RESILIENCE AND LIVABLE CITIES IN A WARMING WORLD

A FESTSCHRIFT IN HONOUR OF

TPL. DR. JOSHUA ADEWUMI ADEBISI FNITP, RTP



EDITED BY

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CHAPTER 23

ROAD TRANSPORT SYSTEM IN NIGERIA: KEY ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

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Abstract

Despite the central position of road transport and its role in the movement of goods and services in the country, the system over the years surfer a myriad of challenges that is hindering efficient movement and consistent development of the subsector. The aim of this study is to examine the key issues and identify the challenges with a view to recommend policy direction for the amelioration of the challenges facing road transport sub-sector. This paper attempts a review of the key issues and challenges of road transport sub-sector, and focuses on four key areas: road transport operations, infrastructure and regulation and planning/administration. The study reviews several papers and books on road transport system, explore and analyse relevant secondary data using simple percentage. The paper recommends formalising transport operators, development of integrated transport infrastructure and setting up of good regulatory and administrative framework.

Keywords: Road Transport, infrastructure, transport operators, Challenges and Nigeria

1.0 Introduction

Road transport is central to the entire transport system. Its comparative advantage of providing the last mile transport services made it an essential mode in the system. Road transport facilities provides a link to individual parcels of land and make delivery of goods and services easily distributed to the final consumer at his or her door step. It is therefore acknowledged that road transport is demanded at both end of journey made by other mode. Hence, it plays a complementary role. Road transport is an indispensable component of urban transport, it constitutes most short and medium travel that are incidental to day-to-day activity with influence on socio-political and economic life of the people hence, the dominance of road transport mode within urban and rural areas. All over the world the use of automobile in the movement of goods and services is very central, because of the feeder services it performs to other mode, it has invariably become an integral part of development in any other mode. hence, its development has been very consequential and of tremendous improvement, thus taking an overriding position in the entire transport system.

Despite the central position of road transport and the role it performs in the overall movement of goods and services in the country, the system over the years surfer a myriad of problems that is hindering efficient movement and consistence development of the subsector. The motive of the study is to examine the key issues and identify the challenges with a view to recommend policy direction for the amelioration of the

challenges facing road transport sub-sector. Nigeria is a country in the west Africa sub-continent, located in the tropical region and laying between Chad and Niger in the north, Cameroon in the east and Republic of Benin in the west while Atlantic Ocean form the southern boundary. Nigeria has a population is 192 million people (UN est. in 2017) with 46% of the population living in urban area as at 2013 (UN, 2015). The country has 924,000 sq. km. (356,700 sq. mi.) land area. In 1991, the Federal Capital Territory was moved to Abuja in the north central area of the country from Lagos in southwest. Lagos is the commercial nerve Centre and has the largest sea port which serves as transport hub of West African sub-region. The port is connected by rail and network of roads to facilitate movement of merchandise in and out of hinterland.

This study attempts a review the key issues and challenges of road transport sub-sector, it focuses on the development of the sector in Nigeria and discuss issue around three key areas of road transport operations, infrastructure and regulations. The challenges emanating from the identified key areas are examined vis-a-vis strategic policy implication for the development of the sector. Accordingly, the study reviews several papers such as journal article and books on road transport system in Nigeria and explore secondary data relevant to issues of road transport operations, infrastructure and regulation. Simple percentages were used for the analysis of data.

2.0 Literature Review

Historically, road transport development in Nigeria begins as a result of the need to link the interior to the railway station for the economic benefit of the colonial masters (Onokala, 2010), therefore road transport starts as a complimenting mode to railway, and early roads were developed basically to penetrate location of interest to the British merchants who are exporting raw materials and agricultural produce to Britain. The established roads are feeders to the railway, their ability to provide accessibility were limited to some few settlements. This was the situation until after the independence, when government embarked on lateral interconnections of feeder roads which open up a good number of settlements (Onokala & Olajide, 2020). There is need to also note that the economic buoyancy of 70's as a result of oil boom equally impacted on road transport development: Government through their national development plans embarked on development of priority linkages and expansion of roads into multiple lanes. Some of the roads developed includes Lagos-Ibadan, Sagamu-Benin, Benin City and Onitsha, Kaduna and Zaria to mention a few.

