



## **Modernization of Public Transportation in Semarang: Transition and Challenges, 2009-2017**

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**Abstract:** Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) in Semarang City was introduced to the public in 2009. Its presence became one of the city government's efforts to address urban transportation problems, particularly the increasing traffic congestion. In its early stages of operation, the BRT was met with sharp criticism, especially for unprepared operational conditions, ranging from system management and supporting facilities to suboptimal inter-agency coordination. This situation reflected a gap between policy planning and its implementation in practice. Over time, various improvements were gradually implemented, covering aspects of service, infrastructure, and operational governance. These improvements brought significant changes to the image of the BRT, which eventually transformed into a new face of public transportation in Semarang City and became one of the solutions for reducing congestion levels. This study employs a historical method with a qualitative approach, supported by primary sources in the form of newspaper archives to reconstruct the dynamics of BRT development over time. The findings indicate that the presence of BRT, followed by the emergence of app-based transportation, has driven structural changes in the urban transportation system. The dominance of conventional public transport, such as angkot (public minivans) and city buses, has gradually been replaced by more modern and integrated modes of transportation. On the other hand, this transformation has also brought socio-economic impacts, particularly for workers in the conventional transportation sector, who are faced with the challenge of adapting to modernization and rapid technological advancement.

**Keywords:** Bus Rapid Transit; modernization; public transportation; Semarang City

**Abstrak:** Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) di Kota Semarang diperkenalkan kepada masyarakat pada tahun 2009. Kehadirannya menjadi salah satu upaya pemerintah kota dalam mengatasi permasalahan transportasi perkotaan, khususnya kemacetan lalu lintas yang semakin meningkat. Pada tahap awal pengoperasiannya, kehadiran BRT tidak lepas dari berbagai kritikan tajam, terutama terkait kondisi operasional yang dinilai belum siap, mulai dari manajemen sistem, fasilitas pendukung, hingga koordinasi antarinstansi yang masih belum optimal. Situasi tersebut mencerminkan adanya kesenjangan antara perencanaan kebijakan dan implementasi di lapangan. Seiring berjalannya waktu, berbagai pembenahan mulai dilakukan secara bertahap, baik dari segi pelayanan, infrastruktur, maupun tata kelola operasional. Perbaikan tersebut membawa perubahan signifikan terhadap citra BRT, yang kemudian bertransformasi menjadi wajah baru angkutan umum di Kota Semarang serta berperan sebagai salah satu solusi dalam mengurangi tingkat kemacetan. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode sejarah dengan pendekatan kualitatif, yang didukung oleh sumber primer berupa arsip surat kabar untuk merekonstruksi dinamika perkembangan BRT dari masa ke masa. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kehadiran BRT, yang kemudian diikuti oleh kemunculan transportasi berbasis daring, telah mendorong terjadinya perubahan struktur dalam sistem transportasi perkotaan. Dominasi angkutan kota (angkot) dan bus kota secara perlahan mulai tergeser oleh moda transportasi yang lebih modern dan terintegrasi. Di sisi lain, transformasi ini juga

membawa dampak sosial-ekonomi, terutama bagi para pekerja di sektor transportasi konvensional yang dihadapkan pada tantangan adaptasi terhadap modernisasi dan perkembangan teknologi yang semakin pesat.

**Kata Kunci:** Bus Rapid Transit, Kota Semarang; modernisasi; transportasi publik



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## Introduction

Transportation is an integral part of people's daily lives (Yang, Dam, & Majumdar, 2019). Its existence has become an instrument that supports the mobility of the general public for various activities, both small and large-scale (Fatimah, 2019). More than just a means of transporting people and goods, transportation is closely linked to the economic sector (Kartiasih, 2019). Effective and efficient management facilitates the distribution of goods and services, expands market access, and increases a region's productivity and competitiveness (Karim et al., 2023). Its presence not only supports the community's smooth mobility but also serves as an important driver of the city's economy (Kurniawan & Aminata, 2023).

In an urban context, transportation plays a vital role. Large cities experiencing rapid population growth face serious challenges, including traffic congestion (Diamond, 1975). The presence of an efficient and affordable public transportation system allows people to switch from private modes to collective modes, thereby reducing traffic congestion and, at the same time, curbing the use of private vehicles (Oktavianti & Lituhayu, 2017).

