

January 3, 2001
Categories: Gem Scam

MR GRA-1074



9-13 Chula Soi 14 Rungtong Rd., Phatumwan, Bangkok 10330, Thailand.

9-13 คลองจฬ 14 ถนนบรรทัดทอง เขตปทุมวัน กรุงเทพฯ 10330

Tel : 219-2412-4 Fax : 219-2414

"Official" receipt 2

After a pleasant holiday in the Northeast of Thailand and a week on the island of Ko Chang we returned to Bangkok for a short visit and the flight home. On December 21st we decided to do some sightseeing as a farewell to this country we like so much. When we were on the square of the Democracy-Monument we were approached by 2 friendly men who told us they were students and asked us where we were going. We told them we had no definite plans, but wanted to visit some temples. They told us it was our lucky day, because government was having a tourist promotion, there was no entrance fee for tourists in the temples on this day and every tuk-tuk driver would get a coupon for 5 l of gas if he took tourists to some temples and then to a government-owned shop – the Bangkok Royal Export Center with a promotion for silk, jewels etc.

In the temple of the Lucky Buddha we “met” a middle-aged man who identified himself as the owner of the temple and showed us an identification card from the Thai government saying he was a costumes official working at Don Muang airport. After some small talk mostly about travelling he told us that for Thai students the stiff costs of travel and studying abroad were subsidized by the Thai government with tax free sales of jewels, which the students could sell in the foreign country with at least 100% profit. We were lucky (again!), he said, because for the short period of a week government would allow also tourists to buy jewels on the same conditions as the students, and today was the last day of the sale and it would be open only until 2 pm. we would have to hurry.

Then the man who had introduced himself as a Mr Pra-Yuth informed us about the Thai blue sapphires. He said that there was a great demand for them, even in Austria we could sell them without a problem, but the easiest way would be to sell them to a wholesaler named Kris (or Christ) in Munich, Maximilianstrasse. He said he knew Mr Kris personally been drinking beer with him on the Oktoberfest and Mr Kris would buy everything we brought and would be happy to buy from us because he would save costs for air tickets, hotels and other expenses he had to pay, if someone of his staff flew to Bangkok to buy jewels.

Mr Pra-Yuth insisted on sending the jewels by EMS, it would be safer for us and there would be no problems with customs and taxes. If there were some taxes to pay it would be a small amount and Bangkok Royal Gems & Jewellery would refund them. We paid with VISA and Mastercard, then the jewels together with an impressive looking certificate were put into an envelope which was sealed with tape and we had to sign it for proof.

In the evening grave doubts set in and we phoned a lawyer-friend in Austria and asked about the government to government agreement concerning jewel imports. When he told us there was no such agreement the whole story began to crumble. In the morning we were quite sure we had been cheated and went to the shop as soon as it was open. Nobody we recognised was there but after some arguing the "manager" was called and talked to us and promised us we would get a full refund if we brought back the jewels. We didn't believe a word he said but there was nothing left to do. We tried to catch the parcel in Laksi post office and although the people there were very helpful we had no success – the jewels were on their way to Austria on board a plane.

One important point has to be mentioned: the word ROYAL in the company's name was one cause for our trusting the company. We read everywhere that Thai people love their king and that one has to be very respectful with insignia and terms relating to the king. We could not believe that a scam of that kind could run under the title ROYAL.

On December 22nd we went to the tourist police. They said our only chance of getting at least part of the money back was to either stay in Bangkok and ask a friend at home to send the jewels back or to return with them personally to confront the shop owner in the presence of the tourist police.

Unfortunately we could not extend our stay and flying back to Bangkok is rather costly, on top of which there is no guarantee that the shop will still exist on our return, which would still raise our losses. Our urgent question is: does anyone know another possibility of getting our money back?

We hope to overcome all our disappointment one day and to be able to return to Thailand. It still is a very beautiful country.

[Return to Gem Scam main page](#)

Children's Day in the subway tunnels

January 13, 2001
Categories: Subway



January 13 is Children's Day in Thailand. On this day MRTA opened a portion of its unfinished tunnels to a children's group to tour. Wisarut accompanied the group and took all the photos on this page.



Huge, unfinished area which will eventually be one of the underground stations.



While no station is finished yet, MRTA created a mockup to demonstrate what the finished station area will look like.
Commentary by Ron: I hope they make it look more distinctly Thai...



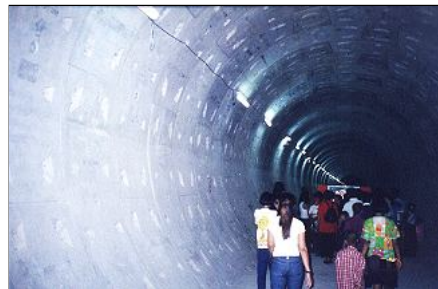
From a display in the subway station mockup: photos of the subway digging machine.



No one beyond this point. The tunnel stretches off into seeming infinity.



Walking along the subway concourse...



Calling all skateboarders...

Bangkok Skytrain Links

February 1, 2001

Categories: Skytrain

SKYTRAIN LINKS

[Railway Technology Web Pages](#) – The website of Piers Connor, who did design work on the Skytrain. Want to know how a commuter train service is planned? How air-brakes on trains work? Need links to other railway technical sites? You'll find it all here.

[Railway Technology Web Pages – the Bangkok Skytrain](#) – "A new metro system opened recently in Bangkok, Thailand called "Skytrain". This page describes the background, the design features and the operation, following recent visits." This site is very comprehensive and enjoyable to read...

How the Skytrains were Imported

The Freight Company, Ltd. recently contacted 2bangkok.com: "Our company was appointed by Siemens AG of Germany as the exclusive transport and logistics company (freight forwarder) for the Bangkok Skytrain Project. Our company was responsible for the transport of all the equipment for the Bangkok Skytrain from all over the world to Thailand. Moreover, our company was dealing exclusively with Thai Customs for the Import of all the equipment. Our Group also provided the warehouse facilities to store these goods prior to delivery to the project site." We hope to have a more in-depth account of the import and more photos soon.

[The Freight Company, Ltd. main page](#)

[Photo galleries](#) of the various gigantic items they have imported (including the skytrain)

[Info on their projects](#)



The Official BTS Skytrain site! The Thai-version is [here](#) and the English version is [here](#). [BTS email](#). The BTS Latest News page (in Thai only—it is mainly articles announcing their latest promotions and events) is [here](#).

Their phone number is (662)617-7300. Their address is Bangkok Mass Transit System Company, Ltd., BTS Building, Phahonyothin Road, Yatyao, Chatuchak, Bangkok 10900, Thailand.

[Italian-Thai Development Public Company Limited](#) – "July 1994 – January 2000 – Design and construction of an elevated heavy railway system including 25 stations, depot and administration building. The total length of the system is 23.5 km." – they are involved in many local projects – [list of their projects](#)

Need a free shuttle bus to a Skytrain? BTS has good maps in [Thai](#) and [English](#).

The [Groovy Map](#) people have a nice [Expressway/Skytrain Map](#). If you don't know this company, they make extremely practical and up-to-date maps with an emphasis on easy to understand public transport info.

RMJM Thailand (formerly <http://www.rmjm.co.th/NEWS.htm> – now a dead link) – planned and designed stations for the Rama III feeder route and the elevated light rail system proposed to link to the main BTS system

[The Dawn of Modern Rapid Transit in Bangkok](#) – This site's webmaster wrote an article about the Bangkok Skytrain for the German webzines *futureframe* and *MorganWelt* for a "Cities of the Future" issue. The German version of the article is [here](#). *futureframe's* main page is [here](#).

[Siemens](#) – Main contractor for the projects. Siemens recently changed to a database-driven site which means inner pages are hard to link to and it takes a lot of searching to get to what one wants. Still, lots of good information.

[BERGER/ABAM](#) – Engineering consultants hired to doublecheck all design work on the BTS. They also designed the J. Paul Getty Center People-Mover in Los Angeles.

[Railway Technology.com – Bangkok Public Transit](#) – A good overview of what's being done in town.

[Metro Planet: Bangkok](#) – An overview of Bangkok mass transit projects with a useful map.

Who's to blame? (formerly <http://www.nationmultimedia.com/special/skytrain/> – now a dead link) – A feature from a local newspaper from about a year ago complaining about safety problems during the construction of the BTS (i.e. things dropping on people).

[J. Muller International](#) – J. Muller was acquired by Earth Tech. Some technical details and a description of construction methods from the designers of the project.

Porsche Design – (formerly <http://www.railway-technology.com/contractors/project/porsche/porsche2.html> – now a dead link) A good drawing of a BTS train interior from its designers.

[American Society of Civil Engineers \(ACSE\)](#) – (February, 2001 – this article appears to be gone- we've emailed them about it) The second article on the page is a rather pessimistic report on Bangkok's rapid transit plans.

[Subway page](#) – On this page there are two Bangkok links with maps of the BTS and MRTA project areas.

2Bangkok.com Glossary

Here are some of the acronyms and other terms that often crop up when reading about Thai mass transit. Note that many of these organizations' duties overlap. You can see where these terms appear on this site by conducting a [search](#). You might also check the list of links that appear with each individual project page. If there are any we have missed, [let us know](#).

AEI – company that proposed constructing a high-speed train from Pak Tho to Donmuang

BITEC – International Trade and Exhibition Center – convention center on the outskirts of town – <http://www.bitec.net>

BKK – sometimes used as an abbreviation for Bangkok

BOI – Board of Investment – in charge of promoting investment in Thailand – they can give special privileges for big projects – <http://www.boi.go.th/>

BMA – Bangkok Metropolitan Administration – 'City Hall' or the local city government – <http://www.bma.go.th>

BMCL – Bangkok Metro Co. Ltd., subsidiary of Ch. Karnchang PCL – company chosen to operate the subway – <http://www.bangkokmetro.co.th>

BMTA – Bangkok Mass Transit Authority – in charge of busses – <http://www.bmta.motc.go.th> – English-language bus routes are [here](#)

BTS/BTSC – Bangkok Mass Transit System Company – company that operates the Skytrain – <http://www.bts.co.th>

CBD – central business district

CREC – China Railway Co. Ltd. – headquarters at Shanghai

ETA – Expressway and Rapid Transit Authority of Thailand, controlled by the Interior Ministry – state organization in charge of expressways – <http://www.eta.or.th> (it is all in Thai, but you can run your mouse over the links on the left and you can see the English name of the links at the bottom of your browser)

IRR – Internal Rate of Return – an investment term

ITD – Italian-Thai Development PCL (ITD) – huge contracting firm

JBIC – Japanese Bank for International Cooperation, a major creditor of MRTA – <http://www.jbic.go.jp/english/index.php>

KFW – German KFW Bank, a BTSC creditors

KTT – Krongthep Thanakhom Co.Ltd. (KTT), Bangkok Bank, financial arm of BMA – November 14, 2001-> Their hard-to-find telephone numbers are 66-2263-0461, 66-2263-0462, 66-2263-0463 (66 is the country code – dial 0 during the message for the operator.) – The following numbers are also given, but no one answers – 66-2207-0200, 66-2207-0201, 66-2207-0202, 66-2207-0203, & 66-2207-0204

MFC – Mutual Fund Company – The website of [MFC Asset management](#)

MOF – Ministry of Finance

MOI – Ministry of Interior

MOIndus – Ministry of Industry

Monthol – **Monthol (Circle) was a set of provinces -> according to the Administration Act of Ror Sor 116 (AD 1897). Monthols were dissolved by the Administration for the Kingdom of Siam BE 2476 (January 1934).]**

MOTC – Ministry of Transport and Communication

MOU – Memorandum of Understanding

MRTA – Metropolitan Rapid Transit Authority, under the Prime Minister's Office – state enterprise that is overseeing the [subway](#) construction –

<http://www.mrta.or.th>

MRTC – Management of Road Traffic Commission – office that is, in theory, in charge of the development of transport services, but actually has no power as most transit schemes are controlled by independently operating companies or government agencies

MTR – MTR Corporation – consultant company with expertise in mass transit system business hired by BTSC creditors in 2001

NBIA – [New Bangkok International Airport](#)

ngan – Thai measure of land – 1 ngan = 400 square meters = 100 tarang wah (100 square wahs)

NHA – National Housing Authority – <http://www.nha.or.th> (September, 2000 – their website appears to be down – NHA often comes up since it is often proposed that housing projects be torn down to allow new mass transit routes go through since the government already controls this land)

NESDB – National Economic and Social Development Board – government organization that, among other things, figures the economic feasibility of projects – <http://www.nesdb.go.th>

NIMBY – ‘not in my backyard’

NPL – non-performing loans

OCMLT – Office of the Commission for the Management of Land Traffic – state organization that advises and makes plans concerning traffic problems and patterns – <http://www.ocmlt.go.th/>

OTP – Office of Transport and Traffic Police and Planning

rai – Thai measure of land – 1 rai = 0.16 hectare = 1600 square meters = 4 ngan = 400 tarang wah (400 square wahs)

RSR – Royal Siamese Railway (precursor to the SRT)

RTAF – Royal Thai Air Force

SBIA – [Second Bangkok International Airport](#)

SEC – Securities and Exchange Commission – regulatory body for the Thai stock market – <http://www.sec.or.th/>

SET – Stock Exchange of Thailand – <http://www.set.or.th/>

SMCC – Shanghai Metro – China-based company that will apparently construct the Samrong extension of the Skytrain (as of April 2001)

SRT – State Railways of Thailand, supervised by the Transport and Communications Ministry – runs the traditional railroads – controls the failed [Hopewell Project](#) concession – <http://www.srt.or.th/httpEng/>

TOR – Terms of Reference – an agreement between parties

wah – Thai measure – 1 wah (1 tarang wah or 1 square wah) = 4 square meters

The Suvarnabhumi Airport Background/History of the Project

February 1, 2001

Categories: Airports and Airlines

Background/History of the Project

By Pas Seangsong

Source: *Asia Business Magazine*, *Asiaweek*, the *Nation*, *Bangkok Post*

[Back to the SUVANABHUMI AIRPORT main page](#)

Bangkok's long delayed second international airport is frequently cited as a classic example of Thailand's poor track record of economic planning and management for large infrastructure projects. The second airport project has been bogged down for the past three decades particularly as a result of endless political inference. The project's completion has passed through two initial deadlines, the first in 1990 and the second in 2000.

Previous governments have already invested considerable resources to expand the existing Don Muang Airport to cope with growing traffic volume. Don Muang has already reached its full capacity at 30 million passengers per annum. What is at stake is not just another high profile infrastructure project, but Thailand's chance of becoming the aviation hub for South East Asia.

Conceived in the 1960s

The New Bangkok International Airport or Suvarnabhumi Airport as it is now known, has been in planning since 1960 when the government of the day commissioned a master plan for the 1990 Bangkok Metropolis. The airport's site, Nong Ngu Hao – which translates as Cobra Swamp – is well situated about 30 kilometers east of Bangkok in Samut Prakan province. The government finalized the purchase of this boggy 3,100 hectare site in 1973. The project looked set to take off but came one day short of being approved in 1973 when a popular student uprising succeeded in overthrowing the government and the project has been shelved indefinitely.

Revival in the 1990s

It was not until the early 1990s when the Thai government decided to revive the project. The need for a new International Airport became a national agenda with the release of the government's 5 year plan by the National Economic and Social Development Board (NESDB). In April 1991, premier Anand Panyarachun approved the Second Bangkok International Airport (SBIA) and placed it under the control of the Airport Authority of Thailand (AAT) – the state run enterprise that operates Don Muang and other provincial airports in Thailand.

Already some 20 years behind schedule, the airport has proven to be a major organizational challenge for Thailand in the 1990s. The NESDB and AAT have however managed to push through with several consultancy contracts. The Netherlands Airport Consultants BV and Louis Berger (US) completed their master plan for SBIA in May 1993. Contracts have been subsequently awarded to designing systems to control floodwater and ground improvement (the Nong Ngu Hao site is notorious for its deep soft clay soil profile which need to be treated in order to cope with the demands of Boeing 747s). Work on the dike to prevent perennial flooding of the site was delayed to remove some 8,000 squatters.

Designing the terminal

In 1994, the government staged a major competition involving major international consultants for the design of the airport terminal – perhaps the most important contract for the airport project. The winning design was from the MJTA group of consultant, comprising Murphy Jahn Architecture and TAMS consultant (US) and ACT Engineering consultant (Thailand).

Keeping it Thai

MJTA's design of the new airport terminal consists mainly of a large glass and concrete terminal. This design immediately attracted criticism from architectural circles in Thailand for the apparent lack of 'Thai characteristics' in the design. The government formed a special committee to ensure that local cultural and artistic heritage was incorporated into the design of the terminal. This committee was chaired by then interior minister, General Chavalit Yongchaiyudh (who would later become Prime Minister). A group of local architects also raised concern whether the predominantly glass-clad structure was appropriate for Thailand's intense tropical climate. They argued that air-conditioning costs would be very expensive considering the will have a total floor area of 500,000 sqm. In order to minimize energy usage, the consultants proposed a huge roof trellis to shade the terminal against the intense tropical sun.

The New Bangkok International Airport Company

In February 1996, under the Banharn Silpa-Archa government, the New Bangkok International Airport Co was formed. This is a privately managed and state-owned company attached to the Ministry of Transport and Communications, that is responsible for the construction and operation of the Second Bangkok International Airport.

More delays

When General Chavalit Yongchaiyudh followed Banharn as Prime Minister in 1996, he immediately called for the airport project to be shelved for an indefinite period. It was later revealed that Gen Chavalit planned to relocate the airport to the Bang Pu district in Samut Prakarn. This policy switch was seen as damaging, especially to the foreign investor's confidence. Allegations of corruption and economic mismanagement led to Gen Chavalit's government being voted out of office in 1997 (a few months after the floating and subsequent plunge of the Thai currency).

Renewal of the project

Construction of the airport resumed under the Democrat-led coalition government with the project deadline extended to 2004. By this time, the government was running out of money to finance the project although it remained committed to push ahead for the country's long term economic benefit.

Cost overruns

"The latest setback facing the Airport project stems from the fact that all four bids to construct the passenger terminal and the concourse complex are about Bt8 billion higher than the Bt45-billion budget that has been allocated. In an attempt to bring the price down, four measures were being taken. The airport's designer Murphy Jahn Consortium has been asked to modify the design to bring the price within the Bt45-billion budget. For example, NBIA CO has called for the MJTA to find ways to limit the import of construction materials to only 20% from 64%. The government has also been asked to increase the budget. And the Japan Bank for International Cooperation, which is providing the Bt73-billion loan for construction work, has been asked for assistance." ([Business in Thailand magazine website](#), December, 2000)

Alternative designs & the waiting game

Another alternative design of the passenger terminal, using a design-build option, was proposed by SBIA's project management team, Pacific Consultants (from Japan) who also made an estimation that the MJTA design would cost 70% over budget. While the government still opted to use the MJTA design and to open the bidding contest for engineering and construction contracts, they are also running out of patience waiting for MJTA consultants to adjust their design to lower construction costs.

Completion date

See the top of this page for the latest info on completion dates.

Airport Terminal Complex

Total Floor Area: 500,000 sqm (world's largest for a single terminal complex – the roof trellis will also be the largest of its kind).

Capacity: 30 million passenger a year first phase (ability to handle 76 flights per hour), The capacity would increased to 45-50 million passenger per annum after second run way complete and buildings space expand (by 2006). The airport will be expanded to its ultimate capacity (all phase) by 2010 to handle 112 flights per hour and accommodating 100 million passengers each year. Ability to handle 1.46 million tons of cargo per year Handling 51 aircraft stands and 24 remote parking bays for wide-bodied aircraft.

"the facilities will consist of four runways with twin passenger terminal building located both in the north and south together with satellite buildings located between the passenger terminal buildings."

Transport Connection

Highways are being built (connecting Bangkok's outer ring road?)

Mass transit link: the government proposed to extend the Skytrain from Onnuj); SRT's highspeed rail project from Huay-Kwang to Lad Krabang to Chonburi will have a spur line connecting the New Airport – [the project is off and on](#))

Stakeholders

Airport Authority of Thailand (provide 1/3 of funding); New Bangkok International Airport Co. (responsible for managing construction) Thai Ministry of Finance + Transport and Communications Ministry; The Japanese Bank for International Cooperation – JBIC ; (responsible for 59% of the project's finance) National Economic and Social Development Board

Major Contractors

Master planning – National Airports Consultants BV, Louis Berger International General Engineering Consultants (GEC) responsible for project design.

NACO, Netherlands Airport Consultants B.V.

Louis Berger International Inc.

Design 103 Ltd.

Asian Engineering Consultants Corp.,Ltd.

Index International for project design.

Team Consulting Engineers Co.,Ltd.

Management studies

Coopers & Lybrand (now Price Waterhouse Cooper)

Land fill, ground improvement / airside improvement

Ital-Thai Group, CH Karnchang

Airport Terminal design

MJTA Consultants, comprising Murphy Jahn – architecture, TAMS Consultant and Act engineering consultant

Urban development around the airport

in the tendering process

Project Management Consultants Group (PMC)

Pacific Consultants International

Roge and Associates Co., Ltd

Epsilon Co., LTD

Asian Engineering Consultants Co., LTD

Suvanabhumi Airport diagram and model photos

February 1, 2001

Categories: Airports and Airlines

SUVANABHUMI AIRPORT diagram and model photos



Computer graphic renderings of the completed airport from NBIA renderings

[nbia_location.gif](#) (11KB) – Locality map, image taken from an old Airport Authority of Thailand page on [New Bangkok International Airport Co. website](#)

[pic_smallmap.gif](#) (11KB) – More detailed locality map, from [New Bangkok International Airport Co. website](#)

[chart.jpg](#) (87KB) – flowchart showing the airport completion schedule from the *Bangkok Post*, May 29, 2000

[layout_allphase.jpg](#) (14KB) – artist's impression of completed development (all phases) from the [AAT website](#)

[layout_phase1.jpg](#) (10KB) – artist's impression of the airport (1st phase) to be completed in 2004 from the [AAT website](#)

[NongNguHaoAerial.jpg](#) (6KB) – aerial view of the construction site showing ground improvement from *Bangkok Post*, February, 2001

[pvd1.jpg](#) (7KB) – the use of PVDs for ground improvement on site (prefabricated vertical drains), from [AAT website](#)

[sbia_cross.jpg](#) (201KB) – design cross-section from *Helmut Jahn – Transparency / Transparenz* by Werner Blaser (1996), published by Birkhauser Verlag (Basel, Boston, Berlin))

[sbia_cross1.jpg](#) (196KB) – design cross-section from *Helmut Jahn – Transparency / Transparenz* by Werner Blaser (1996), published by Birkhauser Verlag (Basel, Boston, Berlin)

[sbia_crossxd.jpg](#) (47KB) – design cross-section from a book by Helmut Jahn and Werne Sobek entitled *Archi-neering*, Hatje Cantz Verlag, Leverkusen

[sbia_invert.jpg](#) (127KB) – design cross-section from *Helmut Jahn – Transparency / Transparenz* by Werner Blaser (1996), published by Birkhauser Verlag (Basel, Boston, Berlin)

[sbia_crossxd1.jpg](#) (139KB) – design cross-section from a book by Helmut Jahn and Werne Sobek entitled *Archi-neering*, Hatje Cantz Verlag, Leverkusen

[sbia_term_large.jpg](#) (47KB) – design cross-section from a book by Helmut Jahn and Werne Sobek entitled *Archi-neering*, Hatje Cantz Verlag, Leverkusen

[sbia_term_model.jpg](#) (41KB) – design model from a book by Helmut Jahn and Werne Sobek entitled *Archi-neering*, Hatje Cantz Verlag, Leverkusen

[sbia_term_modell.jpg](#) (30KB) – design model from a book by Helmut Jahn and Werne Sobek entitled *Archi-neering*, Hatje Cantz Verlag, Leverkusen

[sbiaclimate1.jpg](#) (11KB) – terminal Concourse, cross-section, analysis of different temperature zones, from a book by Helmut Jahn and Werne Sobek entitled *Archi-neering*, Hatje Cantz Verlag, Leverkusen

[sbial.jpg](#) (150KB) – design model from *Helmut Jahn – Transparency / Transparenz* by Werner Blaser (1996), published by Birkhauser Verlag (Basel, Boston, Berlin)

[sbia2.jpg](#) (46KB) – design model from *Helmut Jahn – Transparency / Transparenz* by Werner Blaser (1996), published by Birkhauser Verlag (Basel, Boston, Berlin)

[sbia3.jpg](#) (77KB) – design model from *Helmut Jahn – Transparency / Transparenz* by Werner Blaser (1996), published by Birkhauser Verlag (Basel, Boston, Berlin))

More airport info on 2Bangkok.com

[June 8, 2004 construction photos](#)

[February 9, 2004 construction photos](#)

[August 4, 2003 construction photos](#)

[Airport Rail Link news](#)

[Bangkok Airport Watch – When will it be completed?](#)

[Airport Quick Facts](#)

[Background/History of the Project](#)

[Latest News](#)

[Diagram and model photos](#)

[Links](#)

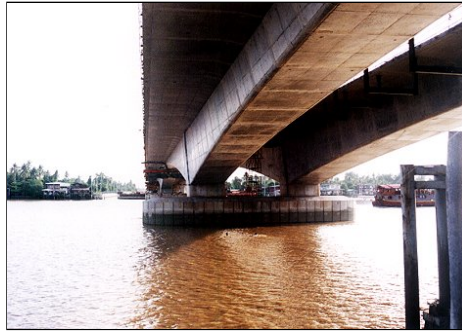
Under the Chulachomklao Bridge

February 1, 2001

Categories: Bridges

May, 2001 – On a lazy, blazing hot Sunday afternoon, the overhead construction provides pleasant shade as Nonthaburi kids swing out over the brownish water of the Chao Phraya River. Barges glide by, each with a watchdog onboard that eyes the children swimming through the boat's wake. Back onshore, a droopy eyed old man sips whiskey as he fishes and children play hopscotch, their voices echoing in the quiet underneath the smooth concrete.

By the end of this year, the Nakhon In Bridge will open. It is near Wat Nakhon In, linking Nonthaburi on the eastern side with Bang Kruay and Bang Yai. Sorry these photos seem overexposed, but that is how it looked that day—as bright as a day in Thailand can be...



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)

Toward Bang Yai – If you look closely, there are two small children swimming toward the bridge support.



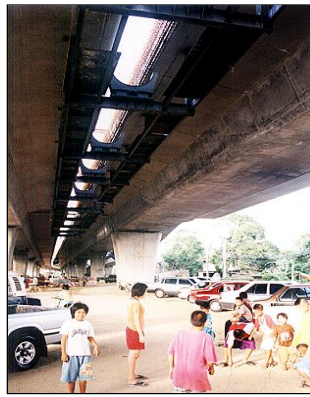
(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)

The ferry pier under the bridge



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)

Kids swing out on a rope over the water.



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)

Looking back from the river –
Thailand gets another colossal elevated road

Chulachomklao Bridge News



(Photo: Oran Viriyincy)

Crossing the bridge

Chulachomklao Bridge opens

– May 13, 2002

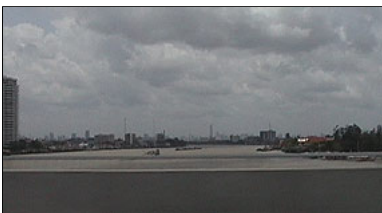
Oran Viriyincy writes: *The Chulachomklao Bridge at Wat Nakhon In is now open to traffic. The bridge was opened today beginning at the Tiwanon overpass, the bridge and the highway to the Outer Ring Road. At present, the highway ends at the Bang Kruai-Bang Bua Thong Road. There is an overpass, but it is not open yet. The road continues after the intersection and ends with unfinished road construction.*



(Photo: Oran Viriyincy)

The end of the road

*There are no walkways on the bridge.
I hope this project will be finished soon, so I can get to the Outer Ring Road without using the often congested Rattana Thibet Road.*



(Photo: Oran Viriyincy)

The view south

The bridge named

Wisarat reports: Saphan

Nakhon In Bridge was given the name "Rama V Bridge" by HM The King. It is due to be opened at 5:30 PM on June 21, 2002 by the Crown Prince. Rama V Bridge is a 320-meter double bridge with six traffic lanes. Those who come from Phetkasem Road and Rattana Thibet Road can use this

bridge to go to Phiboon Songkram Road and Tiwanon Road. This is the 12th bridge across the Chaophraya in the greater Bangkok area and was constructed by the Department of Public Works.

River road opens in April
Six-lane crossing is part of project

Supoj Wancharoen, *Bangkok Post*, December 2, 2001

A new bridge across the Chao Phraya river in Nonthaburi will be open to traffic in April, says the director-general of the Public Works Department, Sermsak Pongpanich. Mr Sermsak said the bridge across the Chao Phraya river in front of Wat Nakhon-in in Nonthaburi would open on April 18 as work was now 90% done.

The six-lane bridge worth around 1.4 billion baht is part of a road project linking Tiwanont to Phetkasem and Rattanathibet. Under the project approved by cabinet in October 1991, there will be two new roads—the East-West road and North-South road.

The 12km East-West road begins at Tiwanont-Pracha Rat intersection past Phibun Songkhram road, the bridge, and Bang Bua Thong road and leads to the Outer-Ring road. The 18km North-South road starts from Phetkasem road, cuts through Soi Charan Sanitwong 13 and 35 past Bangkok Noi-Nakhon Chaisri road, and ends at Rattanathibet road.

Work on the roads is expected to wrap up in March 2003. The bridge gives people another river crossing and should help with traffic flows.

Nakhon In/Chulachomklao Bridge

Summarized from *Dailynews*, February 21, 2002

Nakhon In Bridge is 80% done, ready to be opened in April 2002, and the whole project (Nakhon In Bridge and the 6-lane road from Tiwanon Intersection to Bang Bua Thong-Nonthaburi Road) will be done in 2003... The Dept. of Civil Works also asked His Majesty to grant the official name of the bridge as "Chulachomklao Bridge."

Ma Mere Claims More Victims

February 19, 2001

Categories: Gem Scam

[Return to Gem Scam main page](#)

Gem scam account: Ma Mere Claims More Victims – February 19, 2001

From an email reprinted with permission:

"OK it starts close to the Grand Palace. There is an entrance which is closed and so a friendly (slimy) tuk-tuk driver comes and tells that the Wat Pho is closed before lunch. But he will bring you around for 30 baht to some nice Buddhas (yes they have been nice). Actually his name is Whai (one Buddhist who will not be reborn). So off the trip goes to the sitting Buddha. He waits nicely even though I take my time. I come back we continue. Now there is a place closed so he brings me to another temple. Not a big one, but quite and just what I want to relax now. After a while a friendly guy enters the temple (yes it is a temple and probably he is the next one who won't be reborn). We start talking and he speaks good English. He has his children studying in England (I told him that I am from England). Story goes on and he is really educated. After 30 minutes I just (buy the way) ask him about a promotion for diamonds – good to check. OK he says it's a good thing and even shows me two papers (I will own them one hour later for quite some money). He will go soon to London to sell his set and it should pay for his children's living expense there (you do need a lot of money in London). I ask him about any promotions and he explains that the intention is to create extra business so Thailand can fight the drug crime – noble and something everybody should support. What really convinces me that this guy is telling his story in a temple and even Buddha is watching – wherever you go on this planet: people do not lie in churches, mosques or temples (or any other holy place). I leave the place as this is really convincing me and he leaves a bit later. My friend we will meet again!