Like most developing countries, road transport dominates the transport system, and over 85% of movement are recorded by road mode (Badejo 2014). This mode of transport provides a variety of transit service both at urban and rural areas with different vehicles and service characteristics such as operating speed, service coverage, seating capacities, level of comfort and fares that allow commuter choice (Robert 2001). Robert further identified that road transport subsector is without central control and direction which made it the most unregulated as there is free entry and exit especially by these small transit operators (Fadare, 2005). By this, a large market that is regulated by the forces of demand and supply was created.

The porosity of the road transport sector in terms of regulation and control can be traced back to the colonial period, around 1920s when there was an expansion in the industry

as more private operators entered into the sector (Olubomehin, 2012). Though this boosted the economy but it was the beginning of loose and porous road transport system in Nigeria. The private investors like W. A. Dawodu in Lagos, Messrs S.O. Ojo and Maiyegun in Abeokuta and Mr. Salami Agbaje in Ibadan were very successful transport enterprise in the southwest Nigeria and they grow to have strong monopoly that forced the government owned bus services in Southern Nigeria to close (Drummond-Thompson, 1993). For several years now, private entrepreneur and their union have dominated the road transport system and formed a monopoly of informal operators.

In a report on informal transport in developing country, UNHABITAT acknowledge the role of transport union like NURTW, RTEAN as providing regulations for the management of the road transport system in the absence of official regulation. It may not be totally correct to say there are no official regulations, because there are a number of laws and regulations by government on uses, construction and administration of motor vehicle in Nigeria such as motor vehicle ordinance of 1913, road traffic act of 1930 and other subsequent laws which address specific issues like road safety, highway traffic etc. But what seems to be lacking is the machinery to ensure the implementation of the regulations.

Road transport safety has been in the global agenda in the past few decades owning to the record of fatality and injuries associated with road transport operations. The United Nations and the World Health Organization identify the quantum of human and materials losses especially in the third world countries and concluded that if the rate of road crashes is not abated, road crashes will be the leading cause of death in the years to come (UN, 2011). As a way of ameliorating the rate of crashes, the United Nations came up with a global action plan 2011-2020 on road safety which has five pillars including road safety management; safer roads and mobility; safer vehicles; safer road users; and post-crash response. Nigeria has keyed into this action plan and very significantly road safety management is receiving attention of state Governors through establishment of road traffic management agencies.

Transport administration has surfer neglect as a result of inability to articulate its management under a regulatory agency, for decades there are as many agencies in transport sector as there are issues of interest, until recently transport administration has been a unit in several ministries such as works and housing, works and transport, commerce and industry, works and infrastructure. The establishment of ministries of transportation across the country can be traced to last one decade, though not all state has it, to be specific Ogun state, the nearest neighbour to Lagos established ministry of transport in the year 2020 while many other States are yet to. Interestingly, agencies such as internal revenue services house the motor vehicle administration, Federal Road Safety Commission and or state-owned traffic management agencies is saddle with road safety while road infrastructure development and maintenance have a separate agency created for that purpose. Lack of coordination between these agencies was one of the reasons Badejo (2014) identified as hindering the development in road transport sub-sector.

With road transport dominating urban transits system, road infrastructure development and maintenance should receive greater attention. Ironically, scholars have continued to identify the deplorable state of Nigeria roads. Akanmu & Salisu (2025

& 2024); Akanmu, Gbadamosi & Omole (2022); Badejo (2016); Onakala and Olajide (2020) attribute the deteriorating road infrastructure to the lopsidedness in the modal integration with road transport been the dominant, they stated that the bulk of products which should go on rail now move on road. Instability of government since independent, lack of consistent development plan and poor budget appropriation/corruption are some of the factors responsible for deteriorating road infrastructure. Ogunsanya (2006) identified the challenges of road transport in Nigeria as including poor road infrastructure. He highlighted features of Nigeria roads as narrow, winding and poor surface. Faajir & Zidan (2016) and Adewuyi & Iyanda (2020) also identifies bad management and lack of planning of the road infrastructure as a problem that has left the road system in the deplorable state.

