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Syarikat Prasarana Negara Bhd, the state-owned public transport operator, plans to spend up to RM7 billion to extend light rail transit (LRT) lines in Kuala Lumpur. It already has RM4 billion in hand and will call for bids from construction companies next month.

Group managing director Datuk Idrose Mohamed said work on the extensions of the Kelana Jaya and Ampang lines, which cover a total of 34.7km, is due to start early next year, after all approvals from the authorities have been obtained.

The LRT extension is among a few major deals eagerly awaited by the construction industry, which has not seen large contracts of late.

Construction is expected to be completed by the end of 2012.

Of the RM4 billion it has, half is internal funds. The balance was raised from an Islamic bond sale recently.

"The other RM2 billion (from the bond sale programme) is expected to be raised somewhere in 2010," Idrose told reporters at a briefing in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

Prasarana was set up as part of efforts to revamp the public transport system in Kuala Lumpur and its surrounding areas.

Feasibility studies for the LRT extension started in 2006. However, it is unclear why the project took so long to take off.

"Of the various alignment options we received during the feasibility studies conducted in 2006 and 2007, we view the proposals submitted to the government last March as the most cost-effective," Idrose said.

Approval for the extension was obtained from the government last month.

Idrose said there will be minimal land acquisition for the project as the lines will go mainly through Tenaga Nasional Bhd's cable area, road and river reserves.

At least 10 alignment options were received for each LRT line, he added.

Idrose said the preferred alignments for the Kelana Jaya line extension will begin from the Kelana Jaya station, passing through 13 new stations, including Subang Jaya commuter station and USJ, before ending at Putra Heights, covering a total of 17km.

As for the Ampang line, the proposed extension will begin from the Sri Petaling station, passing through Kinrara and Puchong before ending at Putra Heights, covering 17.7km with 13 new stations.

A display of the extension can be viewed at the Subang Jaya Municipal Council, Petaling Jaya City Council, Shah Alam Municipal Council and Department of Railways.

The public will be given three months to voice their opinions before the plans are finalised.

Source: <http://www.btimes.com.my/articles/prasa-2/Article/>