"So our friendly tuk-tuk driver Whai (if you meet him ask my 50 baht back, because he cheated me) brings me finally to the MA MERE GEMS. A spacey outlet at Loog-Luang Road with a lot of pretty girls and a fat cat (female – she is probably MA MERE). She explains the model too me: the Thai government has a 195% tax on gems for export. At the moment (and today is the last day) there is a discount of 95% (great). If I as a tourist buy today I get this discount and I can sell the set of diamonds to a local dealer in Europe (she even knows Christ of Germany and even the number of their stores) for 195% tax. She is doing business with them and they will buy the set. Sounds fine with me. She even promised to buy the set back if I can't sell it. There is another woman in the store moving the 1000 baht notes over the table for her purchases. The fat cat has a file of passport photocopies from customers and I browse through them – looks ok.

"Ok now comes a real bummer: you can not buy the set by credit card from her (ouch). She wants cash or gold. So a friendly girl drives with me to the bank. Actually the bank manager looked down when we arrived, so now I know why. We pick some money from my credit card and as this is not enough we will buy some gold at one of the shops with the other card. After 1 hour we are back and the store manager has already packed the set for me. Actually they don't count the money. Now they have even more beautiful girls in that corner of the shop and somehow I am feeling a bit weird. But then she gives me that paper that says "if customer not satisfied MA MERE will buy back". This helps.

"As I will be travelling around for another 2 weeks we will send the stuff with courier to Europe. I am supposed to get the courier receipt the next day in the hotel. Then we leave the store. Her driver shows me around a bit: first we drive to Nakhom Pathom for a really gorgeous temple complex, then to rose gardens (is for tourists and I have to pay the entrance fee) and then he brings me to Thai massage (he pays). There he disappears and I take the Taxi to the Hotel.

"The next morning (20/02/01) I am just paying our friends a visit to check credibility. The shop is closed (that's fair as yesterday was the last day of the promotion and there are things to clean up). The door is locked and the security guy from yesterday recognises me. He brings me to the back entrance and a guy with radio comes out. I tell him that I want to pick up my courier receipt and need a statement for customs that I paid half in gold and half in cash. He comes back after 15 minutes and the same person has signed the letter. Seems my stuff is on the way to Europe and the business does still exist (even though they didn't want to let me in).

"Ok now I am in Europe and just tried to sell the set to CHRIST (Germany) who does not buy this kit. I have contacted Mr Manat by email and my strategy would be getting a lawyer who brings the set back to MA MERE for them to buy it back (as stated in their paper). I would transfer my re-sell rights to the guy and give him a commission. Hope this works.

"However this story ends, I want to tell everybody that Thais are very nice and friendly people and that even the MA MERE suckers (Buddha don't give them another live and if only as rats) have not been able to spoil the holiday. I will come back and I will return to the shop as well."

[Return to Gem Scam main page](#)

Inside the Morchit Subway Station

March 14, 2001

Categories: Subway



Inside the Morchit Subway Station
March 14, 2001



Looking down into the station construction
– Materials are lowered into the site through this shaft.



Temporary stairs into the construction site



Elevator shaft under construction – Eventually there will be 69 elevators and 346 escalators in the entire subway line.



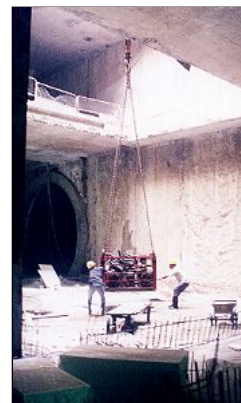
The subway will run along this trough. This station is gigantic—but the Rama 9 Station is even bigger.



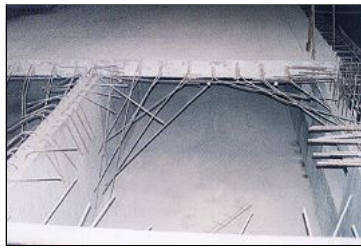
Part of the mockup of the station decor – Each station will have a color band to identify it.
Morchit Station will be green since it is under Chatuchak Park. Two stations will have special decor. See [here](#) for details.



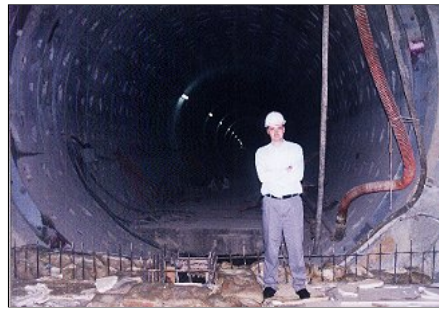
Huge pipes supply fresh air into the site.



Equipment is lowered by crane to the bottom level of the construction site.



Under the subway platform



What I came to see... the tunnels stretching off into infinity.



Closeup of the one of the tunnel panels – Bolts link the panels and the pressure of the earth presses the whole structure together.



The Omega Ring – This ring attaches the tunnels to the stations and allows for differential settlement between the two structures up to 10 cm.



The south end of Morchit station – Workers get supplies from above and the yellow tube on the left supplies fresh air.



Inside a tunnel looking out into the station



Construction of stairs to the lower level



Workers take a break in front of an air delivery shaft. It's very hot down there!



In one dark side of the station is the pedestrian tunnel that leads to the opposite side of Phahonyothin Road. This connects the Mochit Subway Station to the Skytrain Station.



A final look down the tunnel



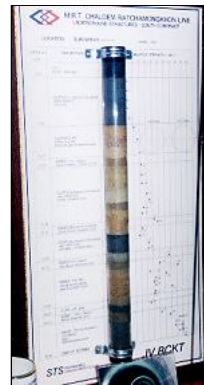
Looking up the subway station stairs



Subway station stairs from ground level



Subway entrance with the elevated Mochit Skytrain Station in the background



Display at MRTA headquarters showing the composition of the ground at different levels



Quitting time at the Mochit site

Bangkok Subway Souvenirs

March 17, 2001

Categories: Subway

Bangkok Subway Souvenirs & Ephemera

Last updated March 17, 2001

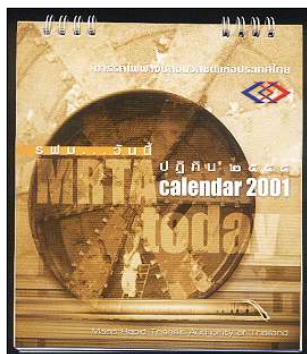
Unfortunately, these items are only for sale and distribution at MRTA headquarters to employees and visitors ("to promote team spirit"). There are no plans for wider distribution or sales ("that's not our policy").



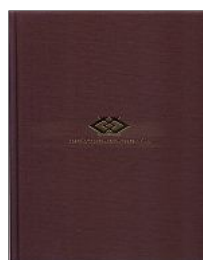
(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)
MRTA coasters (red or blue) – 35 baht for a set of four
MRTA keychain – 95 baht
Subway car tie clip (gold or blue) – 109 baht – The clip is the perfect complement for the MRTA tie->



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)
MRTA silk tie – 600 baht



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)
MRTA Today calendar 2001 – free promotional item
– This is a beautiful calendar with great photography and graphic design.



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)
MRTA day planner 2001 – free promotional item

– The inner pages are decorated with photos of the area around each future subway station entrance.



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)
MRTA wallet-sized calendars for 2001 (four varieties)
– free promotional item

Early Rama VIII Bridge Photos 2000-2001

March 24, 2001

Categories: The Rama VIII Bridge



(Photo:
Olli)

Olli sent in this great photo of the bridge construction
in July, 2001 from atop the Golden Mountain



(Photo:
2Bangkok.com)

Rama VIII Bridge construction seen from the new ferry
pier at [Santichaiprakarn Park](#) on October 13,
2001



(Photo:
2Bangkok.com)

October 13, 2001 – About two-thirds across



(Photo:
2Bangkok.com)

Connected! – January,
2002

With the placement of these road supports, the
[Rama 8 Bridge](#) spans the Chao Phraya River for the
first time.



(Photo:

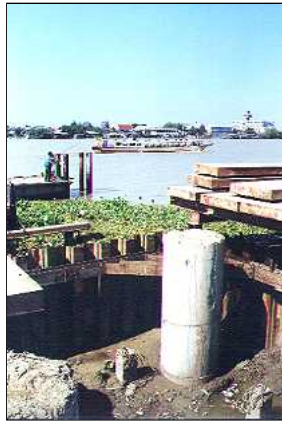


(Photo:
2Bangkok.com)

March 24, 2001 – Wisutkasat Road

August 6, 2000 – View down Wisutkasat Road

The Bank of Thailand building is in the background on the left.



(Photo:
2Bangkok.com)

December 5, 2000 – Pilings below water level on the east side of the Chao Phraya River.



(Photo:
2Bangkok.com)

March 24, 2001 – Elevated road leading from the Pinklao area to the bridge



(Photo:
2Bangkok.com)

March 23, 2001 – The road surface will pass between the two supports



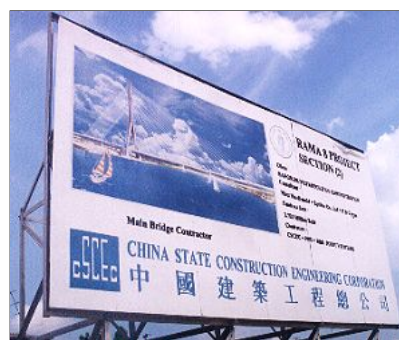
(Photo:
2Bangkok.com)

Roadside project panel



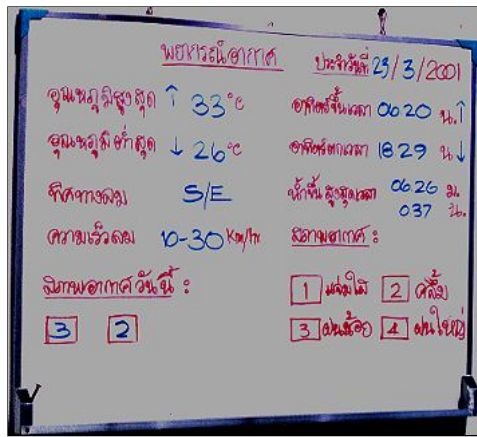
(Photo:
2Bangkok.com)

March 24, 2001 – Scaffolding at the base of the pillars



(Photo:
2Bangkok.com)

Project billboard – We love the sailboats on the Chao Phraya River



(Photo:
2Bangkok.com)

This is real ephemera! The white board for March 23, 2001 reports the high and low temperature, wind direction and speed, sunrise and sunset, high and low tides, and the weather which is light rain and cloudy (1=clear, 2=cloudy, 3=light rain, 4=heavy rain).



(Photo:
2Bangkok.com)

March 24, 2001 – Bridge and crane disappearing into Bangkok's bright sky. In the foreground is the construction of road support pillars.



(Photo:
2Bangkok.com)

March 23, 2001 – The ubiquitous "Last Accident Occurred" sign



(Photo:
2Bangkok.com)

May, 2001 – Closeup of the top of the pillar as it nears completion

Views from around town



(Photo:
2Bangkok.com)

Pinklao Bridge as seen from the Rama VIII Bridge construction site. The Rama VIII Bridge is designed to handle most of the traffic that now uses the Pinklao Bridge thus rerouting traffic from the historic Ratanakosin Island area (this is where the Grand Palace and all the most famous landmarks are).

The bridge piling can be seen from all around town if one looks closely enough. Here is a view of bridge piling from the Rama IX Bridge further down the Chao Phraya River.



(Photo:
2Bangkok.com)

The bridge piling as seen from Na Phra That Road, near the main tourists' entrance to the Grand Palace. On the left is Silapkorn



(Photo:
2Bangkok.com)

University and on the right is Sanam Luang (the big open park downtown). Because the river turns east, the piling appears to be on the Bangkok side, but it is actually on the Thonburi side of the river.

Skytrain News 2001

April 3, 2001

Categories: Skytrain

Green light for subway extension

Excerpted from *The Nation*, April 3, 2001

The Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (BMA) is to guarantee a loan worth US\$175 million (Bt7.86 billion) to the Bangkok Transit System Company (BTSC) so that it can begin construction of extensions to its skytrain routes, BMA Governor Samak Sundaravej said yesterday.

....

He said the loan would be used to finance part of the construction of the nine-kilometre extension from On Nut to Samrong and the two kilometre route from Sathon Road to Taksin Road.

The governor said that the BMA would shoulder the cost of constructing the pylons for the extended skytrain routes while BTSC would build the tracks, set up the electric system and provide trains.

Samak said he would consult Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra about BMA's plan to issue bonds to raise funds for construction of the pylons. The governor said the city administration would go ahead with the plan to build an 80-kilometre railway around outer Bangkok as an alternative transport option for commuters.

....

Samak said the route would start from Bang Plee and go via Lam Lukka, Rangsit, Bang Bua Thong, Bang Bon, Rama 2, Bukkalo Intersection, Bang Pakok, Rama 3, Chong Nonsi and Wat Saphan to Bang Na. He said the route would have two tracks and would be mostly built at ground level, except at Chong Nonsi where it would be elevated. He said part of the route could be connected to the BTSC-skytrain system. The governor said he expected some one million commuters to use the new line each day.

How the Skytrains were Imported

April 2, 2001

The Freight Company, Ltd. recently contacted 2bangkok.com: "Our company was appointed by Siemens AG of Germany as the exclusive transport and logistics company (freight forwarder) for the Bangkok Skytrain Project. Our company was responsible for the transport of all the equipment for the Bangkok Skytrain from all over the world to Thailand. Moreover, our company was dealing exclusively with Thai Customs for the Import of all the equipment. Our Group also provided the warehouse facilities to store these goods prior to delivery to the project site." We hope to have a more in-depth account of the import and more photos soon.

[The Freight Company, Ltd. main page](#)

[Photo galleries](#) of the various gigantic items they have imported (including the skytrain)

[Info on their projects](#)

BTSC Directors Rushing to BMA City Hall to Confirm that they are Ready for Extension Constructions

Dailynews, March 29, 2001

BTSC Director went to the City Hall and met with Deputy Governor to confirm that they are ready to construct the extensions, and they will make a press conference about the extension plan very soon.

Mr. Sahat Bunditkul (Deputy Governor) after BTSC felt very hearing the rumor that the company was not ready for the extension construction. Therefore, the company sent Mr. Anat Abhabhirom (a consultant of the BTSC Board) to see him. Mr. Anat told Mr. Sahat that he had no idea who spread such a bad rumor to the press since it never came up at the BTSC at all. Furthermore, he also said that the company would be ready to construct since the company had rolling stock, a depot, and a maintenance center in their hands so their would be no need of a new set of rolling stocks, a depot and a maintenance center.

Mr. Sahat also told the press that Mr. Anat hadn't told him about the financial resources for the extensions and the country who would finance the projects as well as other related details. Nevertheless, the company would hold a press conference with the mass media very soon to correct the news. BTSC also planned to construct Park and Ride Buildings using elevators to move the cars up and down for safety and convenience so as to increase the passenger numbers.

Before the rumor spread out, the committee was drafting the TOR for bid calling open only to 11 companies which initially sent proposals for the first phase. After that, BTSC would take a look at the company's plan. If the plan satisfied BTSC, BTSC would use the plan to construct according to the cabinet resolution and its status as the pioneer for the mass transit system. However, the daily loss of 8-9 million baht as well as the inability of the company to find financial resources to fund the projects dimmed BTSC's prospects to deal with the winner, causing the rumor that they would not be involved in the extensions to spread like wild fire. Eventually, the company had to go to City Hall to confirm that the company would be ready for the construction.

Notes: We can guess that Chinese Government and Shanghai Metro Co.Ltd will definitely be on the list of financial resources for the Skytrain extensions due to the CEO's Chinese connections. It would be much better if the company could persuade Premier Thaksin to come up with G to G (Government to Government) loan to finance the mass transit projects since it is much cheaper for the government to borrow from other governments. Otherwise, the government will have to come up with the massive bonds (in baht, US\$, Euro, Yen denominations) to finance the projects.

Inviting 11 groups to deal with Skytrain extensions

Dailynews, March 27, 2001

Pol. 2nd Lt. Kriangsak Lohachara (City Clerk) said BMA is drafting the bidding plan for the Skytrain extension projects to deliver to the BMA Governor. The bid plan will be done in the next 2 weeks. After BMA Governor approves the plan, BMA will invite 11 groups to compete for the extension projects. The names for the groups are as follows:

- 1) AEROMOVEL Consortium
- 2) Thanayong Consortium (BTSC's subsidiary)
- 3) Thai-German Bangkok Metro Consortium
- 4) Bangkok Metro Co. Ltd. (BMCL – the concession holder of Subway – Ch. Karnchang PCL.'s subsidiary)
- 5) IIMRT Group
- 6) GEC Alstom Co.Ltd.
- 7) Siemens Co.Ltd.
- 8) Ch. Karnchang PCL.
- 9) MARUBENI Co.Ltd. (Japanese Firm)
- 10) Italian-Thai PCL. (one of BTSC's Shareholders)
- 11) ADTRANZ Group

City Clerk said the TORs for extension projects are that the private company have to make 100% investment for the construction of three lines with the same specifications for rolling stocks, standard 1.435-meter gauges, and the same control systems as Thanayong. If the bidding companies offer the better deal, the contract reserves the right for Thanayong to decide whether the company could comply with the winner's conditions. If Thanayong agrees with the winner's term, it will be okay; otherwise the winner will be the one who will undertake these projects.

So far, no companies have offered a better deal than Thanayong since the owner (Tanayong – AKA BTSC) won't have to deal with the depot and parking construction. If someone offers a better deal than Thanayong, Thanayong won't accept the company's imposing conditions (since it definitely requires the hostile

takeover of BTSC or other stringent financial and shareholding terms). Therefore, BMA will ask the cabinet to approve the new bidding plan which requires government assistance to realize the project.

BTSC Running out of cash for extension projects—Even the Taksin extension won't help very much

Dailynews, March 27, 2001

BTSC declines to deal with the extension projects since the company ran out of cash since the number of passengers is much less than the company expected causing creditors to refuse to lend the money for them. BTSC also said Taksin Extension won't help either since it doesn't go to a business area. The company has made a debt restructure plan to cope with creditors.

BTSC said the company will deliver the debt restructure plan to the creditors for the delay of debt payment since the revenue from the passengers cannot cover the expenses. Initially, the company thought that they could get 400,000 passengers a day or more to pay off the debts. However, the number of passenger is, at most, 200,000 passengers a day during the weekday and less during the weekend. The economic downturn also kicks the cost up from 35 billion baht to 52.634 billion baht. With the small number of passengers and the loan payment, the company won't be in the position to deal with the extensions. Even though the government offers to deal 80% of the extension cost through the construction and civil works and allows the company to deal with the services, systems, and rolling stocks, it won't help either since the creditors will decline to lend the company more money.

The Taksin extension won't help either since the area along the Taksin extension won't be a business area such as Silom and Sukhumvit, but those rural people who work in the factories on the Thoburi side of Bangkok. The bus route readjustment will help a little bit but not much since the routes which have already been adjusted are the routes that BMTA had allowed the private concession. The Hopewell project which are supposed to be the main feeder line is not finished yet (and might never be). Other companies which BMA invites to deal with the extension said they cannot deal either since it is very hard to find the investment loan. Even though the government have made 80% investment on civil work on the subway, BMCL Co. Ltd. hasn't received any loan yet since the creditors feel afraid that they will face passenger problems as BTSC.

Notes: With this kind of problem, I think Thaksin, BJ, and Ajarn Wannor will have lots of headaches to deal with. For the case of Hopewell, it will be much better to make separated section – Eastern Section and Northern Section. Northern section will run from Rangsit to Samsen to feed the subway and the Eastern section will run from Suvarnabhumi Airport to Hua Lamphong to feed the Skytrain and subway. After that, they will have to decide which section will have to be done first—Northern or Eastern section. If Suvarnabhumi Airport is done according to plan (or delayed for a few years), the Eastern Section will have to be done first since SRT is going to build a railway track to the Airport and this route will have more connection than the Northern section. If the airport won't be done very soon, the Northern section will be the best answer. For the tracks from Samsen to Hua Lamphong, the subway will function as a feeder for them until the economic is fully recovered.

If the economic is at full recovery, they will have to dig tunnels along Yothee Intersection and Saowanee Intersection to make traffic along Sri Ayuthaya Road and Ratchawithee Road flow without interruption, and force the cars in those roads to turn left along the Local Road or from Local Road to Sri Ayudhaya and Ratchawithee Road to ensure smooth traffic flows without going across the railway tracks.

The reason for the tunnels at Yothee and Saowanee Intersection is that the project holder will have to put the railways (and skytrain) on the ground level since it would be very prohibitive and disrespectful to construct the tracks above Chitlada Palace! Therefore it will be necessary to construct slopes to enable to elevated tracks to go down to earth and enable to ground tracks to go up from the earth to the elevated track. If it is necessary to put the track from Hua Lamphong to Phayathai at the ground level, the complicated flyover at Yommarat Intersection to keep smooth traffic flows is a must.

Firm lacks funds to extend service – Creditors knocking, too few passengers

Supoj Wancharoen, *Bangkok Post*, March 26, 2001

Bangkok Mass Transit System Corp will back out of the skytrain extension because of lack of funds and let other firms bid for the work. The skytrain operator is tied up in debt relief talks with its creditors, an executive source said. A debt restructuring plan must be submitted to all creditors within the month, after which the company would seek a delay in debt repayment.

He said the number of passengers was disappointing, much lower than originally expected. "We need at least 400,000 passengers a day to generate enough income to repay our debts. We serve only about 200,000 people on weekdays. This drops to 190,000 on Saturdays and only 120,000 on Sundays," he said. The firm, which has a 30-year concession to operate skytrain from the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration, began the service in December 1999 with fares ranging from 10 to 40 baht. The company originally planned to invest 35 billion baht and hoped to attract 430,000 passengers daily. The economic crisis spelled disaster for the firm when the government floated the baht, which suddenly depreciated and compounded the company's debts. As a result, project investment soared to 52.6 billion baht, of which 39% came from German bank KfW, 20% from Siam Commercial Bank and 7% from International Finance Corp.

The executive source said the baht depreciation and the disappointing number of passengers made it impossible for the company to acquire fresh loans for additional investment. The creditors would not lend any more money, but were well aware of the current financial situation and would have to come to an agreement. The company simply could not extend the train system, he said, even though the state offered to invest in the civil work. "We don't even have money to lay more tracks on state-funded structures. "The proposed extension of the track to Thon Buri will not give us as many additional passengers as reported," the source said. Residents of Thon Buri were unlikely to use the skytrain because most of them worked in factories, not in the business districts of Silom and Sukhumvit. "Most of the people there come from other provinces and work for factories or other local companies. "They already have enough department stores in Thon Buri and have no need for the department stores on the skytrain route," he said.

The firm had little hope of increasing passenger numbers over the next three years because many of the bus routes the Bangkok Mass Transit Authority could have re-routed to feed the skytrain were now run by private operators. The failed Hopewell mass transit project could have fed passengers to the skytrain but there was little chance of it being revived in the next five years.

Cabinet has endorsed the 8.9km Onnui-Samrong route, the 8.5 km Chong Nonsi-Sathupradit route and the 2.2km Sathon-Taksin route as extensions. Under its concession, the firm had the right to propose its extension plan first. It was unable to do so and the city has invited other companies to tender. They include Ch Karnchang Plc, Adtranz Group, Italian-Thai Development Plc, Siemens and Alstom Group. City Governor Samak Sundaravej recommended the state invest in the civil work for the extended routes, with private participation in laying tracks, running trains and expanding the operating system. The state assistance will be similar to that given for the city subway, but the skytrain expansion is not expected to proceed without a hitch. "The other mass transit bidders should think hard before responding to the invitation because it is difficult to get a loan for such a project now," the BTSC source said.

"Despite not having to invest in the civil work, the Bangkok Metro Co Ltd is still unable to seal a loan contract with its banks because creditors fear the subway will not have enough passengers."



Groovy Skytrain Map

The [Groovy Map](#) people have a nice [Expressway/Skytrain Map](#). If you don't know this company, they make extremely practical and up-to-date maps with an emphasis on easy to understand public transport info. Their *Bangkok by Day* and *Bangkok by Night* maps are must-haves...

OCMLT Revising the Rama III Extension – from BTSC to MRTA

Thairath Daily, February 14, 2001 and *Dailynews*, February 14, 2001

Pol. Maj. Yongyut Sarasombut (OCMLT's Secretariat) said that OCMLT would like to revise the feasibility of Rama III Extension after the cabinet have approved the plan for BTSC to construct the Taksin, Samrong and Rama III extension of the Skytrain. OCMLT would like to ask MRTA to handle to Rama III extension instead of BTSC by connecting the first section of the MRTA Blue line at Queen Sirikit Station to go along Rama III Ring Road to Mahai Sawan Intersection (or Thanon Tok Intersection) as a subway even though it is initially ends at Sadhupradit Intersection near Sadhupradit Pier.

On the Northern extension of the Blue line from Bangsue to Phra Nangklao Bridge, the extension should be readjusted at Wongsawang Intersection to go across Chaophraya River via Rama VII Bridge and then turn left to go along Charansanitwongse Inner Ring Road and connect with the Blue Line at Ratchadaphisek Inner Ring Road (Tha Phra) and then connect with Rama III extension at Mahaisawan Intersection (or Thanon Tok Intersection later on). Such a ring loop will boost the passenger up from the target 400,000 passengers a day to 600,000 passenger a day.

However, the MRTA bridges to go across Chao Phraya River are necessary even though the bridge that goes parallel to Krungthep Bridge must be high enough to accommodate the cargo ships from Klong Toei Port (looking at Rama III Bridge as a good example!). Even better, the Stations near the river should be close to the piers (Saphan Krung Thep and Rama VII Pier) to transport the passengers from Phra Pradaeng and Rat Boorana in very easy way as those who go through Saphan Taksin Station.

For the Northern extension of Skytrain, OCMLT would like to use the abandoned pillars of Hopewell project while BMA wants to go along Phaholyothin Road instead. Therefore, it is necessary to call another discussion between OCMLT and BMA about this matter in March 2001. After that, OCMLT and BMA will submit the plan to revise the Rama III extension and Northern extension of Skytrain to the cabinet later.

So far, Bangkokians travel 14.4 million trips a day by cars and buses – 53% for cars and 47% by buses. If cabinet decide to follow the plans for both Skytrain and Subway, both mass transit systems will cut down the buses and car transportation by 1.5 million trips a day.

Setting Up a Flea Market in Skytrain Station as "Soi Lalaisub 2 Project" – Mochit Station is the First branch

Thairath Daily, February 13, 2001

Ms. Rosarin Suchart, the Marketing and Sales Manager of VGI Global Media Co. Ltd. (BTSC's subsidiary) said the company will set up "Soi Lalaisub 2 Project" on Mochit Station from February 14, 2001 (Valentine's Day). This project will allow the private entrepreneurs to rent 15 booths in a 5.1-square-meter space in the northern section of Mochit station to sell cosmetics, clothes, gifts, Tape-CDs, bakery products, drinks, ornaments and spectacles from 6am to midnight in a similar way as those who live in Soi Lalaisub at Silom do. This "Soi Lalaisub 2 Project" will increase revenue for the company and maximize the utility of empty space in the station. The company will make an open ceremony in the morning of Valentine's Day and assess customers' satisfaction and total sales. If the project works well, the company will open more branches at Chit Lom and Phrompong Station. There would be no problem about moving the passengers during the emergency, since the booth area is at the edge of the stations which is not in the pathways of the stations. VGI Co.Ltd. Received the 15-year concession from BTSC to utilize the station areas of Skytrain but the company have to pay BTSC 200 million baht a year. So far, VGI Co. Ltd. gets revenue from ads on the rolling stock, inside the trains, and around platforms.

BMA Defense BTSC's Action to Open "Soi Lalaisub 2 Project"

Thairath Daily, February 15, 2000

After BTSC granted a 15-year concession to VGI Global Media Co.Ltd to open "Soi Lalaisub 2 Project", some passengers agreed with the project while the others didn't like it. Mr. Winai Lekwongsederm (39 years old, private business) said he dislikes such a project since the stations have the main duty to move the passengers so there should not be many shops inside the stations which will cause more congestion inside which will obstruct passenger pathways. On the other hand, Miss Ornchat Amatayakul (24 years old, office lady) said she likes this project since the company choose the right space which won't obstruct the pathways so there would be no problems during the evacuation.

Mr. Karun Jantharangsu (BTSC Administration Director) said the company had studied before coming up with such a project. Furthermore, the Article 3 of the contract with BMA said the company can earn income from activities relating to the transportation systems which include advertisement, the rent and the ticket fees. Therefore, it is legal to rent a space to sell the products inside the stations so long that the booths won't block the pathways. Mr. Mana Nopphan (Deputy City Clerk) said the company can rent a space to sell the products since BMA allows 100% private investment. Therefore, the company can open up the space for rent without asking BMA, so long that the booths won't block the pathways.

Dept. of Civil Construction Giving the Area under Sathon Bridge to Construct Park & Ride for Skytrain

Thairath Daily, February 9, 2001

Mr. Karun Jantharangsu (BTSC Administration Director) said after the meeting with the Ad Hoc committee for solving BTSC problems headed by Pol. Maj. Yongyut Sarasombut (OCMLT's Secretariat) that BTSC proposed a plan to construct a connection point between the Skytrain and other land transportation modes under Saphan Taksin Station. The Dept. of Civil Works will allow BTSC to use an area of about 1 rai (about 17,222 square-feet) as a transportation connecting point to park taxi cabs, buses and cars. The connecting point will have a roof and it will take about 6 months to finish after the committee approves the plan. Furthermore, there will be a discussion about the connecting points Mochit and Onnut Station. Mr. Karun said the BMA plans to readjust the 2nd section of the Phaseecharoen Elevated way project (Taksin to Wat Ang kao – 6.1 km) into the extension of the Skytrain. BMA will deal with civil engineer matters while BTSC deals with rail and rolling stock which will require 5-6 billion baht (around US\$ 125-150 million). The creditors will definitely grant a loan to support this project since this project will enable the company to increase daily passengers since the Thonburi side has high traffic density and OCMLT said this western extension will boost the number of daily passengers 70,000 persons or more.

(Note from Ron: Here's the same story from two different newspapers. On the left is the English-language *Bangkok Post* version and on the right, the Thai-Language *Dailynews* version. The *Bangkok Post* version makes it seem like everything is simple and settled. The *Dailynews* version gives much more detail on the remaining conflicts.)

City suggests longer route

Elevated road can be transformed

by Supoj Wancharoen, excerpted from the *Bangkok Post*, Wednesday, February 7, 2001

The city administration has agreed to transform an elevated road project into a skytrain extension route to serve Thon Buri. Targeted for the change is the two-lane Klong Phasi Charoen elevated road designed during the term of former Bangkok governor Bhichit Rattakul to serve high-occupancy vehicles such as passenger buses and cars with at least three people. The road project was designed to run along Klong Phasi Charoen for 12km from Kanchanapisek road to the Phetkasem area.