An attempt has been made to put into perspective the major issues bisecting road transport system in Nigeria and effort of government globally, nationally and locally are reviewed. This study provides basic information on the key issues in the sector and highlights various efforts at addressing it though, each of the issues identified are critical areas of further study.

3.0 Issues and Challenges

The key issues are presented under four broad headings namely, road transport operations; infrastructure, regulations and planning and administration.

3.1 Road Transport Operations

Road transport data, especially as regard services and patronage are relatively limited, this is not unconnected to the general problem of not keeping record for planning purpose. However, two main issues have been identified in the literature regarding road transport operations, first is the dominance of informal transit and or the operation of para-transit, and secondly the issue of road safety (Schalekamp, 2017). Though data on informal transport operators cannot be easily accessible because of absence of recorded activities i.e. services and patronage (Robert, 2000). Vehicle registration record provide an insight into appreciating the investment by informal sector in road transportation and the consequential effects on road transport system.

In the past decades the number of vehicles in the country have increased geometrically to about 693% between 1970 and 2010, most of which are used vehicles from Europe and other western world. The statistic from states of the federation shows an average of 134% (NBS, 2018). This increase in the vehicle population without improvement in the road infrastructure is responsible for the traffic situation in most urban areas. Ukonze et al (2020) submitted that the growth in vehicles population is responsible for the endemic traffic congestion, pollution and high rate of road crashes. He concluded that if the influx of para-transit is not controlled sustainability of the road transport system will be threatened.

Road safety is one of the consequential effects of dominance of para-transit in the road transport system (Akanmu & Salisu, 2024). Table 1 provides analysis of road crashes between 1960 and 2016. The analysis was in three categories, before the establishment of federal road safety commission, evolution of state traffic management agencies and the global intervention period of decade of action on road safety. The

analysis revealed that on the close of the first period of 1960 to 1980 the rate of road traffic cases (92.8%) is less than the rate of causality (113%), the situation was similar in the second period though there was a drastic reduction in both the cases (31.4%) and causality (43.2%).

The trend between 2011and 2019 has not been a steady reduction as planned for the decade. At the beginning of the decade in 2011 the number of road traffic cases was 13196 and by the close of 2019 the number of cases was 11072, this gives 16% reduction in the number of cases. Similarly, road casualty was 47219 in 2011 and by close of 2019 it was 41464, given percentage reduction of 12.2%. The pattern of reduction has been fluctuating in the interval of three years. What this situation suggest is that, there is no consistency in the monitoring and road policing, as well as other efforts at minimizing the severity of crashes are not been given adequate attention, such as road users education, rescue services and improvement in health care services.

Table 1: Road Traffic Crashes Trend in Nigeria Between 1960 And 2019

Years	Total Cases	% increase/ Decrease	No. Killed	% increase/ Decrease	No Injured	% increase/ decrease	Total Causality	% increase/ decrease
1960	14130	-	1083	-	10216	-	11299	-
1970	16666	17.9	2893	167	13154	10.1	16047	42.0
1980	32138	92.8	8736	201	25484	93.7	34220	113
1990	21934	(31.7)	8154	(6.7)	22786	(10.6)	30940	(9.6)
2000	16606	(24.3)	8473	3.9	20677	(22.7)	29150	(5.8)
2010	11385	(31.4)	6052	(28.6)	35691	72.6	41743	43.2
2011	13196	15.9	6054	0.03	41165	15.3	47219	13.1
2012	13262	0.5	6092	0.63	39348	(4.41)	45440	(3.8)
2013	13583	2.4	6544	6.0	40057	1.80	46601	2.56
2014	10380	(23.5)	5996	(6.50)	32063	(20.0)	38059	(18.3)
2015	9734	(6.2)	5440	(5.90)	30478	(4.94)	35918	(5.6)
2016	9694	(0.4)	5053	(5.35)	30105	(1.22)	35158	(2.12)
2017	9383	(3.2)	5121	1.3	31094	3.3	36094	2.6
2018	9741	9.6	5181	1.2	32220	3.6	37401	3.6
2019	11072	12.0	5483	5.5	35981	11.6	41464	10.8
2011-2019		(16)		(9.4)		(12.5)		(12.2)

Source: Gbadamosi & Akanmu (2019); Ajala (2018) and FRSC Annual Report (2016-2019)

