



Truckers, haulers to benefit most from toll fee adjustment Trucks and trailers stand to gain the most in the toll fee adjustment now in force at the North Luzon Expressway (NLEX).

These vehicles classified as Class 3, used to pay P609 from the Balintawak toll plaza in Quezon City to Sta. Ines in Mabalacat, Pampanga. Under the revised toll fee schedule, this was reduced to only P539, or P70 less, compared to P23 savings by Class 1 vehicles (cars and jeepneys) for the same distance.

Other vehicles are also enjoying an average of 10 percent decrease in the new toll rates that was implemented last Dec. 20 and would be in effect for the next two years.

The rate adjustment was expected to have positive impacts on major tollway users in terms of savings in operating costs which may in turn benefit downstream sectors of the economy.

An umbrella organization of non-government organizations (NGOs) in Central Luzon has in fact cited the Manila North Tollways Corp. (MNTC), builder-operator of the NLEX, for "doing the unexpected" by bringing down fees at the country's premier toll road, in effect fulfilling a promise to adjust the rates after two years, depending on the prevailing economic conditions.

As it was, the avowed adjustment came earlier than expected.

The toll fee adjustment was even the subject of the year-end meeting of Sulong sa Ikaunlad ng Gitnang Luzon: Aksyon Na (SIGLA), a broad-based advocacy group in the region

The SIGLA leaders noted that it was unusual for a corporation to slash its service fees, particularly during the holidays when prices are normally one the uptrend.

"This is a big thing for the NLEX-users, particularly traders of vehicles and other farm products," said Jesus "Teng" Lim, co-founder of SIGLA.

He stressed that the reduction should encourage these traders to at least maintain if not increase their prices proportionately.

"We are happy with this toll fee adjustment. It all but proves that the MNTC could keep its word," said SIGLA chairperson Rosemarie Herrera. "We never thought this would happen, but the MNTC simply did it shortly before the year was over," she added.

Other SIGLA officers, among them Chris Lu, Annie Iran and Rodolfo Custodio, were one in saying that the MNTC, builder-operator of the NLEX, "holds the rare distinction of delivering on what it has promised."

The MNTC declared during the toll fixing process that it would revise the rates in two years, taking into consideration the prevailing economic conditions. The recent strengthening of the peso in the foreign exchange market and other positive developments at the economic front thus prompted the MNTC to adjust its rates downward.