....

Under the change, the skytrain system will run along half of the route, for 6km from Phetkasem road via Klong Bang Khun Thien, Therd Thai road,

Readjusting the Elevated Way to become a skytrain route Track laying and Rolling Stock for BTSC

Dailynews, February 7, 2001

BMA agrees to readjust the Phaseecharoen Elevated Way from Taksin to Wat Ang Kao (Phatthanakarn Road) to become an extension of the skytrain and allow BTSC to lay track and run the service.

On February 6, Mr. Sahas Bunditku (BMA Deputy Governor), Mr. Kumrop-luk Suraswadi (Deputy Secretariat of OCMLT) and officers from KWF (BTSC Creditor) went to inspect the Phaseecharoen Elevated Way Project from Sathon Road to Phetkasem Road (National Highway No.4) to plan for the readjustment from elevated way to skytrain extension.

Mr. Sahas said the cabinet had already approved BMA to construct Taksin Extension from Saphan Taksin Station to Taksin Intersection (2.1-2.2 km)

Wong Wian Yai-Mahachai railway track, Ratchadapisek road, Taksin road and Krung Thon Buri road to Sathorn bridge.

....

(Bangkok deputy governor Sahas Bunditku) said it would be easy for Bangkok Mass Transit System Corp to find a source of funding for the laying of tracks and building of stations because the city would pay for the civil engineering work. In the meantime, the city would terminate the other half of the Klong Phasi Charoen road project as its design failed an environmental impact assessment, Mr Sahas said.

Kumropluk Suraswadi, deputy director of the Megaprojects Office, said the change would also bring a new rail terminus in Thon Buri as the extended skytrain route would meet the new Mae Klong railway track. The new terminus would facilitate transport to China, Burma and Malaysia in addition to the only terminus at Hua Lampong, he said. Also, the skytrain system would benefit from the change because of commuters on the Thon Buri side. The current demand for the skytrain system in Thon Buri was about 70,000 people daily, he said.

....

while BMA was constructing the 2nd section of Phaseecharone Elevated Way from Phatthanakarn Road to Taksin Bridge (AKA Saphan Taksin) -6.1 km long – with a budget of 742 million baht. However, the 2nd section of Phaseecharoen Elevated Way is 10.35% done – 45.79% delayed from original plans. Even worse, there are conflicts about the transfer of land ownership between BMA and the Dept. of Civil Construction. Therefore, OCMLT and BMA decided to readjust the section from Sathorn to Taksin (2.1 km) as the extension of the skytrain.

BMA is going to make a consideration on the section from Taksin Intersection to Mae Klong Railway (2km) and the section from Mae Klong Railway to Wat Ang Kao between Phatthanakarn Road and Phetkasem Road – 2 km) since BMA thought that the route should turn left to go along Mae Klong Railway near Wutthakart Road (AKA Thoed Thai Road) while OCMLT said the route to go all the way to Phetkasem Road. Therefore, BMA and OCMLT need to discuss to get the final OCMLT resolution about these 2 sections (Taksin – Wutthakart Road and Wutthakart to Phetkasem). After that BMA will deliver the resolution to Sino-Thai Construction PCL (a contractor of Phaseecharoen Elevated Way) to readjust the project.

Mr. Sahas said if final resolution is to readjust the whole project to Skytrain extension (6.1 km), BMA will invest in the main structure from the budget which BMA has enough and then BMA will ask BTSC to invest on the rail tracking, rolling stock and services. Mr. Kamrobelux said OCMLT has planned for the Skytrain route from Sathorn Bridge to Phetkasem Road and the Mae Klong line is considered to belong to SRT. On the other hand, BMA wants the route to turn left to go along Mae Klong Railway since SRT said they want BMA to deal with Mae Klong Route. Mr. Kumrop-luk also said that if the route goes from Sathorn to Phetkasem, BTSC will receive 70,000 more passengers a day.

Notes: It would be very nice they can come up with compromises that all relating parties can agree with. For example, there should be an interchange station between Wutthakart and Mae Klong Railway so that one can go to either Mahachai or Phetkasem. However, such an interchange will increase the budget which will definitely become unacceptable during the current economic situation. Even worse, it will be very hard if not impossible for BMA and OCMLT to come up with a compromise. The conflicts about the northern extension of the skytrain is a good example since both sides reject the compromise choice while they prefer their favorite route instead!

Note 2: The route of the 2nd section of Phaseecharoen Elevated Way is as follows:

- 1) Going from the foot of Sathorn Bridge to Taksin Intersection
- 2) Going from Taksin Intersection to Ratchadaphisek Inner Ring Road
- 3) Going from Ratchadaphisek Inner Ring Road to Wutthakart Road (part of Thoed Thai Road) which is very closed to Mae Klong Railway
- 4) Going from Wutthakart Road to Branch out at the place between Wat Pleng and Wat Salakruen
- 5) One Branch go to Phatthanakarn Road and cross Phaseecharoen Canal. This branch ending up at Phetkasem Road
- 6) The other branch go parallel to Phasseecharoen canal to cross Bang Khunthian Canal, and Bang Bon Road. This branch end up at Kanchanaphisek Outer Ring Road

There is a road from Taksin Intersection to Phetkasem. The Road is supposed to connect the projected road from Phetkasem to Rattanathibet Road. However, only the section from Taksin Intersection to Ratchadaphisek is done.

BTSC Chasing Swallows in Silom Area Away

Dr. (Vet) Alongkot Mahannop (a veterinarian from Chitlada Palace) noticed that there are fewer swallows around Silom Road in recent winters. One of the many culprits may be pollution from Skytrain after putting power lines underground or noise from the Skytrain which disturbs the internal magnetic compass that swallows use.

Dr. Alongkot believes that the swallows, which migrate from Siberia each year, will leave Silom for good to winter in less polluted and noisy areas—unfortunate thing since swallows have become a familiar for those who live around Silom area.

Mr. Harnnarong Yaowalart (the assistant secretariat of information division, Wildlife Conservation Foundation) said the whole structure of Skytrain is the reason for the decline of Silom swallows—no more hanging power lines, and scary big things like the Skytrain rolling stock.

BTSC denies that they chased the swallows away

Thairath Daily, February 1, 2001

Mr. Karun Jantharagsu (Administrative Director of BTSC) contends that the Skytrain did not cause the swallows to leave the Silom area. Putting the power lines underground leaves no place for the swallows to roost, so they flew to Lumpinee Park or Bueng Kum Park which are much greener and have more food and places to rest. He said putting the power lines underground came before the construction of the Skytrain, so the Skytrain did not chase those bird away. Environmental studies conducted by Kasetsart University before the Skytrain construction has clearly stated the construction of the Skytrain did no harm to the environment—including birds around the Silom area.

Mrs. Arunee Ratsameethat (Laksi District Director and the former Bangrak District Director from 1998-2000) said the number of birds is decreasing, but there are about 300-500 birds that still stay in the Silom area. She knows this because district cleaners have to clean the road tainted on bird dropping daily instead of only in the winter. Nevertheless, she has no idea what caused the birds to disappear from Silom area.

Skytrain blues for Silom swallows

excerpted from *The Nation*, January 31, 2001

.....

For decades, electricity cables slung along either side of Silom Road provided a winter home for thousands of barn swallows, who migrate to Thailand annually from northern Asia. But several years ago the bird's temporary lodgings were uprooted to make way for construction work on the skytrain project, and underground cables installed in their place. Since then, the number of birds passing the winter on Silom Road has fallen each year.

According to the Silom Road Tagging Project, there were about 130,000 migratory barn swallows living along Silom Road in 1992. The following year – which saw the first cables removed – about 71,000 birds were sighted. The number dropped to 48,000 when skytrain construction began in 1996. Last year, the project recorded only 38,000 birds in the remaining tress and on top of buildings along the road.

The project is a joint effort between Telecom Asia Cooperation Co, the Royal Forestry Department and the Bird Conservation Society of Thailand.

The group plans to tag each bird in an effort to learn more about the life cycle and biology of migratory barn swallows in Thailand. Each year, employees of the project's three founding members, along with student volunteers, use large nets to catch the birds, which are tagged with a coded band identifying where and when they were found. They are then released. This year's round of tagging is being held today.

.....

Watchara Yoosawad of the Bird Conservation Society also feared that one winter the birds would not return to Silom because the environment along the road had changed so drastically. "I don't see how this place can support the birds any longer: No more wires, no big trees, no more flying insects, the

skytrain and all this noise. It all adds up to a totally unsuitable environment for the barn swallow," he said.

.....

While nobody could say for sure where the birds go once they decide not to stay in Silom Road, Watchara speculated they might be moving south to Pattana and Yala, or Malaysia.

Skytrain Extensions Can Be Finished in 3 years

Dailynews, January 30, 2001

Pol. 2nd. Lt Kriangsak Lohachara (City Clerk) said he'll call a meeting to discuss the plan to construct the extension on Jan 31 and invite BTSC to discuss with them about the details and conditions for the 3 skytrain extensions. BTSC is the first company to be called for this discussion. If BTSC declines to accept the conditions according to 1992 contract imposed by BMA, BMA will have to call other companies to handle the extensions.

Name of Extension	From	To	Distance	Construction Period
Sukhumvit (Samrong)	Onnut	Samrong Tai	8.9 km	36 months
Silom (Taksin)	Saphan Taksin	Wongwian Yai	2.2 km	30 months
Rama III	Chong Nonsee	Sadhupradit	8.5 km	36 months

The City Clerk said the construction will be a 100% private investment with 30 years concession. The deposit for the bid is 200 million baht (US\$ 5 million). The deposit for the contract is 200 million baht (US\$ 5 million), and the deposit for the construction is 50 million baht (US\$ 1.25 million). There will be no land expropriation.

BMA will ask BTSC when it wants to start the construction. When BMA knows the starting date, BMA will try to do everything to finish the construction on time. For the fare rate, they will discuss whether BTSC will have to freeze the fare rate or BTSC can raise the fare rate to the ceiling. The company may freeze the fare rate if they can count on picking up more passengers.

Issuing Bonds to Finance Skytrain Extensions

Dailynews, February 1, 2001

BMA is preparing to issue a bond with a 6% annual rate this April to finance the Skytrain extensions to Bangplee, Mahachai and Lum Lookka and reduce the fare to a 20-25 baht flat rate with daily passengers of million people after Bang Plee, Mahachai, and Lum Lookka Extensions become operative. BMA will let BTSC deal with the service.

Pol. 2nd Lt. Kriangsak Lohachara (City Clerk) has called a meeting to discuss the investment plan on skytrain extensions to comply with the 16th Article in the 1992 Joint Venture Act. BMA will invite 11 groups to join in this project after the Attorney General accepts the BMA plan. BMA will ask the companies to submit the preliminary investment plans within 15 days after BMA calls a bid and the companies will have to submit the plans in detail within the next 90 days after the deadline of preliminary plan submission so that BMA will have the data to discuss with BTSC later.

Governor Samak Sunthoravet said after the meeting with the OCMLT committee that the committee decided that the best route for the Northern Extension of Skytrain is to go along Phaholyothin Road and then turn right to Km25 before going along Thanyaburi canal to Lum Lookka. The Investment Plan for the extension will be as follows:

Route Plan

1) Saphan Taksin – Taksin Intersection (Wongwian Yai)

80% BMA -20% BTSC-Shanghai Metro by readjusting the section of Phaseecharoen Elevated Way

2) Taksin Bridge – Ko Bo (Actually Wat Nang)

100% BTSC- Shanghai metro

3) Onnut – Samrong

100% BTSC- Shanghai Metro

4) Ko Bo – Mahachai

80% BMA

5) Samrong – Bangplee

80% BMA – 20% BTSC-Shanghai Metro

6) Mochit – Lum Lookka

80% BMA

Krungthep Thanakhom Co. Ltd. will issue 100 billion baht (US\$ 2.5 billion) with an annual interest rate of 6% in this April to finance the construction of the Mahachai, Lum Lookka and Bang Plee extensions. BTSC will run the services. After Mahachai, Lum Lookka and Bang Plee extension are opened for service, the fair rate will be cut to 20-25 baht flat rate to boost the passenger numbers up to one million passengers a day.

Samak wants the state to fund extension

Operator agrees to flat rate of 20 baht

Bangkok Post, February 1, 2001

Supoj Wancharoen

The state should invest in the skytrain extension and allow the private sector to run trains on the new routes, the Bangkok governor said. Samak Sundaravej said the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration could raise 100 billion baht if Krungthep Thanakom issued bonds for sale to the public at 6% interest.

"The bonds could be issued soon since the Office of the Auditor-General agrees with the plan. The repayment will depend on fares collected from the extended skytrain system," he said.

The Bangkok Mass Transit System Corp would receive a loan from China to import more trains and expand the operating system, he said. The lender would expect German development bank KfW, a current creditor of BTSC, to guarantee the loan.

Mr Samak intends to submit his proposal to the government and use the successful state finance of the new subway plan as an example.

"This will allow the project to be completed quickly so the state can provide lower fares for the public."He said he has discussed the reduced skytrain fares with BTSC chairman Keeree Kanjanapas, who has agreed to implement a flat rate of 20 baht per trip after the extended routes become operational. The state and the private operator would then share the income according to the size of investment.

The governor expects the extended skytrain to serve a million passengers daily. Cabinet has endorsed three extended routes: Onnuj to Samrong (8.9km), Sathon to Taksin (2.2km) and Chong Nonsi to Nang Linchi (actually Sadhupradit Pier) (8.5km). The current skytrain covers a distance of 23km and runs through the city. Mr Samak's plan is different from another scheme planned by a panel considering the extension.

City clerk Kriangsak Lohachala, head of the committee, said the panel proposed the private operator bear the whole investment of the extension in line with a previous cabinet resolution. The panel includes representatives from the BMA, the National Economic and Social Development Board, the Transport and Communications Ministry, the Office of the Attorney-General and the Finance Ministry.

Discarding Samak's Idea to Construct the Northern Extension Along the Canals

Dailynews, January 23, 2001

Land Traffic Committee determined that Skytrain northern extension should either go along Phaholyothin Road or along SRT Railway since both choices are better and cheaper than going along the canal Governor Samak has proposed. However, the final choice will be discussed next month.

Pol. Maj. Yongyut Sarasombut (OCMLT Secretariat) said that after OCMLT called a meeting with public and private sector about the assessment on Northern Extension of Skytrain, the results were as follows:

Route	Score
Phaholyothin	76
Hopewell	75
Canals	less than 75
Phahonyothin-Hopewell	even less than Canals

The first two choices scored so closely that OCMLT has called a meeting to finalize the route in early February (or perhaps in late March). If the final choice is Hopewell, OCMLT, BMA and BTSC will have to negotiate with Hopewell since the company is in conflict with SRT. If the choice is the Phaholyothin route, the Kaset flyover must be demolished just as the Saphan Kwai flyover was.

The governor's canal route failed the test since such a route would have detrimental effects on thousands of families living along the canals. The BMA apartments may not be able to cover all of those families and BMA would have to spend billions of baht to create new jobs for them.

Notes: Even though Hopewell route is cheaper (they can use the abandoned pillars with a few modifications), the long negotiation process will definitely make many people run out of patience. Therefore, the Phaholyothin route may be the best choice we have right now.

Governor Samak Pushing for BTS Extension Using Pillars from Phaseecharoen Elevated Way

Thairath, January 9, 2001

Governor Samak Sunthoravet said that after the Cabinet approved the BMA to start construction without calling a new bid, BMA sent Pol. 2nd Lt. Kriangsak Lohachara (BMA City Clerk) to negotiate with BTSC about the construction details and the conditions before signing a contract to start the construction from Onnut to Samrong and Saphan Taksin to Taksin Intersection (AKA Ko Boh) which BMA will push to be done within 18 months. Governor Samak said he suggested to BTSC and the City Clerk that the company should use the pillars from the suspended 2nd phase of Phaseecharoen Elevated Way. BMA will pay compensation to private contractors who worked for the terminated Phaseecharoen Elevated Way project. When the Skytrain reaches Wongwian Yai, it will be lowered down to surface level before going along Maeklong Railway.

Skytrain Stops due to Glitches

Thairath, January 13, 2001

Skytrain stopped running for about half an hour at 09:30 AM of Jan 12, 2001 when the train which started from Morchit Station nearly reached Saphan Kwai Station. The stopping also caused three more trains following to stop.

Mr. Arnat Abhaphirom (BTSC Adviser) said the glitches are due to unknown rolling stock problems while running to Saphan Kwai Station, causing other rolling stock to stop. The company will make a detailed investigation on what were the actual causes of the problems.

Readjust Phaseecharoen Elevated Way to be ready for BTS Southern Extension

Dailynews, January 18, 2001

Mr. Khamrobe-rak Suratsawadee asked OCMLT and the Traffic Committee to stop phase 2 of Phaseecharoen Elevated Way project owned by the Department of Civil Works (Ministry of Interior) and transfer the budget to BMA for the construction for BTS Western Extension since it is very easy to do so (just constructing the skytrain structure & stations).

Mr. Khamrobe-rak (deputy director of Traffic Committee) said after the discussion with Mr. Mana Nopphan (BMA Deputy City Clerk) that he agreed with BMA about the proposal to readjust the 2nd phase of the Phaseecharone Elevated Way (Taksin – Wat Angkaeo) into the Skytrain Western Extension. OCMLT will prepare the report to the Traffic Committee which will be appointed by the new Prime Minister (Taksin Shinawatra) and his cabinet.

Mr. Khamrobe-rak said that OCMLT has a new mass transit master plan for the Thonburi side of Bangkok which includes the upgrading of the Maeklong Railway Line, the construction of Taksin Extension, and the Southern Bangkok Transportation Hub.

Now, BMA has started the construction of the Taksin extension at the foot of Sathon Bridge; therefore, BMA can implement the extension from Taksin Intersection Phetkasem Road by going along the Phaseecharoen Elevated way route by constructing additional structures and stations. There is no problem with the budget since BMA can use the BMA budget of a billion baht for the first section of Phaseecharone Elevated Way (suspended due to strong opposition from people living along Phaseecharone canal) which can be used after revoking the project. 700 million baht from the revoked project is for upgrading the structure to fit the skytrain need and the other 300 million baht is for improving Phaseecharoen Canal. Such extension will start after finishing the construction from Sathon Bridge to Taksin Intersection (Taksin Extension).

Thaksin's Quest for Gold

April 16, 2001

Categories: The Thaksin Years

Every few years someone claims to have found the elusive treasure that the Japanese supposedly buried in Kanchanaburi during World War II. These "finds" often occur during economic downturns and the local press is usually more interested in reporting how this gold will wipe away Thai debt or solve financial woes than actually wanting to see the gold itself. The treasure always turns out to be imaginary—the result of our collective urban myth-making culture. It is belief stoked by publicity-seekers, a careless press, and a desire that there be some quick fix to solve economic problems.

Right now, we are in the grips of gold fever once again. The new Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra visited a cave site where the gold was supposed to be and spoke favorably about the claim. CNN got into the act as well, reporting the gold find as fact and noting how it could help solve current Thai woes. However, [the story on their website](#) has a different tone, noting the many similar hoaxes that crop up now and then.

The treasure has yet to be seen, and latest reports indicate that it actually consists of 100-million-dollar gold bonds from the US which the Japanese were hoarding. There are articles about the "treasure" in the April 15 and 16 editions of the Bangkok Post and the Nation, but since the links to these articles will change after a few days, we cannot link directly to them (if you want to read the articles, go to the newspapers' main page and then find the editions for April 15 and 16, 2001).

[Thai senator lifts lid on treasure trove](#) – CNN, April 16, 2001

...Senator Chaowarin Latthasaksiri says the riches, rumored to be worth billions of dollars, were found Friday in a cave close to the border with Myanmar after a five-year long search.

...Chaowarin has made such claims before, in 1995, triggering a mini gold rush to the area. But despite extensive searches no buried treasure was found...

Updates

[Thai treasure cave a hoax: officials](#) – CNN, April 17, 2001

...Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra has called for a halt to digging at a cave near the border with Myanmar, where the treasure was supposed to be hidden.

He's hoping that a satellite owned by friends in the U.S. can detect whether the treasure exists when it passes over the site later this week.

...The Prime Minister took the story seriously enough to fly to the site by helicopter last Friday...

April 18, 2001 – The story has already broken down: [No treasure in Thai cave leaves premier red-faced](#)

[Four arrested over Thai treasure hoax](#) – CNN, April 20, 2001

...Police arrested four men over the treasure scam, which has embarrassed the nation and badly dented the government's credibility, after the men tried to sell fake U.S. bonds with a face value of \$24.7 billion to Payap Shinawatra — brother of Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra.

...Meanwhile, members of Thailand's parliament expressed suspicions that Thaksin had given credence to Chaowarin's claims because he saw them as a good diversion charges of wealth concealment against him that are being heard by Thailand's Constitutional Court...

April 20, 2001 – The *Nation* has an [interesting article](#) on gold bond scammers in Thailand. Maybe this article should have been run when this story first broke. (April 29, 2001 – The link to this article has changed *three times* since its publication.

It seems local newspapers are determined not to have their articles linked to... although it is more likely they do not understand how newspaper articles are typically accessed by viewers on the web.)

A summary of closed, defunct and obscure railways in Thailand

April 20, 2001

Categories: Thai Railroads

A summary of closed, defunct and obscure railways in Thailand

- closed
- some of the infrastructure was recent or is still there (overgrown)
- already discussed or mentioned on the [2Bangkok website under Forum – Railways/SRT](#)
former rolling stock preserved

Northern line

Muang Fang district (West from Chiang Rai) ●

Light railway for the transport of teakwood (logs) by The Borneo Company

Phayao / Chun district (road 1021) ●●

SFCL = Siam Forest Company Ltd. Separate system – 1000 mm / 49 miles – closed in 1939

Thai Sugar Corporation – factory Ko Kha (Nakhon Lampang – km 642) ●

Network – 750 mm – to transport sugar cane

Muang Pong (105 miles from Den Chai – km 534) ●

Light railway – 26 miles – for the transport of teakwood (logs) by the Anglo-Siam Cooperation

Thai Sugar Corporation – factory Wang Khapi (km 477) ●●

Network – 750 mm – to transport sugar cane and one line – 1000 mm – in connection with the SRT

Branch line near Rai Oi (km 454)

Mysterious line found on an (old) map but no clues (open / closed ?)

Hua Wai – Ban Plai Rang Mai (Tha Tako) (km 204+62) ●

Line – 19 km / 600 mm – for firewood transport

Tha Rua – Phra Puttabath (km 102) ●●

RFTR = Rot Fai Tha Rua Ltd. 750 mm

Lop Buri (km 133) ●

City tram line

Branch line near Ban Talat Nong Tao (km 150) ●●

Mysterious line found on an (old) map with a bridge over Khlong Khut Chonlaprathan.

Bangkok

Krung Thep ●●●

City tram network. The last two lines closed on 30 September 1968.

Phra Padaeng ●

A single tramline to shortcut a (big) wind in the Chao Phraya river

Klong San – Wong Wian Yai ●●

A section of the Maeklong (Thachin) Railway along the Thanon Charoen Rat

Hua Lamphong – Samut Prakan ●●

Suburban line – 21.3 km – closed in 1962

Thonburi – Bang Bua Thong ●●

750 mm line

Siam City Park ●●

Line – 600 mm – (loop) for fun riding in an attraction park with a closed station and section outside the gate.

Eastern line

Sri Maharacha Lumber Company (SRJ) – Sri Racha ●●

Extensive network – 750 mm – in a wood plantation

Aranya Prathet (km 255) – **Khlong Luak – Cambodia** →

Closed for traffic in 1974, open again till the boarder on the Thai side – 6 km – in February 1992.

North-Eastern line

Sung Noen (Nern) (km 234) ●●

2 lines radiating southwards – 600 mm – for firewood transport, abandoned in 1962.

Branch line at Buri Ram (km 376)

An obscure line, still open (?) but no clue where to and for what purpose.

Southern line

Burma line ●●

Nong Pladuk Junction (km 80) – Kanchanaburi (km 133) – Nam Tok (Tha Sao – km 210) – Three Pagoda pass (border) – Thanbyuzayat. (Burma)

Still in service till Nam Tok and recent extended to the waterfall (Sai Yok Noi) (1.5 km). Beyond that point many traces and remains can be found hidden in bushes and undergrowth. Well preserved – as a memorial walking trail – a few miles to and from the “Hellfire pass.”

Kirirat Nikom (km 678) ●

Extension to Phuket but never realised.

Amphoe Kapong (road 4175) ●

An old map shows a rail line beginning at Ban Pak Thak. I presume industrial use (tin mine).

Hat Yai – Songkhla (km 945 – 974) ●● [Photos](#)

Sungai Golok (km 1159) – **Rantau Panjang** (Malaysia) →

Only open for fright service, if there is still any (?)

Straight talk from Mechai Viravaidya

May 1, 2001

Categories: 2Bangkok News

Straight talk from Mechai Viravaidya

The legendary public-health campaigner speaks up on ethics, AIDS, and unlicensed drugs

by [Ron Morris](#)

How many founders of NGOs have become legends in their own time? Mechai Viravaidya is one. Twenty-six years ago he founded the Population and Community Development Association (PDA) and embarked on the first successful population control program in a developing country. The voluntary program reduced the average number of children per family from seven to less than two today.

During the 1980's he started an influential program to combat the AIDS epidemic in Thailand head on by promoting condom use. Condom-inflating contests were held and rice farmers were paid to have family-planning slogans posted on their buffalos. Viravaidya himself walked through red-light districts handing out condoms.



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)

His chain of "Cabbages and Condoms" restaurants combine innovative Thai food with a positive attitude about condoms and family planning. The restaurant features humorous condom posters on the walls and t-shirts featuring Winston Churchill's famous v for victory salute, but in this case it means "stop at two children." Viravaidya's office sports a huge coffee table with condoms under a glass surface. Bouquets of flowers around the PDA offices are decorated with colored condoms. So high-profile was the condom awareness campaign that condoms became known in some quarters as "Mechais."

In another internationally applauded program, the PDA partnered with major corporations to relocate factories near rural villages so local people would not have to migrate to the cities for profitable employment.

And as for positions and accolades—you name it and Viravaidya has headed it or been a member. Presently he is a Thai Senator and the UN Ambassador for UNAIDS (Joint UN Programme on HIV-AIDS). He has served as a former cabinet minister and headed dozens of local and international organizations. Half-Thai and half-Scottish, educated in Australia, Viravaidya has made a unique contribution to how NGOs are run. NGO administrators from around the world attend training courses at the PDA's Asian Center to learn the secrets and successes of the Viravaidya approach.

And he's not out of ideas yet. His restaurant chain is planning to expand into eastern Europe, Australia, and the UK and is branching out into packaged Thai foods such as sauces, curries, and honey.

A unique red rice discovered by a farmer is also being marketed to support the PDA. The mutant rice, naturally high in carotene and fiber was crossbred to strengthen the strain and is now about to be exported. The PDA is applying its commitment to improving the plight of the rural poor to this project as well by offering the red-rice farmers the majority of income made from the sale.

According to Viravaidya, the businesses are a necessary way of raising funds. "Most charitable organizations in the Third World will find it hard to survive because donations come and go and donors change their mind. That's their right, of course. So for the last 25 years we've received grants and gifts, but at the same time building our own by setting up as separate legal entities companies like 'Cabbages and Condoms' to make a profit. That profit is given to the nonprofit foundation. That has to be the way of the future."

Recently I spoke to Mechai Viravaidya on the future of the PDA and the issues it addresses:

Q: What's the next natural step for the PDA?

A: From the 70s to the mid-80s, it was population and family planning. From the 80s to the 90s, mostly rural development and institutional development such as village banks and taking manufacturing out to villages. In the last three years it was youth government in villages and scholarships—over 1200. In 2000 we started anti-corruption studies for youth in secondary school—seminars for the kids to talk about corruption.

Q: Something like ethics?

A: Yes, but going beyond, because if you start off in kindergarten teaching honesty and good manners it grows from there. And this year, instead of having scholarships, we're planning to have our own school in the Northeast. It'll be open Saturdays and Sundays so that good teachers from all over including those in business can come and help us.

We want to teach not just the basics of primary and secondary school, but produce people with conscience. People who want to do public good. We want kids to analyze with a modern style of thinking rather than just sit down and become parrots.

So originally we tried to prevent people from being born because there were too many, then we tried to keep them fed, and now the third stage is on the "software side," the brain side, that's beyond feeding.

Q: There's been some slight increase in AIDS cases lately. Is the challenge of fighting AIDS in Thailand different these days?

A: Basically in the last nine years there has been a decline in new cases. We have just over one million that have been infected, so we must continue public education and that has weakened in the past couple of years. So when people don't hear about it on radio or television they think it's gone away like cholera.

Q: This weakness is the result of what?

A: Governmental commitment which has slackened, so that was a failure. I've spoke with the current Prime Minister about what we have to do. We'll never have enough money for the treatment side, so right now the major concern, like in many countries, is prevention.

Q: Do you feel the present government is receptive to it?

A: Yes, they're committed to it and we just had a meeting last week that they're going to move on it.

Q: Do you have any opinion on the situation in Brazil where they are producing AIDS drugs without patents?

A: Oh yes, this will have to be the case. It's much, much cheaper. Brazil is producing the cheaper stuff, India's doing the same, we're beginning to do it already, and so is South Africa. So it seems that countries are fed up when the poor cannot afford to buy this drug when we know so well the production costs are so low.

Q: So that's what you would say to the big drug companies in the U.S. and elsewhere?

A: Oh yes. If it's a luxury product, fine. If it's a Rolls Royce, or Mercedes Benz, fine. We can expect to pay a lot. But in this case it's just that the poor won't be able to touch it. It's just genuine survival.

Q: Nearby in Cambodia, they have a very high AIDS rate...

A: Yes, it's 4 percent of adults now. Again, the thing they can do best is awareness, public education, and make condoms available everywhere.

Q: So the same model that worked for Thailand would work for them?

A: Just tell them what it is, and again, some people, even if they know, they take risks, so have the condoms around everywhere. It's the only way you can really get hold of it.

Q: Perhaps no one can really answer this themselves, but what in your life or background has enabled you to be the person you are—to come up with ideas and innovate freely?

A: Well, this is just a stab in the dark, but it may be because I use both hands. I write right, I throw left, I play tennis right, and I play golf left. Maybe the fact that I use both sides of my brain may be responsible for having more ideas because the brain is more active. Just a guess!

In terms of conscience, a lot came from my parents. My mother in particular said you just shouldn't waste your education and you just shouldn't just want money because that is not the be-all and end-all. If you have the opportunity, try and pass on opportunity to someone else. The book probably explains more. My biography comes out in early May.

Q: What's the most important thing to you in all the things you do?

A: Hard work, consistency, and I guess honesty. I started this off 26 years ago and had I been lining my pockets it would have certainly been different in terms of work and people's reactions. I think you have to be open and transparent and work hard at it and don't give up. Nothing's easy. Some people give up easily. I take quite a bit longer before I give up.

Q: Of all the programs you've been involved in, what are you proudest of?

A: Firstly, the word "proud"—I don't use it. It's not in my vocabulary. I think it's the Scottish side of me that says you don't praise yourself. So I'm glad things worked or they didn't fail. I may have come up with the idea, but to put it into action I need all sorts of people to help, so what I've done is more like teamwork.

