**ESSENTIALS OF THE TRANSPORTATION PLANNING PROCESS AND THE SOCIOECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS OF EACH OF THIS FUNDAMENTALS IN RELATION TO NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

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TRANSPORTATION

Planning for effective development in the various sectors of Nigeria is a herculean task. Especially in the aspect of transportation which forms a vital part of living. Transportation systems in Nigeria over the years and since independence has continued on a relatively slow pace and experienced a lot of problems. Inadequacies in this sector has grossly affected urban centres across the nation and as such greatly influenced the country’s economic and social growth.

Transportation, put simply, is mobility – the inherent characteristic of moving from one point in space to another which occurs solely in living entities and by extension goods and services. A look at the urban and regional system shows that individuals, people as families, and people as groups are actively involved in a variety of activities that are achieved by engaging first in movement. There exists a functional criss-crossing of urban activities as no settlement is a self-contained unit. The transportation sector is a very delicate aspect of the physical system which involves a lot more than just systems and infrastructure. Aderamo, 2012 states that; “Transportation planning is the hub of the economy, and that it connects people and makes people and places accessible and enhances social, economic and cultural interactions”. This definition of transportation clearly expresses its importance to the economy and the social spheres of the urban fabric. Socio-economic development of a place thus, is hinged on the free flow of activities in the urban and regional system.

Cities are locations having a high level of accommodation and concentration of economic activities and are complex spatial structures that are supported by transport systems (Rodriguez, 2009). The most important urban transport problems take place when transport systems for a variety of reasons cannot satisfy the numerous requirements of urban mobility. Urban productivity is highly dependent on the efficiency of its transport system to move labour, consumers and freight between multiple origins and destinations. These result in congestion and environmental problems. Among the most notable urban transport problems are;

1. Traffic congestion and parking difficulties
2. Longer commuting
3. Public transport inadequacy
4. Difficulties for non-motorised transport
5. Less public space
6. Environmental impacts and energy consumption
7. Accident and safety
8. Land consumption and freight distribution.

 Other problems facing urban transportation involve the dominance of automobiles.



With respect to the economy, efficient transport systems provide economic and social opportunities and benefits that result in positive multipliers effects such as better accessibility to markets, employment and additional investments. Conversely, deficiency in transport systems in terms of capacity or reliability can have an economic cost such as reduced or missed opportunities. Efficient transportation reduces costs, while inefficient transportation increases costs. The impacts of transportation are not always intended, and can have unforeseen or unintended consequences such as congestion. Transport also carries an important social and environmental load, which cannot be neglected.

The social sphere of the environment on the other hand involves the individual attitudes of commuters, economic health and quality of life of inhabitants of the area. Not only does the transportation system provide for the mobility of people and goods, it also influences patterns of growth and economic activity by providing access to land. Public policy concerns like air quality, environmental resource consumption, social equity, land use, urban growth, economic development, safety, and security are concerns of the system also. Transportation planning recognizes the critical links between transportation and other societal goals. It requires developing strategies for operating, managing, maintaining, and financing the area’s transportation system in such a way as to advance the area’s long-term

TPP

Transportation planning is the development of a comprehensive plan for the construction and operation of transportation facilities. It is a cooperative process involving users of the system – business community, community groups, environmental organisations, commuters, freight operators, and the general public through a proactive public participatory process.

This dynamic and continuous process should be methodical as opposed to political, where decisions on construction and operation of transportation facilities are taken by political functionaries to gain short term popularity which often leads to piecemeal if not stale growth and development as is seen in Nigeria today. The process comprises of various elements as is found in the model planning process. Although similar, the model comprises of elements which are unique to transportation. The process as described in the fig. 1 illustrated above comprises of; Importance, Administration, funding, planning and decision making . Transportation is intended to help cities and other areas anticipate problems and avoid them. Some of these problems of utmost importance include; congestion, economic development and safety.