3.2 Road Infrastructural Development

Road Infrastructural development have received tremendous budgetary allocations compared to other modes, though little were the achievement in terms of good and adequate motorable roads across the country. Scholars have attributed deplorable condition of roads to so many reasons, lop-sidedness in the modal share which has made road mode to attract all traffic which is stressing the road beyond design and built capacity; hence the road is deteriorating faster than expected. Table 2 show the proportional allocation of capital expenditure to the transport sub-sector between 1962 and 2000. The data revealed that road transport sub-sector enjoy over 50% of the allocation over the years and on the average 66.14% which is more than the total allocation for all other modes.

Despite this allocation, the improvement has not been very encouraging, the reasons could be as a result of over used or abuse of the road transport system in the movement of all kind of traffic including bulky cargos that could have been moved by rail. Road started as an integrated facility to rail system, so multimodality was achieved and each system was able to function in an integrated manner. Overtime road infrastructure was made to stand alone and all journey start and end on the road. Secondly, road ownership and management structure in the country as presented in the Table 3 is lopsided, the data revealed that 17.5% of the total road length is owned and manage by federal government while state and local government are in-charge of 15.7% and 66.8% respectively. What this suggest is that the federal government and state with all the resources have less than 40% of road length to manage while local government with meagre resources is given higher responsibility in terms of construction and management of 66% of road length.

Table 2: Proportional Allocation of Capital Expenditure to Transport Sub-Sector 1962 – 2000

SN	Mode of Transport	Plan Period							
		1962 - 1968	1970-1974	1975-1980	1981-1985	1985-1989	1990-1995	1995-2000	AVERAGE
1	Highway (Road)	54	58.8	72.4	70	72.6	64	70.2	66.14
2	Railway	14	17	10.6	15	3.8	14.2	13	12.54
3	Port (Sea)	25	13	9	9	5.9	7.5	4.6	10.57
4	Waterways					3.8	3.3	3	3.37
5	Air (Airport)	7	11	8	6	5.6	2.6	2.3	6.07
6	Other	NA	NA	NA	NA	8.4	7.4	6.9	7.57
	Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	

Source: Nigeria national budget and rolling plan 1962-2000 in Onakala & Olajide (2020)

Table 3: Total Road Length Owned/Develop by Tier of Government

Road Type	Total Length in Km	Percentage of Total
Federal	34,120	17.5
State	30,500	15.7
Local	129,580	66.8

Source: Survey, 2024

3.3 Road Transport Regulations

Road transport regulation is receiving attention across the country, many of the state of the federation has established Ministries of Transport and Road Transport Authority as well as Road Safety Enforcement Agency. A search of the regulatory agencies of state on the internet present the data shown on Table 4. It can be observed that some of the agencies have combined roles, and transport is an additional responsibility while they have some other primary focus in environment, solid wastes,

Table 4: Check list of states with key regulatory authority

State	Ministry of Transport	Road Transport Authority	Road Safety Agency	Remark
Abia	Yes	No	Yes	
Adamawa	Yes	No	No	
Akwa Ibom	Yes	No	Yes	Combined
Anambra	Yes	No	Yes	
Bauchi	Yes	No	Yes	Combined
Bayelsa	Yes	No	No	
Benue	Yes	No	No	Combined
Borno	Yes	No	Yes	Combined
Cross River	Yes	No	Yes	Combined
Delta	Yes	No	Yes	
Ebonyi	Yes	No	Yes	Combined
Edo	Yes	No	Yes	
Ekiti	No	No	Yes	
Enugu	Yes	No	Yes	
Gombe	Yes	No	Yes	Combined
Imo	Yes	No	Yes	Combined
Jigawa	No	No	No	
Kaduna	No	Yes	Yes	
Kano	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Katsina	No	Yes	No	Combined
Kebbi	Yes	No	No	Combined
Kogi	Yes	No	Yes	
Kwara	Yes	No	Yes	Combined
Lagos	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Nasarawa	Yes	No	No	Combined
Niger	Yes	Yes	No	
Ogun	Yes	No	Yes	
Ondo	Yes	No	No	Combined
Osun	Yes	No	No	Combined
Oyo	Yes	No	Yes	
Plateau	Yes	No	No	
Rivers	Yes	No	Yes	
Sokoto	Yes	Yes	No	Combined
Taraba	Yes	Yes	No	
Yobe	Yes	No	Yes	Combined
Zamfara	Yes	Yes	Yes	Combined
Abuja	Yes	Yes	Yes	