The city of Semarang is among those facing these challenges. Its coastal location has driven rapid economic growth and population expansion, accompanied by complex problems (Ridlo, 2016). In response to these challenges, the city government directed its policy focus toward developing a public transportation system. The transformation of public transportation in Semarang can be traced through a historical study by Hermawan & Wijayati (2025), which identified the shift from bemo to mikrolet as the forerunner of angkot. The transportation modernization initiative aims to increase passenger capacity and encourage the public to switch to public transportation.

However, empirical evidence shows that public transportation's presence does not always have a positive impact. A historical study conducted by Aljusta & Wijayati (2020) reveals another side to this phenomenon. The massive presence of public transportation in Semarang has actually created new problems, one of which is unhealthy competition among public transportation drivers. This competition is triggered by the high number of public vehicles operating without adequate regulation, resulting in competition for passengers on the streets. The heyday of conventional public transportation in the 2000s was marked by the dominance of public transport vehicles and city buses as the main modes in Semarang (Suara Merdeka, 2007a). However, the role of these two modes of transportation, which were expected to solve traffic congestion, has not been fully realized. Irregular operational practices, such as waiting for passengers on the side of the road (ngetem) and indiscriminately picking up and dropping off passengers, have contributed to increased traffic congestion (Suara Merdeka, 2007b).

In response to these issues, the city government introduced a new public transportation system to address traffic congestion. The idea of introducing Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) as a public transportation fleet was initiated by the Transportation Agency in 2008 (Kompas, 2008). The initial implementation took the form of a trial run of the BRT system on May 2, 2009, which was marked by protests from public minibuses drivers (Kompas, 2009a). Despite facing waves of opposition, the first corridor serving the Mangkang-Penggaron route officially began

operating on September 18, 2009, after several delays (Kompas, 2009b). The BRT system is projected to be an effective solution to ease traffic congestion (Pradipta & Suharini, 2014).

One year later, on October 13, 2010, a major technological change entered and influenced the transportation sector with the launch of the Go-Jek application (Abdillah, 2022). One of the services offered is Go-Ride, an online motorcycle taxi platform. This service provides a new option for people to use online motorcycle taxis as an alternative to conventional motorcycle taxis. The choice of app-based motorcycle taxis is motivated by a perception of greater safety, due to the monitoring system through Go-Jek's central server and the transparency of fares, which passengers know before using the service (Andhini, 2017). This phenomenon marks a new phase in the transportation transition with the exclusion of conventional motorcycle taxis.

In 2015, the Go-Jek app aggressively expanded into various cities, including Semarang (CNN Indonesia, 2015). Go-Jek's penetration in this city faced resistance from Organda Semarang in its early stages. Even the Head of the Semarang City Transportation Agency rejected Go-Jek's operations because it did not yet have legal permission as a mode of transportation (Tempo, 2015). However, amid this conflict, Go-Jek continued to grow rapidly in Semarang. The process of modernization and technological revolution in Semarang has led to significant transformations in transportation. The presence of BRT and the launch of the Go-Jek application marked the transition from conventional modes of transportation to modern systems and modes. This phenomenon raises fundamental questions about the future of conventional transportation, which includes public minibuses, city buses, and conventional motorcycle taxis, amid the wave of modernization and technological disruption.

Based on the background above, this study warrants further exploration. Therefore, it is necessary to identify the issues surrounding the dynamics of public transportation in Semarang amid the rapid pace of modernization and technological advances. From this problem statement, there are two research questions, namely: (1) how did the transformation of public transportation in Semarang take place from 2009 to 2017? (2) What are the implications of this transition process and the challenges faced? The significance of this study lies in its attempt to understand the phenomenon of the marginalization of conventional public transportation, which modern transportation systems have replaced.

## **Research Methods**

This study uses the historical method, which consists of four systematic stages. These four stages include heuristics, source criticism, interpretation, and historiography (Kuntowijoyo, 2003). The first step is to use heuristics or to collect primary and secondary sources relevant to the research periodization (Wijayati, 2009). Primary sources were obtained from the *Wawasan* and *Suara Merdeka* newspapers stored in the public document collection of the Central Java Provincial Archives and Library Office. In addition to using printed newspapers, researchers also accessed sources through online news channels, including Kompas, Tempo, Antara News Jateng, and CNN Indonesia. To complement the primary sources, researchers collected secondary sources in the form of previous studies that were thematically relevant to strengthen the research analysis framework. The second step was to critique the sources to verify their credibility and authenticity. The interpretation of verified sources produced historical facts, which were then recorded in a chronological, systematic account called historiography.

