

Fixing the Fragments: Driving a Coherent EV Future

Policy Brief

Why does the shift to electric vehicles in the Philippines have to be coherent, not just fast?

The Philippines is moving toward electric vehicles, but the effort is scattered. National agencies, local governments, and private players are all active, and not always pulling in the same direction. Ambitious sales and infrastructure targets sit on top of a transport system that is congested, oversupplied, and poorly connected.

On May 20, 2026, Liveable Cities Philippines convened its first New Mobility Co+Lab to look at three areas holding the transition back, namely policy implementation, financing, and infrastructure. The session brought together EV industry experts, national regulators, and local government leaders. This brief sets out what came out of that conversation and recommends five policy moves that would turn a fragmented rollout into a coherent national shift. The country cannot electrify its way out of a mobility problem, and it will not get the transition it wants by counting vehicles alone.

The Case for Coherence

Under the Comprehensive Roadmap for the Electric Vehicle Industry, the Department of Energy wants electric vehicles to make up about half of all vehicles on the road by 2040, roughly 2.5 million units. The same roadmap sets a short-term goal of 7,300 public charging stations by 2028, on the way to more than 20,000 by 2040. Today the country has fewer than a thousand public stations, most of them in Metro Manila and a handful of other urban centers. The International Energy Agency projects that EVs could reach about 45 percent of total vehicle sales by 2035 if the government backs the sector with stronger policy.

Sales are climbing fast. Registered EVs passed 41,000 in the first nine months of 2025, well above the record of around 9,000 the year before, though they still account for only about four percent of the total fleet. The momentum is real, but the question is whether it adds up to a better transport system or just a greener version of the same gridlock.

That was the warning Dr. Syrus Gomari brought to the Co+Lab. You cannot electrify your way out of a traffic problem, he said. Swapping internal combustion engines for electric motors does

nothing about congestion, an oversupplied jeepney and tricycle network, or a public transport system that does not connect well from one mode to the next. If the transition stays fixed on selling more EVs, it will leave the deeper structural problems exactly where they are, only quieter and with lower tailpipe emissions.

Both the public and private sectors are already moving, which is part of why coordination matters so much now. Private companies are building charging networks and pushing them beyond Metro Manila. The Department of Energy is tightening the policies that drive adoption, from charging-station rules to grid-integration requirements for distribution utilities. A growing number of local governments are running their own EV programs, often well ahead of national guidance. What is missing is coordination between these efforts. Targets are set nationally, but they are met, or missed, locally, where small budgets meet small operators and good intentions run into thin infrastructure.

What the Co+Lab surfaced?

Policy needs to be aligned, not just present

Dr. Gomari, CEO and founder of Seermio, laid out a vision for a coherent EV future built on clear policy, real planning, and execution coordinated across government, industry, and communities. His argument was that the pieces already exist in isolation. There are targets, incentives, and pilot programs. What they lack is alignment. Infrastructure planning, transport planning, and the needs of local communities have to line up, or the system keeps producing activity that does not translate into outcomes.

Director Patrick Aquino of the Department of Energy's Energy Utilization Management Bureau made the same case from inside the government. The country's electric mobility transition, he stressed, extends far beyond deploying vehicles and charging stations. A scalable EV ecosystem depends on stronger institutional alignment, coordinated implementation across sectors, and clearer mechanisms for accountability. The hard part is not buying EVs but building the governance that makes them add up to a working system.

Financing decides who transitions

A transition that runs on commercial EV sales alone will reach car buyers and corporate fleets while leaving behind the drivers who carry most of the country's daily trips. Jojo Vega, CEO and founder of E-RONDA, made that case directly. His company provides flexible financing for tricycle drivers moving into green micromobility, and its starting point was not a product but a conversation. Before launching, E-RONDA sat down with local e-trike drivers to understand their operational pain points, then designed an electric ecosystem around their real anxieties about charging access and credit. The result protects both local livelihoods and the environment, rather than treating the two as a trade-off.

The numbers he presented make a strong case. Electricity for an e-trike costs about one peso per kilometer. A driver who switches from gasoline can save up to fifty-four thousand pesos a year, money that stays in the household instead of going to fuel. Figure 1 breaks those savings down across several provinces.



Figure 1. Estimated annual savings for drivers switching to electric tricycles (E-RONDA, 2026).

Many drivers are eager to switch but are stopped by the upfront cost of the vehicle and the lack of affordable credit. The EVIDA Law offers broad fiscal incentives and supports national infrastructure, but it sets up no dedicated, localized financing for the small operators who make up most of the road. Until that gap is closed, the transition will keep moving fastest for those who need help least.

Local governments are where it gets real

Section 16 of Republic Act No. 11697, the Electric Vehicle Industry Development Act, requires covered entities, including national agencies and local government units, to ensure that at least five percent of their owned or leased fleets are electric. It is a clear mandate, but compliance looks very different from one town to the next. Two mayors at the Co+Lab showed what it means on the ground, and where it strains.