What has satisfied me is a combination of things—to get the family planning program going from seven kids to under two now—that's one. And to get the anti-AIDS program going and the rural development going—they all sort of give me a level of satisfaction.

It is not a sense of "oh, I've sacrificed this," it's just that this is the field I've found most pleasant and satisfying to work in. Probably the most important thing that I feel is that I don't think I've wasted my life. I've tried to make a difference. I hope I've made a difference. History will judge. I see a lot of people have wasted their life even if they have lots of money. I feel like a marathon runner. I reach kilometer 1, then kilometer 2. I'm glad I reached it, I've done it, and I've participated.

Mechai links

[Cabbages and Condoms Restaurant](#) – a must-visit when in Bangkok

[PDA](#) – Population and Community Development Association

[Mechai Viravaidya's Resume](#)

Durian + Whiskey = Death?

June 14, 2001

Durian + Whiskey = Death?

– June 14, 2001

There is a widely held belief in Thailand that eating durian and drinking whiskey can cause death. This appears to be from the Thai-Chinese tradition of assigning foods qualities of "hotness" or "coldness." The idea being that one should not consume too much of a hot or cold food, but balance things out with some of each. Both whiskey and durian are considered to be extremely hot in character and thus eating both would make one too hot and cause death.

Durian is an unusual fruit. It grows in gigantic spiky husks that must be slashed open with cleavers. Its fleshy sickly yellow pulp is either ambrosia or something unsuitable for human consumption, depending on your point of view. The smell is penetrating. Across the region, carrying durians on buses or trains is prohibited because of the annoying odor. Thai Airways has special metal boxes in the holds of their planes to transport durians for passengers.

Is it possible some component that makes up the pungent odor might combine with alcohol and form a poisonous chemical? And if so, why only whiskey? What about beer or vodka? A friend of ours makes durian wine. Is he poisoning himself by drinking it? Where are the official warnings? Surely a drunken tourist might eat some durian without knowing and die.

Even some local doctors have told us it is not safe to eat whiskey and durian, but the explanation, that they are both "hot" foods, is not very satisfying. Considering the vast quantities of durian and whiskey consumed here, if the two were fatal in combination, there would likely be corpses littering the restaurants and pubs each night.

Update – July 26, 2001

– Thanks to the dozens of people who have written confirming they have consumed whiskey and durian without dying. The whiskey/durian urban legend seems similar to a new urban legend from Taiwan being reported on the Urban Legends Reference Pages: [vitamin C + shrimp = death](#)

Tam Nak Thai is gone

June 23, 2001

Categories: 2Bangkok News

Tam Nak

Thai is gone – June 23, 2001



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)

The site of the former Tam Nak Thai today

The April 2001 issue of *Sawasdee* (Thai Airways' inflight magazine) reminded readers that Bangkok has the largest restaurant in the world, Tam Nak Thai. The problem is that the restaurant was closed five years ago. When the lease ran out on the land, the owners opened a Chinese restaurant, the Golden Dragon, on Bang-na Trat Highway.

Tam Nak Thai was then razed and the land sat vacant until 2001 when a gigantic Carrefour was constructed. This "world's record restaurant" still appears on many websites and we have no doubt that careless free-lance travel writers will keep the phantom Tam Nak Thai alive for some time.

Update – November 29, 2001 – Wisarut found the [website for the Golden Dragon](#) which is now billing itself as "The World's Biggest Restaurant."

Learn astronomy with the Bangkok Post

June 24, 2001

Categories: 2Bangkok News

Learn astronomy with the *Bangkok*

Post – June 24, 2001

From Conor: *Bangkok Post* had a lead article about Mars' proximity to the earth ("Stargazers view Mars at its closest point," June 24, 2001). Nice to see them giving scientific events some priority. But then they concluded with "In another two years, Mars will come to within 55.7 million km of Earth, the closest in at least 5,000 years. At that time, NASA is preparing to land astronauts on the planet for the first time." [Full article](#) on the *Bangkok Post* website

Mars getting closer by the day

June 24, 2001

Categories: 2Bangkok News

[Mars](#)

[getting closer by the day](#) – July 21, 2003

It's a bright reddish star that is visible after 10:30pm in the eastern Bangkok sky... Articles: [The Summer of Mars: What You'll See](#), [How to Observe](#) & [The 10 Best Mars Images Ever](#)

The *Post* had a funny article about Mars two years ago during another close pass:

Learn astronomy with the *Bangkok Post*

– June 24, 2001

From Conor: *Bangkok Post*

had a lead article about Mars' proximity to the earth ("Stargazers view Mars at its closest point," June 24, 2001). Nice to see them giving scientific events some priority. But then they concluded with "In another two years, Mars will come to within 55.7 million km of Earth, the closest in at least 5,000 years. At that time, NASA is preparing to land astronauts on the planet for the first time." [Full article](#) on the *Bangkok Post* website.

Thai References in The Simpsons

June 30, 2001

Categories: The Simpsons in Thailand

Mother Simpson

Burns: Yes, I'd like to send this letter to the Prussian consulate in Siam by aeromail. Am I too late for the 4:30 autogyro?

Kid: Uh, I better look in the manual.

Burns: (groans) Oh, the ignorance.

Treehouse of Horror VI

Thai restaurant in background of live action sequence *Homer*³.

Homer to the Max

Trent: So where to eat? You like Thai?

Homer: Tie good. You like shirt?

Homer brings home Thai food from Thai Palace Restaurant.

Homer: Marge, this is Thai food. From now on, I want it morning, noon, and night.

Marge: When did you start liking Thai food?

Homer: When Trent Steele bought me some.

Marge: Who's Trent Steele?

Homer: He's Max Power's oldest and dearest friend.

Lisa: What's this wrapped in a banana leaf? Mmmm, smells like mint!

Homer: Oh, I spit my gum in there.

Lisa: Ew. (She drops the leaf.)

The Old Man & the "C" Student

Bangkok mentioned as site for the Summer Olympics.

They Saved Lisa's Brain

Lindsey: For a nickel a person tax increase we could build a theater for shadow puppets.

Dr. Hibbert: Balinese or Thai?

Lindsey: Why not both? Then everybody's happy.

Comic Book Guy: Oh yeah, everyone's real happy then.

The Mansion Family

Homer: (on the phone) Operator, get me Thailand. T-I- and so on.

Marge: Homer, who are you calling?

Homer: Everybody! I found Burnsie's address book. I called the New York Yankees and told them to bunt and then I called the Queen of England and asked her how it was going and then I—

Marge: Well, don't run up Mr. Burn's phone bill.

Homer: Just a second, Marge. (on the phone) Hello? Thailand? How's everything on your end? Uh huh. That's some language you've got there. (chuckling) And you talk like that 24/7, huh?

A Thai character on *The Simpsons*!

Season 12 has two episodes with Thai references—there's even a new Thai character. Too bad he seems more Japanese than Thai (he teaches Bart ninja moves) and speaks with a generic "oriental" accent.

Lisa the Tree Hugger

Bart goes to at a Thai restaurant called "You Thai Now" to ask for a job.

Thai restaurant guy: You need job? I have job for you. (he hands Bart a stack of menus with cutouts to hang on doorknobs) You take these. You hang Thai menu on door. I get more business. Send daughters to small, liberal arts college. Swathmore. Maybe, Sarah Lawrence. Call professors by

first name. Ah, dynamite!

Bart: Hang 'em on the door. Got it!

Bart tries to hang the menus, but people chase him away from their doors, so Bart throws the menus in a dumpster. The Thai restaurant owner runs up.

Thai restaurant guy: You quitter. Quitter boy! Quitter boy!

Bart: I'm sorry.

Thai restaurant guy: Now restaurant fail. Children go to state college. Serious students powerless against drunken jock-ocracy. Baseball hats everywhere.

Bart: Hey, man. This job is too dangerous.

Thai restaurant owner: Menu boy no be coward like shrimp. Menu boy be brave like prawn.

Inside the restaurant, a short stick with pegs on it stands in the middle of the room.

Thai restaurant guy: Menu boy must move silently like ghost. Leave no footprint, only lunch special. Hey!

Bart runs to the stick and deftly leaves menus on all the pegs. Following scenes show the town littered with Thai menus. Lisa even finds a fish in the gutter stuck in a menu a la plastic soda can rings.

Selling the redwood

The Thai restaurant guy turns up again at a secret auction to sell Springfield's largest redwood tree. Bids are being made.

Man: 30,000 dollars. To make cages for animal experiments.

Thai restaurant guy: 50,000. For Thai menus. (he sits down and explains to man sitting beside him) Daughter on wait list at Bennington.

And later, in an unprecedented THIRD Thai reference, Lisa is sitting up in the giant redwood tree when she gets a thermos of "Thai soup" sent by Bart.

Homer vs. Dignity

Special thanks to Jan for pointing out the Thai reference that appears in the June 30, 2001 showing of *Homer vs. Dignity*. Smithers tells Mr. Burns he has written a play about the Malibu Stacey dolls and Burns replies, "A play about a doll? Why don't you write a play about cats or the King of Siam? Give it up, Smithers."



Various early subway-related images

July 1, 2001

Categories: Subway



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)

Juxtaposition – November 30, 2002

A modern-style subway entrance (right) in front of Wat Hualampong (the Wat where they have many Chinese-style funerals). Once the entrance is finished, it's the kind of image foreign photo journalists love to shoot of Thailand—the old and the new together. We just wanted to print it first



Subway Station Model

Wisarat Bholsithi took these photos of the Bangkok subway station model when it was being displayed at a shopping mall. The four levels can be clearly seen—from the Thai-style overlapping roofs of the ground-level entry to the subway tracks. In the photo on the left note that the subway platform will be partitioned from the tracks with doors in the same way it is in Singapore.





Bangkok Subway Graphics

These are some interesting computer renderings from MRTA of what the completed subway system will look like. On the left is a subway entrance, in the center is one of the future subway cars (the placard reads "Hualamphong-Bangsue"), and on the right is the subway car level of a station. If you look carefully, you can see the doors that will keep people from falling onto the subway tracks (this is like the subway system in Singapore).



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)

Subway Depot

December, 2000 – View to the southeast from the 29th floor of a building on Ratchapeisek Road. The large rectangular building on the left (it looks like an airport) is the massive subway depot. The gray-roofed building below it is the Thailand Cultural Center. On the far right is Rachadapeisek Road. The subway tracks branch off from the main subway line here and go over to the depot. The tall, black building by Rachadapeisek Road is Shinawatra Tower I. Notice the office towers in the background that dot the skyline.



Aerial Photos

July, 2001 – Pas Seangsong, webmaster of [Bangkok Highrises](#), found these two aerial photos of the huge subway depot near Rama IX intersection on the [Thai Engineering website](#).

Covering the Construction & Restoring the Road Surface

August 1, 2001
Categories: Subway

May, 2001 & August, 2001



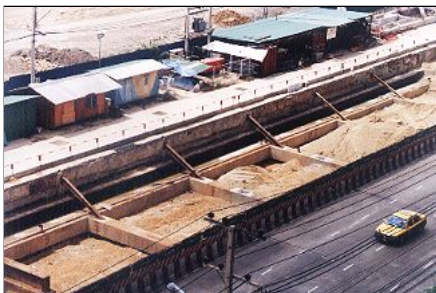
(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)
The road leading up to Ah-saw-mah-tah Intersection



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)
Workers sweep the dirt off the top of the road-surface plates before the plates are lifted off by crane and stacked in the background.



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)
After the plates are removed, dirt is filled in the to level of the future road.



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)
August, 2001 – The final road surface slabs are being poured. Behind this, road drainage pipes are being laid.
At the top of the photo is where the track branches off to go to the depot and the detour for southbound cars on Ratchapisek Road.

For one brief shining moment: Bangkok bus lanes

August 16, 2001
Categories: Buses

For one brief shining moment... Bangkok bus lanes – August 16, 2001

I used to take the bus. Late at night, tearing across the city on a bus with all the windows open and a bracing breeze from a storm blowing through, they were great fun.

But usually, like the hoards of workers forced to take the ill-equipped buses, I was resigned to sullenly and compliantly cursing my fate as one of the unfortunates without a car, slowly breathing the still, still air of the hot city.

One morning in 1996, the bus lanes on Phahonyothin Road and a few other major thoroughfares were marked out with cones. The bus lanes had always been there, but no effort was made to keep cars out. This time, buses were actually the only vehicles permitted in the lanes.

It was part of then-Deputy Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra's drive to solve Bangkok's traffic problem in six months. It was clear there were dozens of areas around town where it would never be possible to strictly close off bus lanes. There were too many roads with oddly configured lanes, weird u-turns, and buildings with no drop-off zones. However, on major roads such as Phahonyothin and Silom, bus lanes seemed to benefit the majority of commuters.

For the first time, riding the bus did not seem like a penalty for not having a car. I remember seeing the spoiled-brat kids in their giant Mercedes stopped in traffic. Their swarthy drivers scowled as I zoomed by and I was happy I rode the bus.

It was a heady time and people swapped pet theories on how to improve traffic—ban cars from the inner city (a la Singapore), crack down on reckless motorcycles, expand the bus routes, stagger work times, etc. New carpool lanes were discussed and people wondered whether unemployed men would gather at the start of these lanes, like they do in Jakarta, offering to ride in a car for a small fee to enable the driver to use the lanes.

I cannot recall exactly when the bus lanes disappeared. Like many optimistic schemes in Thailand, they were gradually forgotten and everything returned to normal. I know the lanes did not last very long. Two weeks? Three? It seemed to fall apart when cars with four or more persons were allowed in the lanes along with the buses. Apparently there were too many cars with dark tinted windows and "military or police caps on the rear ledge" (*Bangkok Post* editorial, June 26, 1996) that used the lanes, daring the authorities to stop them. Pretty soon everyone flooded back into the bus lanes. Eventually, Thaksin gave up on his traffic pledge.

Five years later, Thaksin is back, this time as Prime Minister and head of the first party ever to win an absolute majority of seats in parliament. Pledges to solve traffic problems have been forgotten, but the city is very different than it was in 1996.

Within a year of the bus-lane experiment, disaster struck the Thai economy and the marketplace removed cars from Bangkok streets. Fixed mass transit systems finally arrived and although the road system remains an unsightly, inconsistent tangle, many improvements were made. Nevertheless, given another bubble economy, the streets will surely swell up with the cars of the newly rich once again.

Today I am part of the problem. I drive—one man, one car. On my way to work I can still sympathize with the young men and women dangling from handrails outside the doors of overstuffed buses, each person knowing it is their punishment for not having a car. I turn up my ac and zoom by.

I wish had a photo of the bus lanes from that time. The open bus lanes marked off with cones are a vivid memory. If you know of a photo of this, let me know.

A short, negative review of the film *Suriyothai*

September 5, 2001

Categories: Film and TV

A

short, negative review of the film *Suriyothai* (2001)

September 5, 2001

by [Ron Morris](#) (This review

is of the Thai-release of the film.)

Now that the hubbub has died down, I can say it: *Suriyothai* is not really a film, but a forced march through an uninvolved history lesson. Intriguing events are presented in rapid succession without rhyme or reason. Emotionally gripping scenes, such as the execution of a young king, are wasted in a frantic attempt to chronicle every historical incident possible.

The filmmakers have an obvious reverence for the characters they present, but this reverence only makes the characters more remote. No character ever seems more than an artificial cardboard cutout. And while the cast is attractive, the acting is uneven—at times naturalistic, at times broad, soap opera-style monotone.

Compare *Suriyothai* to *Bangrajan* (2000), another recent Thai historical epic. While far from perfect, *Bangrajan* has characters that the viewer can care about and a purposeful story that builds to a meaningful climax—elements missing in *Suriyothai*.

A great deal of money was spent on *Suriyothai* and it shows. Every frame is replete with exotic eye-popping detail, sure to intrigue non-Thais, and the entire production is sumptuously photographed. *Suriyothai* also breaks new ground for a Thai film with its brief glimpses of nudity and graphic beheadings. Like Cecil B. DeMille, who was able to make racier films if dealing with Biblical subjects, the makers of *Suriyothai* have found that crowd-pleasing nudity and violence are acceptable when dramatizing patriotic events.

If *Suriyothai* was the first competent Thai film in years, I would be loathe to criticize it, but in recently, many Thai films have made money and achieved critical acclaim internationally. I am curious to see the reedited version of *Suriyothai* that will be released to international markets (which will reportedly include a foreign narrator to explain the myriad confusing incidents and characters).

Having said all this, I'd like to also point out an interesting *AsiaWeek* article on the significance *Suriyothai* is supposed to have for the Thai viewer: [Movie to the Rescue](#).

Also: [Interview with maverick Thai filmmaker Pen-ek Ratanaruang](#)

Installing cables on the Rama VIII Bridge July-September, 2001

September 9, 2001

Categories: The Rama VIII Bridge



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)

September 9, 2001- The Rama VIII Bridge construction extending out from the west side of the Chao Phraya River.

To show the scale of the construction, below is an enlargement of part of the photo at right showing two workers sitting on scaffolding.



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)

September 9, 2001- It's amazing to see the construction hanging out over the river.



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)

September 9, 2001- A better view of the progress of the road surface on a stormy day.



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)

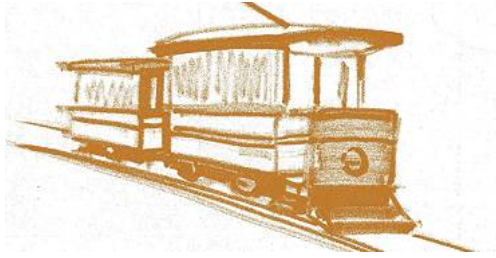
The September 9 photos were taken from the new [Santichaiprakarn Park](#).

September 9, 2001 - Closeup of the single pillar
that makes up the bridge. Eventually, cables will be
attached nearly to the top.

Vintage Color Bangkok Tram Photos

September 11, 2001

Categories: Trams



The photos on this page were taken by Wally Higgins and are reprinted with permission from Ric Francis. Without Wally Higgins' foresight, these wonderful photos of the trams would have been lost to history.

These photos are so great, you might want to view the full resolution version [here](#) (196KB).



February 23, 1959 – Bangsue Line
Note the Coca-Cola advertisement in Thai and in English on the front of the tram.



June 8, 1961 – Bangkolem line Trams 124 and 128 crossing Charoen Krung Road in Sampeng;
it is a single car line because west of here they turned back.
Note the two triangular tram stop signs on the second telephone pole back. Wisarut informs us that the two tram signs indicate that this is the place where passengers need to buy a new ticket to continue.



June 8, 1960 – Bangkolem Line Tram set 13-44 on Charoen Krung Road near the main Post Office
Note the shades to keep the afternoon sun out of the trams.

U.S. Embassy exposes names of citizens

September 26, 2001

Categories: 2Bangkok News

September 26, 2001

Did you register with the [U.S.](#)

[Embassy in Bangkok](#)? If so, I might have your full name and email address courtesy of an embassy emailing! The embassy sent out security precaution emails to registered citizens and wardens on September 26, 2001 without BCCing the send addresses (this would hide the recipients' names from each other). Everyone who received the message could see the names of everyone else. The messages were sent alphabetically by surname and the message I have contains the full names (first, middle, and last) of 13 other people. (Hi, Frederick, William, Joshua, Jane, Marshall, Sally, Steven, Robert, Kathryn, Donald, Richard, Sally, and Katherine!) No one should expect the careless disclosure of this type of information by one's own embassy (especially in these times). The embassy should learn to use their email system before sending any more notices.

September 27, 2001 – The U.S. Embassy responds to my email complaining about this: *I agree with you that all addressees should be blind, and that was my instruction yesterday morning. Unfortunately, technical problems prevented the message from going out to large numbers of blind addressees, and it was decided that it was important to get this particular message out as soon as possible rather than waiting until the address problem was solved. I apologize for this, and I hope that we will not have to face the same choice again.*

Sincerely,

Jeffrey C. Schwenk

Chief, American Citizen Services Unit

US Embassy Bangkok

UPDATE – A further warning message sent on October 2, 2001 was apparently BCCed. However, they did send me six copies....

Bangkok Subway News 2001

September 28, 2001

Categories: Subway

Ministers are in Japan seeking loan Bank likely to okay subway extension

Bangkok Post, September 28, 2001, by Supoj Wancharoen

Thai authorities have left for Japan to seek a loan to extend Bangkok's subway system from Hua Lamphong to Bang Khae. A source at the Mass Rapid Transit Authority said PM's Office Minister Somsak Thepsuthin and MRTA governor Prapat Chongsanguan went to Japan last week to discuss the loan with Japan Bank for International Co-operation.

The source quoted Mr Prapat as saying that he expected a soft loan with 0.75% interest, repayments spread over 40 years and a 10-year grace period. JBIC usually offered softer conditions for environmentally friendly projects like the subway, he said.

The MRTA governor was also quoted as saying that although the project would bear a small internal rate of return it would benefit the national economy especially with fuel savings. The economic internal rate of return of the Hua Lamphong-Bang Khae extension was put at 14%.

Minister Somsak, who supervises the MRTA, and Mr Prapat would also inspect Kumagai Gumi Co, the firm which supplied the tunnelling machines. The machines can do their work without disturbing the ground surface. This would benefit the extended route, which passes under Ratanakosin Island.

The route is 13.8 kilometres long and likely to cost 41.4 billion baht. It would add to the first-stage subway, 20km from Hua Lamphong to Bang Sue, that could open late next year. The MRTA has sent its extended route plan to cabinet for approval.

Japanese ambassador Nobutoshi Akao said last week that JBIC was likely to approve a loan. JBIC, he said, had already financed the first stage and should stick with the project because the extended route would make the whole subway viable.

MRTA meeting with JBIC to confirm the loan for the southern extension from Hua Lamphong to Bang Khae

Dailynews, September 28, 2001

MRTA is inviting Minister Somsak to see the JBIC director to get confirmation of the loan for the southern extension of Blue Line (Hua Lamphong – Bang Khae) and inspect the new drilling heads which render surface digging unnecessary.

Minister Somsak Thepsuthin (Minister of PM Office), Mr. Praphat Jongsanguan (MRTA Director) and other officers were going to Japan on September 25. For that trip MRTA director told the correspondents that Minister Somsak is going to the World Tourist Expo in Japan, so he invited Minister Somsak to go with him to Osaka to see the JBIC CEO and ask for the confirmation on the loan for Southern extension of the Blue Line. The loan should have the same loan conditions as the initial section—40-year repaying period, 0.75 % annual interest rate, and a grace period for the first 10 years. According to unofficial discussion, JBIC said the institute is willing to support the extension, but this time MRTA wants to see the confirmation since MRTA has submitted the plan for Southern extension to the cabinet. Even though this extension is not financial viable (less than 10% financial return), the project have more than 14% economic return since it reduces oil bills, and supports the government campaign to cut down fuel consumption.

Furthermore, he will invite Minister Somsak to see the construction of subways in Japan which will use the new type of drill head which does not require "cut-and-cover" construction at all, rendering road disruption unnecessary. Even though such drills are VERY expensive, they are suitable for working in the city center.

MRTA Extension Update

August 20, 2001

Wisarat reports: I have news from MRTA that the MOF and NESDB said they would not approve the MRTA southern extension even though MRTA desperately wants to build it. MOF and NESDB said they should allocate the budget for the other priorities even though MRTA is trying to convince both MOF and NESDB that the Southern extension is economically worthy since it would save billion baht in crude oil importation and cut down the pollution in the city center.

Subway train extension proposal rejected

[*Bangkok Post*](#), August 14, 2001

A proposal to extend the Bangkok subway system has been rejected because financial returns for the state are considered too low. The Finance Ministry and the Budget Bureau refused to endorse a 30-billion-baht plan by the Mass Rapid Transit Authority to stretch the subway by eight kilometres from Hua Lamphong to Bang Wa, Thon Buri.

"The Finance Ministry and the Budget Bureau want the MRTA to review the financial returns for the state because they consider the present figure as too low," said MRTA governor Prapat Chongsanguan. He did not give the figure. He said such mass transit projects usually yield low financial returns but the economy benefits in terms of faster travel and lower fuel consumption on roads. He informally discussed the extension project with Japan Bank for International Co-operation, which agreed to finance it.

Consultants plan to make city 'liveable'

Offices, green areas, parking near stations

Bangkok Post, August 3, 2001, by Supoj Wancharoen

The city's new subway train stations could be greened and the immediate surroundings developed to make Bangkok a more "liveable city", a British consultant firm has proposed. Development is initially recommended within a 500-metre radius of each underground station, said Brian Weavin, Mouchel's project manager. Siting parking lots, green areas, residential units, offices and shops near stations would make travel more convenient for locals. "As a result, the mass transit system would create a liveable city," he told a seminar at Queen Sirikit Centre.

Sakda Thong-urai, a Mouchel city planner, said it could all start in the compound of each subway station, and expand later if the Mass Rapid Transit Authority could acquire surrounding land. Hua Lamphong station should be left untouched, apart from a parking lot, until 2011.

Sam Yan station should have shops, a parking lot and an advertising area. Apartments and quality offices should emerge around the Silom station after 2011.

Commentary: Chulalongkorn University should revive the abandoned Chula High Tech Center, with larger parking lots and apartments for Chulalongkorn University students. For Silom, they should be able to turn the buildings of defunct financial institutes into quality offices in no time.

At the Lumpini station, there should only be a parking lot, advertising areas and shops until 2011. Bon Kai station should be surrounded by shops and advertising until 2006 before any high-rise residential units were built.

Commentary: The Royal Crown Property—the owner of the area that was Cadet Preparation Academy—should turn the area into a public park next to Lumpinee park before constructing a parking lot, high-rise condominiums and apartments, and other commercial buildings. For the case of Bon Kai, MRTA should help the

people in Klong Toei neighborhood to set up a new community not far from the Port Authority of Thailand before asking the Port Authority to evict the people in Klong Toei neighborhoods to set up high-rise condominiums.

Sirikit station should have a food centre, a bus terminal and shops. A parking lot, advertising areas and small shops would suit Sukhumvit station well until 2011.

Commentary: Asia Park has set a new parking lot from the abandoned building near Asok station. However, it would be much better if MRTA could help Asia Park to construct a park and ride facility to enable those who live around Asok-Sukhomvit area to park their cars.

Petchaburi station should have nothing but a car park and advertising areas until 2006. A food centre and a convenience store could be added by 2011. An office building and a shopping mall should be the last thing on the books.

Commentary: So long that those who study at Srinakharinharaviroj Prasarnmit could go shopping at Emporium, Central Chitlom or so on, a shopping mall is unnecessary.

The Rama IX station should have advertising areas, a parking lot, shops and a green area.

Commentary: This area has Fortune town, so a park and ride facility is necessary.

Advertising areas, parking lots, food centres and shops are recommended at the Thiem Ruammit and Pracharat Bampen stations. Suthisarn station should have shops while the Lad Phrao station should be surrounded by a parking lot, a supermarket, billboards and office space.

MRTA governor Prapat Chongsanguan said the consultants also suggested fare discounts of 5-10 baht for commuters catching both the subway and buses under a park-and-ride scheme.

The MRTA hired Mouchel for 72.8 million baht to advise it on building subway-related facilities and feeder bus routes to serve the subway system.

MRTA's plan for more subway passengers—remove aircon buses from subway route

Dailynews, August 2, 2001

During the discussion of the plan to connect mass transit systems with the MRTA Subway, MRTA asked BMTA to remove air-conditioned buses from MRTA routes while allowing only the regular BMTA buses (3.50-5 baht) with a 5 baht discount when they buy subway tickets. If BMTA accepts such a proposal, it will boost the number of passengers by 40%.

OCMLT and MRTA set up a seminar headed by Mr. Somsak Thepsuthin (Ministry of Prime Minister Office) about the study and design of the MRTA facility project to ensure convenience for connecting the subway with other mass transit systems and the land development plan along the blue line subway and future extensions. MRTA hired Mouchel Consulting Co.Ltd. as a consultant company which delivered the preliminary results of their study which consists of six parts:

1. Masterplan for MRTA facilities for connecting the transportation and the land development along the MRTA route, and the identification of significant subway stations for first phase development (Mochit, Asok, Silom, Queen Sirikit, Hua Lamphong, Bang Sue, and Tiem Ruam Mit are all critical stations which deserve first phase design and development)
2. Principle design for the facilities to connect to other modes of transportation
3. Studies and suggestions to reroute busses along subway tracks
4. Selection of facilities and land development along subway routes
5. Final design of the transportation facilities
6. Economic and financial analysis along with the analyses on the management structure of the organization, relating laws, and service plans

The preliminary plan states that MRTA must connect the subway with the BTSC Skytrain, BMTA buses, Bangkok taxis, and the commercial buildings and department stores by creating small communities around the subway stations to boost the number of passengers. MRTA will have a connecting ticket system to connect the subway with the Skytrain. Only regular buses would go along the subway routes, with a 5 baht discount if BMTA passengers use their tickets to buy MRTA tickets. For connections with Skytrain and Subway, MRTA will make 10 baht discount for Skytrain passengers. If the implementation of connecting systems becomes successful, the number of Subway passengers will be boosted by 5% from the estimated 240,000 passengers a day which will eventually become a 40% increase in the future.

MRTA Director said the final study results will be done in February 2002. After that, the results from the final study will be implemented as the main plan to get the approval from relating agencies.

MRTA plans connections to Skytrain and discounts for riders

Matichon Daily, August 2, 2001

Mr. Somsak Thepsuthin (Minister of the Prime Minister Office) headed the MRTA-OCMLT seminar on study and design of the facilities to systemically connect the subway with other modes of transport. There were 200 in the audience from the public and private sectors.

Mr. Praphat Jongsanguan (MRTA Director) hired Mouchel Consulting Co.Ltd. to study the blue line subway. The study will cover land development around the subway stations, the connecting system to connect the subway with other modes of transport, and more park and ride facilities to cut down private car usage. The study was started in September 2000 and will be done in February 2002.

Mr. Brian Veevin, (Project Manager of Mouchel Consulting Co.Ltd.) said that the company will do its best to deal with the project by taking into consideration the conservation of the environment, cultural heritage, security and stability. At the same time, the facility masterplan must maximize transportation convenience. The plan will emphasize on the facilities, housing, employment sources, public transportation systems, and commerce along the subway route to attract more passengers, reduce traffic congestion, and cut down pollution from congestion. After the subway becomes a reality, the government will have to prevent air-conditioned busses from running along subway routes while allowing ordinary bus passengers a five baht discount if they use their tickets to connect with the subway. Those who use the Skytrain will be eligible for a 10 baht discount if they connect with the subway. Both discounts will result in 15 baht discount to boost subway ridership.

Mr. Nikhom Vaiyaphanit (Director of BMA City Planning Bureau) said that MRTA should never let the private sector rent space for commercial development or it will create uncontrollable chaos which have detrimental effects on the city. MRTA should issue the private concession instead so as to have full control of commercial activities along the MRTA route.

MRTA Director said that MRTA has bought the subway system produced by Alstom-Mitsubishi Co.Ltd. and the concession holder (BMCL Co.Ltd.) is preparing for the assembly of the rolling stock.