## **Research Result**

### **Early Phase of Public Transportation Transformation**

The year 2009 marked the embryonic phase of modernizing Semarang City's public transportation system. Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) was introduced to the public through a trial run on the anniversary of Semarang City on May 2, 2009. The trial run faced resistance from the angkot driver group, which rejected the presence of this new mode of public transportation. This rejection was motivated by the drivers' concerns about competition for passengers, which could potentially reduce their income (Kompas, 2009a). Nevertheless, the city government continued with the BRT program despite facing waves of opposition. After the trial run, the scheduled operation on May 20, 2009, was delayed due to obstacles posed by the business consortium's requirements (Kompas, 2009b).

After a delay in the schedule, BRT operations were slated to begin on September 14, 2009. However, on that date, operating conditions still showed significant unpreparedness. This unpreparedness was evident in the empty, unkempt shelters, which were even used as parking spots by pedicab and taxi drivers (Wawasan, 2009a). The chaotic situation surrounding the BRT's operations has led to the perception that the city government is not serious about managing the system. According to a journalist's report, the BRT's operation has led to the view that the city government is not serious about managing it. Upon investigation, it was found that the BRT operation on September 14 was canceled because the operational permit had been issued (Wawasan, 2009b).

The operation of the BRT became clear when the first BRT corridor officially began serving the public on September 18, 2009. Although it had entered the operational phase, initial evaluations identified technical problems, namely passenger complaints about the boarding bridge between the bus and the shelter, which was considered a safety hazard rather than a facilitator of passenger access. On the other hand, some members of the public responded positively, appreciating the city government's initiative to provide affordable public transportation (Wawasan, 2009c).

In the early stages of operation, BRT faced public suboptimal utilization. This was reflected in the low passenger occupancy rate. In addition to low passenger interest, violations of standard operating procedures (SOP) were also identified, including buses not stopping at shelters as stipulated in the regulations disseminated and reported by public transportation drivers (Wawasan, 2009d). In response to these violations, the Semarang Metropolitan Police Chief will take firm action against BRT drivers who do not comply with the rules for stopping at shelters (Wawasan, 2009e). Even the consortium acknowledges that the BRT project has not been maximized and requires improvement. The consortium also noted that there are budgetary issues and losses due to the low number of passengers, so it will take time to attract the public to use BRT (Wawasan, 2009f).

### **The Dynamics of Transportation Mode Competition After BRT**

The presence of BRT in the urban transportation system has given rise to various complex dynamics and implications. In the same year it began operating, there was sharp criticism of BRT's management, which was deemed unprofessional. The criticism covered administrative aspects, such as delays in issuing operating permits, as well as infrastructure aspects that were not adequately prepared. The existence of BRT also had an economic impact on city bus operators with routes similar to those of BRT corridor 1. They were forced to lower their fares to compete with the very affordable BRT fares, which were subsidized by the city government. The consequence of this fare policy was a decline in city bus passenger volume, which led to a

reduction in bus operator income, triggering complaints from city bus operators (Wawasan, 2009h)

Towards the end of 2009, recommendations were made to city governments to prioritize improving urban public transportation. It was suggested that the BRT public transportation program be continued and become the main focus of government policy for the period 2010 to 2015 (Wawasan, 2009h). The recommendation is based on empirical evidence that, from its initial launch through the end of 2009, BRT continued to incur financial losses. The consortium reported operating losses of Rp19 million per day. In addition to financial problems, there were also issues related to the welfare of bus employees that received insufficient attention, as evidenced by the failure to meet basic needs, such as lunch (Wawasan, 2009i).

In its development, BRT began to experience a significant increase in passenger numbers. However, this increase has not generated financial profits, so the consortium is still experiencing operational losses. The relatively affordable ticket prices have not covered the operational costs of the 20 BRT fleets, requiring government subsidies or alternative funding sources (Wawasan, 2009j). Faced with ongoing financial pressure, the PT Trans Semarang consortium threatened to halt BRT operations unless it received financial assistance from the city government (Wawasan, 2010a).

