



SUSTAINABLE MOBILITY STARTS SMALL: LESSONS FROM LOCAL INNOVATIONS

SEKI Yosui
ALMEC Corporation

1

Background & Perspective

- ▶ Work with island nations (Palau, Solomon Islands) and secondary cities in Asia-Pacific

Mobility Gap

- ▶ Metropolitan areas often receive most attention and investment
- ▶ Non-metropolitan and island regions are left behind

Unique Constraints

- ▶ Dispersed populations
- ▶ Limited transport modes
- ▶ Difficulty sustaining services

Focus My Presentation:	How small-scale, local innovations can help close this gap
Core Message:	<i>Sustainable mobility starts with local, inclusive, and scalable innovations</i>

UNDERSTANDING THE MOBILITY GAP OUTSIDE BIG CITIES

2

TOPICS

1.  **Understanding the Mobility Gap**
 - ▶ Non-metropolitan and island contexts
2.  **Case 1: Palau – Building Eco-Friendly Mobility**
 - ▶ Starting small in an island nation
3.  **Case 2: Honiara – From Informal to Organized Bus Services**
 - ▶ Step-by-step reform in a small capital
4.  **Lessons & Implications**
 - ▶ Common challenges, success factors, and relevance for the Philippines

3

1. UNDERSTANDING THE MOBILITY GAP

● **Non-metropolitan and island contexts:**

- Philippines as an island nation
- Geographically dispersed population across many islands

● **Limited transport modes:**

- Tricycles
- Jeepneys
- Walking / boats in some island areas

4

1. 🌐 UNDERSTANDING THE MOBILITY GAP

● Issues:

- Unreliable services
- Difficulty sustaining operations
- Small-scale Markets
- Weak institutional support

● Mobility is key for:

- **Social inclusion:** Access for students, elderly, and low-income groups
- **Economic vitality:** Connection to jobs, markets, and tourism
- **Environmental sustainability:** Shift away from inefficient modes

5

2. 🚌 CASE 1: PALAU – BUILDING ECO-FRIENDLY MOBILITY

6

BACKGROUND

Palau is addressing the challenges of car dependence.

Climate Impact

Car Dependence & Health Risks

Unsafe for Pedestrians

Traffic Congestion

Air Pollution along Road

Limited Island Mobility

- ❑ From car-dependent society to eco-friendly mobility for all.
- ❑ Balancing the use of cars and public transport for a sustainable future.

7

FOUR APPROACHES TO ECO-FRIENDLY MOBILITY



8



PALAU'S FIRST PUBLIC ROUTE BUS – SMALL STEP, BIG CHANGE

Key Achievements:

- ▶ First route bus launched in April 2024 (Koror Downtown)
- ▶ Expansion in July 2024 (to Malakal + new bus stops)
- ▶ Serving residents, commuters, students, and tourists

Step-by-step timeline:

Nov 2023:

- Night Market Shuttle

Apr 2024:

- Daytime Route Bus

Jul 2024:

- Route Expansion

Oct 2024:

- Weekday Service (5 days)

Jan 2026:

- Route Expansion

GREEN HUB FOR FUTURE MOBILITY

Eco-Technology Demonstration

- ▶ Demonstration of solar-powered EVs ("GREEN HUB")
- ▶ 3 EV models (LSV-4, Mini Cab EV, EK X EV)
- ▶ 2 solar-charging stations in Koror
- ▶ Testing CO₂ reduction and local maintenance skills
- ▶ Promotes eco-tourism and energy resilience





EMPOWERING PALAU'S BUS DRIVERS – 'DRIVEN TO SERVE'

- ▶ **Capacity Building & Drivers**
 - ▶ **First Driver's Operation Manual in Palau**
 - ▶ **Topics:** customer care, inspection, emergency response, announcements
 - ▶ **Joint training with Japanese bus experts**
 - ▶ **Ongoing updates for new vehicle types (blind spot, overhang differences)**

11

BUILDING BRIDGES WITH THE COMMUNITY

Community Engagement & Education:

- ▶ Transport education for 112 fifth graders in Koror (Apr 2024)
- ▶ School programs and stakeholder consultations promote awareness
- ▶ Children learn public transport manners and environmental values
- ▶ Encourages behavioral change and long-term cultural shift



12

CASE 1: PALAU – LESSONS

1 Start Small, Scale Smart

- ▶ Pilot routes proved the demand and built public trust.
- ▶ Gradual expansion showed how small steps lead to impact.

