

The Urban Poor and Mobility Stress in Nigerian Cities

O.B. Olufemi and M.S. Oluseyi

College of Engineering and Environmental Technology,
Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ogun State, Nigeria

Abstract: The exploding rate of growth of cities poses great challenges to urban planners and policy makers in general. The proportion of urban dwellers in most Africa cities is expected to be about 61% of the world's population by the year 2030. Specifically in Nigeria, the proportion of the urban population in 2000 is about 43.5% and by projection, more than 50 % of the entire population will be living in urban centres by 2010. It should be noted that urban mobility is one of the challenges of the present millennium. The rapid urbanization rate has unequal consequences on the urban dwellers. In other words, the urban poor are the worst hit of this menace. This study therefore, argues that, despite the huge benefits accrued to cities, Nigerian urban poor are suffering from intolerably high levels of mobility stress courtesy poverty. The concept of urban poor and mobility stress are explored; the study makes its contribution by: Identifying and discussing the mobility coping strategies that the urban poor have been forced to adopt in order to survive. The study concluded with a set of recommendations on what needs to be done to reduce urban mobility stress for the poor and non-poor in Nigerian cities.

Key words: Urban poor, mobility stress, poverty, affordability, availability and access

INTRODUCTION

Cities remains the focal points in an economy where people come together primarily to exchange goods and interact. Cities over the years; witness an exploding rate of growth (Cities Alliance, 2006; Kessides, 2006); the continued alarming growth of the urban population is one of the major factors partly contributing to the high rate of physical development mishap in the country (IFPRI, 2002; Helaakoshi and Merilainen, 2001; Egunjobi, 1999). Despite the opportunities in cities, however, Nigeria is experiencing increasing rate of urban mobility stress. Mobility according to Yu (1982) is the backbone of the activity system of human race. Thus, adequate mobility for all tends to broaden the perspective of an individual. In other words, improved mobility is a crucial and necessary element in alleviating poverty throughout the developing world; as it allows the urban poor to be actively involved in societal development issues. Improving accessibility to employment, education, health and other urban services is necessary for improving the welfare of the urban poor (Haider and Badami, 2004). Although the rate of urbanization and motorization is increasing in developing Countries, but; more dishearten, the bulk of the urban poor in developing world do not have sustainable means to afford private motorized

transport (Helaakoski and Merilainen, 2001; Haider and Badani, 2004; World Bank, 2002; SMILE, 2005; Odufuwa, 2003) therefore, they rely on both formal and informal public transport and most often walking is adopted for trips that require motorized transport. This partly establishes the fact that poverty exist among most city dwellers.

It should be noted that, the share of people living in poverty is larger in African than any other region in the world (UNICEF, 2006; Kessides, 2006; Booth *et al.*, 2000). Africa is the only part of the world where the number of the urban poor is increasing (World Bank, 1994). Mekonnen (1994) emphasized that, 52% of sub-Sahara Africa's population was poor in 1985 and this rise to 63% in 1990. Presently, more than 63.5% of Africa's populations are poor (UNICEF, 2006; World Bank, 2001). Based on these statistics, it is not very surprising that most poor people are found in urban environment of developing countries. Nigeria for instance has 48% urbanized population as at 2005 (UNICEF, 2006); while, more than 42.3% of urban population in the country are living below the United State standard poverty level measure. Therefore, considering the urban poor in transport sector is essential to ensure that transport or mobility is equitable, affordable and provides access to resources and opportunities required for development.

The objective of the study is to introduce and make a case for why policy makers should worry about the urban poor. The study discusses the urban poor, mobility stress and provides a glimpse of the extent of poverty in the country. Coping mechanism adopted by the urban poor to cushion themselves against mobility stress were discussed. Finally, a set of recommendations towards reducing urban mobility stress for the urban poor and non-poor were highlighted.