In response to this situation, the Semarang city government proposed allocating Rp7.1 billion in subsidies for BRT in the 2010 Regional Revenue and Expenditure Budget Draft (RAPBD). The Semarang City Regional Representative Council (DPRD) stated that the budget draft would be approved on the condition of transparency, following an assessment of several irregularities in the proposal. The DPRD found an anomaly in the form of subsidies for bus maintenance costs, which should have been the consortium's responsibility. The city government emphasized that it would subsidize only passenger ticket costs, so that the fare would remain at the initial level of Rp3,500 (Wawasan, 2010a).

Although initially a subsidy of Rp7.1 billion was promised to be approved, the Regional Representative Council (DPRD) ultimately only approved a subsidy budget plan of Rp5 billion. The decision to reduce the budget was based on the council's assessment that the proposed Rp7.1 billion was too large, so it was cut to Rp5 billion. Furthermore, the DPRD proposed that the management of the BRT be transferred from PT Trans Semarang to the Transportation, Communication, and Information Agency (Dishubkominfo) if PT Trans Semarang was not serious in managing it from the start of operations (Wawasan, 2010b).

The introduction of BRT into the urban transportation system was followed by the operation of Damri buses on the Ungaran-Penggaron and Ungaran-Mangkang routes. The launch of these Damri routes sparked fierce protests from city transport drivers, who rejected their presence. However, Damri insisted on continuing to operate to serve the community (Wawasan, 2009g). Similar protests occurred again in 2010, this time by minibus drivers. The demonstration on February 1, 2010, was marked by dozens of minibuses parked in front of the city hall. In his speech, the chairman of the Roda Mulya City Transportation Association said that the presence of Damri AKDP buses had resulted in overlapping routes and increased competition. The public tended to choose Damri buses because they were equipped with air conditioning and offered affordable fares of Rp. 3,500 (Wawasan, 2010c).

Despite facing a wave of protests, Damri reiterated its refusal to suspend services on the Ungaran route. The city government, acting as a mediator, stated that it lacks the authority to suspend Damri bus operations. According to the city government, intervention can only be carried out by the Provincial Transportation, Communication, and Information Agency, not the City Transportation, Communication, and Information Agency. However, it promised to coordinate with the Provincial Transportation, Communication, and Information Agency and

Damri to resolve this issue. As a temporary measure, Damri bus operations on this route will be suspended (Wawasan, 2010d).

Returning to the dynamics of BRT management, it was revealed that PT Trans Semarang, as the operator, had failed to fulfill its rental payment obligations to the city government. A member of Commission C of the Semarang City Council, Wachid Nurmiyanto, conveyed this fact. In his statement, the memorandum of understanding mentioned that PT Trans Semarang is required to pay rent of Rp. 27.5 million for the first four months of operation, followed by payments of Rp. 55 million per month for the subsequent period. However, entering the fifth month of operation, these payment obligations have not been fulfilled. Nurmiyanto emphasized that the city government must take a firm stance by issuing a warning letter and imposing fines in accordance with the agreement. If the consortium ignores the warning, the cooperation contract could potentially be terminated. Management will then be transferred from the City Transportation, Communication, and Information Department (as the previous option) to the City Public Works Department. For this transfer scenario, the designated department is expected to immediately establish a Public Service Agency (BLU) as the new managing entity for the BRT (Wawasan, 2010e).

After one year of operation, the management of BRT was deemed a failure and received a warning from the minister. The Indonesian Ministry of Transportation, through the City Transportation Agency, will conduct a major evaluation to make improvements. The Directorate General of Transportation assessed that the number of passengers using this bus service remains low, so more intensive public outreach is needed. The head of the City Transportation Agency, Gurun Risyadmoko, acknowledged that the usage rate of Trans Semarang is not yet optimal. According to him, this is because the public is not yet fully familiar with this new mode of transportation. To address this issue, his agency will launch a City Tour program to familiarize the public with Trans Semarang services and introduce tourist destinations in Semarang (Suara Merdeka, 2010).

Following a major evaluation, the BRT, which PT Trans Semarang still manages, continues to record losses. In one month, operational losses are estimated to reach Rp. 120 million. PT Trans Semarang revealed that the establishment of a Public Service Agency (BLU) is a prerequisite for the disbursement of the BRT subsidy of Rp. 7.1 billion, which was previously planned to be cut to Rp. 5 billion, has not yet been implemented. The subsidy can only be disbursed after the BLU formation process is completed, even though the agency is only planned to be established in June. With the formation of the BLU, accountability for the use of the Rp. 7.1 billion subsidy will be guaranteed (Wawasan, 2010g).

