

The proposal is for a high speed rail link that will connect Kuala Lumpur to Singapore in 90 minutes via its direct service. There will also reportedly be an inter-city service, that will have multiple stops along the journey.

SPAD are in the process of undertaking feasibility studies and while there is no indication as to when this will be completed, discussions are already underway with the representatives of Singapore to iron out the details.

It is also worth noting that the HSR is seen as a key project under the Greater Kuala Lumpur national key economic area (NKEA). A tender is expected to be called by the end of this year, and as such, Tiger would venture a guess that the project is fairly far along.

Of course Tiger's frequent readers will know that she has roared about this project before- largely over concerns that there are no publicly available feasibility studies to scrutinise and aside from the eye-catching headline every now and then, there really is not much information available about this multi-billion project.. For a catch up of KiniBiz's coverage, please go [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#).

So Tiger's question is this - does the country need two rail links both with similar routes? While it is hard to reach a definite conclusion without proper feasibility studies, let us for the sake of the argument, say no.

Now before you point it out, Tiger is well aware that the ERL proposal only (for now) goes up to Malacca and the HSR all the way to Singapore. What this cat is suggesting is that instead of building both, the HSR route is merged into ERL's plans for expansion.

This way instead of having two lines running along the same alignment, we will have just one travelling at speeds commonly categorised at fast speed rail travel (although the ERL folks categorise themselves as high speed).

ERLSB shareholders are YTL Corporation Bhd, Lembaga Tabung Haji Bhd and Trisilco Equity Sdn Bhd with 50%, 40% and 10% respectively. If you remember, YTL Corp were the ones who proposed a high speed rail link with Singapore in the first place.

Moreover ERLSB has said that it will bid for any HSR project. The company has both the experience in building and running such a rail link. Tiger believes that it might be worthwhile for SPAD to consider if they can merge the two proposals into one concerted and well laid out plan.

Other benefits include the fact that the ERL's main terminal is at KL Sentral. which makes it accessible via a wide range of transportations options. It also goes past the KLIA and klia2 terminals, which will be a great convenience for folks along the route who need to get to the country's main airport to catch their international flights.

And yes Tiger is aware that the ride will not quite take the headline grabbing 90 minutes to zip down to Singapore – but this link will be fast, effective and most importantly, not redundant. At a time when the government is said to be rationalising its mega-project plans, this just might work.

GRRRRR!

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