CONCEPTUAL UNDERSTANDING OF URBAN POOR AND MOBILITY STRESS

Mobility and transport security of people is determined within the context of their livelihoods. In other words, people's capabilities and assets, is partly a determinant of their travel pattern. Livelihoods are considered to be sustainable if people can recover from stress and shocks without jeopardizing or destroying the natural resource base. Arguments have been advanced for the need to worry about the poor (Cornia *et al.*, 1987; Green, 1991; Nayar, 2003; Shiva, 2003) but within the context of this study, it is pertinent to understand; who the urban poor are? Where they live? What are their peculiar economic circumstances and why are they poor? Answering these questions is quite logical but important before designing policies that aim at the poor. This will enhance the location and distributional strategies of policy makers and questions on who gets what and what goes where can be provided with sustainable responses for actions. The poor are those who experience poverty in their daily lives (Shiva, 2003). They lives in the midst of plenty and they are the most marginalized, excluded, oppressed and exploited at the mercy of those who have gate-keeper positions which controls access to goods and services (TUGI, 2002). In urban areas where goods and services are available; the urban poor have less access to these services compared to the better-off persons. According to Demery *et al.* (1993) three broad groups of poor people needs to be a major concern for urban planners and policy makers; this include.

The chronic poor: This refers to individuals whose situation is caused by multiple deprivations, such as low productivity due to poor health and nutrition, or poor access to productive assets.

The new poor: These are people who were above the poverty line before deterioration in economics and the negative impact of inspired adjustment programs; but have since fallen into poverty as a result. They range form recently arrived migrant youth from rural areas in search

of research and a better life, to urban victims of economic crises, to slum dwellers whose families have lived in slums or on sidewalks for generations (EHP, 2004). They come from socially disadvantage and classes of low castes. The criterion for being poor according to the World Bank (1993); is that one's the standard of living (usually measured in terms of income or consumption) falls below the poverty line. In other words, poverty line is the standard of living usually measured in terms of income or consumption; below which people are deemed to be poor. It should however be noted that, poverty line varies from one country to another over time.

The vulnerable: A household or an individual is vulnerable if it or he/she is particularly open to adverse external events or shocks and cannot make the necessary adjustments to protect its or his/her standard of living (World Bank, 1993). It should be pointed out has done by Demery *et al.* (1991) that some households may be poor and not vulnerable, this stemmed on the fact that, they are not affected by external events; or simply because they can readily cope with the changes in their environment. Similarly, others can be vulnerable but not poor. Meanwhile, vulnerability refers to a condition of living that is detrimental to the psychological condition of individual's communities and several groups.

The conditions of the urban poor in most cities worldwide are similar but worst in most African cities (Cities Alliance, 2006); hundreds of millions of urban poor in developing and transitional world have few options but to live in neglected parts of cities where housing, mobility and general living conditions are appallingly or apparently poor. They most often lives in the products (Slums) of failed policies, bad governance, corruption, inappropriate regulation, dysfunctional land markets, unresponsive financial systems and a fundamental lack of political will (United Habitat, 2003; EHP, 2004; Kessides, 2006; Booth *et al.*, 2000). Majority of them work in the informal sectors and depends on a cash economy-a precarious situation to health, food security and mobility consequences. They are day laborers, domestic servant, hawkers, small service provides, drivers, hair dressers, hustlers and prostitutes. Some however; work in factories or even as government employees, with wages that barely meet their needs. It should be understood that, the urban poor lies within the realm of arrays of poverty. That is, they are found within different types of poverty-Inherited, instant, new, overcrowding, absolute, relative and hidden poverty (Nayar, 2003).

Studies reveal that urban mobility in third world cities is worse than those of developed countries (Filani, 1988; Adeniji, 2000; Bolade, 1986; Oyesiku, 2002). A clear

indication of the extent of urban mobility problems in Nigerian cities can be gleaned from the level or state of transport infrastructure, the deplorable state of public transport, increase accident rate, transport insecurity; prolong waiting and travel time and ineffective transport policy. For instance, most Nigerian cities lack adequate sidewalks that facilitate or enhance pedestrians' movements. More disturbing fact is that; where sidewalks exist, they are often taken over by roadside traders (Filani, 1994; Egunjobi, 1999); thus compelling pedestrians and other road users to stressful situation. Based on the mobility stress experience; some individuals who are not really poor becomes poor due to changes in mobility circumstances or exposure to sudden transport externality (accident) that eat away their normal mobility value. Above all, the urban poor lacks financial resources; mobility or travel information or knowledge, support from legal system or enforcement agents; have no voice in public discourse or issues that affects them and they lack connections to policy makers. The often rely on public transport and most time they adopt walking over long distance to actualize their daily needs. They spend 10-20% of their income on transport and more dishearten, they cannot afford more comfortable, safe and efficient public transport service. They are expose to polluted air from motorized vehicles. They are more vulnerable to transport externalities compared to the urban non-poor.

