

Executive summary

The premise

The application of an innovative, partnership-oriented, problem-solving approach derived from the latest development concept of ‘sustainable livelihoods’, is the hallmark of this research. The ultimate aim is to establish rapid result-yielding links between the various stake-holders involved in public transport activity, in an effort to facilitate a service which can offer better access and quality for the urban poor. The city of Karachi serves as the first case study for exploring this methodology.

This is a relatively new approach to an already much discussed and documented topic, the innovation being the more realistic and down-to-earth concept of ‘sustainability’ which advocates a logical and systematic derivation of solutions from within the context of a problem. Sustainability of the context itself is therefore the automatic starting point of this concept. In this case study this translates into a concern for the extent to which public transport is or is not contributing to the maintenance and development (including the potential of providing sustainable livelihoods), of the city of Karachi.

As is the case for any urban system, the well-being of Karachi and the transport activity in this city are densely interwoven in an inseparable relationship of cause and effect. This exercise has confirmed that the life blood of this city is essentially the port activity and the resulting gradual proliferation of industry, which has attracted and continues to sustain a total estimated population of more than 10 million people (unofficially believed to be close to 13 million). The port and industrial activity cannot survive without the directly transport-dependent availability of a huge blue-collar labour force. This labour pool lives in the low-income squatter settlements colloquially called *katchi abadis* (estimated to contain more than 50 per cent of the population of the city), which are located at such a distance from the major job markets that there is virtually no other way to link them other than a system of mass transit.

Public transport activity therefore clearly occupies a centre stage position, a two-way life-line between the fundamental employment and residential activities which sustain Karachi.

Access and quality naturally emerge as the basic criteria for evaluating whether the transport system (in its present form as well as in any of its future proposed forms) is helping or will be helping in the development of the city or contributing towards its gradual degradation. These two issues, by virtue of their own definitions, represent the experience of the users, who also happen to have the most will to see improvements. (The public sector have almost completely withdrawn from this activity, while the overall unfavourable operating conditions ensure that the transporters/operators are concerned about little more than the survival of their business and related issues.) Hence the underlying premise of this whole project – that the existence/non-existence of public transport activity is a direct determinant of the availability/non-availability of sustainable livelihoods at all three levels: transit and related services/supporting activities being a major source of blue-collar employment in themselves; as the critical/direct link between residential and livelihood-related activities of the low-income segments; and, thereby, as one of the foremost factors affecting the well-being and sustenance of the whole city, which includes all other income-level citizens as well.

Overview

A number of activities have been carried out, including: the collection of primary data from field surveys and interviews; public forums and workshops, as the first step towards building partnerships between the stake-holders; and the final report, containing information obtained through literature/secondary data reviews, and also elementary analysis reports.

Given the premise of this research (as evident from its title), the point of view of the users of large public transport modes has evolved as the highlight of the whole venture. This proved to be the foremost source of understanding the nature and extent of the problem, as well as the starting point of any intervention actions. The large modes are the cheapest means presently existing and represent the only portion of the public transport activity which operates as a system, supposedly consisting of set routes and timings (in practice these are not followed exactly). The users of this so-called system are undoubtedly the party which has the most at stake, as they are largely people on low incomes, whose livelihood opportunities are directly dependent on the access and

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

quality of the set-up (see section on Current Analysis). The secondary data available on this subject was found to be devoid of any documentation of the point of view of the users, further confirming the significance/ innovative nature of this project's approach.

The findings basically show that the present transport services are severely lacking, with alarming negative impacts that directly affect the livelihood opportunities of 30-40 per cent of the already deprived low-income population of the city (who in turn constitute more than 50 per cent of the total population). The long distances between the major blue-collar job markets and the squatter settlements where they live means that these people do not have any other choice but to improvise with whatever is affordable/available – even at the current heavy cost of at least two deaths and scores of injuries per day (and the true figures may be higher than this unofficial report).