One month before the disbursement of the Bus Rapid Transit subsidy of Rp. 7.1 billion, PT Trans Semarang welcomed the news. The consortium admitted that it had been waiting for the subsidy funds for a long time to improve BRT services for the community. On the other hand, Semarang Mayor Sukawi Sutarip stated that the subsidy would be disbursed 20 days after the Public Service Agency (BLU) was established as the entity responsible for managing the funds. He also emphasized to the consortium that the funds should be used appropriately to improve the quality of BRT services (Wawasan, 2010h).

### **The Transformation of Public Transportation in Semarang**

After receiving city government subsidies, BRT has emerged as a more comfortable and safer mode of public transportation for the community. To increase public interest, Trans Semarang even placed advertisements in newspapers. The advertisements highlighted several advantages of BRT compared to other modes of public transportation. The advantages highlighted include: air-conditioned comfort, spacious seating so passengers are not crammed

together, punctuality, affordable fares, and time efficiency because the bus does not stop frequently to wait for passengers (Wawasan, 2010i).

The success of the BRT service improvements led the city of Semarang to receive the Wahana Tata Nugraha award. Improvements in service quality and the addition of new vehicles were the determining factors in the city receiving this award, which also serves as proof of the success of public transportation management in Semarang. This award was given by the Ministry of Transportation and was received directly by the Mayor of Semarang, Sukawi Sutarip, on October 1, 2010. This award also confirms that the BRT has successfully provided good service to the community and has become a growing trend in public transportation (Wawasan, 2010j).

The success of BRT as a public transportation mode has spurred plans for its further development. One of the 2011 agendas is the addition of a new corridor. The demand to accelerate the opening of Corridor II is mainly driven by traffic congestion in the Jatingaleh area. The plan is for Corridor II to serve the Terboyo-Sisemut route, which will pass through the Jatingaleh area. This situation has led to calls for the route to be operational immediately (Wawasan, 2010k). On the other hand, transportation observer Djoko Setijowarno also urged accelerating the realization of Corridor II. According to him, BRT is a more effective solution to overcome traffic congestion than the plan to build a ring road in Semarang, which he considers less effective (Wawasan, 2010l).

Entering 2011, the Semarang City Government is still facing traffic congestion issues. Transportation observer Djoko Setijowarno believes that the government has not been serious in addressing mass transportation as a solution to this congestion. According to him, the government must immediately focus on developing the BRT as the new face of public transportation in the city. Djoko argues that mass transportation outside the BRT system still seems chaotic, uncomfortable, and unsafe, leading people to be reluctant to use it and to prefer private vehicles instead. For Djoko, it is time for the government to develop comfortable, air-conditioned, safe, and affordable public transportation so that people will switch from private vehicles. According to him, the main solution to this problem is the development of Bus Rapid Transit (BRT), which must be realized immediately (Wawasan, 2011a).

Although it is expected to be the new face of public transportation, Semarang's BRT still faces infrastructure challenges that require urgent attention. One of these is the condition of the shelters, which are in disrepair. Damage was found at the shelter on Jalan Raya Tugu-Mangkang, which was in a very poor condition, with the roof missing (Wawasan, 2011b). This is ironic considering that BRT is touted as a replacement for public transportation that is unfit for the road. These expectations arose when it was revealed that 80% of conventional city buses operating in Semarang did not meet roadworthiness standards. There are still many city buses operating with rusted bodies and using old fleets (Wawasan, 2011c).

On the other hand, the Semarang Land Transportation Organization (Organda) explained that this situation was caused by increasingly fierce competition, which has put pressure on revenues. Limited revenues, coupled with high operating costs and spare parts prices, have left conventional city bus operators unable to provide a fleet that is safe, comfortable, and affordable. In addition, the organization added that city buses and urban transportation are beginning to experience difficulties due to the ease of obtaining motor vehicle loans, which has led to a decline in public transportation ridership. Furthermore, Organda Semarang expressed its support for the presence of BRT as a public transportation solution, on the condition that existing transportation operators are involved (Wawasan, 2011c).