Urban mobility in the present day is becoming increasingly complex, tension ridden and a great source of stress. Stress according to Gurubabu (1999), "is the sum total of all non specific biological phenomena elicited by adverse external influences". Interestingly, it is a process through which environmental and institutional forces threatens people's well-being and existence; thus evoking from them various responses, as well as coping strategies or behaviour directed towards the threat. In actual fact mobility stress is an inevitable scene for both poor and non-poor in Nigeria cities. That is mobility stress spares none, not even professionals that gives suggestions on how to prevent it. The fact therefore, remains that, the poor are the worst hit of the mobility crises in the country. Urban mobility stress overtime have increasingly transforming passive existence into an active business of living by shaping and changing ones travel or mobility life-styles and setting the tempo or pace and determining the rhythm at which one travels over space. Mobility stress is the result of individual factors and more of the outcome of environmental factors like economic or technological uncertainty mainly due to over population leading to competition. Based on this scene, most transport infrastructure users often feels psychologically disturbed, emotionally drained, physically sapped out and

may even sweat heavily due to subjection to prolong waiting and travel time and excessive walking (The Punch, 2006 a,b). The implications of these mobility mishaps showcases its direct or indirect impact on physiological symptoms like fear; anger and anxiety, thus resulting to headache, high blood pressure and hearth diseases etc. institutional or governmental factors like lack of provision of transport infrastructure facilities; poor management of existing transport facilities (road condition), poor physical development activities and inappropriate adoption of professional planning theories, role conflict and ambiguity etc; are factors responsible for mobility crises in most cities. Also, the individual factors like household automobile ownership, income, household size and types etc, are responsible for mobility stress in most cities.

TRANSPORT POVERTY AND MOBILITY NEEDS IN NIGERIA: AN OVERVIEW

Transportation is inherently central to development of nations, is not only a necessity of life but have a resultant effect on all aspects of our existence (Oyesiku, 2002). It provides access to goods, services and social activities to maintain a good quality of life. It is fundamental in braking isolation and thus strengthening individual's capital base (World Bank, 2002 and Odufuwa, 2006). Poverty is not simply low or inadequate income but refers also to a lack of physical necessities and other assets (Whitener, 2002; World Bank, 1993, 2002; Osinubi, 2003), Poverty implies deprivation of human needs that are not met. For instance, accessibility is germane to the emergency of poverty, thus significant lack of access to resources, employment and markets would inevitably results in low productivity and low incomes and implicitly lead to poverty (Mbara, 2002). In the light of this, enhanced productivity can be constrained by the failure to provide the requisite transport infrastructure.

Mobility needs can be viewed as to the extent to which available quantity and quality of existing transport infrastructure falls short of the required to provide individual or each households in the population, irrespective of ability to afford or of particular preferences, with mobility of specified minimum standard and above. The required minimum standard that must be met is vital in defining transportation needs (World Bank, 2001, 2002). Thus, clarifications of minimum standard for various transport facilities need to be examined in transport decision-making process. For instance, the space standards (land width) recommended for Arterial, Sub-Arterial, Collector street and Local street are 50-60, 30-40, 20-30 and 10-20 m, respectively (Pratap, 2001; Obateru, 2003).

In actual fact, transport needs and how better to address them; demands detailed micro-level understanding of both the spatial distribution of low-income groups and their needs to travel. Needs, requirements and preferences are vital to decisions on transportation policies. While the urban poor may solve their land, housing water and in some cases, their sanitation needs themselves, addressing their transport solutions needs to be a collective effort if the solutions are to be affordable (Urban Resource Centre, 2001). More importantly, the term “transport poverty”, is use to represent a broader concept that include:

- The basic problems of shortage or inadequate transport facilities/infrastructure: Roads, terminal, lighting.
- Unaffordability of public transport as well as low purchasing power of private carrying units or vehicles.
- The uncomfotability of travel modes in terms of travel time, safety, transport externalities-pollution, accidents and congestion.

