

THE IMPORTANCE OF A FUNCTIONAL BUS TERMINAL IN PORT HARCOURT (RIVERS STATE)

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ABSTRACT

The importance of public transit system has been growing increasingly in order to achieve smooth traffic in urban areas. One of the most used transit systems is the bus transit system. In this study, the focus will be on the role of bus transit system as public transportation. The first point is to review how to treat and to clarify the significance of bus transit system with exclusive bus-ways in public transportation planning. The second is to examine, through comparative analysis with other transit systems, the relationship between the approach of planning and operation of infrastructure and the transportation service offered. Despite the increasing popularity of luxury buses transportation in this country, little or nothing is available in regards to provision of terminal facilities to cope with the resultant explosion in the number of buses.

Keywords: Architects, movement, transportation, terminal, bus, human, travelers.

INTRODUCTION

One of man's needs since creation has been that of mobility. This need brought about a systematic progress from the paths to the roads, from streams and rivers to the ocean, the rails to the sky. This is known as transportation. According to 'Advanced Learner's dictionary' (2003).

Transportation could be defined as the movement of people, raw materials, and goods from one place to another. The essential role of transportation has been experienced in the socio-economic activities, political and defense of a nation. Land transportation is the most common of all modes of transportation and usually involves vehicles. In the urban areas alone, transportation planners reserve more than 25% of the urban space for transportation alone. In Nigeria, Land transportation remains the most popular type over the years. Land transportation is categorized into Road transportation and Rail transportation. The former is the most popular and mostly patronized.

There was a gradual growth in motor vehicles transportation in Nigeria which competed with rail transportation in the 1960s. The poor development of the roads is as a result of poor state of socio-economic development and government ignorance of the importance of an organized, long distance mass (road) transportation system. However, due to urbanization and oil boom, there was a sudden explosion in motor transportation in the early 1970s.

There was a rise in the standard of living and urbanization which invariably resulted in more traveling. Consequent upon the poor and often unreliable services rendered by the railways, and its sudden death, road transportation became more patronized, this account for the increase in the pressure on road transportation. The rapid increase in the use of commercial vehicles on Nigeria roads led to the disorderly situation in the cities and their connecting road network. As private organizations came into existence, they exploited the commercial opportunities. The public motor parks in Nigeria

have been the most neglected and poorly maintained in the transportation sector. Lack of planned bus terminal facilities and important ancillaries, creates some serious traffic situation in the cities such as separating functions like booking and loading from each other. In some cases passengers are often required to book at a particular place and board the bus in an entirely different location worse still, the busses are sent to a different area for maintenance. Bus stops along busy roads are designed for intra city buses which need frequent stops. But intercity commuter buses use them thereby intensifying the road congestion in the city.

AIM OF STUDY

To provide a functional intercity bus terminal with adequate facilities for major transport organizations to operate mutually and at the same time achieving proper relationship of associated functions.

OBJECTIVES OF STUDY

The objectives of this project should rather be seen as a creative effort to help the Rivers state Government as well as itinerant merchants proffer solution as follows:

- To decongest the roads by having proper definition of bus routes thereby bringing to the barest minimum, traffic conflicts with urban commuter vehicles
- To provide opportunity to travelers to change buses and routes with minimum effort.
- To provide a functional bus terminal with adequate facilities and at the same time achieving proper relationship of associated functions and minimum walking distances.

- To ease the difficulties and rigors experienced so far by Nigeria itinerant merchants while on transit, thereby speeding the nation's economic growth.
- To create a reference point through a well thought design that will solve the problem of circulation and traffic to avoid conflict between arriving and departing passengers while using some common facilities.