The root causes consist mainly of certain 'grand' policy decisions taken in the past (documented in the Historical Review section) which have gradually worsened over the years, leading to the current crisis situation. An analysis of the cause/effect inter-relationships of this provides important clues as to what may be avoided/included in future planning, while the 'Current Situation Analysis' highlights further details about all the participants (and hence potential partners), in the existing activity.

The 'Recommendations' section includes a synthesis of all the major findings, exploring the possibilities of creating partnerships between the actors as a means for establishing mutual co-operation for bringing about improvements (specially noteworthy are the valuable groundbreaking starting points yielded by the forums and workshops, which show that both the users and the transporters possess a substantial will for improvement – albeit for different reasons – which can be channelled into constructive/positive/sustainable ends).

In terms of 'Methodology and Process', the frustrations and time-lags resulting from the unavailability of reliable/presentable data and the vastness of even each sub-aspect of the transport activity in Karachi today together represent the extremely acerbic constraints which the research team found itself at a loss to overcome within the time-frame set for the completion of this project.

Historical review

The comparatively 'young' independence of Pakistan (1947), and the continuing overall instability (or 'adolescence') which can be attributed to a series of traumatic events accompanying or following independence is the basic perspective in which the roots of a number of detrimental policy decisions and related negative socio-cultural trends fit into a common context.

Foremost among the policy decisions is the 'grand' plan executed by the military regime in 1962-64, in which it was envisioned that with a few sweeping decisions all of the proletariat classes would be taken out of the city centre, and jobs as well as housing (through the creation of industries and adjacent labour colonies) would be arranged on the outskirts of the city. This grand plan had to be abandoned in 1964, mainly because of the limited resources of the country/city which precluded the continued high investment necessary. Unfortunately the discontinuation of this idea occurred at a most crucial and irreversible stage of its execution – the low-income areas had already been literally bulldozed out of the centre, but jobs were not created for them in the outskirts (the expected incentive-supported springing-up of industries never occurred). Then began the daily long-distance commuting activity to and from the job-intensive port and central areas of the city, creating the multiple distance/time/fare problems which continue today.

Moreover, frequent military interventions in the democratic process (including those which were ordered by the 'elected' governments themselves), and

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

the continued deployment of an out-dated and incompatible civic-administrative set-up (whose negative traits of poor co-ordination, fragmented duplication, growing corruption, etc., have been allowed to proliferate instead of being questioned in the light of more efficient examples existing within the developing world), have combined to culminate in the present virtually complete collapse of the civic institutions.

The transport set-up has therefore grown in an *ad hoc* manner, and no attempt was ever made to comprehensively plan a co-ordinated and rational use of the modes and routes. The infrastructure (roads, stops, terminals, etc.) has suffered from continued negligence, with the consequence that even whatever assets were inherited/acquired (the Tramway, the Karachi Circular Railway, the KTC fleet of buses, etc.) were all lost to either the accompanying spontaneous/unplanned policy decisions, or to the resulting rapid rate of erosion. Details provided in the 'Historical Review' section allow a most valuable understanding about the background of all these continuing issues, enabling the development of an appropriate and effective strategy to face them, rather than further wastage of the already meagre resources of the country in the pursuit of unrealistic grand solutions.

Equally noteworthy are the positive aspects of the past. There have been periods of good performance (details of the KTC service during 1977-84 have been included in the Historical Review), showing that a precedent for better performance does exist, and that it is therefore not impossible to achieve international standards. At a more holistic level, it can be observed that although this city has had to bear periods of extreme turmoil and violence (especially succinct is the directly transport-related violence of the mid-1980s, whose colossal negative impacts on business and commerce activity – and accompanying repercussions on not only the livelihood opportunities of the low-income segments but on the socio-economic well-being of all the citizens of the city – have yet to be assessed), it nevertheless has still managed to survive and persevere, demonstrating the immense potential for constructive intervention in this case-study. The overall root-causes for the existence of Karachi (it continues to be a major port and industrial centre, and therefore one of the largest job-markets in the country), combined with the now deeply embedded long-distance dichotomy which continues to exist within the city (between the low-income residential areas and their main livelihood activity locations), appears to provide a perpetual impetus for intense public transport activity. The concern now only remains of how the inherent momentum of this activity can best be channelled for it to acquire the most appropriate shape and

form, so that rather than inhibiting socio-economic progress (as it has been doing in the recent past), it can instead become a means of not only enhancing the whole city's potential to provide sustainable livelihoods, but can even perhaps become one of the major sources of employment itself.

