The Bus Rapid Transit Project in Accra, Ghana: Institutional factors affecting its implementation

BACKGROUND

- Congestion in Cities due to rapid motorization and growing vehicle ownership, inadequate integration of land use planning resulting in longer travel times, diminishing economic productivity (Gakenheimer, 1999)
- Improving urban mobility necessitates a shift in transport mode and policies that promote the use of public transport (Banister, 2008)
- Current major transport initiative in cities - Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) systems (Hensher, 2007)
- Whilst some cities have been successful, others have experienced difficulties (Filipe and Macário, 2013). Literature on institutional challenges is limited.

Accra embarked on a BRT Project in 2008. Expected project completion was 2012. Implementation faced challenges despite adequate funding and political commitment. Why?

- Project was launched as Quality Bus Service without dedicated lanes in November 2016

CURRENT CONDITIONS

- As at 2007, urban transport in Accra was characterized by poor public transport services, over-reliance on low-capacity passenger vehicles, congestion, inadequate road safety and traffic management measures.
- The sector was generally self-regulated by an informal private sector which encountered major quality issues

SOLUTION

Formalization of Passenger Transport Sector in Accra
- Establishment of Coordinating institution to plan, regulate and contract out transport routes and services in Accra
- Piloting of BRT services in Accra

Anecdotal example where these measures worked is the BRT system in Johannesburg (South Africa).

THE PATH TO IMPLEMENTATION

- The Accra case showed that executing BRT concurrently with institutional reforms proved to be a risky task
- Future BRT initiative in cities in Ghana should proceed after the reform and reorganization of the city’s passenger transport sector
- Establishment of a cross-jurisdictional authority if the BRT is to operate across more than one jurisdiction;
- Ensuring part or full ownership of BRT scheme by existing transport operators;
- Building of stakeholders’ capacity in BRT prior to actual implementation;
- Enactment and enforcement of urban transport by-laws.

FOLLOW UP

Future research on how other factors contributed to implementation challenges
- Focus on standardizing measurement of Institutional Thickness framework indicators

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