METHODOLOGY

The research method will be a descriptive survey research. However this research on bus terminal depends largely on data obtained from personal interview and field trips to gather information through on-the-spot assessment of some existing local bus terminals. Some foreign case studies will be made as part of this study. Their merits and demerits will help in evaluating how useful the knowledge of them will be in planning/design of the central bus terminal for Rivers State Government. An analytical study of the city matrix and existing transport patterns will be undertaken. Both inter and intra city transport pattern shall be with respect

DISCUSSION

Transport or transportation is the movement of people and goods from one location to another. Transport is performed by various modes, such as air, rail, road, water, cable, pipeline and space. The field can be divided into infrastructure, vehicles, and operations.

Infrastructure consists of the fixed installations necessary for transport, and may be roads, railways, airways, waterways, canals and pipelines, and terminals such as airports, railway stations, bus stations, warehouses, trucking terminals,

refueling depots (including fueling docks and fuel stations) and seaports. Terminals may both be used for interchange of passengers and cargo, and for maintenance. (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2008). Vehicles traveling on these networks include vehicles of appropriate types such as automobiles, bicycles, buses, trains, trucks people, helicopters and aircraft. Operations deal with the way the vehicles are operated, and the procedures set for this purpose including financing, legalities and policies. In the transport industry, operations and ownership of infrastructure can be either public or private, depending on the country and mode.

Passenger transport may be public, where operators provide scheduled services, or private. Freight transport has become focused on containerization, although bulk transport is used for large volumes of durable items. Transport plays an important part in economic growth and globalization, but has a deteriorating impact on the environment. While it is heavily subsidized by governments, good planning of transport is essential to make traffic flow, and restrain urban sprawl.

The first goods transport was on human backs and heads, but the use of pack animals, including donkeys and horses, developed during the Stone Age. The first vehicle is believed to have been the travois, a frame used to drag loads, which probably developed in Eurasia after the first use of bullocks (castrated cattle) for pulling ploughs. In about 5000 BC, sleds developed, which are more difficult to build than travois, but are easier to propel over smooth surfaces. Pack animals, ridden horses and bullocks dragging travois or sleds require wider paths and higher clearances than people on foot and improved tracks were required. As a result by about 5000 BC

roads, including the Ridgeway, developed along ridges in England to avoid crossing rivers and bogging. In central Germany, such ridge ways remained the predominant form of long-distance road till the mid 18th century.

The origin of the wheel is unknown, but once it was invented, knowledge of the wheel spread rapidly throughout the Mediterranean and Asian world. Wheeled vehicles made the movement of goods much easier. The earliest known examples of wheels are from Mesopotamia and date from about 3500 to 3000 BC. The cart or wagon, pulled by humans or animals, was the first wheeled vehicle. Today, animal-drawn carts are still used in many countries, primarily to move freight but sometimes to transport people. The horse-drawn chariot, a faster version of the cart, became an important instrument of warfare because it could overpower enemy soldiers quickly. The chariot appeared in Mesopotamia around 2000 BC, and its use later spread to Egypt, Persia, Greece, Rome, and other ancient civilizations. (Microsoft Encarta, 2009).

While the invention of the wheel was important to the development of transportation in Europe and Asia, the wheel was unknown to the ancient civilizations of North and South America. People in these areas used pack animals or dragged goods on crude sledges. Europeans brought the wheel to the New World as they began to settle there in the 16th century. The automobile history began in the late 19th century. By the 20th century, automobile was already a booming industry in many parts of the world. The introduction of the motor car led to a lot of improvement in the comfort of traveling. Buses with built-in baggage compartment, comfortable seating and tube tyres that allow driving freely are used in many cities

today. The improvement of roads and its maintenance and the construction of terminals attracted so much attention from Governments all over the world.

Bus terminal could be defined as that location and facilities at which vehicles stop to pick up passengers and drop off passengers. A terminal is the beginning or the end of a transportation line. However, the term is often used for large stations with elaborate passenger facilities. It is seen as a public utility structure that acts as a terminal parking facility for the company's vehicles and also acts as the point where accesses available on to these vehicles are possible. The key facilities every bus system requires are an administrative office and one or more storage, servicing, and maintenance base. In modern times accommodation facilities are required for comfort of the users of the terminal.