Current situation analysis

The issues of access and quality have been used to evaluate and understand the prevailing conditions. The activity was found to consist of three broad levels: first, the *actual travelling activity*, in which there are three main parties or stakeholders, namely the users, the operators, and the regulators; secondly, the *related services sector*, consisting of workshops, rest facilities for drivers/conductors, vendors (catering to transit/waiting passengers), spare-parts businesses, etc.; and thirdly, the *impacts/fall-outs* of the activity, including accidents, pollution and its effects (noise as well as air), socio-economic repercussions, etc.

Access was found to be so difficult for even an average user that gender issues appear almost entirely eclipsed in comparison. A general insufficiency prevails, with people having to risk their lives by traveling on roofs during peak rush-hours, and waiting for long periods at other times timings, and in fact the services were found not to be available at all from early evening onwards in some places. Time lost because of the absence of rationalized routes and unreliable operating practices were discovered to be inhibiting not just the livelihood activities of the users, but even their social and self-development opportunities. The underlying long-distance commuting phenomenon also means that people who are already struggling to get by on low incomes are having to spend a large proportion of their income on transport being.

The lack of safety and frequent accidents/injuries are the foremost among the quality problems, while the non-maintenance of the buses and the inadequacy of their design (interior as well as exterior) makes journeys uncomfortable and encourages nuisance behaviour. Combined with the rude behavior of the drivers/conductors, the cumulative inconvenience is causing some people (especially ladies), to completely abandon their livelihood-seeking activities.

Despite these problems, the users still expressed a willingness to participate in any effort to improve the situation, and many attended the forums to give their views. The other two primary stake-holders, the operators and the regulators, had different perspectives on the problem, as expressed in separate forums/workshops conducted with them.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The main concern of the private operators/transporters is that the fares are too low, and they cite this to justify all malpractice associated with the services being provided by them. They advocate the need for an adherence to internationally used formulas for calculating the maximum and minimum fare limits (based on fuel prices, cost of vehicles, operating costs, distances, route structuring, etc.). They claim that the administrative agencies have a negative attitude towards them, quoting examples of frequent stoppages and checking of documents on the roads (designed to cause inconvenience and persuade the transporters to enter a 'deal' instead), unchecked sale of adulterated fuel/oil, etc. At the policy/planning level their grievances include:

- high import duties on large vehicles;
- absence of credit/insurance facilities;
- undue encouragement of small vehicles;
- high fuel prices;
- deteriorating infrastructure (broken roads, absence of bus-stops/depots/terminals); and
- non-implementation of recommendations submitted for and included in the national-level 'Five Year Plans'.

Nevertheless they have a positive attitude, displayed by the way they have organized a Compensation Fund on their own (in the wake of the refusal of insurance companies to insure the old vehicles being used, and non-existence of any parallel facilities from the government), through which they have managed to distribute Rs30 million among various affected groups (victims of accidents, political violence, etc.) within the twenty or thirty years since each operating vehicle began contributing a small amount regularly for this purpose. They also have a co-operative attitude towards the action-research process and are willing to participate in discussions and forums, as and when they are invited.

The distortions surrounding the role of the regulators, however, have been found to be far more complex. Traditionally it would have been assumed that, aside from temporary or exceptional lapses, the government is 'in control of everything'. In fact a number of significant realities were exposed during the research, the most vivid example being the fact that thousands of public transport vehicles on the road today are operating without valid route permits and have been doing so since the ban placed on mini-bus route permits after

the Bushra Zaidi accident of 1986. There is also an elaborate *bhatta* system (bribes paid on a regular/monthly basis to the authorities by the transporters/street-hawkers in exchange for allowing blatant violations of laws and regulations) estimated to involve up to Rs11 million monthly just in the area of Saddar (in the central part of the city). Rampant traffic violations, encroachment onto large portion of roads, haphazard parking, etc., are among the issues which have remained unresolved over the past decade, and are expected to become even more severe if they are allowed to continue unabated.

