



COMMITTEE REPORT

DATE : JUNE 3, 2026
 TO : THE PRESIDING OFFICER
 FROM : JOINT-COMMITTEE MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE, ENVIRONMENT and NATURAL RESOURCES AND COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS AND INFRASTRUCTURE
 SUBJECT : ENDORSEMENT LETTER FROM MR. BENJAMIN A. BAUTISTA, PROJECT DIRECTOR, UPMO-ROADS MANAGEMENT CLUSTER II (MULTILATERAL), REQUESTING THE ISSUANCE/ENDORSEMENT OF A CERTIFICATE OF NO OBJECTION (CONO) FOR THE AFFECTED TREES WITHIN THE PROJECT ALIGNMENT IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF NAIC, CAVITE, IN CONNECTION WITH THE BATAAN-CAVITE INTERLINK BRIDGE (BCIB) PROJECT

A joint committee meeting was conducted regarding the endorsement letter requesting the issuance/endorsement of a Certificate Of No Objection (CONO) for the affected trees within the project alignment in the Municipality of Naic, Cavite, in connection with the Bataan-Cavite Interlink Bridge (BCIB) Project

The meeting commenced with the introduction of the attendees. Present during the meeting were SB Member Bonifacio M. Atienza Jr. as Chairperson on Committee on Public Works and Infrastructure, SB Member Cesar Ryan Nazareno, SK Federation Pres. Darlaine Mae Benesen, Ms. Kjellen H. Evangelista (OIC-MENRO) representative from MENRO, Mr. Joseph Romoel B. Lofamia (Project Manager), Ms. Jea Marie Diato (Atty III), Ms. Heidee Becerral (Admin Officer V), Ms. Maria Eugenia Karisma M. Carde (Engineer II) and Mr. Peter John D. Cobangbang (PDO II) as representative from DPWH.

During the meeting, the committee noted that prior to the conduct of the committee meeting, representatives from the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) had already met with the Municipal Government and the Sangguniang Bayan regarding their request for the issuance of a Certificate of No Objection (CONO) for the affected trees located within the alignment of the Bataan-Cavite Interlink Bridge (BCIB) Project in the Municipality of Naic, Cavite.

It was explained that the Municipality has an existing ordinance governing the cutting of trees, specifically Ordinance No. 10, Series of 2018, otherwise known as the Environmental Code of the Municipality of Naic. Under Section 33(c) thereof, “Any person who shall engage in cutting, gathering or removing of trees from his own land, for firewood and charcoal making, and other purposes for sale shall secure a Certificate of No Objection from the Office of the Sangguniang Barangay and Endorsement from the office of the Mayor thru its MENR Office before applying for permit from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources. Environmental fee of P500.00 per tree cutting shall be paid to the municipal treasurer”.

The DPWH representatives informed the committee that under the previous administration, a Certificate of No Objection and exemption from the payment of the ₱500.00 environmental fee per tree had already been issued for the project. However, the certification covered only a limited number of trees and did not include all trees affected by the project. As a result, DPWH requested the issuance of another Certificate of No Objection covering the remaining affected trees.

The representatives further stated that during discussions with the current administration, there was an agreement in principle to issue the required CONO and to consider exemption from the payment of the



₱500.00 environmental fee per tree, considering that the project is funded by the National Government and is intended for public use.

DPWH explained that the agency regularly complies with DENR requirements, including payment of applicable fees and implementation of replacement tree planting programs. However, this was the first instance where a local government unit required the payment of ₱500.00 per tree for a national infrastructure project. They further emphasized that the ordinance specifically refers to trees cut for "firewood and charcoal making and other purposes for sale." Since the affected trees will neither be sold nor used for commercial purposes, DPWH believes that the project should not fall within the coverage of such provision.

The Committee was informed that the project commenced on March 15, 2026 and that DPWH is currently undertaking right-of-way acquisition involving affected lands, structures, crops, and trees. Initially, 413 trees were identified for cutting. However, after validation and re-evaluation conducted by DENR, the Philippine Coconut Authority (PCA), and the Department of Agriculture (DA), the number increased to approximately 817 trees. Consequently, DPWH was advised to secure a new Certificate of No Objection covering the updated number of affected trees.