Specifically, transportation problems of the urban poor centres around “access” but include; fares burden, lengthy travel duration, limited hours of operation of public transport; inadequate coverage, lack of safety and noise disturbance. Access is a precondition for the satisfaction of almost any need, especially physical (Booth *et al.*, 2000). It should be noted that, “access” provides a central integrating concept with which to understand the complex interactions between subsistence economic and social needs. In other words, accessibility can be viewed in terms of provision of access and the ease with which a need can be satisfied. Access in transportation discourse can be viewed as availability of transport services whenever and wherever users need them. Increase improvements in transport infrastructure and transport services can thus enable urban poor to meet subsistence-economic and social needs more easily. This fact is far from being reach in Nigeria; despite the fact that road transportation is the most popular means of movement that accounts for about 90% of the movement of passengers and freight; expenditure on road construction and maintenance is however dishearten when compared with other countries (Ogunsanya, 2004; Oni 2004; Oyesiku and Oduduwa, 2002). As revealed in Table 1 using the most populous city in Nigeria-Lagos, compared with other cities of the world, roads expenditure is extremely low; with high travel time and low car ownership.

This disparity in expenditure is the evidence of the poor state of Nigerian roads as revealed in Table 2a and b. Based on the fact that less than 50% of national

Table 1: Per Capital expenditure on cities road and other indicators

Cities	Travel time (Min.)	Car ownership cars/1000	Road expenditure (\$ Capital)
Lagos, Nigeria	85.00	4.30	0.04
Cairo, Egypt	59.50	50.10	5.70
Paris, France	35.00	426.00	248.00
New York, USA	36.50	232.00	123.22

Source: UNCHS (Habitat) Global Urban Indicator Database, 1996 cited in Odeleye 2000

Table 2a: State of paved and unpaved roads

Unpaved roads	Good (%)	Fair (%)	Poor(%)
Federal Roads	60	56.6	37.4
State Roads	7.0	49.5	43.5
Local Govt. Roads	42	38.4	57.4
Paved roads			
Federal Roads	50	20	30
State Roads	30	30	40
Local Govt. Roads	5	20	75

Source: Road Vision 2000 Steering Committee Information Brochure, pp. 4 Transport in Nigeria in 2020

Table 2b: Distribution of the national road network

Type of pavement	Federal	State	Local Govt.	Total
Paved trunk roads	26,500	10,400	-	36,900
Unpaved trunk roads	5,600	20,100	-	25,700
Urban roads	-	-	21,900	21,900
Main rural roads	-	-	72,800	72,800
Village access roads	-	-	35,900	35,900
Total kms	32,100	30,500	130,600	193,200
Percentage	17	16	67	100

Source: Road Vision 2000 Steering Committee Information Brochure, pp. 4 Transport in Nigeria in 2020

road network are in good or fair condition, an annual loss of N80 billion is suffered by road assets due in part to lack of maintenance; nevertheless, road users suffer an additional vehicle operating costs of N53 billion due to poor condition of Nigerian roads (Road Vision, 2000).

It is interesting to note that; the implication of low expenditure in road transport infrastructure in Nigeria is responsible for the high rate of mobility stress. For instance, the interior of most buses and taxis are not ergonomically designed, seat size and spacing is not standardized, therefore resulting in excessively cramped travel condition and responsible for sitting, standing and aisles passing discomfort (Oduduwa, 2006).

THE NEED FOR TRANSPORT POLICY PARADIGM IN NIGERIA

Transport policy is the process of regulating and controlling the provision of transport with a view to facilitating the efficient operation of the economic, social and political life of any country at the lowest social cost (Tolley and Turton, 1995). It forms the bedrock of planning and facilitates the directional growth of transport system towards the provision of efficient and comfortable livelihood. It is however, surprising that, many African countries lack national policy framework within which the urban transport sector can be addressed (Mbara, 2002). In

recent years, the existence of transport policy for Nigeria has become a controversial issue. To some scholars, far back from 1960, Nigeria has no national transport policy, while others are of the opinion that the country has national transport policy that is in form of statement or mere documents (Oyesiku, 2004; Ogunsanya, 2003). According to Ogunsanya (2004) there have been some policy statements by the federal government aiming to resolve specific transport problems in the nation's transport system; among these are;

- 1965 Transport policy statement
- 1993 Transport policy statement
- 2002 Master plan for an integrated transport infrastructure
- 2002 Draft transport policy document for Nigeria.