Mayor Patrick Go of Siniloan, Laguna, described a push toward a cleaner public transport system that already gives members of the Tricycle Operators and Drivers Association free charging access. Looking ahead, Siniloan plans to deploy solar-powered charging stations and is aiming for at least thirty percent EV adoption among its local tricycle drivers, with the goal of becoming a sustainable, future-ready municipality. The ambition is there, but progress is slowed by limited local infrastructure and policy gaps the town cannot close on its own.

Mayor Webster Letargo of Gumaca, Quezon, described a more improvised, faster-moving approach he called policy in action. To bridge a town whose public services are spread across a wide and fragmented geography, the local government is using its twenty percent development fund to run a pilot fleet of eighteen e-trikes along three fixed Hatid corridors, carrying residents free of charge to key government and healthcare hubs. Gumaca is also decarbonizing its own operations, modernizing the municipal fleet with fully electric administrative cars and a plug-in hybrid police pickup. Leading by example, rather than waiting for the market, is doing a lot of the work.

Both cases show the same thing. Local governments are willing, often more willing than the framework assumes, but they are working without baseline infrastructure, without targeted financing, and without a clear playbook. They are improvising solutions that should be standard.

Five policy pillars to move from fragmentation to integration

The recommendations below follow directly from what the Co+Lab surfaced. They are designed to work together, and together they can turn scattered effort into a coherent system that reaches the operators and communities national targets tend to miss.

1. LGU e-mobility and public transport transition plans

Require every local government to prepare and carry out a data-driven e-mobility plan, and tie it to existing planning cycles so it does not become another document on a shelf. Each plan should connect EV deployment to public transport reform, micro-mobility integration, charging infrastructure, and livelihood support for transport workers affected by the shift. This makes sure electrification is planned alongside how people actually move, not bolted on afterward. National agencies should provide a common template and technical support so smaller towns are not left to design these plans from scratch.

2. One Town, One Charger

National targets push hard for electrification, but no policy currently directs the country's roughly 1,500 municipalities to establish even a single baseline public charger. The Department of Energy and the Department of the Interior and Local Government should jointly issue a national municipal charging directive requiring every municipality to designate at least one highly accessible, multi-modal public site, such as a municipal hall, public plaza, or central market, for public charging.

A directive like this addresses range anxiety for long-distance provincial travel, one of the strongest brakes on adoption outside the cities. It also ensures every local government is actively included in the national transport transition the EVIDA Law calls for, instead of leaving the map dotted only where private operators see an immediate return. With fewer than a thousand public stations today against a 7,300 target for 2028, a guaranteed municipal baseline is one of the fastest ways to spread coverage beyond the urban core.

3. Formalize and protect micro-mobility

Regulators should stop treating e-trikes, e-bikes, and e-quads as a problem to ban and start treating them as a network to integrate. These vehicles carry the last mile in most Philippine towns and pushing them off the road removes connectivity that nothing else replaces. Local governments should map dedicated micro-mobility lanes within inner-urban corridors, especially where average traffic speeds are already below twenty kilometers per hour, to preserve last-mile connectivity, protect vulnerable road users, and safeguard driver livelihoods. Formalizing these

vehicles also bring them into the data, which makes every other part of the plan easier to design.

4. Flexible, localized financing

The EVIDA Law provides broad fiscal incentives for manufacturers and corporate fleets, but it lacks targeted, non-collateral micro-financing or localized credit guarantees for the public transport workers, e-tricycle drivers among them, who cannot absorb high upfront costs. Local governments can close that gap without waiting for national legislation. Acting as an institutional facilitator, an LGU can partner directly with non-collateral micro-financing providers and local transport cooperatives to open accessible, zero-collateral loan pathways for drivers.

The E-RONDA model shows why this works. When financing is designed around drivers' real constraints rather than standard credit requirements, the savings from switching, up to fifty-four thousand pesos a year, can carry much of the repayment. The role of the local government is to broker the arrangement and lower the risk, not to fund every vehicle itself.

5. EV knowledge and capacity building

Successful adoption begins with understanding local realities and stakeholder concerns, not with technology. As one speaker put it, you have to start from pain points before you can propose a program. Bringing transport operators and local governments together to name their challenges around financing, charging, operations, and implementation lets EV initiatives be built to fit rather than imposed and abandoned.

A structured knowledge and capacity-building program would do two jobs. It would strengthen the ability of local governments to write workable EV policy, and it would equip transport operators with the information and skills to make the switch with confidence. Both are prerequisites for everything above. A municipal charging directive or a financing partnership only works if the people running it know how.

The bottom line

The EVIDA Law gives the country a strong baseline blueprint, but its implementation remains fragmented and uneven from one locality to the next. The Philippines cannot simply electrify its way out of a structural mobility crisis. Replacing internal combustion engines with electric motors will not resolve systemic congestion or close transport deficits on its own.



What will is a unified framework that combines strategic transport planning, coordinated inter-agency policy, and local execution mechanisms designed for the places they serve. The Co+Lab made the gaps visible. The five pillars in this brief are a practical way to start closing them, turning a scattered set of efforts into the coherent transition the country has set its targets on.

Sources

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