2 Serve Both Residents and Tourists

- ▶ Combining daily and visitor demand ensured economic viability.
- ▶ Public transport became part of the island's life and attraction.

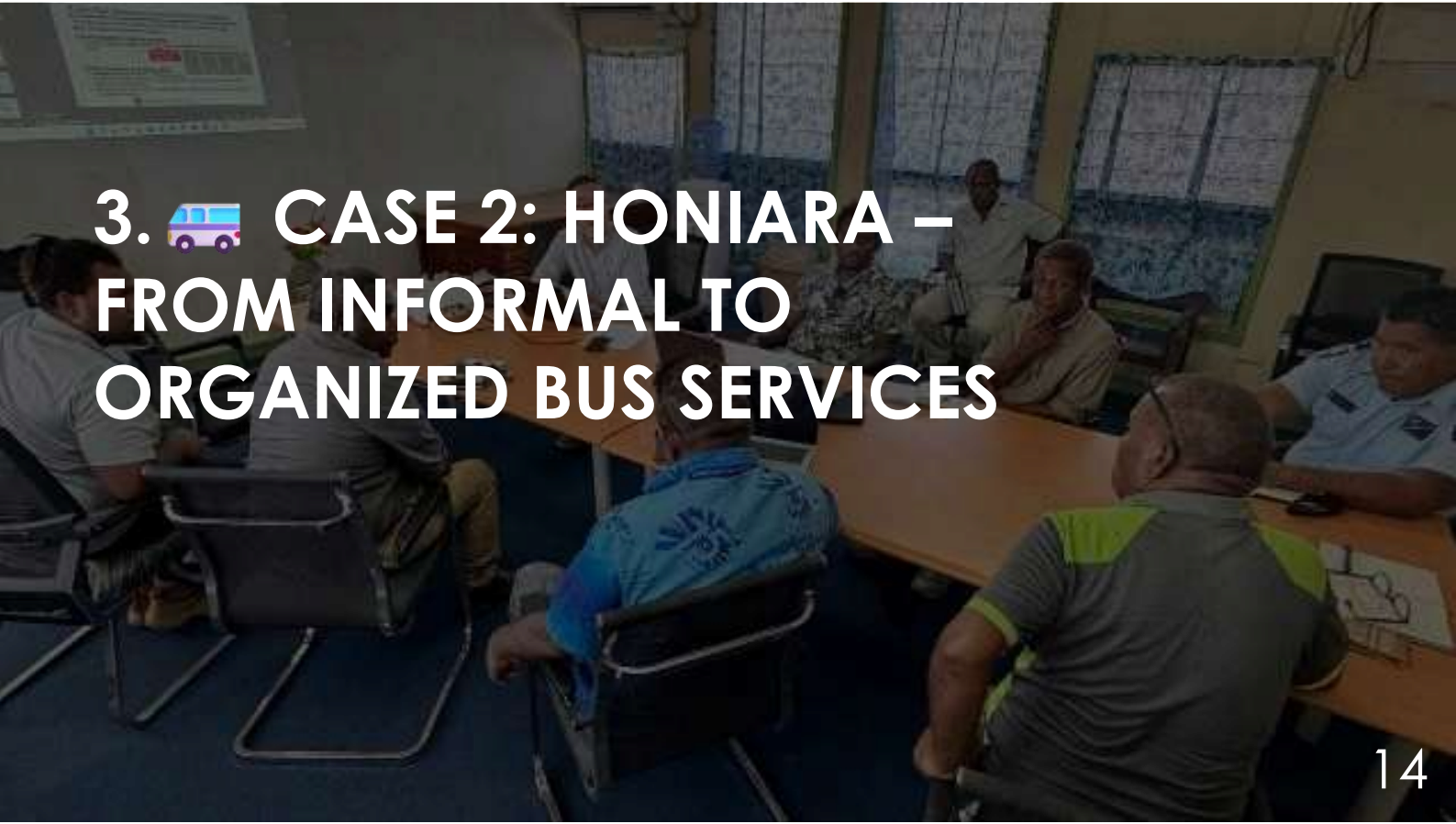
3 Empower People and Build Capacity

- ▶ Training and manuals strengthened drivers' professionalism.
- ▶ Local ownership drives sustainability.

