

Alternative Methods of Transportation Infrastructure Delivery in Sub-Saharan Africa

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I. Introduction

Sufficient transportation infrastructure in sub-Saharan Africa is lacking, as is the case among many developing nation states in the Global South. As other sectors of the developing economies improve, “societies grow wealthier and transport problems worsen” - in that way, “urban transport problems are perverse”¹. Both Ghana’s and Nigeria’s current and past administrations have reiterated the stark need to modernize transportation infrastructure but haven’t had much in the form of tangible progress until recently. Now that both countries have achieved relative political and economic stability, they can start actively addressing these infrastructure needs.

In order to properly complement the expansion and modernization of Ghana’s commercial ports, significant investment in Ghana’s interior transportation networks is absolutely imperative. The country’s railways were originally designed and built out by foreign mining interests in the early 1900s for hauling people and goods to and from these sea ports. This railway system has received minimal maintenance and no expansion since Ghana’s independence in 1956. Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) has been introduced in Accra, Ghana along with renovations to some commuter rail lines with more promised expansion in the pipeline – but progress has been slow.

In the same vein, although BRT service has been successfully operating in exclusive lanes since 2008 in Lagos, Nigeria; however, with a population of 21 million people, it is still the second largest city in the world that lacks rail-based mass transit. Consequently, Nigerians that live in Lagos endure some of the worst urban congestion in the world. Past attempts to modernize passenger transport infrastructure in Nigeria have fallen prey to irresponsible governance and corruption and even the most recent light rail project is many years past its expected opening date.

With definite needs for infrastructure funding and minimal local sources to cover those needs, both Ghana and Nigeria have embraced the concept of direct foreign investment and Public-Private-Partnerships (PPPs) to deliver high-quality and modernized transportation infrastructure to facilitate goods movement and passenger travel in and around large urban areas. China has been a key source of such investment. For example, Ghana recently developed a funding partnership in which China pledged to commit US\$15 billion towards infrastructure development based on a model of leveraging Ghana’s natural resources rather than the traditional model of borrowing and aid. Similarly, Nigeria has established a public-private partnership between the Lagos State Government (LSG) and the Lagos Metropolitan Area Transport Authority (LAMATA) to build out a light-rail system to serve the nation’s capital city, employing a Chinese civil engineering and construction firm.

As Chinese infrastructure investment quickly escalates in the region, it is important to establish a comparative study between the two nations that feature similar key industries, explosive population growth, similar social problems, and democratically elected presidential leadership, but very stark differences in governance tactics, transparency and corruption. While certain levels of corruption are likely present in both countries, it is certainly more pronounced in Nigeria. On the other hand, Ghana has been applauded as an exemplar of successful democracy in sub-Saharan Africa with the democratic election of Nana Akufo-Addo in 2016, the first time a sitting president has failed to win a second term since the country’s independence in 1956. I intend to study the resulting mobility and social impacts of the aforementioned public-private partnerships along with existing forms of passenger transportation in each country while comparing and contrasting the transportation infrastructure delivery process and public perspectives of it in both places.

II. Research Questions

I have already conducted two reports on transportation infrastructure delivery and public private partnership finance models in Ghana for Dr. Michael Walton’s Transportation Systems Management course

¹ Pojani, Dorina, and Dominic Stead, editors. *The Urban Transport Crisis in Emerging Economies*. Cham, Switzerland, Springer, 2017. *The Urban Book Series*. Gale Virtual Reference Library. Accessed 26 Sept. 2017.

(CE 392U). I am in the process of undergoing the same process to establish a baseline of available research, literature and news reports about Nigeria prior to departing for my research trip. However, due to the paucity of reliable and available online resources on these subjects, especially in nation-states ranking 70th (Ghana) and 136th (Nigeria) out of the 176 countries ranked in Transparency International's 2016 Corruption Perception Index, primary resource collection is imperative to get a full and accurate perspective to report upon in my thesis project. I will conduct the majority of this research and data retrieval over a 6 to 8-week period in July-August of 2018 in both Ghana and Nigeria.

The following questions will be explored and expanded upon during my visit to each country: 1) *What have been the mobility and social impacts of direct foreign investment and PPP's on transportation infrastructure?*; 2) *What is the general public perception of the improvements and the way they have come to fruition?*; 3) *What have been the key factors that have limited the use of PPP's in the past for these types of projects?*; 4) *With China and/or Chinese companies picking up the financing and construction contracts for most of these PPP projects, is there a concern about China establishing 'soft power' in sub-Saharan Africa?* I plan to refine these questions and fully develop my research methodology throughout this semester as a part of Dr. Rebecca Torres' Research Design in Geography course (GRG 390L).

III. Research Methods

In order to explore and refine the aforementioned research questions, my fieldwork abroad will be divided into two parts. I will spend the first 3-4 weeks in and around Accra, Ghana experiencing local transportation systems and interviewing local government officials, transportation professionals at Metro Mass Transit (a public-private transit provider), community groups and academic contacts. I am working with Dr. Omi Jones within UT Austin's African & African Diaspora Studies department, who will be in Ghana teaching a UT study abroad course in Accra in May, to establish connections with community groups and local university contacts in Ghana. My primary focus will be transportation development, operations and delivery in and around Accra; however, if time permits I plan to make trips to the important port city of Takoradi and an industrial center inland from the coast, Kumasi to experience the state of regional transportation options within Ghana.

I will spend the second 3-4 weeks in and around Africa's largest city: Lagos, Nigeria. Here, I also plan to experience the local transportation systems and seek interviews of local government officials, academics, and community groups. In addition to taking his class in *China & Africa* this semester, I plan to work with Dr. Joshua Eisenman, a professor at UT's LBJ School and author of two books documenting Sino-African relations, to help develop contacts on the ground in Nigeria before my visit. I am specifically interested in establishing contacts within the Lagos State Government and the Lagos Metropolitan Area Transport Authority, the respective private and public agencies cooperating with contractor China Civil Engineering Construction Company to construct a light rail system in Lagos under a public-private partnership. It is expected that the first of eighteen lines of the Lagos Urban Rail Network – the Blue Line connecting the Lagos Marina with suburban Okokomaiko - will be constructed prior to my arrival. I plan to spend extensive time at each station area to gauge user perceptions of the new service and will look to acquire ridership and other relevant data from local sources.

IV. Funding Requested

The requested amount of US\$5,170 will cover a portion of my expenses during my thesis research fieldwork period in sub-Saharan Africa, taking place for 6-8 weeks in July and August of 2018. The amount can be broken down as follows: round-trip international airfare (Austin to Accra & Lagos to Austin; ~\$1950USD); Visa fees in Ghana (US\$200) and Nigeria (\$US200); 3 weeks accommodation in Accra and surrounding areas (~US\$735 or \$35/night); 3 weeks accommodation in Lagos and surrounding areas (~US\$735); food allowance for 6 weeks (US\$500 or \$12/day); land transportation in Ghana (US\$200) and Nigeria (US\$200); books, photocopies, maps, aerial photographs, and GIS data acquisition fees (US\$300); domestic airfare between Lagos, Nigeria & Accra, Ghana (US\$150). I plan to self-fund weeks 7 and 8 in addition to a trip to China in May of 2018, which will involve meeting with both Chinese government officials and private contractors who have ties in African infrastructure development to gain an additional perspective.

Inspiration: "A developed country is not a place where the poor have cars...it is where the rich use public transportation." - Enrique Peñalosa, Mayor of Bogotá, Colombia.