Bus Transportation

The need for motor vehicles as a means of mass transportation arose as more people started embarking on long distance travels. Buses with greater passenger carriage capacity were constructed. Before World War 1, the standard motor-bus carried between 15-20 passengers operated on solid tyres and often lack wheels. As a result of improvement in motor parts and internal comfort, early motor-bus developed rapidly and evolved as the large luxury coaches of the present day. The most popular means of road transportation among others is bus transportation which is indispensable as far as road transportation is concerned.

Development of Bus Transportation in Nigeria

During the colonial period roads came into existence as an improvement of already existing pathways into motor able tracts. These were manually constructed through widening and straightening of bush paths. Major towns were linked throughout the country, as better roads were constructed.

Development of Bus Terminal in Nigeria - Private Participation

Intercity transport has come a long way to its present state in Nigeria. Competitive, coupled with improved facilities and demand has favored the rapid development of this sector. Furthermore, the development of intercity high ways by the various governmental organizations in the past has enhanced this development. Until recently, the motor park - a vast open field, used as a common open ground by various transport companies, has been the official version of the bus terminals in the country, while the roads were paid more attention, the parks were neglected, resulting in;

- i. Dilapidating facilities
- ii. Poor security for travelers and their luggage
- iii. Absence of rest areas and conveniences.

The inability of the park authorities to control its activities and maintain its facilities, led to the initial along-the-way loading of passengers by some private transporters, and the use of public bus-stops as well as filling stations, which results in serious obstruction of traffic flow. The Government, though tried to control this situation through the establishment of state owned transport co-operations with improved facilities, these however, collapsed almost immediately due to poor management and general mismanagement of funds. (Adenij, 1983).

All these culminated in the eventual establishment of private Bus terminals by intercity luxury bus operators in order to keep a steady flow of passengers, who had been discouraged from patronizing the motor parks-and their business going. This group of transporters included private and government commercial-oriented transport corporations. Early pioneers included transport companies like Chisco Mass Transit, The Young Shall Grow, Yankari Mass Transit, Ifesinachi Transit ,ABC Transit etc.

These parks offered comfort oriented services to customers, which reflected in the more organized operational system of ticket-booking and boarding of buses. Customers were also offered more conducive relaxation areas where light and heavy refreshments could be obtained via waiting lounges. Customers didn't have to wonder about trying to locate buses going to their destinations or get harassed by garage touts.

RECOMMENDATION

As pointed out in the chosen site, Port Harcourt- Aba, East West Express Road is being used as a demonstration centre for the concept of photo-type design at the different entry points into Port Harcourt aimed at transportation improvement in Port Harcourt, Rivers State and other states around the Federation.

A terminal authority charged with the day to day running of these terminals as well as their maintenance should be constituted by the Ministry of Transport to oversee their operations.

The terminal facility will be used by all those that engage in intercity-“luxury” bus transportation in the country. This particular Model is for luxury buses plying Port Harcourt to the East, West and North-Eastern States. They are expected to pay for the spaces and services rendered to them on a strictly commercial basis as may be determined by the terminal authority, Traveler should be given the right to choose the carrier whose buses they are to travel, based on the schedule displayed in the terminal/departure lounge. The individual carriers will also have their respective administrative offices within the terminal building. It is also important to note that the designer of this project be involved by the government during consideration to ensure construction as designed.

CONCLUSION

The major Architectural achievement of this project is the successful arrangement of travelers needs in a simple design arrangement that allow for easy flow of commuters and buses in and out of the building.

It also eliminates the hazardous transport system currently experienced in the state caused primarily by lack of planning and organization.

In conclusion, through relative analysis of case studies, there is need to site the terminal outside the central business district to accommodate the facilities for the buses to operate effectively and efficiently. It is also located at the transit route to define the traffic pattern in Port Harcourt city the capital of Rivers State. Deductions made from the case studies are well adhered to ranging from proper

positioning of the terminal building to achieve an agreeable traffic and pedestrian network within the site.

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