The point of note is that, the proclaimed transport policy or statements in Nigeria; are decisions taken in respect of urban transport reaction to transportation crisis. In actual fact, long-term transport policy is expected to address issues that include; adequacy, safety, reliability, affordability and efficiency. To justify this assertion, the 1993 transport policy for instance came into existence due in part to the unprecedented transport crisis between 1970s and 1980s in the country. The transport crisis however, was attributed to imbalance resource allocations to different modes, inadequacy of existing transport infrastructural facility and the misalignment between objectives of transport parastatals, operators and the material as well as organizational resources for them (Filani, 1988; Adeniji, 2000; World Bank, 2001).

In 1998, the Federal Government initiated the Federal Urban Mass Transit Programme (FUMTP) that covers road-based projects, rail-based projects, water-based projects and intermodal projects (Bolade, 1986). This development is to enhance the mobility of the citizens, but surprisingly it failed due to poor monitoring of operations, undue political interference, financial misappropriations, high operating cost and above all poor governing process. It is instructive to note that, the country's National Development Plans and the 1990-1992 Rolling Plan made appropriate provisions for transportation sector of Nigeria economy. As revealed in Table 3, the transport sector's share or allocation of total planned public investment was approximately 20, 24, 22 and 15% respectively in the 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th plan periods.

It is pertinent to state that, the allocations to transport sector during the plan periods were distributed among the modes. Is worth mentioning that, as at independence Nigerians inherited a vibrant and efficient railway system from the colonial administration, but in recent years and in the face of urban transport policy produced in 1998 and several transport policy

Table 3: Planned Public Sector Expenditure on the Transport Sector (1962-1985)

Plan period	Total planned expenditure (million naira)	Transport sector allocation (million naira)	Proportion of transport sector as percentage of total planned investment
1962-1968	1,586,000	309,000	19.500
1970-1974	2,050,738	472,398	23.659
1975-1980	43,314,009	9,677,541	22.300
1981-1985	70,500,000	10,706,616	15.171

Source: Fourth National Development 1981-1985 pg. 217 cited in Filani, 1988

statements, Nigeria Railway transportation service is inefficient and has rarely developed over the years compared to rail transport in developed world. According to Odeleye (2000); the failure of Nigerian transport sector (railway in particular) can be attributed to maladministration by successive governments and lack of a functional transport policy. As a result of this, Nigeria needs a more dynamic transport policy than the existing dysfunction policy framework that has gravely incapacitate development in the transport sector of the Nigerian economy. One pertinent element of note in the Nigeria future transport policy debate is the question of the role of the local government, state and federal government on how they can empower Non-government organizations, communities and the private sector through cooperative ventures. It is however, believed that, presently, enabling approaches rather than ad hoc approach to addressing vital and urgent transport issues are the most important and necessary for the low-income transport policy paradigm in Nigeria. The enabling framework needs to be developed in response to transport problems and the failure of conventional public sector responses. Thus, government actions in regards to transportation are expected to concentrate on supporting the efforts of different stakeholders to develop more sustainable transportation service for the country.

It is interesting to note that, participation, transparency, decentralization, accountability, equity and security are inseparable popular norms of good governance and thus demands for transport infrastructure will be a major influence for the development of effective and flexible enabling policies. Differentiating enabling approaches and market-based approaches has become pertinent in the present day. Enabling policies goes beyond less involvement or intervention of government, rather, government involvement are designed to help those whose mobility needs and priorities are not met by the "market". The strategy implies that the traditional welfare state approach in which government sought to be the primary provider, should give way to a new role for government as enabler and facilitator that creates the right environment and incentives for stakeholders to contribute to development. Such government involvement usually

centers on ensuring that resources needed for purchasing carrying units, construction and maintenance of transport infrastructures are available at the lowest possible cost or price. In the present day, a more pluralistic and inclusive approach to transportation planning is needed, one in which all stakeholders functions as partner. Thus, the ineffectiveness of most past and present efforts in transportation development requires a conceptual change in the role of government towards provision of improve transportation conditions for lower-income groups. To make the enabling process successful, there is need for urban local authorities to develop their own sustainable transport sector policies, which will correlate with the national transport policy. Such policy needs to articulate the active participation of all stakeholders towards achieving the basic transport policy objectives. Nevertheless, discrimination of all forms should adequately be avoided and recognition should be given to past mistakes to avoid or guide against repetition of such mistakes.