At the policy/planning level, there are many problems.

An absence of route-planning. This actually requires a comprehensive transport plan, in turn only possible if developed as part of a proper city/regional Master Plan, which is virtually non-existent (the Plan 2000 developed in the 1980s has not been adhered to or followed, and it was never given any legal status).

An absence of infrastructure. Out of the eight settlements surveyed in five different parts of the city, only one had a bus-stop/terminal, otherwise no proper bus-stops have ever been built. Even the places marked by signboards are rarely used, as passengers were found to load and unload randomly wherever convenient.

The policymaking process remains disconnected from the day-to-day changes occurring on the streets. One of the senior officials admitted during a forum/workshop, that the government has not incorporated the user's input even in the latest reports being prepared on the subject of Transport.

Whatever policies/decisions do get formulated, they remain largely unimplemented. The inability of the administration to enforce even a Supreme Court judgment concerning the prohibition of the pollution-creating (both noise and air) and ill-maintained silencers (exhaust pipes) being used in auto-rickshaws in 1996-7 illustrates this most vividly.

Also widespread lawlessness prevails, which is mainly rooted in the detachment/alienation of the public from the administrative mechanisms, and caused by the frequent and lengthy military takeovers and accompanying disruptions of the democratic process that have occurred throughout the brief fifty-year history of the country. One of the negative outcomes is the emergence of four mafia-type interest groups who essentially control the city, influencing all major urban processes and events.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

With reference to views about the relationships which exist with the other two primary stakeholders, during the workshop on the topic of ‘Regulating Agencies’ certain officials said that an offer was once made to the transporters to abolish the infamous *bhatta* system, but they declined because they were concerned about the severe disruptions to the service that they expected to happen because of the frequent checking of documents, etc.

The services sector fits into the transport scene as a secondary stakeholder, consisting of workshops, service-shops, rest and eating places for operators, vendors and hawkers (catering to the passengers in transit), spare-parts businesses, parking/depot facilities, etc. An almost minimal provision for these activities exist in the infra-structure and built environment of the city, hence there is little choice for the small businessmen other than to encroach upon whatever place is available (on the streets, on sidewalks, etc.). This is a major cause of congestion and degradation in the city, and it also restricts the flow of traffic, including the passage of public transport vehicles.

At the next tertiary level of transport-related activities and processes are the impacts and repercussions of what is present on the roads today. The vastness of the two foremost issues, loss of life and property due to accidents and the transport-related decrease in the availability of sustainable livelihoods, merit complete full-fledged studies all by themselves. Pollution and the related health hazards also have an indirect affect on livelihood activities, while the overall end-result is a comprehensive physical and socio-economic degradation, expected to produce extensive negative consequences for the whole city, including all its citizens (not just the low-income users of public transport).

The freight-traffic issue and the related Northern Bypass Proposal; the proposed ‘grand’ Karachi Mass Transit Program (KMTP); the existence of numerous un-coordinated civic bodies dealing with transport; and overall socio-cultural issues are among a number of other separate analytical aspects which have been described in detail in the ‘Current Situation Analysis’ section as well as in the Appendix.

Recommendations

A three-tiered hierarchy of interventions is proposed, in accordance with the scope and nature of impact expected from each category of proposals/recommendations. The hierarchy consists of:

- long-term policy-level recommendations;

- medium-term administrative measures; and,
- grassroots-level partnerships between stakeholders.

Long-term policy-level recommendations

A number of specific policy decisions will eventually become unavoidable, and delaying these decisions will only increase the extent of harm caused to the city and its inhabitants:

1. The establishment of a single, all-encompassing official body for dealing with transport (the proposal for a Karachi Mass Transport Authority is already partially implemented, but it needs to be given legal status).
2. The initiation of a continuous process of data collection and monitoring, interaction with all the stakeholders, and localized planning and policy-making needs to be taken up by the body proposed above.