In the same year, BRT intensified its efforts to promote its image through newspaper advertisements. One example is an advertisement for the “Free Tour of Semarang City on the Trans Semarang Bus, Mangkang-Penggaron Route” program on November 21, 2011. The advertisement was sponsored by Indosat (Wawasan, 2011d).



**Figure 1.** Advertising around Semarang City on Trans Semarang Buses  
Source: Wawasan, 2011

There are also photos of conventional city buses that appear to be falling apart, with passengers boarding. This behavior clearly endangers passenger safety and damages the image of city buses as a form of public transportation that does not pay sufficient attention to safety (Wawasan, 2011e).



**Figure 2.** Risk of Falling. A passenger recklessly jumped onto a public bus that was still moving and had not yet pulled over on Jalan Pahlawan on Tuesday (13/12) afternoon. This is risky for the passenger if he slips and falls onto the road.  
Source: Wawasan, 2011

In 2012, the city government began repairing damaged shelters. One of them was a shelter located in the Simpang Lima area of Semarang (Wawasan, 2012b). Meanwhile, Corridor II, which was previously planned in 2011, finally began to be realized in October 2012 (Wawasan, 2012c). However, several obstacles arose again, including the shelter intended to serve Corridor II being vandalized by irresponsible parties (Wawasan, 2012d). Other obstacles include the condition of several shelters, which appear dirty and unfinished. In addition, the lack of buses is also a serious challenge ahead of the inauguration of Corridor II. These various issues have

led to speculation that the inauguration of Corridor II BRT will be delayed, given that the shelters and buses are considered to be unprepared (Wawasan, 2012a; Wawasan, 2012h).

The city government dismissed this assumption, emphasizing that the launch of BRT corridor II would remain on schedule (Wawasan, 2012e). The fleet for this new corridor will use assistance from the fleet of Corridor I while awaiting the arrival of the new fleet. The launch will still take place in October 2012 with the borrowed fleet. Even one month after operations began, the number of BRT fleets in Corridor II had increased due to high passenger occupancy, with the majority of passengers being students (Wawasan, 2012f).

Corridor II finally received 20 new buses on November 16, 2012. The buses in this corridor differ from those in Corridor I, particularly in their smaller size. The maximum capacity of these new buses is only 24 passengers. The use of these smaller buses is based on operational effectiveness, given that the Terboyo-Sisemut route features many uphill sections. Despite their smaller size, the facilities provided are equivalent to those on Corridor I buses. With the arrival of this new fleet, the Corridor I buses that were previously loaned to Corridor II have finally been returned to serve their original route (Wawasan, 2012g).

In the same year, the image of public transportation (*angkot*) faded further after dozens of vehicles were caught in a raid on December 6, 2012. During the operation, *angkots* that did not meet technical standards were confiscated, while drivers found without a driver's license (SIM) were ticketed. This raid was part of the 2012 Zebra Candi operation, which aimed to reduce the number of public transportation accidents (Wawasan, 2012i). However, the penalties imposed on minibus drivers who violate the rules are still considered too lenient, which could lead to similar incidents recurring (Wawasan, 2012j).

The following year, in 2013, BRT further expanded its reach by opening a new corridor. Corridor IV was inaugurated by converting the Damri bus fleet to serve this route (Suara Merdeka, 2013). The inauguration was conducted by the Mayor of Semarang, Hendrar Prihadi, on December 1, 2013. This new corridor serves the Ahmad Yani-Cangkiran route with a special student fare of Rp. 1,000. In fact, from December 1-3, 2013, a free bus ride program was held on corridor IV. This step indicates the government's focus on developing BRT as the backbone of public transportation in Semarang (Wawasan, 2013).

The massive BRT development continued in 2014 with the operation of Corridor III. This corridor serves the Tanjung Emas - Sultan Agung route and was inaugurated on November 1, 2014, with a fleet of 10 buses providing initial service. BLU Trans Semarang plans to add 12 buses to serve this route. The bus specifications are similar to those of Corridor II, namely medium-sized red buses. The fares applied are also the same, namely Rp. 1,000 for students and Rp. 3,500 for the general public (Wawasan, 2014a). The presence of this new corridor is expected to reduce the prevalence of unofficial transportation (black license plates) (Wawasan, 2014c).

