

## Press Statement

Date: 20 December 2020

PeTUA welcomes the recently announced upgrade plan by both Penang Port Commission (“PPC”) and Penang Port Sdn Bhd (“PPSB”) which involve introducing the Water Bus service between Pengkalan Sultan Abdul Halim (Butterworth) and Swettenham Pier (George Town) while reducing the dependency on the existing, and iconic ferry vessels which had already way pass its healthy service life.

Introduction of the water bus service, which will be run by PPSB using catamaran vessel is a big win for all the pedestrian users as it will reduce the travel time between both shores, and it is much faster for each trip to achieve optimal load for each trip in a shorter time, thus making the ferry service more efficient while achieving the balance of cost and level of service.

While we understand the nostalgia and the historical value of the existing ferry vessels, which many had expressed strongly against retiring them, we must emphasize that the existing vessels are no longer suitable to continue operating as it used to be. The RoRo vessels require to have its engine stay running throughout its operation hours which may span more than 12 hours in a day, it will go through a lot of stress that requires flawless maintenance regime to keep it running even for a brand-new vessel, let alone vessel that had been running for the last 4 decades.

To keep the existing fleet of vessels running like usual after overhaul and repair as proposed by some parties, for the foreseeable future is akin to driving a recently restored vintage car from Penang to Kuala Lumpur and back daily. Any experienced mechanic would advise against doing so.

However, it is to our concern that part of the plan announced by PPSB was to permanently dock the last 2 serving vessels on Tanjung City Marina and repurpose it as floating restaurant and museum. PeTUA highly discourage the said plan as in our view it is not the best way of preserving the vessels. The preservation of vessels should always consider options that are closest to their original use, which is carrying pedestrian and cars across the Penang straits and it should stay the same, with exception of it being recreational rather than mass transport.

PeTUA view this progress positively and hope that our opinion will be taken into consideration by both PPC & PPSB for the advancement of mobility & heritage preservation. PeTUA stand ready to offer our advice and opinion on the issue for the betterment of the ferry service.