URBAN MOBILITY COPING STRATEGIES

The low purchasing power of the populace as a result of the global economic recession in Nigeria has greatly affected the provision and utilization of standard transportation infrastructure. Towards the end of 1980s, transportation sector of Nigeria economy began to witness the impact of the steady drop in the supply of transport services, which resultantly leads to hyper mobility problems. Okoko (1998, 2006); Oyesiku and Odufuwa (2002); stressed that the prohibitive prices of new cars and buses in recent time have resulted in the reduction of the number of private car ownership and commercial vehicles on urban roads. It should however, be noted that, most Nigerians are far from affording brand new vehicles, while very few were opportune to make up for fairly used vehicles that is imported from developed countries. According to Adeniji (1987, 2000) from the mid 1980s most publicly owned transport companies were operating at a loss and far below capacity, due in part to the broken down of most vehicles and short supply of spare parts. Also worth noting, are the undue government interference, poor monitoring and evaluation of the performance of government initiated public transport agencies (World Bank, 1990).

According to Stephen (1990) and Humphrey (1992), coping strategies incorporates the appraisal of the degree of significant threat and surmountability of a demand. It also entails the subjective assessment of the effect of the adopted strategies to meeting the challenging demand. It should therefore be noted that, the wide recognition of

the failure of personal motorization in Nigerian cities to enhance quality of live of most urban dwellers coupled with economic downturn of the country is partly responsible for the wide usage of intermediate modes of travel (motorcycle, auto rickshaw/three wheelers and bicycles). Surprisingly, the imperative role of non-motorized transport in meeting the mobility needs of the urban poor is becoming increasingly acceptable in most African cities and particularly Nigeria (Mbara, 2002; Odufuwa, 2001; Oyesiku and Odufuwa, 2002). Comparatively, Cycling is a dominant mode of travel among the urban poor in Asia and China. While, in Nigeria, cycling is more prominently use in rural areas than the urban environment. This can partly be attributed to ineffective transport-planning network that does not meet the demand of cycling as well as socio-cultural attributions. Towards the end of the eighties, the cycle population in China for instance had reached 220 million with ownership levels in urban centers averaging 460 bicycles per 1000 population (Cai Junshi, 1988). Meanwhile in Nigerian cities notably Lagos, Onitsha, Ijebu-Ode, Abeokuta, Abia and so on, the three wheelers also known as “Keke Marwa” which are imported mainly from India have been a recently added (since mid 1990s) mode of passenger transport mainly used for short trips in urban areas. Just like the motorcycle or “Okada”, the three wheelers are famous for emergency running. Considering issues such as comfortability, convenience, reliability, safety and availability, the non-motorized mode particularly motorcycle is woeful due to their deplorable state of operation that yields no good for most users. More importantly, buses commonly refer to as “danfos”-flying coffins or “molue” moving morgues are death traps for users or urban poor that cannot afford the expensive taxi fare or private means of mobility (Odufuwa, 2006).

Furthermore, urban transport planning and urban governance is yet to achieve the expected goal in Nigeria. This is partly attributed to the import of transport management strategies from developed world that does not fits appropriately to Nigerian settings. A case of note; is the three-wheeler auto rickshaw that does not fit in appropriately to Nigeria road network system and the unguided alarming urban population explosion. Also worth mentioning, are the engineering aspects overshadowing transport management in Nigeria. In other words, non-involvement of professional transport planners and the users; means that mobility issues are solely perceived from engineering perspective.

CONCLUSION

On a final note, the health and well-being of the poor and the non-poor are put at risk by the dearth or very

poor quality of urban environmental public goods and services. Thus, the major signal of well-functioning city is the quality of governance. Therefore, government on its part should be responsive and ready to improve professional practices and procedures and create enabling environment in which authorities at different levels are more responsive to citizens.

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