In 2014, public transportation (*angkot*) faced fierce competition from new BRT corridors and even more serious challenges. The central government raised fuel prices, triggering a wave of demonstrations from various segments of society. The Semarang City Land Transportation Organization (Organda) also opposed this increase, arguing that it would affect the operational sustainability of *angkot* and city buses (Wawasan, 2014b). In fact, Organda Pusat held a National Working Meeting (Muskernas) in Semarang to discuss the impact of rising fuel prices. At the forum, Organda emphasized its rejection by criticizing the inaccuracy of subsidy targets, which allocated more funds to environmentally friendly private cars than to public transportation (Wawasan, 2014d).

The increase in fuel prices has triggered a strike by some public transportation operators in Semarang City. This action was mainly carried out by city transportation (*angkot*) on the C9

route from Mangkang to Johar and city buses. This strike is also a form of protest against the decline in passenger numbers on these routes, driven by fierce competition with the BRT fleet. However, not all transport operators participated in the strike; some continued to operate as usual (Wawasan, 2014f). On the other hand, the fuel price increase has led to an 18% increase in public minibus fares, while BRT fares have remained unchanged. This situation has made things even more difficult for public minibuses, as people tend to switch to BRT, which offers stable fares and more comfortable facilities at a lower cost (Wawasan, 2014e).

The challenges for conventional city transportation and buses increased in 2015 with the arrival of online motorcycle taxi services through the Gojek application in Semarang on November 15, 2015 (CNN Indonesia, 2015). The new service was immediately rejected by the Semarang Land Transportation Organization (Organda) as a threat to the survival of public transportation and city buses (Tempo, 2015). In fact, the Head of the Semarang City Transportation, Communication, and Information Agency, Agus Harmunanto, stated that Gojek does not yet have an operating permit in the region (Wawasan, 2015a). The Semarang City Council also urged Gojek to complete its licensing process in 2016. Although it already had a Trade Business License (SIUP) from Jakarta, the company was still required to confirm its regional licensing. On the other hand, Gojek's management representative in Semarang claimed that all other documents were complete and they were waiting for the local SIUP to be finalized (Antara News Jateng, 2016).

In 2015, there were plans to add two new corridors in 2016. The two corridors were corridor V with the Meteseh – PRPP route, and corridor VI with the Undip-Unnes route. This step was considered appropriate to offset high mobility in areas prone to high congestion while reducing the number of public vehicles in these areas. As a mitigation effort to address the impact on local public transportation operators, they will be involved in this project by forming a new consortium to operate Trans Semarang. As a result, there will be a gradual shift from city transportation (angkot) to Bus Rapid Transit as the primary mode of public transportation for Semarang City residents (Wawasan, 2015b).

Entering 2016, the government showed a strong commitment to transforming public transportation in Semarang. Concrete steps were taken to revitalize the bus fleet in corridors I and II (Suara Merdeka, 2016a). However, various obstacles remained. Plans to launch corridors V and VI, which were scheduled for that year, had to be postponed due to infrastructure unpreparedness, particularly in relation to road repairs in Meteseh and Gunungpati (Suara Merdeka, 2016c). Meanwhile, 25 new BRT buses provided by the Ministry of Transportation cannot yet be operated because the road permits are still being processed (Suara Merdeka, 2016b). This situation resulted in the budget allocated for both corridors being reclassified as Budget Surplus (Silpa). The Semarang City Council regretted this delay and emphasized that the realization of these corridors would be a priority in 2017 (Suara Merdeka, 2016d).

The year 2017 was marked by very dynamic transportation developments in the city of Semarang. Ahead of the planned launch of corridors V and VI, there was a wave of protests from public transportation drivers who were concerned about the impact of the new corridors on their livelihoods. The drivers urged that the operation of the two corridors be reviewed. In response, the Semarang City Council, through one of its members, Agung Budi Margono, promised to push the city government to find a solution (Suara Merdeka, 2017a).

Feeling that their aspirations were not being taken seriously, hundreds of public transport drivers threatened to stage a demonstration on March 8, 2017. This threat came after a second mediation on March 6, 2017, which was a continuation of the initial meeting on March 1, 2017. During the mediation, the drivers demanded the cancellation of the bidding process for the management of BRT corridors V and VI. However, the Semarang City Council explained that

the bidding process could not be canceled. As a compromise, the city government proposed that the winning bidder sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the public transportation association whose routes are affected by BRT operations (Suara Merdeka, 2017b).