Ratchada-Lad Phrao Flyover to be demolished on July 5, 2001

Delayed for the second time

Thairath, June 18, 2001

MRTA Director Praphat Jongsanguan said that MRTA can deal with the demolition cost even though BMA decided not to pay 300 million baht to MRTA for the demolition and reconstruction as they originally agreed. The Traffic Committee created the original agreement that BMA (owner of Ratchada-Lad Phrao Flyover) would have to pay MRTA for the flyover demolition and at that time Samak (presently Bangkok Governor) was a Deputy Premier and the Head of Traffic Committee. BMA will need to ask Traffic Committee to repeal the solution which asked BMA to pay for the demolition costs.

The MRTA director said the flyover demolition will move from June 20 to July 5, 2001. The western section (outbound section from Suthisarn Road to Criminal Court) will be removed first. MRTA will ask the contractor to install the signs to tell the Bangkokians to avoid the outbound section. The contractor will construct a 2-lane detour on SRT land parallel to the flyover. It will take 82 days before the demolition of the inbound section. MRTA asks the people to forgive MRTA for any inconvenience in traveling along Ratchadaphisek Inner Ring Road.

On June 15, 2001, OPM Minister Somsak Thepsuthin was a head of the subway rail installation ceremony at the mouth of the tunnel connecting the subway with the MRTA Depot. MRTA has hired CKSL (Ch. Karnchang – SN Lavalin, a joint venture) to handle the track installation with a budget of 3.0195 billion baht and a total distance of 60 km – 44 km in the tunnels and 16 km in the MRTA Depot. The project is 52.07% done in May 2001.

**MRTA forcing BMCL to conclude the loan by the end of this month
Otherwise MRTA will cancel the BMCL deal and call a new bid**

Prachachart Thurakij, June 12-14, 2001

MRTA feels that the initial subway service will not be able to start on December 5, 2002, so it has decided to force BMCL to sign the contract with JBIC and other creditors and start the production of the rolling stock by the end of June 2001. Unless BMCL concludes the loan by the end of this month, MRTA may borrow from JBIC itself, call a new bid for a new private concession holder, or ask other to run the services unless . The head of the MRTA Board said it is a very serious matter indeed.

**BMA refusing to pay for flyover demolition
MRTA claims BMA is not following the rule of law**

Dailynews, June 15, 2001

BMA is refusing to pay for the Ratchada-Lad Phrao flyover demolition by claiming that they have no cash. MRTA is fighting back by saying that BMA is not following the Traffic Committee Resolution and insists that MRTA is going to pay for the demolition

Deputy City Clerk Mana Nopphan said that BMA will has NO budget for the reconstruction. Previously, BMA issued a letter to the government to review the payment. BMA would not participate in the process of demolishing and rebuilding the flyover since the demolition is a job for MRTA. BMA also does not have a space large enough to store the flyover. Therefore, it is proposed to sell the flyover to MRTA so that BMA will not have to deal with the cost for the storage of a flyover and the removal cost. The price for the demolished flyover is 20 million baht.

MRTA Director Praphat Jongsang-Nguan said there is no problem at all if BMA decides not to pay MRTA for the flyover demolition and reconstruction since MRTA is nearly done with the detour construction. However, he thinks BMA should make such a deal legal by asking the Land Traffic Committee to repeal the resolution . The flyover has an abnormal structure according to engineering viewpoints and there are many road accidents in front of the Criminal Court. If BMA wants to ask MRTA to pay for the demolition, BMA must ask the Land Traffic Committee to repeal the resolution, and then MRTA will be able to pay 300 million baht for the flyover demolition without feeling disgusted with BMA. MRTA cares about the public safety even though nobody else seems to care at all. However, MRTA Director felt puzzled why the government set up Land Traffic Committee at the first place since many government offices are unwilling to follow the Land Traffic Committee Resolutions.

Traffic relief plan seen as not good enough
Supoj Wancharoen, *Bangkok Post*, June 20, 2001

Traffic authorities are not allowing the Mass Rapid Transit Authority (MRTA) to remove the twin flyovers at Lat Phrao-Ratchadapisek junction because the proposed traffic relief plan is not good enough.

The MRTA plans to start removing the flyovers from July 5 to pave the way for the construction of underground stations for the Hua Lamphong-Bang Sue subway. Pol Col Yongyut Sarasombat, secretary-general of the Commission for the Management of Land Traffic, said the MRTA planned to create only two detour lanes in place of the removed flyovers. This would certainly not be enough to cope with the heavy traffic flow during peak hours in the area. He has instructed the MRTA to rent nearby land from the State Railway of Thailand and the private sector to increase the number of detour lanes to five.

The MRTA is also building four-lane underpasses at Huay Khwang and Suthisarn junctions to facilitate traffic flow on two Ratchadapisek crossroads. The underpasses were included in the tunneling work for the train subway. Outbound lanes from Huay Khwang to Ratchayothin of both underpasses will be opened to traffic in September and inbound lanes will hopefully be completed by the middle of next year.

**BMA asks MRTA to use depot land as Chatuchak 3 for the 75th Anniversary of His Majesty The King
Samak negotiating with MRTA to allow use of 153-rai in the Huay Kwang area to create Chatuchak Weekend Market 3 for the Diamond Jubilee (75th Anniversary of His Majesty The King)**

Thairath, June 15, 2001

Dailynews, June 14, 2001

Governor Samak Sunthoravet said he has a plan to construct a new market as the third branch of Chatuchak Weekend Market (the second branch is in Minburi) which will make a daily sale by using 153 rai of the western MRTA depot land near Pracha Uthit Road and Meng Jai Intersection. He will submit the project details of the new market to the MRTA Board in person on June 27, 2001.

The new Chatuchak Market would be separated into 4 zones such as the general store zone, the food center zone, the flea market zone, and the zone for the products from provinces outside of Bangkok. There will be about 3,200 blocks each 12 square meters, 4-meter-wide internal footpaths, and 6 to 8-meter-wide external footpaths. There will be a parking lot for about 800 cars. The budget for this new market will be about 500 million baht. BMA will let the private sector manage the market. This project will commemorate the 75th year anniversary for the His majesty in the year of 2001-2002, so the market will be named "Phet Sombhoj Market" (AKA Diamond Jubilee Market).

Director Praphat Jongsang-Nguan said that on June 11, 2001 Governor Samak met with him to discuss the land use at the MRTA depot. Governor Samak said BMA would sign a 5-year contract and then make another 5-year contract after the first contract expires. The area would become an internal trade center to attract more tourists who have very little time in Bangkok, and also a park and a sport area. However it depends upon the MRTA Board to make a decision on the area. In Samak's opinion, there should be no problem at all in allowing BMA to rent the area since the mentioned section is unused and it is in the area reserved for the Orange Line in the future.

Commentary: The new market is a good idea, but I don't know how to handle the mafia in BMA uniforms who have occasionally wrecked havoc on honest merchants who rent the blocks for trading. Furthermore, MRTA should draw an exact line as to which areas are prohibited from renting or making a commercial deal so that it will not create lots of headaches for the next MRTA director when they are looking for space for the Orange line or even the Green Skytrain when the Connection at Bang Wah becomes a reality.

More Commentary: Furthermore, it would be very nice to construct the Orange line from Minburi to Tiam Ruam Mit instead of constructing it through Rattanakosin Island (from Bang Kapi to Rat Boorana) to save money and pick up more passengers from the suburbs. The City center section will not be necessary if the Saen Saeb boat service, the Southern section of Blue subway line, and the Green Skytrain are in place (with a connection from the Bang Kapi Pier at Wat Sri Bunruen and Bang Kapi station, of course).

Somsak sending 40 billion baht southern MRTA extension to the Cabinet

Matichon Daily, June 11, 2001

Somsak and MRTA are pushing for a 39 billion baht MRTA Southern extension (Hua Lamphong-Bang Wah) and claim that study results show that the Southern extension is worthy to built as a traffic solution for the city center and could result in a 8.7 billion baht annual travel savings. The plan is for the government to deal with the civil work while the private receives the concession and runs the services. It is necessary to make land expropriation in five districts on the Bangkok side and four districts on the Thonburi side.

Matichon correspondents at Government House said that during the upcoming cabinet meeting on June 12, 2001, Mr. Somsak Thepsuthin (minister of OPM who supervises MRTA) is going to push for the southern MRTA subway extension. Mr. Somsak hopes that the cabinet will approve the project in principle and let the MRTA start it.

Last week, Mr. Somsak ordered Mr. Praphat Jongsanguan (MRTA Director) to collect information about the Southern extension before sending it to the cabinet. Mr. Praphat concluded that even though the current Thai economic downturn may slow down the project, the economic loss from traffic jams renders the construction of the southern extension viable. Therefore, the southern extension of the MRTA Blue line will solve traffic problems in the city center, boost the economy (both from construction, speedy services, and so on), while cutting down the financial burden on the government.

The southern extension (Hua Lamphong – Bang Khae) will be separated into two sections. The first one runs from Hua Lamphong to Bang Wah with a distance of 8.7 km and the second section from Bang Wah to Bang Khae with a distance of 5.1 km. The first section must be done first before the second section will follow.

The southern extension follows the advice from the latest report from the mass transit masterplan which says that MRTA will need to construct the southern extension from Hua Lamphong to Bang Wah in the period of 2001-2010. Furthermore, the traffic committee suggests that MRTA will need to design the details and construct at the same time to speed up the project.

Furthermore, MRTA has show the reasons that it is a necessary project and appropriate to invest in since the extension is a part of the mass transit system. MRTA has talked with related agencies and they said that such an extension is worthy to invest in since it matches the development strategy to connect transportation systems between the missing areas, solves transportation problems, and cuts down traffic jams in Thonburi along Phetkasem Road, the business centers in Yaowarat and Wang Boorapha, and the traveling posts in Rattanakosin Island (City Center).

Even though the project has a low financial return, the economic returns are high enough to invest on since it cuts down travel time and travel expenses by 8.7 billion baht a year. The economic investment rate of return (EIRR) of 12.2% makes it a worthy investment indeed. Furthermore, the extension will expand the mass transit network, boost the service efficiency of the Chaloem Ratchamongkhon Line (MRTA Blue Line) and allow it to reduce operating debt. The last but not least is the popular demand to extend the mass transit network to cover every corner of Bangkok.

Budget for Southern Extension

Public Section:

- 1) Land Expropriation – 3.357 billion baht
 - 2) Consultant Company fee – 1.471 billion baht
 - 3) Design and Civil Engineer fee- 22.771 billion baht
- Total public payment – 32.599 billion baht

Private Section:

- 1) Design and install the rolling stock – 6.434 billion baht
- Total private payment – 6.434 billion baht

Total public and private payment – 39.033 billion baht

Total route – Hualamphong-Bang Wah – 8.7 km – 7 stations

Subway (underground) section (Hua Lamphong – Issraphab) – 4.9 km – 4 stations

Skytrain (elevated) section (Tha Phra – Bang Wah) – 3.8 km – 3 stations

Schedule Date

Hiring the Consultant August 2001 – May 2002

Selecting the Contractor August 2002 – September 2003

Selecting the Concession Holder August 2002 – October 2003

Design, Construction, and Test the System October 2003 – September 2008

Opening for Service – October 23, 2008 (King Chulalongkorn Day)

The estimated daily passengers will be 140,000 a day.

The correspondents said Mr. Somsak has proposed four options for the cabinet to deal with the extension project:

1. The Cabinet should approve the southern MRTA Blue line project (Hua Lamphong- Bang Khae) for the Hua Lamphong-Bang Wah section. The construction should be designed and built at the same time. The government handles the civil work while the private sector handles the rolling stock and service according to the 1992 Joint-venture Act.
2. The Cabinet should approve the 30.771 billion baht budget for the civil work – 22% FOREX with the rate US\$1 equal to 40 baht. The budget includes 3 billion baht extra for constructing the subway without disrupting the road surfaces. MOF will need to find financial resources with a long grace period or from other sources. The Budget Bureau will allocate budget for MRTA to pay back the principle and the interest according to the payment schedule until the MRTA has enough income.
3. The cabinet should allow the government to shoulder the payment for the consultant companies to deal services and the construction with a budget of 1.471 billion baht, 3.357 billion baht more for the land expropriation, and 3.260 billion baht for emergency funds. The total budget will be 8.088 billion baht. The Budget Bureau will make a consideration on the budget allocation.
4. If the cabinet approves the plan, the government will issue the Royal Proclamation to define the area to be constructed in the district of Pathumwan, Bangrak, Pomprabsattruphai, Samphanthawongse, Phra Nakhon, Thonburi, Bangkok Yai, Phasaecharoen, and Bang Khae. At the same time, the PM's Office should declare the proclamation about the land utilization for mass transit systems as soon as possible.

Commentary: If MRTA is approved by the Cabinet, only the northern section of Hopewell will be constructed. However, I would like to see the following issues to be considered for both MRTA and SRT:

For MRTA, ask BMCL and Ch. Karnchang if they can accept the construction cost and the concession terms for the southern extension. If so, just go ahead without calling a new bid for contractors and concession holders. If not, then calling a new bid and seeing if BMCL and Ch. Karnchang PCL can accept the terms of the winner.

The next issue is about the financial backup. MRTA should call JBIC, Tokyo-Mitsubishi Bank, as well as domestic creditors.

The Third issue concerns the construction through Rattanakosin Island. It requires a delicate balance during construction due to the fact that most of old buildings use logs and stone as foundations. If they are lucky, they will find teak logs which were used as a foundation pillars. If they are unlucky, they will find lots of skeletons since the area around Samranrat used as a gallows area for beheadings by sword.

**MRTA Asking Government to Approve the Southern Extension
"Khiree" Grumbling about the Slow Progress on BTSC Extensions**
Prachachart Thurakij, May 31-June 3, 2001

MRTA is pushing forward the southern extension of Blue Line subway from Hua Lamphong to Bang Wah (Thonburi) with a distance of 7-8 km to the Secretariat of the Cabinet within this week, after being approved by the MRTA Board. The consultant said the southern extension will increase passengers to 150,000 persons a day. BTSC is complaining that the government is making a strange deal with MRTA.

Mr. Praphat Jong Sa-nguan (MRTA Director) said he will push forward the southern extension of Blue Line from Hua Lamphong to Bang Wah with a distance of 7-8 km as well as four subway stations and three Skytrain stations to the cabinet to get cabinet approval after receiving the assessment from Mushell (Thailand) Co.Ltd– a British consultant company.

"MRTA Board and the minister of OPM have already approved such an extension to be finished as soon as possible so as to ensure the creditors and the government that the subway project won't be a loss maker and can complete the mass transit system network."

Mushell (Thailand) Co.Ltd has made an assessment that the extension will have a construction cost of 30 billion baht. The extension will go from Hua Lamphong to Bang Wah via New Road, and an underwater tunnel from Pakklong Talad to Issaraphab. MRTA will need to spend 3 billion baht for expropriation. The southern extension will boost the number passengers by 150,000 a day. The increased construction cost is due to the baht depreciation. In 1996, 30 billion baht would have been enough to cover the construction of the southern extension from Hua Lamphong to Bang Khae, but the same amount of money now can only cover Hua Lamphong to Bang Wah.

MRTA Director said JBIC told MRTA during the unofficial discussion that JBIC will grant a loan on civil engineer sections and the construction of the southern extension will start in 2003 and be opened in 2008 if the cabinet approves the project soon. MRTA will allow BMCL to run the service to ensure the continuing mass transit system and since nobody else will be able to compete with BMCL for investment on the extension project. The bid calling of Skytrain extension is an example for this case. Such a case will need government help from BTSC to ensure that the project will start as soon as possible.

MRTA said BMCL will conclude the financial deal by the end of June 2001 or the service cannot be started on December 5, 2002.

MR. Khiree Kanchanaphak (BTSC CEO) told *Prachachart Thurakij* that he felt totally amazed that MRTA was trying to push the extension project even though MRTA has not finished the first section yet. They have no idea at all how many daily passengers they will actually have. What about real daily revenue as well as operating costs and profits (or losses) after the subway service becomes a reality? Contrasting with the Skytrain service which has existed for more than a year, the Skytrain extensions will definitely increase passengers from the suburbs and reduce traffic volume from southern Bangkok. However, Taksin and his cabinet have made very slow progress on the Skytrain extensions even though the Skytrain extensions been under discussion for 4-5 years.

Commentary: Mr. Khiree had better try to lobby Taksin very hard to realize the project. However, it is quite hard since BTSC allows DTAC (from UCOM) to set up mobile phone shops in Skytrain stations. DTAC comes from UCOM, an archival of AIS in mobile phone services. AIS is a company Premier Thaksin used to run before going into political fields. Now you see why Taksin pays attention to MRTA instead of BTSC. Even worse, UCOM is backed by the Democrats–a political archenemy of Taksin and the Democrats also back the Skytrain! It will take barrels of sweat for Mr. Khiree and the BTSC Board to pursue Thaksin to pay attention to BTSC extensions.

Furthermore, BTSC should also readjust feeder buses to pick up the passenger from eastern Bangkok (Bang Kapi, Minburi, Lad Krabang). Lang Suan-Wireless Road loop should be expanded to enable to pickup boat passengers at the Pratoonam Pier of Saen Saeb since Pratoonam Pier is an interchange pier for boats from Bang Kapi and Phan Fah Bridge. It will take lots of energy to walk from Pratoonam pier to Chitlom or Ratsdamri Station and I can testify to that since I have walked between them several times.

Another loop under consideration is the Ekkamai-Phra Khanong loop. It should be expanded to pick up passengers from Lad Krabang who stopped at Klong Tan intersection and those who hang around RCA. It could be changed to pick up those who live in the Phatthanakarn area but BTSC may consider running a shuttle bus service for a small fee since it is quite a long distance.

For a middle-term resolution, BTSC and Microbus should consider merging. BMA should also consider the boat service along Pravat Canal and the revival of the Phrao Canal boat if possible to feed BTSC, but BTSC shuttle buses should pick up those boat passengers as well.

Senators Aiming to Kill the "Subway Business Center" Plan
Siam Turakij, May 27-June 2, 2001

Japanese Banks Delaying Loan Causing Subway Construction to be in Limbo
Prachachart Thurakij, May 24-27, 2001

Ch. Karnchang PCL has lots of headaches after the foreign banks are delaying the 20-billion-baht loan for BMCL to invest in the subway due to a lack of confidence and the continuing economic downturn. Such delays on loans will make the first phase (Huay Kwang-Bangsue) opening on December 5, 2002 impossible. The financial sources have told Prachachart Thurakij that BMCL is in financial trouble since the international financial institutes have little confidence in investment in Thailand, and the amount of money required to invest in this project (20 billion baht principal plus high interest rate) has made them cautious in granting a loan to BMCL for 25 years with a fixed interest rate.

If BMCL cannot find financial resources from abroad to back the company up, MRTA will have to come to bail BMCL out of trouble by investing in the subway system while letting BMCL deal with services. Nevertheless, BMCL told MRTA that the company will eventually find the financial resources to back the company up. Even though BMCL said they will find the financial resources to back the company up, many of the BMCL creditors still feel skeptical about the claim since Ch. Karnchang PCL (BMCL's mother company) is still sunk in a sea of red ink in loss-making projects such as the Pathumthanee Water Utility, and the Northern Bangkok Expressway (Chaeng Watthana – Bang Pa-In) which is now merged with the 2nd Stage Expressway (Bang Klong-Chang Wattana). BMCL is reducing the investment fund from 25 billion baht to 20 billion baht after the company found that the estimated number of daily passengers will be 270,000-280,000 passengers instead of 430,000 passengers. Furthermore, BMCL had reduced the initial purchase of rolling stock from 35 to 20 sets to ensure creditors that the company will make a profit after starting the service.

BMCL also is studying the operating results of BTSC as a guideline for the the operation. "BMCL has to invest 6 billion baht for MRTA services and the company will need 13-14 billion baht loan to cover the expense. Now, BMCL is negotiating with Tokyo-Mitsubishi Bank, JBIC, and French Credit Agregeole-Indosuez Bank SA to obtain the loan. The negotiation is continuing even though 10 months has passed after the contract signing. The creditors have not concluded the loan allocation to BMCL yet." So far, BMCL is designing the rolling stock, but BMCL has not sent the blueprint to Alstom-Mitsubishi for the production yet. It will take 14 months for Alstom-Mitsubishi to produce the rolling stock at the amount BMCL requests, and it will take Alstom-Mitsubishi another 4-6 months for the test-run. Therefore, many feel doubt whether BMCL will be able to meet the deadline to run the northern section (Bangsue-Huay Kwang – 10 km, 9 stations) by December 5, 2002 and keep the fare rates at 14-36 baht (with 15% discount during the first 3 months of services). BMCL said the company has no problems finding the loan from foreign creditors since domestic financial resources will fill the vacuum as soon as foreign creditors refuse to grant the loan to BMCL. The current problem is about the loan ratio between domestic and the foreign creditors. The creditors are drafting the loan contract which will be done in three months. Furthermore, BMCL estimated that the annual income will be reduced from 3-4 billion baht a year to 2 billion baht a year.

Nevertheless, the company will pay back to the government at the same rate as the contract with MRTA stated. Mr. Parfait Jongsanguan (MRTA director) felt surprised about such news from BMCL since he had received a letter from BMCL on April 27, 2001 that BMCL found creditors to support the project which is considered as the preliminary part of the loan request. BMCL is negotiating with creditors such as JBIC, Tokyo-Mitsubishi Bank and so on. It will take lots of time to finalize the loan request since the subway is a megaproject. So far, JBIC and Tokyo-Mitsubishi Bank have sent representatives to talk with the MRTA Director about the plan to connect the subway with cars and BMTA (Air-conditioned) buses which should leave no questions or doubts in the minds of Japanese creditors at all. If BMCL cannot find any financial resources to back the company up, it will delay the construction first after BMCL runs out of funds to pay the contractors. BMCL also has a schedule to order rolling stock from Alstom-Mitsubishi (NESCO) by the end of June 2001 or the operation cannot be started on December 5, 2002. However, MRTA has a second plan to deal with this problem. So far, Alstom-Mitsubishi is ready to produce rolling stock as soon as they receive the order even

though BMCL has no cash to pay them, but the company needs to receive the order from BMCL first. Reduction of the number of rolling stock is not a problem for MRTA, but BMCL must deliver all the rolling stock to meet the quota after the concession expires.

Commentary: BMCL must order rolling stock first while MRTA will have to find something for collateral. I hope everything will be all right for MRTA and BMCL—starting the service on time and boosting the number of passengers up to the original target as soon as possible.

Pushing BMCL to produce rolling stock to meet the deadline

Dailynews, May 8, 2001

MRTA is pushing BMCL to produce rolling stock to meet the deadline in the next 18 months. Otherwise, the service cannot be started on December 5, 2002. Mr. Praphat Jongsa-nguan (MRTA Director) said that after receiving a letter of financial confirmation issued by the creditors from BMCL (the concession holder of Chaloem Rachamongkhon subway line from Hua Lamphong to Bangsue—to ensure that BMCL has the resources to run the service) that MRTA is going to check BMCL about the progress on rolling stock production and the contract signing between BMCL and creditors. BMCL has told MRTA that the rolling stock production will be started within this month or by the end of the next month. The prototype will come from France and Japan, with the same form as the subway rolling stock in Singapore. The body of the rolling stocks will be made in France and the rail system will be made in Japan while being assembled and tested in France. The rest of rolling stock will be assembled and shipped to Thailand via Laem Chabang Port for test running by July 2002 before the opening of service (Northern Section Huay Kwang-Bangsue) in December 2002, so there is 18 months left. Mr. Praphat said the MRTA subway system will be similar to the BTSC Skytrain—3 bogies for 1 set of rolling stocks—but without noise. The stored value tickets will be smart cards which can be read by showing the cards to the reader machines, without putting the cards into the machines. On the other hands, the one-way tickets will be very similar to the one-way skytrain tickets. The machines will "eat" the cards to recycle them for further use.

Stealing 700 rai of expropriated land to construct a shopping center

Siam Business Weekly (AKA *Siam Turakij*), Vol. 7, No. 334, May 6-12, 2001

MRTA Southern Extension (Hua Lamphong – Bang Khae) plan heading to the cabinet next month

Dailynews, May 4, 2001

The First Section of Blue Line is 66% done. Mr. Praphat Jong Sa-Nguan (MRTA Director) said the construction of MRTA Blue Line with five sections is 66% done. The progress of each section is done as follows:

- 1) The tunnel and stations in the Southern Section (Hua Lamphong – Huay Kwang) : 83% done
- 2) The tunnel and stations in the Northern Section (Huay Kwang – Bang Sue) : 74% done
- 3) Maintenance center construction : 89% done
- 4) Track Laying : 44% done

5) The installation of elevators and escalators : 44% done For the private section, BMCL has sent the letters of confirmation from financial institutes that they are ready to finance the projects. MRTA expect to speed up the project to follow the plan – Northern section by December 2002, and Southern section by August 2003. Praphat said the MRTA Board has approved the plan for the southern extension of the Blue line which will be in two sections:

- 1) Hua Lamphong – Bang Wah (Part Subway – Part Skytrain with an underground tunnel across Chao Phraya river)
- 2) Bang Wah – Bang Khae (Skytrain) In June 2001, MRTA will send the extension plan to the cabinet. If the cabinet approves the plan, MRTA will allocate land for the project. The financial resources will come from JBIC as usual since JBIC said the institute is willing to give a 40 year pay back period. The extension will be the good old 80:20 – 80% from public for civil works and 20% from private for service.

BMCL confirming that the company will obtain loans from domestic and foreign institutes

Cutting down the loan from 25 billion baht to 20 billion baht due to the passenger estimates cut almost by half

Dailynews, May 4, 2001

On the afternoon of May 3, BMCL held a press conference stating that the company has the financial resources to deal with the MRTA Blue line (Chaloem Ratchamongkhon Line) from Hua Lamphong to Bangsue. Mr. Sombut Kitjalux (BMCL CEO) said that after signing the contract with MRTA on August 1, 2000, the company had successfully negotiated with financial institutes and obtained US\$350 million from the financial institutes which was more than the company had expected.

JBIC and Tokyo-Mitsubishi Bank from Japan, Credit Agricole-Indosuez Group from France, Hongkong and Shanghai Bank from Hongkong are willing to finance this project without hesitation. All four international financial institutes will finance the rolling stock productions, and instruments for subway system operations for NESCO (Nippon-Euro Subway Company) Group which is a consortium jointed by Mitsubishi Group from Japan and Alstrom Co.Ltd. from France Furthermore, Siemens Co. Ltd. from Germany comes to MRTA to offer a deal to find more financial institutes and the production of rolling stock systems to ensure the system compatibility after the Skytrain is transferred to MRTA after the ending of concession (BMA will be the owner of the line and MRTA will run the service in the next 30 year if BMCL declines the concession extension).

Sumbut said the domestic financial resources such as Siam Commercial Bank PCL (<http://www.scb.co.th>), Krung Thai Bank PCL (<http://www.ktb.co.th>), Thai Military Bank PCL (<http://www.tmb.co.th>) are willing to extend a credit line of 13 billion baht. Bangkok Bank PCL (<http://www.bbl.co.th>) and MRTA are negotiating on the loan and related details which will take a few months to conclude. Furthermore, the company will invest 20 billion baht on this project instead of 25 billion baht since the MRTA has lowered the estimated daily passenger from 430,000 passengers a day to 260,000-270,000 passengers while the company and MRTA are discussing the return which forces the company to lower the money level to borrow.

The fare rate will be 14-36 baht and 15% discount during the first few months after the operation. Praphat Jong-Sanguan (MRTA Director) said the concession conditions do not force BMCL to send a letter of financial confirmation in detail, just tell MRTA that those financial institutes are ready to support the project or not. If the plan does not go as they expect, MRTA must find an alternative plan to deal with such an emergency. For the case of lowered investment due to lower estimated number of passengers, BMCL will order rolling stock at the adequate level according to the actual number of passengers. However, BMCL will supply the rolling stock to the final level just before the concession ends in the next 25 years.

Bt28 bn on offer for subway

The Nation, Somluck Srimalee

Bangkok's subway system will be financed through Bt28.7 billion in loans from local and foreign financial institutions. The loans would go to Bangkok Metro Co Ltd (BMCL), a concessionaire of Metropolitan and Rapid Transit Authority, which is building the subway system. BMCL is to provide the electric trains and install the system. The deal would be the largest loan syndication since the economic crisis of 1997. BMCL managing director Sombat Kitjalaksana said the foreign lenders would include the Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC), which is also a loan guarantor, Bank of Tokyo-Mitsubishi, France-based Credit Agricole Indosuez, Merchant Bank Asia and HSBC. Another loan guarantor includes Nippon Export and Investment Insurance, Sombat said. The foreign banks would lend Bt15.7 billion. The remaining Bt13 billion would come from local institutions, including Krung Thai Bank, Siam Commercial Bank, Thai Military Bank and Bank of Ayudhya. "The project is an integral part of Thailand's mass transit system and it is financially viable," a JBIC representative said yesterday. BMCL president Plew Trivisvavet said lenders showed great interest in the project because the projected annual return on investment is 17 percent over the 25-year concession. Sombat said the company prefers interest rates "in line with our policy of no more than 9 percent per annum during the 12-year period". "We expect that the funding would be completed by the end of June," he said. The company might not borrow the entire amount offered, as its policy is to keep the debttoequity ratio below 2.5:1, he said. These financial ratios would meet the company's earning projection, he said. BMCL expects to break even 10 years after the subway begins operating, scheduled for 2003. The figures are based on projections of 290,000 passengers a day. At the time the concession was awarded to BMCL last year, the company expected that the daily number of commuters would be 400,000. The projections was revised, based on the operation of Bangkok Transit System's skytrain, which has about 150,000 riders per day, and the slowing of the economy. Despite the revision, Sombat said the company's long-term financial projections will not be harmed. To accommodate fewer commuters, BMCL has lowered the investment budget from Bt25 billion to Bt20 billion. BMCL plans to seek a listing on the Stock Exchange of Thailand in the middle of next year before the project is kicked off in 2003.

BOI Forcing MRTA To Use More Local-made Materials

Thairath Daily, April 30, 2001

Mr. Jakkramonthon Phasukwanit (Deputy Secretariat of BOI) said that the BOI committee has not approved the investment promotion to BMCL (the concession holder of Blue line) which has an investment budget of 25.168 billion baht since the BOI committee needs to review the investment plan to add more local-made machines and instruments to reduce import bills. BOI will help BMCL on matters relating to the subway. For the commercial deal on the MRTA land, the public

sector will help the private sector only in case of low return through the lower payback to the government, but not more investment promotion of commercial deals on MRTA land.

MRTA Lobbying to Amend the Act – Snapping 90 Billion Baht Profit from Real Estate Deal

Siam Turakij Weekly (www.siamturakij.com), Vol.7 No. 333, April 29-May 5, 2001

From the Correspondents at MRTA/National Assembly/BMA

The Proposal to Demolish Ratchada-Lad Phrao Flyover

Dailynews, April 25, 2001

MRTA contractors are going to demolish the Ratchada-Lad Phrao Flyover in mid-May by demolishing the central island on Ratchadaphisek Inner Ring Road first. Metropolitan Police HQ has approved the 3-step plan to demolish the flyover. However, the new flyover plan hasn't been approved yet due to the problems.

