

SP 2006-01

IN SEARCH OF A FRAMEWORK FOR INSTITUTIONAL COORDINATION IN THE PLANNING FOR PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICAN CITIES

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ABSTRACT

OVERALL GOAL AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

This study proposes a new framework (the Apex Framework) for institutional coordination in planning for public transportation that is capable of addressing constraints to tackling problems of public transport in the cities of sub-Saharan Africa. Public transport in major cities of sub-Saharan Africa currently consists of e.g. public paratransit (minibuses), characterised by disregard for traffic rules, congestion, accidents, air pollution and abysmal quality of services. Provision of sustainable public transport is a formidable task for authorities in the cities of sub-Saharan Africa, where success in transport and traffic planning in the post-independence period has been negligible and where the urban population is growing faster than in any other continent. Without immediate strategic planning intervention, the deteriorating travel conditions will continue to undermine the urban environment in sub-Saharan Africa.

The main contention in this study is that public transport problems in sub-Saharan African countries could easily be tackled if institutional coordination were to be organised in such a way that all stakeholders in the public transport sector were involved effectively in the planning process. The barriers to institutional coordination in planning for public transportation are widespread and varied, and occur in different ways in developed and developing countries. In sub-Saharan Africa, the existing literature on sustainable public transport fails to explain how such barriers arise and how the citizens concerned believe transport planning institutions could be improved.

THE AIM OF THE STUDY

The aim of this study was thus to devise an effective framework for institutional coordination in planning for public transportation suited to the cities of sub-Saharan Africa. This aim was achieved through two case studies in the cities of Dar-Es-Salaam and Nairobi.

STUDY FINDINGS

Field studies revealed a number of factors that constrain prospects for institutional coordination in planning for public transportation, including:

- **Lack of vision of cities:** Envisioning a type of 'city for all' wanted by citizens is the base on which public transport policies can be formulated.
- **Lack of effective city and public transport plans:** City and transport plans are essential in institutional coordination because it is from these plans that different fields can coalesce to tackle problems of public transport.
- **Lack of professionalism:** Professionalism must be improved by establishing robust departments such as public transport planning and traffic management, and by providing competent, trained and motivated people to manage such functions.

- **Lack of regulatory framework:** A regulatory framework stipulates the roles that different stakeholders should play and sets standards for accountability in the planning process.
- **Rampant corruption:** Corruption must be eliminated so that public resources can rightly be directed to planning and implementing public transport schemes and to supporting the mechanisms for institutional coordination.
- **Poverty:** Alleviation of poverty is essential for securing a good economy that can provide public institutions with the necessary finances to formulate and implement transport schemes; enable relevant stakeholders to invest in the public transport sector and enable citizens to afford to pay for public transport services and thus sustain the system.
- **Poor citizen and stakeholder participation:** Citizens and other stakeholders are the principal recipients of public transport services and their involvement in planning processes is crucial in supporting actual implementation.
- **Inadequate political and fiscal decentralisation:** Realistic political decentralisation to local level is essential to increase the political power for taking crucial planning decisions at city level. Likewise, appropriate fiscal decentralisation at the local level would expand and increase the local government self-sufficiency in revenue generation necessary in formulating and implementing public transport schemes. Increased revenue generation is also crucial in supporting programmes essential for institutional coordination.
- **Unwillingness by decision-makers to change existing transport systems:** City development decision-makers and leaders must be willing to make planning interventions that change existing poor public transport systems and that engage different stakeholders in public transport planning.

The study found that these nine factors that constrain institutional coordination in Dar-Es-Salaam and Nairobi occur in the same way and have the same negative impact on institutional coordination in tackling public transport problems in other cities in sub-Saharan Africa.