Medium-term administrative-level measures

These recommendations represent remedies which can yield almost immediate relief for the commuters:

1. The segregation of local and through road traffic, and the construction of the proposed Northern Bypass.
2. The rationalization of the routes and interchanges.
3. The revival of the Karachi Circular Railway (KCR), in conjunction with shuttle-services and bicycle/pedestrian access ways.

Grassroots-level partnerships between stakeholders

A tremendous potential exists for developing self-help solutions, in order to overcome the constraints of limited resources and lack of control prevalent in the present administrative set-up. These small projects can be taken up easily and rapidly by all the stakeholders together, in fact willingness to contribute to these type of initiatives has already been expressed by the users in the discussion forums and interviews:

1. The building, repair, and maintenance of bus-stops.
2. The cleaning of bus-stops and vehicle interiors.
3. The employment of ergonomic standards for the interiors of the vehicles.
4. The recovery of the informal cash-flows, and their constructive usage.

Action plan

On the basis of these recommendations the following immediate actions are proposed:

1. Initiation of a lobbying effort to encourage the required policy decisions.
2. Preparation of detailed proposals for the Northern Bypass and the revival of the Karachi Circular Railway.
3. Preparation of data collection and monitoring and update mechanisms to be adopted by the proposed administrative agency on transport (including graphical charts, plans, and diagrams).
4. Conducting of more forums and workshops to initiate the small-scale partnership projects, which can be later used to develop larger self-help improvement ventures.

Methodology and process

An attempt has been made in this project to build upon all research and data already available on this subject, in order to avoid wasteful repetition or elaborate detailing of impractical strategies. Therefore a sustainable livelihoods approach has been used not only to identify the objectives of the study, but to plan all aspects of the exercise, including data collection, field surveys, analysis parameters, recommendations, and methodology. The following are some of the highlights of the methodology employed:

- A preliminary analysis was first made to identify the objectives of the project, through discussions and meetings with various resource persons.
- Special care was taken to identify the key aspects of transport activity in Karachi, which were observed to have the potential for both facilitating an understanding of the problems, and also for concentrating on the most rational intervention points. The scope of data collection and processes involved were determined accordingly, avoiding unnecessarily cumbersome statistical processing, but ensuring complete coverage of all relevant information.
- Live forums and discussions were used to obtain candid viewpoints of the stakeholders, and also as the first step for building future partnerships for the purpose of co-operating on self-help improvements.

- Recommendations have been derived from within the identification and analysis of the problem, rather than being imposed on the basis of unfounded external assumptions.

The following constraints severely held back the achievements of this study:

- Reliable data is not available from secondary sources, therefore original sources had to be approached, involving several logistical limitations, and disproportionate waste of time. Data collected in this way was often found to have discrepancies and inaccuracies, which also needed cross-checking and verification, again draining the time and effort needed on the more advanced levels of the project.
- The quantity, size, scope, and volume of each aspect of the subject exceeded all expectations, creating an end situation that investigations into a number of issues which were initially considered significant had to be abandoned in order to submit whatever work was completed within the given time.

A number of guidelines have been identified for better application of this methodology in subsequent phases of the project or when applying to other case studies elsewhere in the developing world. Details of these guidelines are given in the Methodology section of the report, and a few highlights are presented here as examples:

- A weekly monitoring format should be adhered to strictly, in order to ensure timely decisions about adjusting the course of action during the project in accordance to any unexpected developments and discoveries.
- Dialogues and forums can be conducted simultaneously with secondary research material scanning, in order to expedite the process.
- The research team should develop a set format for data collection from the outset, in order to avoid losing valuable data because of shortfalls in source notations, or wastage of time in re-obtaining the same material.

Conclusion

The research team feels strongly that this project has been useful as a first step in a more innovative and result-yielding direction. This further accentuates the need for follow-up exercises, however, and the findings included in this report bear witness to the severe and immediate need to address the situation.

This exercise can therefore be useful as a demonstration of the need for further exploration and intervention along the lines set through this first phase.