Pol.Maj.Gen. Boriboon Wutthiphakdee (Duputy Commander of Metropolitan Police HQ) said ION Joint Venture (MRTA Contractor) has been to the HQ to discuss traffic management during the demolition of Ratchada-Lad Phrao Flyover which will have four steps. However, Metropolitan Police approved only the first 3 steps. The 4 demolition steps are as follows:

- 1) Create a new traffic surface by demolishing the central island which will take 45 days to finish. It will result in the lose of one inbound lane and one outbound lane from the three inbound lanes. It will start in the mid-May.
- 2) Flyover demolision at the outbound section to Ratchayothin Intersection – The contractor will use the SRT area around the flyover to construct a new traffic lane to compensate for the loss of traffic lanes after flyover demolition. During the night, there will be a loss of one inbound lanes and one outbound lane. It will take 150 days to get this section done.
- 3) The demolition of the inbound flyover to Sutthisarn which will lose two traffic lanes of the flyover but add one traffic lane on the ground which will take 142 days to complete.
- 4) Construction of the new flyover in the center of the road hasn't been approved by Metropolitan Police HQ yet since it will cause detrimental effect on traffic management in the intersection.

All 4 steps should be complete by February 2002.

Pol. Maj. Gen. Boriboon said the demolision of the flyover will cause strong detrimental effects on traffic, especially at night for the big automobiles such as trucks and buses, since it will cost four traffic lanes – two inbound lanes and two outbound lanes.

30 Billion Baht Subway Extension, MRTA Board Agrees to Ask Mr. Somsak to Push Forward

Dailynews, March 28, 2001

MRTA is pushing forward for the 7 km southern subway extension from Hua Lamphong to Bang Wah to the MRTA Board of Directors. If the Board agrees with the plan, they will send the plan to Mr. Somsak and persue the cabinet to approve the plan. According to the plan, the southern extension will add 150,000 more daily passengers. On the other hand, BTSC directors are inviting Krungthep Thanakhom to meet with Shanghai Metro in Shanghai to discuss about the funding for extension.

At the MRTA board meeting on March 29, Mr. Suphachai Phisitwanit (former MOF Permanent Secretariate) discussed the Southern extension of the Blue line Subway from Hua Lamphong to Bang Khae (13.8 km) after the inspection and policy delivery by Mr. Somsak Thepsuthin (Minister of the Office of Prime Minister). The Minister said if the extension is good for the Bangkokians, then he will push forward the extension plan.

Mr. Praphat Jongsanguan (MRTA Director) said in 1997 the board had approved the following extensions for MRTA subways with a budget of 199,670 million baht (then US\$ 7.9868 billion):

- 1) 13.8-km Southern extension of Blue line -> Hua Lamphong – Bang Khae
- 2) 11.6-km Northern extension of Blue line -> Bangsue – Phra Nangklao Bridge
- 3) 36-km Orange Line -> Bang Kapi – Ratboorana

However, the 1997 economic meltdown forced the government to cut the budget and MRTA to set the priority for the extension plans to the 7 km southern extension (Hua Lamphong-Bang Wah). The southern extension will be a 4 km subway plus 3 km skytrain to link Thonburi with Bangkok City Center. The civil work budget for this extension will be 30 billion baht. This extension will increase the daily passengers by 150,000 passengers, and have social benefits by reducing oil importation bills, improving the environment, and relieving traffic jams which cannot easily be counted in financial terms. If the MRTA Board approves the plan, MRTA will deliver to Mr. Somsak who will eventually deliver to the cabinet around May 2001 and the plan will adjust the budget according to current situation.

According to the BMA City Hall, Mr. Khiree Kanchanaphak (BTSC CEO) invited the directors of Krungthep Thanakhom Co.Ltd. (BMA Financial Arm) to take a trip to China and meet with the Board of Directors of Shanghai Metro Co.Ltd. to discuss investment in BTSC extensions.

Commentary: The southern extension will be very good for those travelers who want to go to the City Center, northern Thonburi citizens who are better off than southern Thonburi citizens, and those who work with the Royal Thai Navy since one station will be very close to the Royal Thai Navy HQ. However, I think most of the people I mentioned will still rely on river boats and ferries for their trips unless the subway comes up with reasonable ticket prices.

For the case of Shanghai Metro, I hope that Mr. Khiree's Chinese Connection will function well enough to realize the plan since he considers Shanghai Metro as a strategic partner. If the plan functions very well, Mr. Khiree might come up with Hopewell revival so he could put his Skytrain into uses at full capacity.

Subway extension to be revived – Track delivery raises hopes for opening
Supoj Wancharoen, March 29, 2001

The board of the Metropolitan Rapid Transit Authority will revive its planned extension of the Hua Lamphong-Bang Sue subway.

MRTA governor Prapat Chongsanguan said the 7 km extension would consist of a 4 km underground and a 3 km elevated section.

The board will resubmit the plan to cabinet since PM's Office Minister Somsak Thepsuthin, supervising the agency, promised to support useful projects.

"We will not look at the internal rate of return but will convince the government of the subway's benefit to the society," said Mr Prapat. "It can relieve congestion, save fuel imports and protect the environment. The extension to Bang Wa will increase the passenger volume by 150,000 daily if it is completed by 2008." Regarding the overall extension of the first-stage subway, the 20 km Hua Lamphong-Rama IX-Bang Sue route will consist of a 13.8 km Hua Lamphong-Bang Khae extension, 11.6 km Bang Sue-Phra Nangklao bridge extension and a 35 km Rat Burana-Bangkapi extension.

The extension cost 199.6 billion baht before the baht depreciated four years ago. Investment in the initial Hua Lamphong-Bang Wa extension was set at 30 billion baht.

Mr Prapat said the MRTA had yet to review the cost estimation of the initial extension and should be able to forward the plan to cabinet by May.

All 6.2 tonnes of railway track for the first-stage subway have arrived, increasing the likelihood that the mass transit service will open on schedule late next year.

Chukiart Potayanuwat, construction director of the MRTA, said the track had been imported from Austria and Germany and the last lot was unloaded at Laem Chabang port in Chon Buri last Friday. The transport of the tracks to the subway depot on Rama IX road is under way and should be finished in two weeks.

"We have installed the tracks delivered in the first lot. Next month we will lay more on the northern route towards Bang Sue and then the southern route towards Hua Lampong," he said.

The 20 km subway from Hua Lampong via Rama IX road to Bang Sue is expected to start operating the northern half from Rama IX road to Bang Sue late next year. Full operation will begin in mid-2003.

The state enterprise is responsible for all civil work including underground tunnels, stations and tracks while Bangkok Metro Co Ltd (BMCL), its concessionaire led by Ch Karnchang Plc, will import trains and an operating system to provide the service for 25 years.

The MRTA awarded the 3.2-billion-baht track installation contract to CKSL consortium comprising Ch Karnchang and SNC Lavalin Co of Canada on Oct 15, 1999.

Mr Chukiart said track installation will be completed by the end of next year and the commencement of the country's first subway would then depend solely on BMCL.

He said the company was trying to secure supplier credits for the import of electric trains and an operating system. Under the terms of its contract, BMCL is required to seal the loans by next month.

Finding the Solutions for Subway Stock

Thairath Daily, March 26, 2001

Mr. Praphat Jongsanguan (MRTA Director) spoke before the MRTA board meeting on March 29, 2001 and said that MRTA proposed that the board approve the plan to reserve a right to buy Blue Line (Bangsue-Hua Lampong) stock from Bangkok Metro Co. Ltd. (BMCL) at par no more than 25% of the capital stocks after BMCL offers an IPO at SET. However, MRTA has to declare the right to buy stock a year after signing the contract with BMCL which will be due on July 1, 2001.

Mr. Praphat said MRTA will get the priority to buy the stock first. However, MRTA will have to take a look at the market conditions before making an actual purchase of stocks. MRTA will consult with the Ministry of Finance about the money to buy the stock via the annual budget. If the government cannot allocate the budget to MRTA to buy the stock, MRTA will borrow money. However, it depends upon MOF's decision to allocate money for MRTA to purchase those stocks.

There was a rumor that MRTA is going to bail BMCL out of trouble by purchasing the subway stock. However, MRTA said such a purchase was not subject to the 1992 Joint Venture Act since such a purchase was specified in the contract. If amendment of contract is necessary, it will need to follow the guidelines of 1992 Joint Venture Act.

Skytrain and Subway Extensions Must Be Started during Thaksin's Administration

Dailynews, March 16, 2001

General Thammarak provided the policies for OCMLT to realize the Subway and Skytrain extensions during the Thaksin Administration even though Thaksin didn't make any direct involvement on the traffic policies beyond drafting traffic policies.

On the morning of March 15 at OCMLT, General Thammarak Issarangkul Na Ayuthaya (Ministry of PM Office) visited OCMLT and gave the policies to OCMLT to Pol. Maj. Yongyut Sarasombut (OCMLT Secretariat). General Thammarak told the OCMLT staff that Pol. Lt. Col. Thaksin (the Prime Minister) used to supervise traffic affairs so he is familiar in dealing with this matter. Thaksin's policies are designed to solve traffic problems and develop traffic flows according to the government's policies which requires OCMLT to be the main decision maker and coordinator to realize current traffic projects with transparency. Furthermore, OCMLT has a duty to develop sustainable and planned traffic systems.

General Thammarak said the government has a policy to develop mass transit systems into a continuous network and push forward the Skytrain and Subway extension projects to be realized within four years since mass transit systems are effective measures to solve traffic problems. Furthermore, the government will revive the traffic discipline projects which used to be instated when Pol. Maj. Col. Thaksin was Deputy Premier even though the government has little cash to reward those police officers.

Some critics point out that the Premier hasn't had any direct involvement in traffic control since his earlier promises to solve Bangkok's traffic woes in six months (**Note:** Thaksin first came to power as Deputy Minister in a previous government on the promise that he would solve Bangkok's traffic problems in six months—a promise unfulfilled). General Thammarak defended his boss by saying the Premier had made a short term goal, a middle term goal, and long term goal to solve the Bangkok traffic jam but there was a rumor started that he'd be able to solve traffic matters within six months. The Premier said he'll come to deal with traffic matters after he finished dealing with other important matters.

Pol. Maj. Yongyut Sarasombut said that OCMLT sent a proposal to the Council of State to restrict traffic within the radius of Ratchadaphisek Inner Ring Road. However, the Council of State told OCMLT that such a policy would violate the constitution which gives freedom of travel to Thai people. Therefore, OCMLT will have to come up with the measures that implicitly restrict the traffic without violating the constitution.

Government Has to Be Careful about Subway Extension

Dailynews, March 8, 2001

MRTA has finished digging the whole 20-km tunnel. Mr. Somsak Tepsuthin urged MRTA to start the service three months before schedule and pointed out that government has to be careful about the extension since it can have detrimental effects on the budget.

Mr. Somsak Tepsuthin (Ministry of PM Office) came to Hua Lamphong Station at 11:00 AM of March 7 to head the ceremony of finishing digging the Southern Section of subway tunnel along with Mr. Praphat Jongsanguan (MRTA) and BCKT.

Mr. Somsak said the Northern section will be opened for service in December 2002 but it is possible to be opened for service three months ahead of schedule. For the Southern extension from Hua Lamphong to Bang Khae which requires huge amount of money, Mr. Somsak admits that the government has so many budget constraints that the investment on the Southern extension will cause detrimental results on other sections of the budget. Therefore, the government has to make careful consideration.

Mr. Praphat said that the tunnel digging is all done. What is left is internal decoration, concrete pavement for pathways, the room fittings for instruments, machines, and system installation. MRTA will send a proposal to extend the route from Hua Lamphong to Bangkhao to the cabinet soon, but they have to consider who will be able to send the proposal first between OCMLT or MRTA. Mr. Praphat admits that the extension may not be financially profitable, but worthwhile if they take into account social benefits such as time saving, fuel saving, pollution reduction. Furthermore, BMCL will have an additional 150,000 daily passengers. He expects that the Southern extension will be started in 2003 and completed in 2008. The reason that the Southern extension requires both a larger budget and a long time to finish is that it requires a tunnel under the Chao Phraya.

If BMCL is going to offer an IPO, MRTA reserves the rights to buy 25% of stocks according to the contract. However, MRTA will wait until BMCL actually offers the IPO before making a consideration on buying the stocks according to market condition. If it is a bear market, MRTA may decline to buy BMCL stocks which have no effect on MRTA.

Mr. Sombut Kijjalux (BMCL CEO) said the company is going to negotiate with the subway system supplier company (NESCO Co. Ltd. – Franco-Japanese Consortium) to find the financial resources for loans as well as domestic loan. BMCL will submit the financial plan to MRTA in April 2001 and feels confident that the project will survive but will have to depend upon the number of passengers and the approval of extensions to add more daily passengers.

Commentary: Since MRTA also would like to see the circle track for the blue line subway, it would be very nice to include the extensions which turn the Blue line into a circle loop into the same package as the Southern extension. If the budget constrains put such a line on the hold, a half circle line (Bangsue-Wongsawang-Tha Phra) and a modified Southern extension (Hua Lamphong-Grand Palace-Bang Wah) would be all right since they can turn the Blue line into a circle line even though not a big circle as the line that goes (almost) along Ratchadaphisek Inner Ring Road. Well, it has taken 23 years to complete Ratchadaphisek Inner Ring Road (from 1971 to 1994)... think how long it could take to complete the circular Blue line...

Klong Tramway Station List

October 17, 2001

Categories: Mass Transit

October 17, 2001

The list of stations for the trams (actually light monorails) along the canals proposed in 1996

From *Lok Bai Mai* (Environmental Magazine), Vol.8 No. 87, September 1996

There were to be three tram lines along Bangkok canals to act as a feeders for the MRTA blue line

A. Premprachakorn line

(along Premprachakorn Canal – a canal dug during the early period of King Chulalongkorn from Phadung Krungkasem canal near Mongkutkasat Temple to Bangsai, Ayutthaya)

1. Muang Ek – a terminal station with a maintenance center, Muang Ek village in northern suburb of Bangkok. Rangsit University (a private university) is in that village.
 2. Yoocharoen – Yoocharoen village
 3. Techatungkha – Techatungkha Road in the RTAF area
 4. Songprapha – Songprapha Road another road in the RTAF area – near Donmuang Railway Station and Donmuang Airport (International Terminal)
 5. Donmuang – Donmuang Airport (Domestic Terminal) and Thung Songhong NHA Housing
 6. Chaeng Watthana – near Laksi Plaza and Laksi Railway Station
 7. Bang Bua – Bangbua area, near North Park and Thung Songhong railway stop
 8. Namwongwan – not far from Bangkok Railway Station and Klong Prem Central Prison
 9. Prachaniwet – Prachaniwet 1 NHA Village, Wat Samian Naree
 10. Ratchadaphisek – Ratchadaphisek Ring Road near Siam Cement Village
 11. Kamphaengphet – near Km11 railway neighborhood and Kamphaengphet 2 Road
 12. Chatuchak -Bangsue Junction, near Siam Cement PCL, terminal station close to Bangsue Subway Station
- Note from the magazine: *If Hopewell were progressive, this line would be scrapped—but now neither lines are going to materialize.*

There was an experiment of boat service along Premprachakorn canal from Donmaung Police station to Bangsue in 1996. However, the company went out of business just a year later due to economic hard times and too few passengers.

B. Saensaeb line

(a canal dug in 1837 by Chinese labors as a transportation route from Klongtan to Paedriw district of Chachoengsao)

1. Asok Terminal Station – to feed MRTA blue line at Phetburi Station
2. Phromphong – near Italian-Thai Development PCL Building
3. Thong Lor – near RCA – a hangout for high school students and businessmen to get some drinks
4. Klongtan – A junction between Lad Phrao Canal and Saen Saeb canal
5. Rama IX – Not far from Rama IX Temple and Rama IX community – set up as a royal project for the poor Bangkokians
6. Nawasri – Soi Nawasri of Ramkhamhaeng Road, in Hua Mark area.
7. Thepleela – near Wat Thepleela (a temple founded by Chaophraya Bodindecha – a great commander during the reign of King Rama III), Ramkhamhaeng 39 road, not far from Ramkhamhaeng Road
8. Mahardthai – Soi Mahardthai (Ramkhamhaeng 65 Road and Ladphrao 122 Road) – not far from FBT

C. Phaseecharoen Line

(Phaseecharoen canal dug during the King Mongkut period and funded by the opium tax)

1. Rama IV Terminal station to feed MRTA Blue line at Sam Yan station (near Wat Hualamphong, and Chulalongkorn University)
2. Captain Bush – Captain Bush lane near Si Phraya pier, Portugal Embassy, and River City
3. Charoenrat – the starting point of Charoenrat Road (from Klongsarn Pier to Wongwian Yai – a road which is the substitute of the removed section of Thachin Railway (from Klongsarn Pier to Wongwian Yai) – near Sofitel Hotel
4. Taksin – Taksin Road – a road from Wongwian Yai to King Chulalongkorn Fort (a part of Bangkok Naval Station).
5. Intharaphithak – Intharaphithak Road a road from Wongwian Yai to Tha Phra
6. Ratchadaphisek – Ratchadaphisek Road near The Mall Tha Phra
7. Bangluang Noy – near Wat Paknam Phaseecharoen
8. Suan Liab – Suan Liab canal
9. Bang Wah – Bang Wah canal
10. Bang Ranae – Bang Ranae canal
11. Sukhaphiban – Sukhaphiban Road
12. Outer Ring Road – Kanchanaphisek Outer Ring Road from Rama II Highway to Phaholyothin Road near Carlsburg Brewery (Wang Noy, Ayutthaya) and becomes a toll road from Wang Noy to Bangna-Trat Highway. The southern section to complete the circle had not been started yet – a terminal station with an independent maintenance center

Commentary: It would have been a real waste of taxpayers' money to have three separate maintenance centers and unconnected tram lines for tram system along the Bangkok canals. It should have had an interconnected network which could have been done by the following ways:

1. Readjust the Phaseecharoen route to end up at Thewet Pier and then go along Phadung Krungkasem canal to Si Phraya before going across Chaophraya river to Klongsarn pier so that it would feed MRTA Subway at Hua Lamphong and connect with Premprachakorn line at Wat Mongkutkasat
2. Extending Premprachakorn to meet Phaseecharoen line at Wat Mongkutkasat
3. Extending Saensaeb line to meet Premprachakorn line at Wat Mongkutkasat—all three tram lines would be complete at the same time.
4. There should be one maintenance center in Rangsit to deal with the rolling stock and maintenance.

Also: [The story of the Klong Tramway](#)

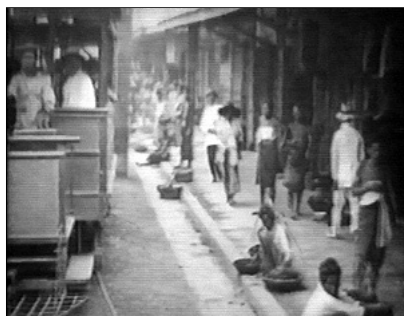
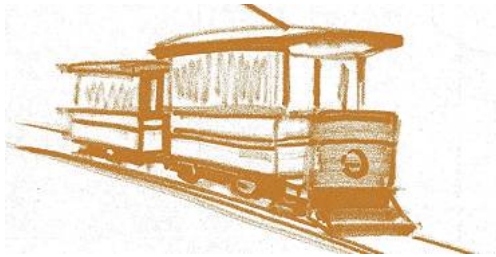
Sport Store and Hua mark Stadium

9. Lomdamri – Soi Lomdamri – near Bangkokpi District Office, The Mall lad Phrao, Happyland Market, and Lamsalee Intersection

10. Sribunruang – Wat Sribunruang a terminal for Saensaeab line with a terminal station and the terminal of Saensaeab boat service (Bangkapi – Pratoonam – Phanfah).

Screen Captures from a Pre-WWII Swedish Documentary

October 20, 2001
Categories: Trams





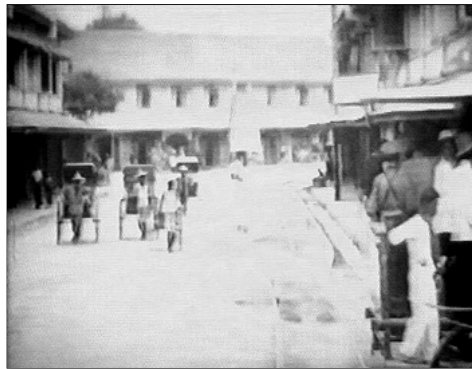
Chinese labor is plentiful - - -





Traffic-control
towers—prettier than those
of New York . . .











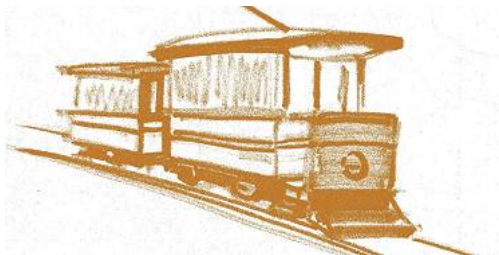






Vintage Color Bangkok Tram Photos

October 22, 2001
Categories: Trams



The photos on this page were taken by Wally Higgins and are reprinted with permission from Ric Francis. Without Wally Higgins' foresight, these wonderful photos of the trams would have been lost to history.

[Return to the Bangkok Tramways main page](#)



1959 – Hualamphong line
tram set passing a Chinese temple



1959 – Tram near the Marble Wat – Dusit Line on Pitsanuloke Road



1959 – Modern era tram crossing Rama IV Road at Lumpini Park
[Return to the Bangkok Tramways main page](#)

The lost city of New Amsterdam

October 22, 2001

Categories: History

The lost city of New Amsterdam

– October 22, 2001

Head south on Highway 303 (Suk Sawat Road) to Chedi Samut Prakan. This is where the Bang Pla Kod Canal meets the Chao Phraya River. The bank of the canal was once the location of the Ayutthaya-era settlement of New Amsterdam. There is nothing to see today but a swampy, mangrove-covered area. A placard at the site says the following:

New Amsterdam City was one of the significant historical sites which was situated at Tambon Klong Bang Pla Kod, Phra Samut Chedi district. In Samut Prakan Province in those days a large number of Dutch men came to trade with Thailand. These Dutch men were well-behaved and cordial in conducting their business with Thai people. Some of them provided good service to the government. They were thus bestowed with some land on the western bank of Bang Pla Kod Canal to be used for storage and residences. The place looked so nice that it was known among the Dutch men living there as New Amsterdam or the Holland Buildings. Later, the mutual relationship began to deteriorate until the end of the Ayutthaya Period and so did the significance of New Amsterdam. Time also strengthened the decline of the riverbank where the Holland buildings were situated. They were eroded by the tide. That is why no traces of such places can be seen today.

Original Skytrain stored-value tickets will soon expire

October 30, 2001

Categories: Skytrain

Original Skytrain stored-value
tickets will soon expire – October
30, 2001

Skytrain stored-value tickets expire after two years. The old tickets must be returned to a ticket booth and the remaining money will be transferred to a new ticket. Many ticket takers do not know anything about this. If they run your ticket through the machine, show you the amount, and then give it back to you, they don't know what they are doing—your old ticket must be exchanged for a new one.

The story of the obsolete letters in the Thai alphabet

November 8, 2001

Categories: 2Bangkok News

The story of the obsolete letters in the Thai alphabet – November 8, 2001

Two Thai letters in the Thai alphabet are obsolete. How did that happen? In the late 1800s, Thailand was looking to create the first Thai typewriters. It was found that the Thai alphabet had too many characters to fit on a standard keyboard layout. *Khor khoat* and *khor koh*, the most rarely used, were declared obsolete and not put on the typewriter. The modified Smith Premier typewriter was presented to King Rama V sometime in 1892. The whole story is on the [Origins of the Thai Typewriter website](#) (offsite). There is also a section on [Antique phonographs and gramophones in Thailand](#) (offsite). We here at 2Bangkok.com live for this kind of stuff! Thanks to Don Entz for pointing out this excellent site.

Renumbering bus routes

November 18, 2001

Renumbering bus routes

– November 18, 2001

Familiar old bus routes are getting new numbers. For instance, the orange aircon bus 11 is now 511. This removes the Thai letters that prefixed the number (to designate aircon) and prevents confusion between different classes of bus with the same number. For now, the old number is posted nearby the new number to help passengers get used to the change. Official bus routes are listed [here](#), but there is no mention of the new numbering yet.

Boiler rooms still going strong

November 19, 2001

Boiler rooms still going strong – November 19, 2001

Time is reporting in [Fast](#)

[Bucks](#) that those frangs "banned for life" from Thailand in July for working in boiler rooms are already back in town scamming. We also see that local papers are advertising boiler room positions again. Apply now for a piece of the action!

Foreigners helping with the gem scam

November 20, 2001

Categories: Gem Scam

[Gem scam main page](#)

Foreigners helping with the gem scam

November 20, 2001

It was probably only a matter of time...

From an email we received:

Hello,

I wish my husband and I had stumbled upon your email before we went on our honeymoon to Thailand. Please do not use my name, but I am writing to tell you my story, which is very similar to the ones listed on your website. The only difference is, the Thai people have started recruiting foreigners for their scam.

We were on our way to Wat Po, following the Lonely Planet walking tour when we were stopped by several tuk-tuk drivers telling us that it was closed for some special Thai holiday. We ignored them until some nicely dressed man walked up to us and told us he WORKED at Wat Po and that it was closed. He then said that we should visit the standing Buddha and some other Wats and pay NO more than 20 baht to a tuk-tuk driver. He then flagged down a tuk-tuk driver who happened to be parked on the road and told him where to take us. He briefly mentioned the export. When we got to the second temple, we walked in and there was a Caucasian guy who started following us. He then asked us where we were from and told us he was from France. We walked around the wat with him and then a Thai man came up to us and was very friendly telling us he was leaving for Japan tomorrow and that he worked for UNICEF. He told us all about the last day of this export and how he had bought a set. He casually asked the French guy if he knew about it and he said that this was his SIXTH! trip to Thailand funded by the profits he made from selling his jewelry back in France.

Needless to say, we were ripped off and soon discovered it after my husband showed me a section in the *Lonely Planet* book on scams. By the time we made it back to the shop that sold us the gem, it was closed and there were a bunch of punks out front telling us to come back the next day. We were set to leave for Phuket the next day, so we pretty much thought it was too late. Luckily, we did not spend \$3000 on a full set and only bought a necklace. It still burns though.

It definitely brings the scam up to a new level with a non-Thai conspirator. Words cannot explain what I hope will happen to that French man.

I will definitely tell my friends about your website if they are planning a trip to Thailand.

[Gem scam main page](#)

Old National Geographic articles on Thailand

November 25, 2001

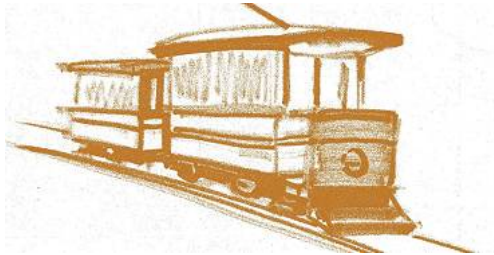
**Old *National Geographic*
articles on Thailand** – November 25,
2001

If you take a look inside the new Thai-language version of *National Geographic*, you will find that each month they are reprinting a vintage article on Thailand. For instance, the August 2001 issue contained "The Greatest Hunt in the World," a 1906 story about capturing elephants and the September 2001 issue featured "Pageantry of the Siamese Stage" from 1947. If you have have friend with a subscription, it is worth a look for the vintage photographs.

Tram-Related Companies

November 27, 2001

Categories: Trams



Profiles of companies involved in Thai mass transit in the past

[The Siam Electricity Company Ltd.](#)

[Bangkok Electricity Authority](#)

[The Siamese Tramway Company, Ltd.](#)

[The Menam Motor Boat Company, Ltd.](#)

[The Mae Klong Railway](#)

[The Paknam Railways](#)

The Bangkok Tram Song

I've seen a few old songs about the tramway but I can only remember this one
(may not be a correct English translation but pretty close). -Wisarut

Pid pree pid the (whistle blows) causing trams to stop
Stop and stop now when reaching Sam Yod (Sam Yod gate near Wang Boorapha)
Big brothers, don't come up (rush on)! Let the aunties go down first!
Catching up, walking in and get your cash ready

City Pillar to S.A.B.

(AKA Societe Annonys de Belge – Belgian Company founded in 1901 by Belgian doctor
to sell Swiss watches and other goodies from Belgian firms)

With a price of 50 satang (half a baht – 2.5 US cents)

Hurry up! Hurry Up! Going up and packing inside without stopping at the doors

Ladies, beware!

Your purses and wallets will be gone by the pickpockets!

[Return to the Bangkok Tramways main page](#)

“The World’s Biggest Restaurant”

November 29, 2001

"The World's Biggest Restaurant" – November 29, 2001

Wisarut Bholsithi found the [website for the Golden Dragon](#), the successor restaurant to the [defunct Tam Nak Thai we reported on earlier](#). The Golden Dragon bills itself as "The World's Biggest Restaurant."

Just what does Thaksin's rise mean for Thailand?

December 1, 2001

Categories: The Thaksin Years

Just what does Thaksin's rise mean for Thailand? – December 1, 2001

There are many simplistic, knee-jerk appraisals of Thai PM Thaksin, but here's a downloadable paper, [Modern Society, Thailand's Thaksin: New Populism or Old Cronyism?](#), that gives a reasoned take on Thaksin's rise to power and what it means to the Thai political system. It is by [Pasuk Phongpaichit](#) and Chris Baker and was presented at Johns Hopkins University-SAIS this November, 2001.

Rattanakosin Island Reclamation

December 13, 2001

Categories: Communities

EMAIL PETITION

Email petition from those opposed to the Rattanakosin Island plan

Last updated December 13, 2001

[More info on the Rattanakosin Island reclamation plan](#)

Subject: to save Bangkok's Ratanokosin Island and Thammasat University

Hi,

Below is the petition which is now circulating.

Please find below a petition to save Bangkok's Ratanokosin Island and Thammasat University from demolition. Amazing, but true, the Thai government has passed a resolution to demolish all the building in old Bangkok dated after the reign of King Chulalongkorn (1868-1910), to relocate the majority of the areas population, and to demolish much of Thammasat University and turn its remaining buildings into a professional school. The end result of this demolition project is supposed to be a more tourist friendly greenbelt for Thailand's many foreign visitors. A number of graduate students from Cornell University have worked to draft the petition below. After December 20, 2001 it will be submitted to protest leaders at Thammasat University for use in their cause.

If you would like to have your name added to the petition below please e-mail your name and academic affiliation to save_r_island@hotmail.com before December 20, 2001.

Petition to Save Ratanokosin Island

As concerned scholars and students of Southeast Asia, we oppose the current government's plan to transform Rattanakosin Island and Thammasat University into a large-scale 'historic preservation' park. The street life and lively business district that surround the Grand Palace and Wat Po must not be swept away as this will drain the lifeblood from these two glorious institutions. And Thammasat University, the shining symbol of the Thai nation's struggle for democracy, should not be demolished. As living, breathing, dynamic embodiments of Thai culture and civilization, Thammasat University and Ratanokosin Island must be spared from this ill-thought preservation movement.