EXISTING POTENTIAL

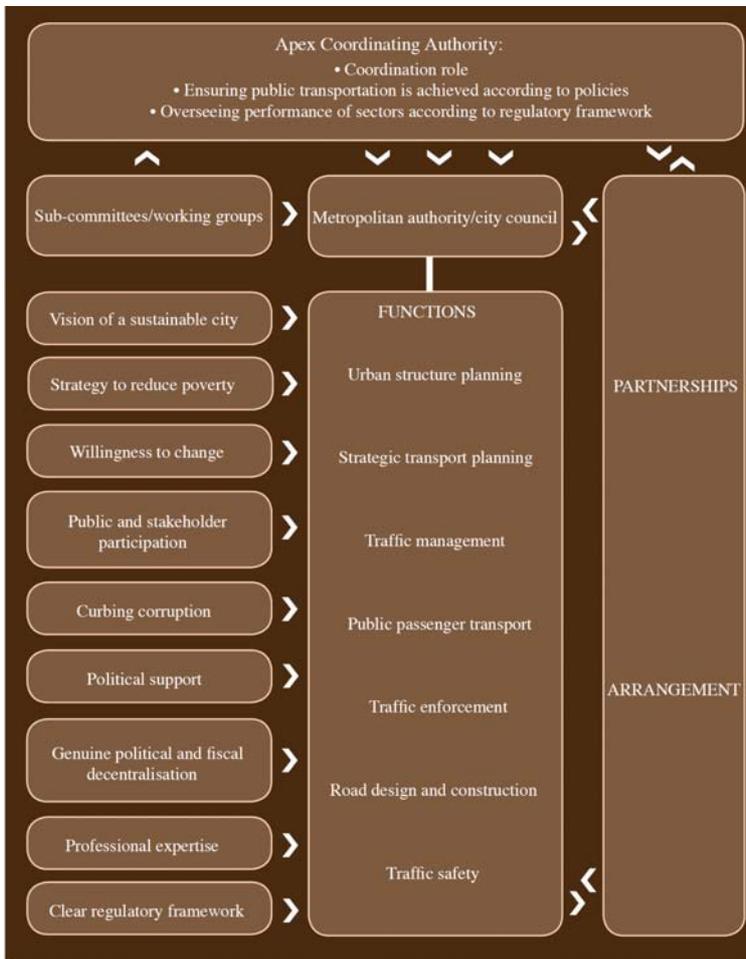
Despite the weaknesses identified above, cities in sub-Saharan Africa possess high potential and capacity in terms of human and organisational capital, which can be the basis for initiating effective forms of institutional coordination in planning for public transport. This is demonstrated by the different planning interventions made to date by these cities to tackle public transportation problems, with varying degrees of success. The cities also have various kinds of institutions and stakeholders involved in the public transport sector with different roles and capacities for tackling public transportation problems.

The stakeholders from Dar-Es-Salaam and Nairobi interviewed in this study provided a range of strategic viewpoints that could be crucial in achieving a coordination mechanism in the planning process. They believed that an effective mechanism of institutional coordination in planning for public transport could be achieved if truly democratic conditions were created in the cities. In general, analysis showed that citizens in the cities of sub-Saharan Africa are aware of the planning weaknesses in tackling public transportation problems and can assist decision-makers, leaders and planning authorities in rectifying these weaknesses.

THE FRAMEWORK

The study culminated in formulation of a framework for institutional coordination, the 'Apex Framework' (Fig.1), which can be applicable in the sub-Saharan cities. The two major considerations in formulating the Apex Framework were that all nine factors identified as constraining institutional coordination must be addressed during the process of planning for public transportation; and

that the institutional structure needs a leading apex authority capable of coordinating all other stakeholders involved in planning for public transport.



The study concluded that the factors constraining institutional coordination in planning for public transport must be tackled by deploying specific fields of expertise in combination with applying principles of governance and emerging types of public-private partnerships. This creates synergy in collective action across the public-private demarcation, and leads to the empowerment and inclusion of civil society into the spheres of public policy processes involving the public transportation sector. Governance models must fit the prevailing social, economic and cultural particularities of a country, but certain basic principles or attributes are essential. The approach taken to governance in planning for public transportation should be transparent, inclusive, coherent and equitable. This requires the participation of government, citizens, civil society and the private sector, as all are instrumental in different ways in the successful implementation of a mechanism for institutional coordination in planning for public transportation.

Figure 1: Summary of the proposed Apex Framework for institutional coordination in planning for public transportation in sub-Saharan Africa.

It was also concluded that the apex authority should have the following specific roles:

- Coordinating the activities of all stakeholders between sectors, jurisdictions and groups concerned with urban (public) transport and providing guidance for long-term, strategic decision-making involving all the relevant sectors.
- Ensuring that decisions on public transport are made according to transport policies intended to achieve sustainable public transport that meets environment, social and economic requirements.
- Ensuring that other sectors conduct their planning activities for public transportation according to the regulatory framework.

There is no single authority blueprint for all countries to adopt as the apex coordinating authority. What is important is that the apex authority body be equipped with the appropriate skills, powers and functions, including e.g. conflict management skills and awareness-raising techniques, to ensure that sustainable public transportation is achieved through planning. The functions of the apex authority should be supported by a clear basis in law.