BRT Corridors V and VI are finally scheduled to begin operating on March 24, 2017, with 25 buses ready for service (Suara Merdeka, 2017c). This announcement sparked resistance from city transport drivers, who felt the promise to involve them in the corridor's operation had not been fulfilled (Suara Merdeka, 2017d). In response, the City Transportation Agency finally urged the winning operator to include public minibuses on the affected routes immediately. The Transportation Agency emphasized its commitment not to abandon these drivers and to involve them in the management of the BRT on the corridors in question (Suara Merdeka, 2017e).

The launch of BRT corridors V and VI, scheduled for March 24, 2017, was postponed again because the new auction winner was only determined on August 17, 2017 (Suara Merdeka, 2017f). Certainty about the launch of the corridor emerged only on March 30, 2017, when the announcement was welcomed by the public but also opposed by city transport drivers whose routes overlapped (Suara Merdeka, 2017h).

In 2017, online transportation experienced massive growth. City transportation and conventional buses, which had already been struggling due to the presence of BRT, now face additional challenges with the rise of online motorcycle taxi services through apps. There have even been clashes between online motorcycle taxi drivers and public transportation drivers due to competition for passengers (Suara Merdeka, 2017g). Overall, the dominance of angkot and conventional city buses is fading. Their role as the backbone of public transportation is being replaced by BRT and online transportation modes that offer greater comfort and safety for users.

### **The Impact of the Transition of Public Transportation in Semarang City**

The transition of Semarang's public transportation system has shifted the dominant role of conventional city transportation and buses, which have now been replaced by Bus Rapid Transit and online transportation modes have now replaced. Drivers who depend on the conventional transportation sector must find new strategies to survive amid increasingly fierce competition. Pressure is mounting as fuel prices rise, forcing city buses and minibuses to raise fares. On the other hand, BRT has maintained its more affordable fares. As a result, city buses and minibuses are experiencing a decline in passenger numbers, with passengers switching to BRT as their mode of public transportation.

The shift of passengers from conventional city transportation and buses occurred for several fundamental reasons. It was not only about cheap fares; many people considered the facilities offered by BRT to be more comfortable and safer than public transportation and city buses. In addition, in terms of service, BRT was known for its efficiency and speed compared to city buses, which were notorious for frequent stops. Moreover, the impact of this transition is not limited to minibus and city bus drivers. Still, it is also felt by pedicab drivers, whose livelihoods are increasingly under pressure due to modernization in the transportation sector. Economic necessity has forced them to seek income through improper means such as gambling (Wawasan, 2009k). There have even been cases of rickshaw drivers committing suicide because their income was insufficient to meet their economic needs (Wawasan, 2010f).

The situation became even more dire with the arrival of online transportation in Semarang. The rapid expansion of BRT and online transportation further eroded the viability of conventional public transportation and city buses. Despite various attempts at resistance, ranging from demonstrations against the arrival of BRT, protests against fuel price increases, rejection of online transportation, and opposition to the expansion of BRT corridors, these

efforts were fruitless. Ultimately, drivers must adapt quickly to make ends meet with limited options: joining the BRT consortium or seeking alternative livelihoods.

### **Conclusion**

The introduction of Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) marked a transformation in Semarang's transportation policy, aimed at overcoming traffic congestion and creating a modern mass transit system. Despite facing operational and financial challenges at its launch, government intervention through subsidies, the establishment of a Public Service Agency (BLU), and gradual corridor expansion successfully consolidated the BRT as the backbone of public transportation. Recognition, such as the Wahana Tata Nugraha award and increased ridership, solidified its position as the new face of reliable and affordable public transportation.

The success of BRT has led to a major shift in the conventional transportation ecosystem. Supported by more comfortable facilities, stable fares, and punctuality, BRT has immediately shifted passenger preferences away from conventional city transportation and buses. The impact of this competition has been exacerbated by two external factors: increases in fuel prices, which have burdened traditional transportation operations, and the entry of online transportation services offering door-to-door service. This combination of pressures has not only reduced market share but also triggered a decline in income and the livelihoods of conventional transportation drivers.

Faced with an existential threat, city transport and conventional bus drivers staged various forms of resistance, such as demonstrations and protests against the introduction of BRT, fuel price increases, and corridor expansion. However, these efforts were unable to reverse the tide of transformation, which was fully supported by government policy. Ultimately, they face limited adaptation options: joining the BRT system through a consortium or switching to other livelihoods outside the transportation sector.

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