Ratanokosin Island is not a village that must be destroyed in order to be saved. The diverse peoples who made their homes outside the walls of the palaces and temples labored to sustain these great places. They provided the food, sewed the clothes, wove the cloth, repaired the walls and building, created the art, and sold the medicines to heal the sick within the walls of the Grand Palace. The merchants, masseuses, amulet vendors, herbalists and food vendors are what keep old Bangkok alive. They constitute the real and living history of the place. Today, the vital community that constitutes Ratanokosin Island is critical to the health of the tourism industry in Bangkok. It must not be displaced.

Thammasat University stands at the center of Thailand's long struggle for democracy, justice, and human rights. Thammasat was born as a people's university, emerging from the ideals of the 1932 revolution to establish a constitutional monarchy in Thailand. These core values have been tested time and again particularly in democratic movement of 1973 and in the tragic events of 1976. If Thammasat's undergraduate population is shifted out of the city to a satellite campus, if its major buildings are torn to the ground, if its vibrant classrooms are transformed into night school seminars for business professionals, Thailand's proud history of democratic struggle will effectively be erased.

As concerned scholars we strongly oppose this project. In short, this project means the literal displacement of thousands of people and the corresponding erasure of living history. This project also entails the dismantling of Thailand's most democratic institutions by embarrassingly undemocratic means. This project is destruction, not development.

END OF PETITION

If you would like to have your name added to the petition above please e-mail your name and academic affiliation to save_r_island@hotmail.com before December 20, 2001.

MORE INFORMATION ON THE RATANOKOSIN PRESERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Two Resolutions and their Possible Consequences in Bangkok-Thailand (And What to be Done?)

Resolution One: In November 1996 the Thammasat University Council headed by Prof. Khunying Nongyao Chaiseri passed a resolution to the effect that from year 2000 onward all first year students entering Thammasat will be relocated at the Rangsit Campus in Pathumthani, 60 kilometers away north of Bangkok. The downtown Tha Phrachan Campus will be used only for graduate students and other training programs. Therefore, student and faculty population will be reduced from 10,000 to 1,000. Consequences are a decline in social science and humanity studies of the University and perhaps a death of one of the most socially and politically committed Campus and its youth; one of the best in Southeast Asia.

Resolution Two: On May 21, 1997, the following year, prior to the baht crash, General Chavalit Yongchaiyuth Cabinet, passed a resolution to the effect that the heart of Old Bangkok (Krung Ratanakosin) will be "preserved and developed" as green area with grass and trees. Most buildings dated after the Reign of King Chulalongkorn (1868-1910) will be demolished and that most of the residents will be relocated outside. The Master Plan (consisted of 20 different projects) will cost taxpayers 1.5 billion baht and will take 25 years between 1998-2022 to complete. Consequences are the decline of a fine old capital, creating what is called a "donut phenomenon". It will become lifeless and Disneyland-like and a good playground for "light and sound" performances.

Democracy March: On June 24, 2001, the date coincides with the 1932 Revolution which transformed Siam/Thailand from an absolute to constitution monarchy, some thousand people marched on the Bangkok Rajadamnoen Avenue from the Royal Plaza to Thammasat University. By the Chao Phraya River and in front of the Dome Building, a Lanna-Chiangmai ceremony for longevity was, then, performed. This was to bestow good fortune on the people and the locations; also it is to demonstrate our dissatisfaction with the two resolutions.

Save Old Bangkok and Thammasat: Help us saved Old Bangkok with life (Krung Ratanakosin) and Thammasat (Bangkok Tha Phrachan Campus) with its youth, students and democratic legacy:

a. Write to the Prime Minister, Government House, Bangkok 10300, Thailand, or send email via www.rakang.thaigov.go.th asking for a review and reconsideration of the 1997 Cabinet Resolution. b. Write to the Chairman of the Thammasat Council and Rector of Thammasat University, Tha Phrachan, Bangkok 10200, Thailand or email: rector@tu.ac.th and webmaster@tu.ac.th asking for a review and reconsideration of the 1996 University Resolution.

If you would like to have your name added to the petition above please e-mail your name and academic affiliation to save_r_island@hotmail.com before December 20, 2001.

[More info on the Rattanakosin Island reclamation plan](#)

Riverside promenades

December 14, 2001

Categories: 2Bangkok News

Riverside

promenades – December 14, 2001

Wesley Hsu has alerted us to possible new riverside promenades:

Taking the Chaopraya Express boat north, I've noticed the recent construction of what appear to be walkways with concrete railing posts very similar (possibly identical) to the ones on the promenade of [Santichaiprakarn Park](#). Locations

of this new work all seem to be on the Thonburi side of the river, including the area in front of the defunct Sofitel hotel and occurring as far north as past the Pinklao bridge.... It almost looks as if they intend to build some sort of intermittent, disjoint riverwalk.... The Si Praya ferry lands right on top of one (by the Sofitel). Anyone know anything about this?

Anti-mosquito program?

December 17, 2001

Categories: 2Bangkok News

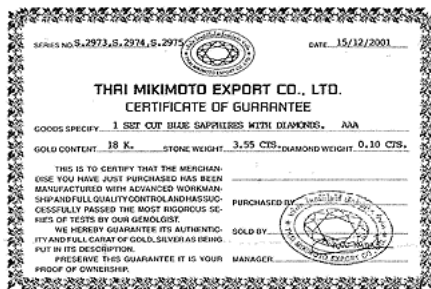
**Anti-mosquito
program?** – December 17, 2001

We don't know if this really works or not, but the AFP is [reporting](#) on a Thai program which claims to keep mosquitoes at bay by emitting a low-frequency sound from computer speakers. You can download the anti-mosquito program [here](#).

Thai Mikimoto Export Co. Ltd. I

December 18, 2001
Categories: Gem Scam

[Return to Gem Scam main page](#)



Thai Mikimoto Export Co. Ltd. I
December 18, 2001
From a letter we received:

Dear Sir,

I am on my way to MBK market for shopping. A person introduced himself as a government employee and asked us to purchase Thai products in Thailand and directed us to Export zone. He helped us in hiring a tuk tuk.

We stopped at a temple where another person who introduced himself as an employee in tourism department told us Thai government is promoting tourism and jeweler business by selling tourists 3 pieces of ornaments per head.

We later met another person who told us to buy Thai jewels, which we can later sell in other countries at double the price.

The series of stories has a lot of influence on us. We then went to the so called export zone where there is a big jeweler store. We brought jewels worth 80,000 baht. We are now back to our country and came to know this is all a big scam.

I read your articles and would have appreciated if I read this before my journey to Thailand.

I would like to know if the chance of getting back money has improved so that I can get my money back.

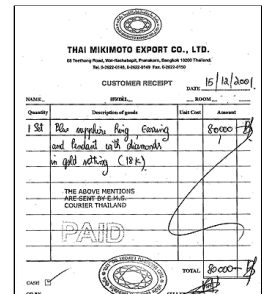
Thanks and Regards,

The purchase details are as below:
Company: Thai Mikimoto Export Co. Ltd.
68 Teethong Road,
Wat-Rachabapit,
Pranakron,
Bangkok 10200
Ph : 0-2622-0148, 0-2622-0149
Contact Person: Peter
Date of purchase: 15th Dec. 2001.

UPDATE: December 23, 2001 – Thanks for posting the article. Your advice worked. Mr. Manat asked us to send the gems so that he can get back the money. Thanks for your support and advice. The attached are the receipts we received from mikimoto jewelers.

[Thai Mikimoto scam account I](#) (December 18, 2001)
[Thai Mikimoto scam account II](#) (January 10, 2002)
[Thai Mikimoto scam account III](#) (January 11, 2002)
[Thai Mikimoto scam account IV](#) (January 22, 2002)

[Return to Gem Scam main page](#)



Origins of Phad Thai

December 20, 2001

Categories: Food and Drink

Origins of phad Thai

– December 20, 2001

Widely known among foreigners abroad as well as those visiting Thailand, phad Thai was invented by dictator Plaek Pibolsonggram during the 1950s. By transforming Chinese noodle into a common, Thai-style dish, Plaek was promoting nationalism to resist what he considered Chinese encroachment.

Phad Thai could be cooked with different ingredients depending on local tastes. In Bangkok, it is frequently mixed with dried or fresh shrimp, but in the Northeast's Korat province, people prefer their phad Thai with bits of pork. – from 'No need to panic about phad Thai,' *The Nation*, December 19, 2001

Thailand set for record rice exports

December 20, 2001

Categories: 2Bangkok News

AFP reports: [Thailand set for record rice exports in 2002](#)

– December 20, 2001

This is because China must open its markets in line with WTO agreements.

Thai Secretary General of the U.N.?

December 23, 2001

Categories: The Thaksin Years

Thai Secretary

General of the U.N.? – December 23, 2001

On December 21, 2001, [TNA](#)

[reported](#) on the [MCOT site](#)

about the search to find an appropriate candidate for U.N. Secretary General. *As the tenure of present U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan will end over the next two years, and the next U.N. chief will be the quota of Southeast Asian countries, Thailand and other countries in the region will send candidates to run for the U.N. honourable top post by next year. The candidates will then launch their campaigns in 2003....*

PM Thaksin: *"We're looking for a suitable person to bid for the U.N. top post. The selected candidate must be recognized by the Thai society, and should not be a politician. This is because before the candidate will be accepted and recognized by the international community, he/she is to be well recognized by the Thai people and society first", he pointed out. During the selection process, the general public will be welcome to express their opinions, he stated.*

Skytrain News – 2001

December 31, 2001

Categories: Skytrain

Skytrain finally attracts 300,000 passengers

Bangkok Post, December 3, 2001, by Supoj Wancharoen

After nearly two years carrying less than half the planned number of passengers, the skytrain finally broke the 300,000-passenger mark on Friday.

The system carried 317,238 passengers on Nov 30, topping the previous peak of 285,000 on Oct 31, Loy Krathong day.

The operator, Bangkok Mass Transit System Corp, had planned on 400,000 travellers a day when it won the concession from the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration. Instead, it attracted only 150,000-160,000 passengers a day when it started operating in December 1999. Promotions have slowly boosted the figures.

The five busiest stations on Nov 30 were Siam Square (30,509 passengers), Onnuj (28,470), Mor Chit (28,035), Sala Daeng (22,212) and Prom Pong (21,788). The least popular stations were Sanam Pao (3,333), Saphan Khwai (4,522) and Ratchadamri (4,833).

The most travelled routes were Mor Chit to Siam, Victory Monument to Siam and Siam to Onnuj.

Sunday was the worst day, averaging about 140,000 trips, but the Silom walking street event on Nov 18 boosted volume by 20,000-30,000 passengers.

BMA Council detects a lie from the Traffic and Transportation Bureau concerning the Phaseecharoen Elevated Way/Skytrain Extension

Dailynews and *Matichon Daily*, November 29, 2001

Somchai Iam-Mongkhonsakul (member of the BMA Council from Thonburi District and the head of BMA Traffic-Transportation-City Planning-and-Sewage Draining Committee) told the press that the BMA Traffic and Transportation Bureau is constructing the 2nd section of Phaseecharoen Elevated Way along Taksin – Phetkasem Road (a 6.1-km road belonging to the Department of Civil Works, Ministry of Interior) and the construction is 40% finished. Recently, BMA Traffic Bureau was readjusting the elevated way project to be a Skytrain extension by drilling pillars for skytrain rails. Those pillars cause confusion and misunderstanding to many people who think that those pillars must be part of the Taksin extension of the Skytrain even though BTSC and BMA have not finalized the procedure to handle the approved extension projects yet.

Even worse, the BMA Traffic and Transportation Bureau has issued false and distorted news to the press that those pillars are part of the Taksin extension of the Skytrain so as to syphon the BMA budget (i.e. Bangkokians' tax money) for the 2nd section of Phaseecharoen Elevated Way project to curry favor with private firms with vested interest (i.e. BTSC) without consulting with the BMA Council in the first place. Somchai insists that BMA must consult with the BMA Council first before readjusting the project, considered as an illegal and ill-willed distortion of the original intention of the project.

Somchai said that Phaseecharoen project was approved by BMA Council during the administration of Governor Bhijit Rattakul as a 2-channel elevated way which allows BMTA buses and vans to flow in both directions so as to solve the traffic problem in Thonburi. However, the BMA office decided to change the project into a Skytrain extension instead. This project requires at least three billion baht with strings attached for many budget years. The first section parallel with Phaseecharoen Canal was suspended due to heavy protests by local people and environmentalists.

Somchai also feels doubts if the readjustment without consultation with BMA Council would be subject to the Joint venture Act of 1992. Therefore, BMA Office must give an explanation to the BMA Council and Bangkokians on both sides of Chaophraya and explain how the project readjustment will have benefits to them. BMA Council would consult with lawyers before sending this issue to the Council of State (<http://www.krisdika.go.th>).

Comment from *Thairath Daily* – November 24, 2001: Hopewell 2?

by "Mr. Pingpong Head" (a columnist in Bangkok Traffic section)

If you go along Krung Thonburi road and Taksin-Phetkasem road up to the Rastchadaphisek intersection, you'll see lots of pillars and the half-finished concrete tracks upon which you can NOT find any constructed skytrain stations at all! That's very strange! I REALLY feel puzzled whether those pillars and tracks are for Skytrain or for the Phaseecharoen Elevated Way. If they are for an elevated way, where are the ramps allowing up to go up and down from the elevated way?

Even though it's likely it will be the western extension of the Skytrain to Thonburi, I have never heard of any negotiation between BMA and BTSC on the Taksin extension of Skytrain at all. BMA simply constructed the pillars without the consent from BTSC. If BTSC refuses to construct the stations (for any reason), BMA's laying of the tracks, running the tracks to Thonburi, and the construction of those pillars will be useless and a big waste of taxpayers' money. Even worse, those abandoned pillars and tracks will become "Hopewell 2" and contribute to the sense of cynicism in the heart of Bangkokians.

BMA inspecting Phaseecharone Elevated Way for readjustment to a Skytrain route

Matichon Daily, November 22, 2001

Praphon Wongwichian (Director of BMA Department of Traffic and Transportation – http://203.155.51.217/office/dotat/menu_home1.html) has told the press about the progress of Phaseecharoen Elevated Road and the 2nd branch that it is 40% done. There are 117 foundation pillars, 107 track pillars for elevated way, 88 concrete head supporting the tracks and 941.9-meter track box. This project goes along Taksing-Phetkasem Road which belongs to Public Works Department (<http://www.pwd.go.th/>) to minimize the land expropriation. So far, Public Works Department has transferred many section of Phaseecharoen Elevated Way and 2nd section to BMA even though the Public Works Department still holds 700-meters of the track (probably from Ratchadaphisek Inner Ring Road to Phetkasem Road).

Director Praphon said after the meeting with the mass transportation subcommittee that the subcommittee issued a resolution that BMA should readjust the Phaseecharoen elevated way and 2nd section to become the western section of the Skytrain. While the Public Works Department is dealing with the pillars from the foot of Taksin Bridge (Thonburi side) to Phetkasem, BMA is dealing with the bridges and connections from Saphan Taksin Station to the foot of Taksin Bridge (Thonburi Side) and the bridge across Phaseecharoen to connect with the southern extension of MRTA blue line at Phetkasem Road (Bang Wah) – with a total distance of 460 meter. BMA is following the resolution from the subcommittee by studying the structural design and readjustment. BMA will start the field study in early 2002.

Skytrain pins hopes on route extensions

Rejected plan would have eased debt

Bangkok Post, October 1, 2001, by Charoen Kittikanya

The skytrain operator, Bangkok Mass Transit Systems, has made little headway in efforts to restructure its debts totalling more than 30 billion baht, according to an executive at the company.

Of the total debt, 70% was lent by Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau (KfW), the German development bank, and the International Finance Corporation, the World Bank's investment arm. The rest was borrowed from Siam Commercial Bank.

The skytrain cost more than 53 billion baht to build, of which 30 billion was borrowed.

Anat Arbhahirama, an adviser to the BTSC board of directors, said earlier that the company would make every effort to win the creditors' support, either through debt-to-equity conversion, debt rescheduling or a loss on investment.

Under the original loan contract, BTSC will begin paying the principal next year. All the debt is to be repaid by 2008. But after about 20 months in service, the skytrain's financial performance has been disappointing, mainly due to a big shortfall in the number of commuters.

Originally, the company projected 400,000 passengers a day, generating enough revenue to cover its operating costs and interest payments. But with only 220,000 passengers a day on average, BTSC can afford to pay only for its daily operations, such as salaries, electricity and maintenance.

BTSC earns between four million and five million baht a day from fares, up from three million a year ago.

A state panel's rejection of BTSC's proposal to extend the system would complicate the debt revamp, said an analyst at Yuanta Securities.

The panel said the proposal was out of line with a Cabinet decision. The Cabinet wanted the system extended on three fronts: three kilometres from Sathon to Phetkasem, eight km from Onnuj to Samrong and eight km from Chong Nonsi to Rama III Road, but BTSC wanted to expand only two routes: Sathon to Phetkasem and Onnuj to Samrong.

Through the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration, the project owner, the company had asked the state to invest in civil construction. However, the Cabinet, wanted the firm to bear all investment costs.

The analyst said BTSC was likely to run into more financial trouble if the expansion was delayed, as the extended routes would serve more commuters. BTSC expected the two routes would increase the total passenger volume to about 400,000 people a day.

However, whether the system would be expanded now awaited the final decision by Bangkok governor Samak Sundaravej, the analyst said.

BTSC Investment Plan for the Extensions Going Against Cabinet Resolution

Thairath Daily, September 27, 2001

Mr. Khiri Kanchanaphak (BTSC CEO) said the Investment plan for the Skytrain extensions would be:

1. A joint venture between the public and private sector. The government has to shoulder all the construction costs while BTSC will provide the new rolling stock, maintenance systems, and employees—identical conditions to the MRTA subway contract.
2. Only the first two extensions (Taksin and Samrong Extension) will be constructed. Rama III extensions will be frozen until the first two extensions are opened for service.

BTSC is negotiating with the creditors to finance the extensions.

After City Hall received the investment plan from BTSC, Pol. 2nd Lt. Kriangsak Lohachara (BMA City Clerk) said the BTSC investment plan was clearly going against the cabinet resolution since the resolution states:

1. 100% private investment.
2. All 3 extensions must be constructed at the same time.

Nevertheless, BMA agrees with BTSC that it is next to impossible to force BTSC to make a 100% private investment due to the fact that the country is still in recession. Private sector investment from the company other than BTSC will cause even worse problems since the new company will need to construct new entrances and exits connecting with the original sections. Therefore, the discussion between BTSC and the joint venture committee in this October is a must. The joint venture committee consists of representatives from NESDB, MOF, MOI – headed by BMA City Clerk.

Commentary: If BTSC wants a joint venture, it will be necessary for Mr. Khiree and company to lobby Premier Thaksin and his cabinet so that the cabinet will come up with a resolution overriding the old one from (previous PM) Chuan. However, it will definitely have strings attached.

City suggests longer route Elevated road can be transformed

Bangkok Post, July-August, 2001

The city administration has agreed to transform an elevated road project into a skytrain extension route to serve Thon Buri. Targeted for the change is the two-lane Klong Phasi Charoen elevated road designed during the term of former Bangkok governor Bhichit Rattakul to serve high-occupancy vehicles such as passenger buses and cars with at least three people. The road project was designed to run along Klong Phasi Charoen for 12km from Kanchanapisek road to the Phetkasem area. The Office of the Commission for the Management of Land Traffic initiated the change to serve mass transit.

Under the change, the skytrain system will run along half of the route, for 6km from Phetkasem road via Klong Bang Khun Thien, Therd Thai road, Wong Wian Yai-Mahachai railway track, Ratchadapisek road, Taksin road and Krung Thon Buri road to Sathorn bridge. The change is possible because road construction started late last year and has made only 10% progress instead of the scheduled 46%. Implementation was delayed by the slow handover of construction areas affected by the nearby Taksin-Phetkasem road project of the Public Works Department.

Bangkok deputy governor Sahas Bunditkul said yesterday the city administration would not have budget problems in changing the elevated road project to serve the skytrain system. Mr Sahas said it would be easy for Bangkok Mass Transit System Corp to find a source of funding for the laying of tracks and building of stations because the city would pay for the civil engineering work.

In the meantime, the city would terminate the other half of the Klong Phasi Charoen road project as its design failed an environmental impact assessment, Mr Sahas said. Kumropluk Suraswadi, deputy director of the Megaprojects Office, said the change would also bring a new rail terminus in Thon Buri as the extended skytrain route would meet the new Mae Klong railway track. The new terminus would facilitate transport to China, Burma and Malaysia in addition to the only terminus at Hua Lampong, he said.

Also, the skytrain system would benefit from the change because of commuters on the Thon Buri side. The current demand for the skytrain system in Thon Buri was about 70,000 people daily, he said.

Wallop Rungkitworasathien, deputy managing director of Sino-Thai Engineering and Construction Co, contractor for the Klong Phasi Charoen road project, said he would have no problem with the change. If cabinet agrees with the change, the already-endorsed skytrain extension from Sathorn to Taksin road could go further to Phetkasem.

Asking for police to supervise areas around the Skytrain stations

Dailynews, June 15, 2001

The areas under Skytrain Stations may be dangerous, so BTS is asking for Traffic Police to be stationed close to the stations to prevent crime. Pol. Maj. Gen. Boriboon Wuthiphakdee (Deputy Commander of Metropolitan Police HQ) said Dr. Anat Abhabhirom (a Consultant of BTSC Board) asked for the cooperation from the Traffic Police to send patrols to help the police stationed close to Skytrain stations. So far, the local police and the 191 patrols have sent police to mediate bad situations. However, police are in short supply and they have lots of duties to handle which have dragged the security processes down. So far, there have been no serious crimes against Skytrain passengers. However many passengers file complaints about beggars, street urchins, hawkers, hidden strangers such as perverts who look up miniskirts, and even grabbers who sexually harass young ladies who travel alone at night.

Revealing Three Thonburi Districts for the new Southern Bangkok City

Siam Turakij, Vol. 7 No. 337, May 27-June 2, 2001

BMA is revealing the New Southern Bangkok City (comprising 3700 rai) on both sides of Taksin-Phetkasem Rd., Wuthakart, and Ratchadaphisek Inner Ring Roads for a trading center, offices, condominiums, and real estate development to feed the Southern Bangkok Transportation Network. A study said the project must be started by 2002 by buying and expropriating the land plots before speculators came to hoard the land. BMA is aiming to buy the orchards around Wat Nangchee Canal, Suan Liab canal, Ta Phaeng canal and Wat Kho Non to become a Western Bangkok Bureaucrat Office to attract people in Thonburi.

BMA hired KTT Co. Ltd. to study the plan to combine the three-district area around Thoedthai-Wuthakart Rd. (Thonburi, Jomthong, and Phaseecharone) as a Southern Bangkok Transportation Center for connecting the Skytrain (Taksin – Thonburi – Phetkasem), Subway (Hua Lamphong-Bang Wah-Bang Khae), Mae Klong Railway, and Hopewell together as well as the New Southern Bus Terminal. Such a center will spark land development and economic growth. To accomplish this, a study is being conducted about combining low-value land plots into valuable land plots though improvement in public utilities and investment which will result in a city within a city.

The 6-square-km area will be in the Phaseecharone District (parts of Bang Wah commune, Pak Klong commune), Jomthong District (Bang Kho commune, Jomthong commune), and Thonburi District (Bukkhalo commune and Sam Reh commune).

The boundaries of the area will be as follows:

- 1) The northern border will run from the gate of Phetkasem Soi 33/2 to the gate of Phetkasem Soi 25/5 and then go across the road to go through Phetkasem Soi 36 (which will become Phetkasem-Talingchan Rd in the future) to Bang Chak canal and go along the canal to the end of Phetkasem Soi 32. After that, going along Phetkasem 32 to Phetkasem 25/1 until it reaches the intersection between Nang Chee canal and Phatthanakarn Rd. After that, going along Nang Chee canal and Bang Khun Thian canal before intersecting with Thoedthai Rd. (Soi 37 to Soi 21 – near Wat Pho Nimit and Talad Ploo Station).
- 2) The eastern border will go from Thoedthai Soi 21 to the end of Ratchada-Tha Phra Soi 11 before going along Ratchada-Tha Phra Soi 11 to Rathdaphisek Inner Ring Road. After that, going along a private road (probably by Soi Wat Bang Sakae Nok) and then turning left to go along Bang Sakae canal to reach Soi Lert Phatthana Nuea.
- 3) The southern border will go along Soi Lert Phatthana Nuea to Jomthong Road and then go along the road to Soi Wisutthijit before going along Rang Bua canal.
- 4) The western border will go along Rang Bua canal to reach Yai Sai canal and then Bang Wah canal and end up at Phetkasem Soi 33/2.

There will be three main spots for the construction of Southern Bangkok Transportation Center such as:

- 1) Taksin-Phetkasem Road intersecting with Ratchadaphisek Inner Ring Road (near the gate of Ratchada-Tha Phra Soi 7) to connect the Skytrain with Mae Klong Railway Line and Wuthakart Road (Soi 12-18 and Soi 9-21) which will be the place where the New Southern Bus Terminal will be constructed. Such development will turn the area from Thoead Thai Soi 21 to Bang Khun Tian canal and the area from Wuthakart Soi 2 to the New Southern Bus Terminal to become golden areas since such area will be designated to be a commercial center area. At the same time, the southern part of Taksin-Phetkasem road around Wuthakart Soi 24-30 and Ratchada-Tha Phra Soi 11 will become a commercial center.
- 2) The 8.2 km AND the area near the intersection between Phetkasem Rd. and Taksin-Phetkasem Rd. at the bank of Wat Pradoo canal will be a commercial area, with the construction of a 8.2-km road to connect Wat Nakhon In Road.
- 3) The southern section of Taksin-Phetkasem Rd. (e.g. Suan Liab canal, Kha Phaeng canal, Wat Kho Nom canal) and the northern part of Phetkasem road to Wat Nang Chee canal will become an office and bureaucratic area. So far, such areas are in agricultural areas, easy to be collected by BMA and other government offices for development. This section will be the first target since this section consists of fruit orchards and trees, with a size of each plot of 1-5 rai or more. There will be a construction of two roads with four lanes – Ngor 1 Rd. from Rang Bua canal to the southern part of Taksin-Phetkasem Rd. via Bang Wah canal, Wat Kho Non canal, and Suan Liab canal. Nogr 2 will start from Taksin-Phetkasem Rd. to Jomthong Rd. via agricultural areas. Such roads will open areas for exploitation.

The Main Reason is the cheap price of land – 2000 baht a square wah (500 baht a square meter)

The study said that since the economic downturn in 1996, the market price of land was not very high, and it is a suitable time to collect the land. Therefore, BMA as well as other offices should allocate the budget to buy, rent, or expropriate the land to construct the transportation center. The land prices with no access to major streets is about 2000 baht per square wah while the areas next to the main streets are 110,000 baht per square wah .

Start Collecting the land before Speculators

According to the masterplan for the Southern Bangkok Transportation center, the design of public utilities, and the expropriation plan for the construction of public utilities must be done within five years (2002-2006) for the first phase and the center must be completed in 2011 to prevent the speculation.

The area around the center (Intersection between Ratchadaphisek Inner Ring Road and Taksin-Phetkasem Road) will be commercial area, with a department store, retail-wholesale shops, and commercial buildings which are already in that area. There should be some entertainment and trading activities such as a cineplex (cinema complex), food centers, restaurants, and park and ride facilities to attract more customers.

Business and offices will be located along Taksin-Phetkasem Road. The northern section will be close to Nang Chee canal while the Southern section will be close to Ta Phaeng and Suan Liab canal. The bureaucratic center and park will be next to the business and office area on Phatthanakarn Road, near the Interchange Station of Bang Wah in the west to facilitate the public service in the western side of Bangkok.

The new residential area will be distributed along the edge of the study area which is now in the fruit orchards with high potential to become a residential area to use the land to maximum utilization. The old residential area will be developed to maximize land utilities. At the same time, the area along Phaseecharoen canal and the areas near the old and important temples will be residential areas with conservation to preserve the environment and the culture of people living in the area.

Creditors Furious about BTSC's Dirty Contract with Siemens

"Stinking!" BTSC Making a Collusion Deal with "China" on Skytrain Extensions

Prachachat Thurakij (www.matichon.co.th) – 21-23 May 2001 Creditors of BTSC felt furious after finding that BTSC had paid Siemens five times higher than usual payment for maintenance. Therefore, creditors decide to hire a consultant company for investigation and found 18 amendments on the contract with Siemens. Furthermore, the bid calling for Skytrain extensions turned stinky since the contractors complained that BMA tries to show that everything is fine while colluding with BTSC and a Chinese company for the project. According to mass transit news sources sent to Prachachat Thurakij, the BTSC creditors have hired MTR Corporation (a consultant company with expertise in mass transit system business) to audit and investigate the contract between BTSC and Siemens (the company which takes charge of rolling stock and rail system) since they felt that BTSC has paid Siemens unusually higher than the price the company is supposed to pay. MRT Corporation has reported to BTSC creditors that the company has found that Siemens has broken every rule stated in the contracts and even worse Siemens committed several acts such as reducing checking for rail dilapidation by 50%, completing only 64% of other maintenance activities, and manipulating the

calculation of maintenance costs during the five-year warrant period. Therefore after collecting information from many members of the BTSC Board and the investigation on the two contracts between BTSC and Siemens/Lincas signed in July 1995, MRT Corp. has proposed 18 rules to reduce the operating costs and increase the service efficiencies such as : – reviewing the overall operating indexation

- negotiating with Siemens to reduce maintenance fees
- cutting down the number of daily service
- stretching the waiting period from 5-6 minutes to 10 minutes
- negotiating with Siemens to hire engineers outside Thailand at the salary based upon the costs of living in Bangkok

If BTSC follows the 18 rules from the consultant company, it will save 650 million baht, and thus reduce loss, lower ticket fees, and so on. The suitable cost in the instruments for maintenance including with other maintenance costs will be 280 million baht/year for the first five years of operation (2000-2004). So far, the contracts state that BTSC has to pay 410 million baht/year to Siemens for maintenance. At the beginning of the sixth year of service, BTSC will face the dilapidation of the equipment and rolling stock, so the company has to pay higher maintenance costs than the first five years. During the year 2000, BTSC had to pay 0.76 US\$/km while Hong Kong Mass Transit System had to pay only 0.2-0.3 US\$/km.

For the case of Skytrain extensions, the news sources from BMA City Hall said there are some irregularities in the bid-calling process. Even though the BMA selling the bid calling form from May 1 to May 22, BTSC and the high-level officers in the City Hall have colluded on the specifications to enable Shanghai Metro Construction Corporation (SMCC) to win the bid without competition. BMA is going to open the bid for Taksin and Samrong extension on July 30, 2001.

"According to the memorandum between Krungthep Thanakhom (KTT) and SMCC signed on March 21, 2001, KTT (AKA BMA) will have to take responsibility for the construction while SMCC will be a contractor before transferring to the BMA after finishing the construction with the supporting funds of US\$ 300 million. Shanghai Municipal has approved the plan, but BTSC still deals with the concession. Further conditions will be settled by KTT and BTSC later on."