A major cause of traffic problems in Nigeria is the city structure which predates the advent of automobiles. Structural pattern of the roads, especially in the traditional areas of the city and the unplanned growth and haphazard land-use distribution, impose serious constraints on movement and the facilities provided. Therefore there is need for a comprehensive understanding of the structural pattern of an urban area and the traffic carrying capability of the roads in order to tackle its transportation problems.

In order to reduce urban transportation problems in Nigerian cities, effective traffic management measures and other remedial measures to improve traffic circulation in the cities must be adopted. This can be achieved through an understanding of the structure of the cities, their route forms and transport needs. The following specific measures are also suggested where necessary:

1. Adequate drainage facilities should be provided in areas lacking. Inadequacy in this aspect results in occasional flooding of roads during the rainy season thus affecting traffic flow and reduces road life span pot-holes develop on the roads.
2. Off-street parking facilities should be provided in designated areas of our cities. When off-street parking facilities are lacking, results is on- street parking in-turn reducing the width of roads leading to obstruction of traffic flow. Off-street parking is necessary especially along those roads with a high concentration of activities.
3. Provision of traffic lights at major road junctions in the cities because of large volumes of traffic especially at peak periods. Other road junctions should be provided with “STOP” signs at appropriate arms of the junctions.
4. To reduce pedestrian-vehicular conflicts in the cities. This could be achieved by creating barriers, overhead footbridges or under passes. Zebra crossings should be provided on major roads in our cities.
5. Provision of enabling factors to Road Maintenance Agencies to carry out their duties. Roads that need rehabilitation should receive government attention.
6. There has not been any comprehensive transportation study for many urban centres in Nigeria. Thus the volumes of traffic along many of the urban routes in our cities are not known. A time-series data on the various components of urban traffic is of great importance to city planners interested in future transport planning. Traffic flows along major roads in our cities need to be monitored regularly so that the design capacities of those roads are not exceeded.

At the national level, it is being suggested that the country adopts “Best Practice” which involves using the best techniques that have been tried and shown to be effective. Such techniques include using cleaner fuels, retrofitting engines, improving public transportation, coordinating interdepartmental efforts and enforcing stricter traffic rules. It has also been suggested that managing traffic and travel demand, forming public- private partnerships and using traffic calming and alternative fuels would help in reducing transportation problems in our cities. In addition, promoting non-motorised modes of transportation, integrating land-use and transportation planning, inspecting and maintaining vehicles, increasing education levels and controlling urban population growth will go a long way in reducing urban transportation problems in developing countries (Aderamo, 2012).

TRANSPORTATION AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Access to essential products of society such as health care, education and employment are related to personal mobility and access to adequate transportation. Communities lacking mobility options are seen as less developed. This makes it even more difficult for them to access support and opportunities and makes it more difficult for governments to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, particularly reducing global poverty, combating epidemic diseases, reducing child mortality rates and introducing universal primary education. Access to goods and services depends not only on the physical availability of infrastructure (such as tracks, roads, and bridges) but also on access to vehicles and transport services, both public and private. Factors affecting access include location, cost, and frequency of services, journey time and physical accessibility.

Transport provisions and social development is often seen as working in harmony based on its relationship when formulating transport policies, planning, procurement, monitoring and evaluation. Social development in the transport sector focuses generally on:

1. Improving access to transport for everyone;
2. Mitigating the negative impacts of transport on society and communities (such as involuntary resettlement, pollution etc.) while maximising the opportunities that transport can present i.e. access to jobs, markets, education, etc.
3. Using transport to promote and achieve social inclusion and cohesion;
4. Reducing the social and health risks and dangers associated with transport;
5. Sharing the social, economic and cultural benefits of transport more equally;
6. Improving the design of transport systems and equipment so that they meet the needs of all, including users with specific needs (such as women, children, poor people, handicapped people, etc.);
7. Ensuring public participation and representation in transport planning and decision-making.