Source: Authors compilation 2025

revenue collection and local security services. Table 5 present proportional analysis of the regulatory agency across the country. In the analysis 10.8% of the state do not have ministry of transport while 43.2% have it as standalone ministry, 46% have it combined with other core responsibilities. The ministry of transport is the central agency in the regulation of the transport operations and development, it is only established as standalone ministry in 43.2% of the state, and 46% have it combined with others core responsibility such as ministry of works and housing; and in some case ministry of

infrastructure. When this happens, policy development and the overall management of transport surfers because the ministry attention will be divided among varying responsibility.

Like other mode of transport, road transport requires a specialized agency for the management of its operations and development, just as we have Nigeria Inland Waterways Authority, Nigerian Civil Aviation Authority and Nigerian Railway Corporation. Similar agency exists in few states for road transport such as Lagos Metropolitan Transport Authority (LAMATA) and Abuja Metropolitan Transport. Analysis of the data revealed that 24.3% only have road transport authority while 75.7% do not have. Though is not very clear whether some of the agencies run as state business or a regulatory agency, however, it implies that road transport is left for market forces to regulate.

As discovered in the literature, year 2000 to date witness tremendous establishment of road traffic management agencies across the country, very few states (35.1%) are yet to establish a road safety agency as a complimentary agency to the Federal Road Safety Commission established in 1988. Table 6 revealed that 56.8% already have a traffic management agency while 8.1% have a multi task agency which have road traffic management as one of the responsibilities. Research has shown that most of these agencies focus more on revenue generation through fines and penalties from traffic offender (Ajala, 2016) rather than developing safety measure for the regulation of road transport operations.

Table 5: Proportion of State with Road Regulatory Agency

Regulatory authority	Have (%)	Have not (%)	Combined (%)
Ministry of transport	43.2	10.8	46
Road transport authority	24.3	75.7	0
Road safety agency	56.8	35.1	8.1

3.4 Road Transport Planning and Administration

Development in the transport sector has not reflected a coordinated progress, resulting in inability of the government and the key players in the sectors to effectively manage the sectors. This brought to the issue of planning and administration. Efficient road transport system requires planning and concerted administrative strategies which is a function of five key areas which includes availability of transport policy document; manpower competency and skill; finance; institutional structure and integrated data for transport planning. For over thirty years, Nigeria has not been able to come up with a transport policy, which is supposed to be the working document or guide to transport development, there are several policy documents addressing some specific aspect of transport, examples of which are the road vision 2020 of 1996, and 1999 presidential policy on road fund and several others prior this time (Oluwakoya & Obasa, 2020). Effort at having an articulated policy in the past three decades only yielded three different version (1999, 2003, and 2010) of draft document in the country.

As earlier noted, most regulatory agencies are not well structured and institutionalised, and as such their roles are not well defined. The work force in the ministries of transportation and other allied agencies that have responsibility for the management and administration of transport system are largely none professionals, permanent secretaries, directors and majority of the field officers are of different professions not related to transport. A report of students' industrial attachment to the newly created Ogun State Ministries of Transportation, revealed that less than 3% of the workforce have background training in transport and transport related field. Transport development has been seen as money gulping projects, successful government focuses on road construction without adequate planning for maintenance, the planning information are disintegrated and scattered in several ministers and agencies without coordination, hence, the challenges of planning the infrastructure and management of road transport operations.

4.0 Conclusion and Recommendation

Road transport is very key to national development and its central role of complimenting other modes has made it important, such that it is an indispensable component of urban transport, it constitutes most short and medium travel that are incidental to day-to-day activity which influence socio-political and economic life of the people. It therefore, imperative to address the key challenges bisecting the road transport sub-sector with a view to enhance socio-economic and the wellbeing of both urban and rural dwellers. Hence, the study recommended that there is need to refocus on the planning, regulation and management of road transport sub-sector.

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