4 Link Mobility with Green Technology

- ▶ Solar-powered EVs and “Green Hub” show the path toward clean mobility.

13



3. 🚌 CASE 2: HONIARA – FROM INFORMAL TO ORGANIZED BUS SERVICES

14



FROM INFORMAL OPERATIONS TO ORGANIZED URBAN TRANSPORT

► Overview & Context

- Honiara's bus services are run by individual owner-operators.
- Anyone can operate with a simple license → "Tragedy of Commons."
- Profit-driven short routes and overlapping services cause congestion and inefficiency.
- Unlike Palau, the modernization process is still in the planning and groundwork stage.

15

CURRENT CHALLENGES

- Over 1,000 minibuses, **mostly privately owned**, no formal routes.
- **Unclear fares** and lack of enforcement by HCC/MID.
- **Safety risks:** random stopping, pedestrian conflicts, poor signage.
- **Traffic congestion** around Central Market and schools.
- **Weak institutional coordination** between regulators and operators.



16

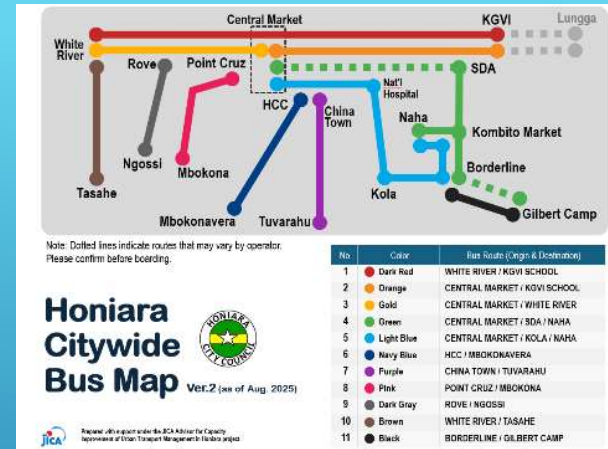
ONGOING EFFORTS

1 Understanding the Reality

- ▶ Bus operator interviews
- ▶ Build of real route map and bus stop naming

2 Building Collaboration

- ▶ Regular **stakeholder meetings** among MID, HCC, Police, and bus operators.
- ▶ **School-based education** to foster a public transport culture.



17

Step

Focus

Example

1

Understanding & Survey

Route mapping, interviews

2

Institutional Setup

Defining routes, fare rules, signage

3

Operator Integration

SME or cooperative-based operation

4

Pilot Modern Service

PPP model, e-fare, fleet management

DIRECTION TOWARD MODERNIZATION

Shift from fragmented informal operations → structured, service-oriented system.

18

LESSONS & IMPLICATIONS

- ▶ Reform must begin with data, dialogue, and trust.
- ▶ Inclusion of operators from the start ensures ownership and continuity.
- ▶ Visible, small improvements (signage, education) enhance credibility.
- ▶ Honiara represents the “pre-action” stage that many cities must first pass.

19

4. LESSONS & IMPLICATIONS



20

CROSS- CUTTING LESSONS & IMPLICATIONS

- ▶ **Common challenges: small markets, limited resources**
- ▶ **Success factors:**
 - ▶ Start small → scale up
 - ▶ Use local assets (tourism, schools, markets)
 - ▶ Social inclusion
- ▶ **Implications for the Philippines:**
 - ▶ Pilot community buses / EV tricycles
 - ▶ Combine “daily life + tourism” demand
 - ▶ Gradual digitalization & institutionalization

21

KEY MESSAGE / CLOSING

- ▶ **In island and provincial areas, sustainable mobility does not begin with big infrastructures.**
- ▶ **It begins with small, local innovations that build trust, prove value, and can grow step by step.**

22

**Thank you for
your attention!**



Yosui SEKI (Mr.)

Email: seki@almec.co.jp
Executive Officer, ALMEC Corporation