DPWH further stated that it had submitted a formal written request seeking exemption from the payment of the environmental fee. However, it was advised that the matter should be referred to the Sangguniang Bayan for appropriate action. The agency expressed concern regarding the additional financial burden that would result from the collection of the environmental fee for all affected trees, noting that its allotted budget only covers fees required by DENR and does not include local environmental fees of this nature.

The committee discussed the interpretation of the ordinance, particularly the phrase "other purposes." DPWH clarified that although the cutting of trees may be considered for another purpose, it is not for sale or profit. The trees to be cut will either be turned over to DENR or donated to schools and barangays for public use, such as the construction of tables, chairs, and other community facilities. DPWH stressed that it does not derive any income from the cutting of the trees and that the activity is solely in connection with the implementation of a government infrastructure project.

The Committee also inquired about the tree replacement program. DPWH explained that replacement requirements are determined by DENR, which may require ratios ranging from one (1) replacement tree for every fifty (50) or one hundred (100) trees cut, depending on the classification of the trees. For coconut trees, replacement seedlings are provided by PCA, while for forest trees such as mahogany, replacement is handled by DENR. The actual tree-planting activities are likewise supervised and implemented by DENR.

The Committee suggested that tree-planting activities be conducted within Barangay Timalan Balsahan, considering that the area will be significantly affected by the cutting of trees. DPWH expressed its willingness to coordinate with DENR regarding such request.

The Committee further raised concerns on whether some of the identified trees could be transferred instead of being cut. DPWH responded that the affected trees are already mature and that evaluations conducted by DENR, PENRO, CENRO, and MENRO in February 2026 recommended cutting rather than transfer, as the survival rate of transplanted mature trees would be very low.

When asked about the schedule of cutting activities, DPWH stated that implementation may commence immediately upon issuance of the Certificate of No Objection and the corresponding permit from DENR. The agency also noted that delays may affect the project schedule, particularly with the onset of the rainy season.

During the meeting, DPWH presented an overview of the Bataan-Cavite Interlink Bridge Project. It was reported that the project has a projected completion period of approximately seven (7) years. Delays in procurement, bidding, and qualification processes contributed to adjustments in the original timetable. The project consists of seven (7) contract packages covering the Bataan and Cavite land approaches, marine viaducts, channel bridges, and ancillary works.



DPWH explained that the bridge is a four-lane, cable-stayed bridge with an approximate length of 32.15 kilometers connecting Bataan and Naic, Cavite. A tree charting map was likewise presented showing the location of affected trees. Approximately twenty-five percent (25%) of the identified 817 trees are situated within the highway alignment and must be cleared before civil works can proceed.

The committee also raised concerns regarding possible flooding in Barangays Timalan Balsahan and Timalan Concepcion following the removal of trees. In response, DPWH assured the committee that the project design was prepared by foreign consultants specializing in large-scale bridge infrastructure projects. The design considered topography, drainage patterns, flood risks, fault lines, environmental impacts, and social considerations. DPWH further stated that appropriate drainage facilities are incorporated into the project and that runoff will be safely directed toward designated discharge areas.

Nevertheless, the Committee requested DPWH to consider the implementation of drainage improvement projects in the affected barangays as a measure to mitigate possible flooding. In response, DPWH stated that the Local Government Unit (LGU) may coordinate with the nearest District Engineering Office regarding such concerns. DPWH further expressed its willingness to coordinate with the appropriate offices and assist in the consideration for the Committee's recommendation.

The committee expressed its support for the project, recognizing its potential economic benefits not only to the Municipality of Naic but also to neighboring municipalities and provinces. At the same time, the committee emphasized the importance of protecting the welfare of affected communities and addressing environmental concerns associated with the project.

Finally, DPWH inquired as to when the Certificate of No Objection may be issued. In response, the Committee suggested that DPWH submit a Letter of Urgency to support the immediate consideration of a resolution endorsing the issuance of the Certificate of No Objection for the project-affected trees under the Bataan-Cavite Interlink Bridge (BCIB) Project.

Committee on Agriculture, Environment and Natural Resources:


Glennon I. Pegollo
Chairperson

Committee on Public Works And Infrastructure:


Bonifacio M. Atienza Jr.
Chairperson