Shanghai Metro (SMCC) will take responsibility for the Samrong Extension (5 stations, 8.9 km) and Taksin extension (1 station, 2.2 km) with the construction cost of US\$ 170 million.

The names of station can be shown as follows:

Samrong Extension:

- 1) Bangchak (near the area between Sukhumvit 101)
- 2) Bang Na (near BITEC and Meteorology Dept.)
- 3) Samrong Nuea (near Sukhumvit 113 – Wat Dan Samrong)
- 4) Thepharak (near Thepharak Intersection)
- 5) Samrong Tai (near the Elephant Shrine – funded by the late Lek Viriyaphan -> the owner of Ancient City, Muang Boran Press, Viriya Insurance, Thonburi Automobile Assembly Co.Ltd. -> the agent of Daimler-Chrysler in Thailand, etc.)

Taksin Extension:

- 1) Taksin (Taksin Intersection)

KTT will borrow from KFW (German KFW Bank, a BTSC Creditors) to finance the project after receiving a letter from KFW that the bank will lend KTT. If the loan from KFW cannot cover the expense, KTT will borrow from other financial institutions as well as issue bonds to ensure that the project will be done on time while SMCC has joined up with Siemens Transportation System to set up a group of companies to handle engineering and electrical system.

There are several persons who went to Shanghai to sign MOU with SMCC such as Mr. Sathian Wongwichian and Mr. Amorn Kitchawengkul (representatives from KTT) and Mr. Khiree Kanchanaphak (BTSC CEO) as a witness to contract signing, and four representatives from SMCC. However, such a contract signing was not reported to the BTSC Board at all so it causes some shareholders and creditors to feel furious on such a contract signing since the BTSC CEO did not mention the deal with SMCC to them at all.

Mr. Amorn Kitchawengkul (KTT CEO) said KTT is going to deal with the Skytrain extensions and the company has signed the memorandum with SMCC. He also said that the cost for civil work would be about 8-9 billion baht (about US\$ 200 million).

For the bid selling, no private firm came to buy the bidding form at all and all the 11 companies said they have not received the invitation note from BMA to bid for the Skytrain extensions at all. It seems to the Prachachart Thurakij that the bidding for extension is a sham bidding to make the bidding looks clean and transparent. Furthermore, BTSC is going to have a discussion about Skytrain extensions with Premier Ju Rong Ji during the official visiting to Thailand on May 19-22.

In the case of Taksin extensions, it seems to me that those who live in Charoen Nakhon area will have to take a 2-baht ferry ride to Saphan Taksin Station since BTSC decides not to build a station at the foot of Sathon Bridge in Thonburi Side (Charone Nakhon). For the case of the Samrong extension, some stations will have to be skipped since they have so few potential passengers it would be much cheaper for the company to run feeder buses and take passengers to the nearest stations.

Hunting for the area around Thonburi to build the Southern Bangkok Terminal

Siamturakij Vol. 7 No. 336 May 20-26, 2001

Land Allocation Bureau: BMA is preparing to create the new "Southern Bangkok Terminal" on the 3,700 rai of land around Thloedthai-Wutthakart (Thonburi) to be a transportation hub for BTSC and MRTA which will cause the area to become another golden area. So far, the consultant company has delivered the final draft of the studies to BMA Land Allocation Bureau by the end of this month. After that, BMA will issue new laws to enable BMA to survey the land and then turn the land into a shopping center—a bureaucrat center—big resident area next to the transportation center after the expropriation, with a hope to start the initial phase in 2004.

Revealing the Thonburi Land Development Plan for Transportation Hub with "New City"

Mr. Nikhom Wairutchaphanit (Director of BMA Land Bureau) told Siam Turakij that BMA has hired Krungthep Thanakhom (KTT-the financial arm of BMA) as a consultant company to study the land accumulation for the development of Southern Bangkok Transportation Center in the area of 3,700 rai around Thloedthai-Wutthakart Road which will cover 3 districts of Thonburi (Thonburi, Jomthong, Phaseecharoen). The consultant company will deliver the study and the final draft for the land allocation of the project by the end of May 2001.

The Southern Bangkok Terminal will be a giant terminal to carry the traffic from the Skytrain extension (Taksin-Thloedthai-Phetkasem) and subway extension (Hua Lamphong-Tha Phra-Bang Khac), Mae Klong Railway, and Hopewell as well as a new Southern Bus Terminal since the land leasing of the Southern Bangkok Bus Terminal at Taling is going to expire soon and it's unlikely that the Transportation Co.Ltd is going to renew the land lease since the Talingchan area has become too congested and impossible to expand. Furthermore, there will be a few main streets around this area such as Taksin-Phetkasem (now in place), a connecting road from Taksin-Phetkasem Rd. to Western Section of Kanchanaphisek Outer Ring Road and (the now defunct) the elevated road along Phaseecharone Canal.

Golden Area "Thloedthai-Wutthakart" for Shopping Center-Bureaucrat Center-New Resident Area

When the transportation center is done, the area around the transportation center will become a golden area with high potential to become a new city within a city with a shopping center, government offices, office areas, transportation center, and park. The resident area will have apartments with a shape of a corn cob around the area.

The consultant company has proposed the development plan for Southern Bangkok Transportation Center as follows:

- 1) Demolishing the commercial and residential buildings around the Southern Bangkok Terminal Center as well as the Bang Wah Interchange Station to enable the expansion of the Transportation Center.
- 2) Development of the New City into a business office area and high-rise resident area. The area will receive public utilities according to the increasing demands and economic expansions.
- 3) Conservation and renovation of buildings in the area of long-term settlement. Such areas will receive less effect from the land development than the first two areas. Such conservation is for communities along the Phaseecharoen canal and the area around temples, mosques, churches, shrines, as well as historically significant buildings. Such area is suitable for conservation and renovation with land utilization regulation and building controls as well as public utilities.

Samak Supporting this Project without Reluctance – BMA to Issue 5 New Acts

Mr. Nikhom said after KKT sends the final report to the Land Allocation Bureau around early June, the bureau will deliver to it the City Hall to get approval from Governor Samak. Governor Samak initially has a policy to support this project for Skytrain extension and land development around Thonburi but this area still has some transportation problems, so it is necessary to have development plan. At the same time, BMA is planning to present one Royal Proclamation to enable BMA to survey the 6-square-km area (3750 rai) and check what area is right for expropriation and what area is right for land reallocation since BMA has no land for the development of the New City. Furthermore, BMA is planning to issue four new acts to be approved by the National Assembly such as the Land Development Act, New City Act, Land Allocation Act, and Exclusive Area Allocation Act to set up a new company joining with Private sectors to develop the land.

The office which will take charge of the land development will be either a Co. Ltd. (privately-owned company) or a PCL (Public Company Limited – having stock listed on the Stock Exchange of Thailand). The expropriated land will be handled by BMA. Land utilization will be controlled by the Land Allocation Law and Building Regulation. BMA may join with the private sector to finance the project.

The Land for Southern Bangkok Transportation Center Must Be Complete by 2004

Fear of the Land Bubble Created by Land Speculators

The land development for the New City must be done at the same time as the Southern Bangkok Transportation Center which is supposed to be done by 2004 to handle the Skytrain and subway extension. Such urgency is due to the economic recession that causes real estate development to be at low ebb. If BMA cannot speed up the project, there will be no space for development left. At the same time, land speculators will step up to hoard the land and shoot land prices sky-high. During the recession, land prices were pretty low, so it is the right time for land development as a new transportation center to ease traffic congestion around Thonburi and pull Thonburi back from disorder resulting from dearth of public utilities. In the past, some areas around Thloedthai-Wutthakart Rd. were under developed since they had no major roads at all, so about 1000 rai of land is agricultural area with very low prices by Bangkok standards. It is a good chance for land development for a transportation hub to boost land prices.

Commentary: 2004 is very fast for land development indeed! However, such a transportation center must have a public park since Thonburi people are also desperate for green areas. Some agricultural areas should be preserved to show how Bangkokians once lived. In the past, Bang NA used to be the best place to grow rice since the area was fertile, but the land development around the 50's and 60's along Sukhumvit Road erased many agricultural areas. Only a few little farms around Prawet area were spared. Such a hard lesson should NOT be repeated if possible. Areas along Phaseecharoen should be cleaned up to be free from pollution if possible.

Since the Southern Bangkok Transportation Center will require the demolition of many buildings, BMA should compensate those who live in the area at the fair prices or the problem of MRTA land will be repeated in Thonburi.

Expansion unlikely in near future – Potential investors show no interest

Bangkokpost May 25, 2001- Supoj Wancharoen

The expansion of the limited BTS electric train network to serve more Bangkok commuters is unlikely in the near future as no companies have expressed an investment interest. The Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (BMA), the project owner, invited contractors to buy bid terms for the expansion during May 1-22 but no company replied.

The offer was sent to 11 groups of contractors, that either developed or previously vied for electric train projects. They are the Aeromovel consortium, the Tanayong consortium and the Thai-German Bangkok Metro consortium that used to bid for the BTS train project; Bangkok Metro Co Ltd and the IIMRT group that vied for Bangkok's subway; and GEC Alsthom, Siemens, Ch Karnchang, Marubeni Corp, Italian-Thai Development and Adtranz that competed for a minor mass transit system on the Rama III route.

Deputy city clerk Mana Noppan said all the companies are aware that the expansion of the BTS train service, currently 23 kilometres long, would certainly be infeasible. The expansion is designed on three routes: eight kilometres from Onnui to Samrong, three kilometres from Sathorn to Taksin and eight kilometres from Chong Nonsi to Rama III. It has been forecast to cost about 30 billion baht.

Mr Mana said: "As the cost is high, low fares will be impossible. This is unattractive to both commuters and investors. I don't know how creditors will like it but if I were one of them, I wouldn't easily lend to the project." The BMA will now have to determine if the government will invest in the network, or negotiate with the project's operator, the Bangkok Mass Transit System Corp (BTSC), to expand its own service, he said.

At present, BTS trains serve only 200,000 passengers a day, well below its expectation of 430,000 people. As a result, its returns only cover daily operating costs and not debt repayment. BTSC has launched fare discount promotions but these have only slightly increased traffic volumes. The company has just refinanced its debts, so it is difficult to find additional loans to cover its expansion.

Bangkok governor Samak Sundaravej has suggested the state issue bonds to raise money for the civil construction work of the expansion. BTSC applauded this idea, but no concrete progress has been made on the initiative.

ROUTE EXTENSIONS: Skytrain moving again

The Nation, May 19, 2001, Nophakhun Limsamarnphun, Petcharee Luengutai

Chinese state firm to complete work, adding 6 stations and 10 km of track Shanghai Metro Construction Corp (SMCC), a Chinese state enterprise, is to come to the rescue of the debt-ridden Bangkok Transit System Co (BTSC) BTSC is struggling to cut a restructuring deal with creditors over a combined debt in excess of Bt30 billion. SMCC, which comes under the jurisdiction of Shanghai's city government, will shortly sign an agreement with Krungthep Thanakom, a company controlled by the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration, to extend BTSC's 20-kilometre skytrain system.

The extension will add eight kilometres and five stations to the Sukhumvit route, with the Silom line being extended by two kilometres and one station. According to a March 21 agreement signed with Krungthep Thanakom, SMCC has committed to investing upwards of US\$300 million (Bt13.65 billion) in the BTS-extension. SMCC is also negotiating with Siemens Transportation System of Germany to form a consortium to implement the electrical and mechanical works.

A source said BTSC would not be investing in the project since it was still burdened with heavy debts. It owes Bt10 billion to domestic creditors and \$550 million to foreign creditors. The source said five out of the eight bank-syndicate creditors had already agreed to the debt-restructuring plan. A conclusion was expected at the end of this month, provided state-owned financial institutions such as BankThai accepted the plan.

As concessionaire of the existing 20-kilometre skytrain system, BTSC will benefit directly from the extensions. The current system does not reach enough of the city's residents, attracting only 240,000 commuters per day. The original projection required 600,000 customers in order to turn a profit for BTSC during its concession period. The BTS skytrain has been losing money since the service began in December 1999. The extension of both the Sukhumvit and Silom routes by a total of 10 kilometres will allow the skytrain to serve commuters from Samrong, Samut Prakan and nearby areas, as well as residents from the Thonburi side of Bangkok.

The source said that BTSC would have to negotiate a revenue-sharing scheme with the investors responsible for the extension project. The Silom extension, crossing the river to Thonburi, provides better income prospects than the Sukhumvit extension to Samrong, where residents have lower incomes. The BMA also plans to extend the system towards Chaeng Wattana in northern Bangkok. The BTS extension deal is separate to the agreement with the Chinese authorities to build a community train system. This agreement will be signed during Chinese Premier Zhu Rongji's visit to Bangkok, which begins today.

Premier Ju Rong Ji Declines Samak's Proposals for \$2 Billion Skytrain

Dailynews, May 22, 2001

Premier Ju Rong Ji declines to invest in the US\$ 2 billion Bangkok Ring Skytrain, but Governor Samak boasts that other countries are still waiting to negotiate. The private sector will have to invest in the entire project since BMA does not have enough resources to deal with it. BTSC has already received a loan from China for Skytrain extension.

At 0900 of May 21, 2001, Governor Samak, Deputy Governor Sahat, and City Clerk Pol. 2nd Lt. Kriangsak came to see Premier Ju Rong Ji of PRC at Shangri-La Hotel (a 5-star hotel next to Saphan Taksin Station) to discuss the Bangkok Ring Skytrain Project. After the discussion, Governor Samak said he told Premier Ju about the US\$ 2 billion project which is now in the stage of route survey by China Railways Construction which will be completed in the next two months. BMA wants China to invest in the construction part while BMA will invest in services and pay back the revenue to PRC Government. Premier Ju responded to Governor Samak's request that "Such a project is a megaproject which PRC Government cannot invest in. Nevertheless, PRC government will help BMA by sending companies to bid on the project." Therefore, Governor Samak said he had to review the project, but still insisted that the private sectors from foreign countries who want to invest in the Bangkok Ring Skytrain will have to invest 100% and BMA will pay back later on, but BMA will help by a 5-year zero-percent interest on

loans, and low interest rates during the payback periods (probably around 40-50 years). So far, countries such as France are going to deal with the project if China declines to do so.

Regarding the Skytrain extensions, Governor Samak said Mr. Khiree (BTSC CEO) has reported to him that Shanghai Metro Construction Company (SMCC), is willing to grant a loan with a credit line of US\$ 175 million, with Krongthep Thanakhom Co.Ltd. (KTT) and German KFW Bank (one of BTSC Creditors) as the underwriters. However, a condition set by KFW Bank is that BTSC must make a contract with Siemens (Thailand) Co.Ltd. (www.siemens.co.th) to construct the routes and supply rolling stock which is not a problem for BTSC at all since Siemens has already dealt with BTSC.

Commentary: Since it appears Samak's ring road project is not going to receive funding, it is much better to let MRTA construct the Ratchada Ring Subway (an extension of the MRTA Blue Line Subway) since we can afford only a ring mass transit at the time being. Nevertheless, BTSC and BMA can join with MRTA to build the elevated sections of the Ratchada Ring Subway which can connect the Skytrain and subway to use the same rails since BTSC has expertise on such sections. BMTA buses, Microbus, and BMA van service can cover the sections along the Bangkok Ring Skytrain for the time being.

Changing the Elevated Way into the Skytrain Extension Requires a New Environmental Study

Dailynews, May 22, 2001

BMA is preparing to readjust the second section of the Phasecharoen Elevated Road into a new Skytrain extension from Taksin to Phetkasem, so BMA is going to do an environmental study assessment to comply with the 1992 Joint Venture Act. If everything goes as planned, service to Phetkasem will start in 2002.

Deputy City Clerk Mana Noppan said he is going to call on Sino-Thai Co. Ltd. (one of the well-known construction companies) to discuss the plan to readjust the second section of Phasecharoen Elevated Road from Taksin Bridge to Wat Ang Kaeo (6 km) into a new extension of Skytrain since the elevated road project cannot be conceived as the route from Phetkasem to Kanchanaphisek Outer Ring Road due to the fact that many local people and environmentalist have opposed the project.

The deputy city clerk said that OCMLT has proposed a plan to extend the Skytrain to Phetkasem Road (National Highway No.4) to connect with the MRTA Blue Line subway. Therefore, BMA has to speed up the readjustment project without delay. There is no budget problem to deal with this readjustment project since the leftover structure is a two-way road which is similar to the Skytrain, so BMA and BTSC can simply put double tracks on the structure and then install the power rails and then let the Skytrain rolling stocks run. However, BMA must speed up the study and the assessment on the environmental impact first and follow the guidelines from the 1992 Joint Venture Act. The study will be done by the end of this year. After that, BMA will have to discuss with BTSC the way to run Skytrain service on this extension since BTSC will does not have to invest on the track construction at all. If everything goes as planned, this extension will be in service by the end of 2002.

Commentary: Since BTSC has already received the loan from SMCC, it would be very nice to dispose of the leftover loan after finishing the construction of Taksin and Samrong extensions (Saphan Taksin-Taksin Intersection and Onnut-Samrong Tai) if they have some money left. Otherwise, BTSC will need to negotiate with SMCC and KFW Bank to extend the credit line to cover this new extension (Taksin Intersection – Phetkasem). I expect that the creditors will grant a further credit line without delay since such extensions will pick up more passengers from Thonburi. I think that BTSC will definitely readjust the feeder buses (the free ones and the paid ones) to cover the new areas.

EDITORIAL : BMA train plan is off the rails

The Nation, May 22, 2001

The Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (BMA) has come up with another innovative scheme to improve commuter transport. BMA Governor Samak Sundaravej has proposed that the Chinese government get involved in an 80-kilometre train service that will bring commuters in the suburban areas to the city centre. Should Bangkok residents hail this initiative? One of the problems which has plagued Bangkok's infrastructure management is that new projects are thought of, and executed, on top of one another. A new commuter-train project may be a burden rather than a solution to the city's notorious traffic.

So far no government, including the present one led by Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra, has wanted to get to the heart of the matter, which is to realign the scattered and inefficient city transport under one umbrella and make it work.

The Management of Road Traffic Commission (MRTC), which is supposed to be in charge of the development of transport services, has remained a paper tiger. It has not been given the mandate to prioritise projects that would be efficient and cost-effective for the city taxpayers and commuters.

Bangkok Transit Co, the operator of the city's first elevated-train service, is the responsibility of the BMA. The subway project comes under the Metropolitan Rapid Transit Authority, a PM's Office responsibility. The Bangkok expressway is under the control of the Express Transit Authority, which comes under the Interior Ministry. The aborted Hopewell project is in the hands of the State Railways of Thailand, which is supervised by the Transport and Communications Ministry.

To anyone living in Bangkok, such a variety of agencies is a source of problems which have beset the city's transport planning. Bangkok residents have grown tired of empty promises of politicians to bring these responsibilities under one roof. And if the new government wants to do the city residents a big favour, it should hold a workshop on city transport services and make the necessary decisions and legal changes to bring them under one umbrella.

Without it, a project such as Samak has proposed is pointless. Even if it has merit, it would only add to the city's investment burden, and the government's, and not efficiently align with the other existing projects. It is also pertinent to note that such projects have a high import content, which does not bode well considering the BTS and the subway project already have an uncertain financial outlook. If the BMA decides to issue bonds to finance its suggested project, a financial feasibility is critical to ensure that the city authority does not fall into a debt trap and sink along with its mega-spending.

The city infrastructure development ought to become one of the prime minister's workshop topics. He is not unfamiliar with the matter, having once been a deputy prime minister in charge of the MRTC. Back in 1997 he made his famous pledge to improve the city's traffic within six months. He failed in that task but along the way picked up valuable experience that could be used to improve the situation.

One of the ruling Thai Rak Thai Party's clearest policies is not to spend too much of the country's budget in urban areas to allow the rural sector a fairer share of development money. This means that Bangkok should be better run and infrastructure development made more efficient and cost-effective. It is not an exaggeration to say that a healthy capital city also means a windfall for the other parts of the country. This is particular true for a one-city nation such as Thailand or Japan.

So new projects for Bangkok, whether they come from the BMA or the government, should be put on the back burner until the existing ones are coordinated under one roof and one unified command. This is to ensure that there is a priority on development and spending and the routes are linked for the benefit of the commuter in a viable and cost-effective way.

Commentary: I could not agree more with the Editor of the Nation. However, the Nation should take into account that the mass transit in many cities around the world initially were (and still are in some cities such as Tokyo and Seoul) separate companies. It took about 60-70 years to unify the New York subway into a single unit. We have never had the first-hand experience like those in the cities around the world, so the lesson is bound to repeat anyway! Don't forget that MRTA will be the one that holds the services of the mass transit line separate for government offices after the concessions expire in the next 40-50 years.

BMA Traffic and Transportation Bureau calling three separate private bids on three skytrain extensions

Thairath Daily, May 3, 2001

Chaiyut Na Nagara (Director of BMA Traffic and Transportation Bureau) is going to invite the groups which won the mass transit concession or participated in the concession bidding such as BTSC, MRTA and the companies in the BMA preliminary list for tram along Chong Nonsee canal to send the BTO plan (BTO-Build, Transfer and Operate) for the civil work, rolling stock, electro-mechanical system, maintenance, services for three Skytrain extensions which are as follows:

- 1) Extension along Silom-Taksin Road (Taksin Extension -> Saphan Taksin – Wongwian Yai) with a distance of 2.2 km
- 2) Extension along Sukhumvit Road (Samrong Extension -> Onnut – Samrong) with a distance of 8.9 km and
- 3) Extension along Rama III Inner Ring Road (Rama III Extension -> S3 Station – Sadhupradit Road) with a distance of 8.5 km

Total distance will be 19.6 km and the concession will be 30 years, the construction time not included.

The companies that feel interested to invest on these extensions can buy a bidding form with a price of 150,000 baht for each copy or they can call or mail for further details at :

Financial Section
Office of Secretariat
BMA Traffic and Transportation Bureau
44, Vibhavadee-Rangsit Highway, Dindaeng
Bangkok, Bangkok, 10400
Thailand

The invitation is starting from May 1-22, during the weekdays and office hour (Monday to Friday from 8:30AM to 4:30PM)

From a Flyer at Chong Nonsee Station (two feeder busses we did not know about before):

April, 2001

BTS Feeder Bus No. 162 – Port Authority of Thailand Circle (Long)

Port Authority of Thailand, Sunthornkosa Rd., Rama III Inner Ring Road, Narathiwat Ratchanakharin Rd., Chong Nonsee Station, Silom Rd., Saladaeng Station, Henri Dunant Rd., Siam Square, Siam Station, MBK Center, Chulalongkorn University, Sam Yan, Silom Rd., Narathiwat Ratchanakharin Rd., Chong Nonsee Station, Makro Superstore, Tesco Lotus (Sathon), Port Authority of Thailand

BTS Feeder Bus No. 162 – Special – Port Authority of Thailand Circle (Short)

Port Authority of Thailand, Sunthornkosa Rd., Rama III Inner Ring Road, Narathiwat Ratchanakharin Rd., Tesco Lotus (Sathon), Chong Nonsee Station, and u-turn at Surawongse Intersection to go back to Port Authority of Thailand through the same way.

5% increase for Skytrain passengers

Passengers complaining about high ticket prices

Thaipost Daily, April 27, 2001

BTSC approves a new via duct to Asia Hotel at Ratchathewee Station while delaying the plan for via duct at Ploen Chit Station since it requires a several-hundred-meter-long via duct. At the same time, BTSC boasts 5.8% increase in the number of passengers. However, many passengers were complaining about high ticket prices.

Mr. Arnut Abhabhirom (BTSC Committee Consultant) said the BTSC administration committee have approved the via duct construction connecting Ratchathewe Station with Asia Hotel, but the plan for a via duct connecting Ploenchit Station with Wave Press Building hasn't been approved yet due to a long distance (about a hundred meters long) which can interrupt the skytrain operation. Therefore, this section will need to wait to see the result from other via ducts before approving it.

For the 2.2-km Taksin Extension and the 8.9-km Samrong Extension, BTSC have confirmed that the company is ready for investing on those extensions. However, BTSC is making a consideration on the negotiation results between BMA and other companies.

In March 2001 (summer holidays for students), the number of skytrain trip increased to a daily average of 192,630 trips—5.8% more than the average number of trips in February 2001. The weekdays have higher average number of passengers than the weekends (210,070 trips a day during weekdays). The highest number of passengers was on March 30, 2001 at 245,059 passengers. However, the ratio between those who use stored value tickets and one-way tickets is 50:50 -> lower than the standard level.

The top 5 stations for the number of passengers are Siam, Mochit, Onnut, Saladaeng, and Victory Monument – with the average of 44.5% of all passengers. So far, most of passenger travel about 7 stations. Now, the only problem is the delay at Saphan Taksin Station which takes 45 minutes. Nevertheless, there is no accident at all!

Mr. Arnut said "According to the poll of 400 passengers, BTSC found that those passenger give the average of 3.75 (out of 5). The lowest satisfaction is about the ticket fee and the highest satisfaction is about the skytrain service." BTSC will also add 10 more shuttle buses since the number of passengers has increased from 14,500 passengers a day to 16,500 passengers a day during weekdays and 17,900 passengers a day during the weekends. However, the total number of passengers is still at 200,000 passengers a day which is 400,000 lower than the target of 600,000 passengers a day.

BTSC is ready to find the financial resources to deal with the extensions Calling a bid for extensions on June 30, 2001

Dailynews, April 27, 2001

BTSC feel bullish that they can find creditors to finance the extension project. The daily number of stations for each passenger is 7. There are 5 stations which have most of the passengers. The bid calling for extensions will start on June 30, 2001.

Mr. Arnut Abhabhirom (BTSC Committee Consultant) said after the BTSC Board meeting (attended by Mr. Sa-Ngad Bunditkul, Deputy BMA Governor) that the daily revenue is 5 million baht—enough to pay the salary for everybody and cover the operating costs and maintenance. However, the daily revenue is not enough to pay loan interest. The most popular stations are Mochit, Siam, Onnut, Saladaeng, and Victory Monument. Typical passengers pass 7 stations for each trip.

BTSC is asking for approval of the via duct construction to connect Asia Hotel and Wave Place to the Skytrain station, but the committee hasn't approved it yet. The company is ready for the 8.9-km Samrong extension and 2.2-km Taksin extension. The company expects no problem finding the financial resource to deal with extension projects even though the company is trying to find the financial institutions to deal with them.

Mr. Mana Nopphan (BMA Deputy City Clerk) said BMA will follow the Cabinet resolution to realize the extensions. BMA is preparing to call a new bid by inviting the former 11 groups to buy the bid calling forms from May 1-20, 2001 and then send the bid on June 30. After opening the bid, BMA will ask BTSC whether the company can accept the terms imposed by the winner. If BTSC accepts the terms, BTSC will sign the contract and construction begins. However, if BTSC cannot accept the terms imposed by the winner, the winner is going to deal with the extension project instead.

Commentary: It seems to me that BTSC will win the contract anyway since nobody can compete with BTSC. For the case of the Taksin extension, a new floor must be constructed in the same way as the Silom station of the subway to prevent a bottleneck at the Taksin Bridge. After passing Taksin Bridge, then skytrain stations will be at the same configuration as usual.

For the case of Samrong extension, the via duct to BITEC or feeder buses to BITEC are a must. And, if possible, the feeder bus to reach Thana City (a suburb village at Km15 of Bang Na-Bang Pakong Highway (Highway No.34) which belonged to Thanayong Group – the owner of BTSC). Thana City is at the mouth of the road to Suvarnabhumi Airport. At least this would help the suburb villagers a lot.

Skytrain Extension Financing

Manager Daily, April 4, 2001

For the 11-km Skytrain extension, BMA asks Krungthep Thanakhom Co.Ltd. (BMA financial manager) to negotiate with creditors to enable BTSC to obtain the loan with BMA as an underwriter to ensure steady debt payment. BMA will invest on civil work (80%) and BTSC will invest on tracks and rolling stocks.

BMA is Going to Bail Out BTSC to Realize the Extensions

Dailynews, April 5, 2001

BMA is going to bail BTSC out of ten billion baht of debt by ordering Krungthep Thanakhom to join with BTSC to borrow money for the 11 km Skytrain extension and propose the government to allow BMA to issue 100-billion baht bonds to finance extensions at the pillar and route sections. BTSC will merely invest on track laying and rolling stocks.

After the discussion with the original 11 companies who were competing for the Skytrain bid, BMA found that all of them declined to the bid invitation since they will never be able to compete with BTSC. Therefore, BMA will have to bail BTSC out of financial trouble by asking Krungthep Thanakhom Co.Ltd. (BMA Financial Manager) to be an underwriter of BTSC even though the BTSC will have to pay the debts alone. So far, the negotiation between BTSC and Krungthep Thanakhom and the creditor is going on. For the extensions, BTSC will have to deal with the 8.9-km Samrong extension (Onnut-Samrong Tai) and 2.2-km Taksin extension (Saphan Taksin-Wong Wian Yai).

As for the Lum Lookka, Mahachai and Bang Plee extensions, Mr. Samak will negotiate with Premier Thaksin and his cabinet to allow BMA to issue 100 billion-baht bonds to finance the project which BMA will be in charge of civil works (pillars, levels, other construction). BTSC will handle track laying and rolling stock. He expects the Mahachai, Lum Lookka, and Bang Plee project to be conceived in the next three years.

Building the Walkway Connecting Chatochak Weekend Market with Skytrain

Dailynews, April 9, 2001

BMA is going to construct a walkway with a moving belt connecting Chatuchak Weekend Market with Mochit Station to facilitate the movement to and from the stations.

Mr. Suphol Kaeosa-ard (Director of Chatuchak Weekend Market) said he has discussed with the managers and CEO of BTSC about the measures to facilitate those who go to Chatuchak Weekend Market. After the preliminary meeting, they came out with the idea of a 700-meter elevated walkway with a moving belt to go back and forth and end up at the tower clock inside the market. It will take 30-40 million baht to build. BTSC will handle construction and BMA (the owner of Chatuchak Weekend Market) gives the company a plot of land to construct it on.

Mr. Suphol said he will discuss with the company until the final plan and the date to start is finalized so he can propose the plan to the BMA and OCMLT to consider and get the budget approval. It would take 3 months to construct such a walkway since the steel structure of the walkway is the same as the one connecting the via duct to MBK Center – with pillars to support. The moving belts will be installed only at the stairways.

Proposal to Readjust the Phaseecharoen Elevated Way to be a Skytrain

Dailynews, April 10, 2001

The Press Correspondent at OCMLT said the upcoming Traffic Subcommittee meeting on April 12 headed by Mr. Pongphol Adireksarn (Duputy Premier and Minister of the Office of Prime Minister) will consider the readjustment plan for the 2nd stage of the Phasee Charoen Elevated Way (Sathon-Wat Ang Kaeo – 6.1 km) to become a Skytrain (Taksin extension) after the cabinet has approved this extension. This extension will also be extended from Wat Ang kaeo to Phetkasem Road (National Highway No. 4). If the subcommittee agrees with the plan, they will forward to the OCMLT committee to ask BMA to order the contractors to readjust the project. Eventually, OCMLT will ask the cabinet to approve the new Taksin extension from Sathon to Phetkasem.