

RETHINKING URBAN SPACES DHAKA AND BEYOND



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Dhaka's transport sector: any sight of a bigger picture?

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included routes for metro rail and Bus Rapid Transits in Dhaka was initiated and developed has changed. The inbound and outbound traffic coming to the access points into Dhaka will change drastically when the Padma Bridge is opened. Instead of two access points, South and part of North Bengal will be linked faster to Dhaka through Mawa, which will induce additional traffic in the Mawa-Zajira end and a reduction in the Daulatdia-Paturia Ferry route. The whole city's transport infrastructure will face a changed scenario, the mass transit system will face further challenges. Circular roads in the revised strategic transport plan can alleviate it, but implementation is still not seen to be in sync with the upcoming projects. All fast track mega projects should be in sync. The study that considered the feasibility of the mass transit system including the metro rail project needs to incorporate future demand in order to be a successful endeavour."

The metro rail itself presents challenges of its own—for a population that has had access to but ardently ignored inter-city rail travel for the most part, questions remain about how effective it will be in enticing the masses to switch from buses to rapid rail transit. What happens to the buses? Will the government incentivise public transport via buses at the same time? Without any clear policy dictating how these elements will play out in the future, there's every chance that the metro rail project will not be as clearly beneficial to Dhaka's transport sector as has been claimed.

THE NEED FOR POLICY

Building flyovers or a metro rail project alone is not a sustainable solution to Dhaka's traffic woes, says Professor Amin. The steps need harmonisation



ILLUSTRATION: EHSANUR RAZA RONNY

between development efforts, plans and visions for the country. In the absence of such harmony, our traffic forecasts in numerals used for planning often remain far away from the ground conditions that a project sees after its implementation. A thorough understanding is necessary between the visions generating the demands and the

efforts undertaken to ensure the supply. Close concerted perception is required among policymakers, planners and the engineering professionals of all implementing agencies.

"We need to match infrastructure development work with policies that seek to reduce the number of vehicles on the road. Whether it's through

creating special economic, commercial or social zones and enforcing it, or through carpooling and High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lanes, or even congestion charges in certain areas, there are a significant number of policies that we might not have still looked into. We are failing to implement the land use area plans. One

of the few attempts to control the number of trips generated daily on Dhaka's roads, through allowing odd and even-numbered cars to ply roads on successive days, was found to be an ineffective policy. We need to refine our strategies in that regard and ensure that

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