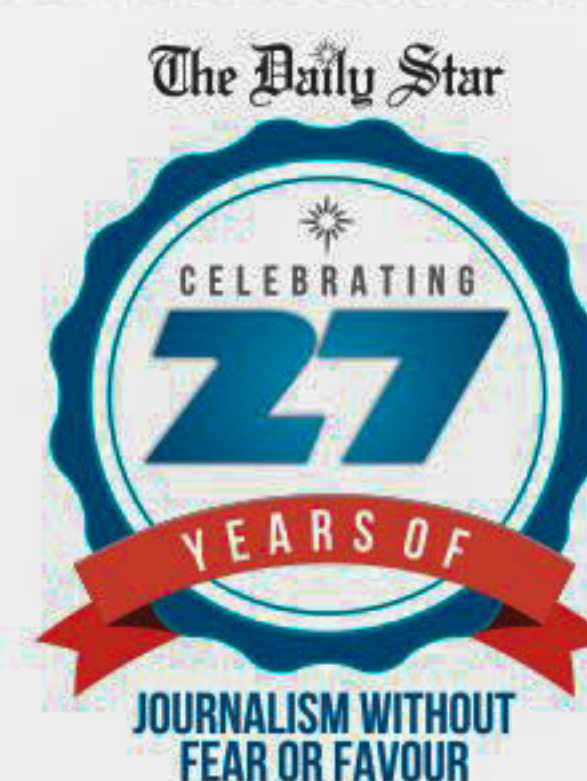


# RETHINKING URBAN SPACES DHAKA AND BEYOND



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## Urbanisation trends and sustainable transport

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traffic congestion is the most common phenomenon in our everyday life. Since 1995 to 2005, the roads of Dhaka have increased only by five percent, but population and traffic have increased by over 50 percent and 134 percent respectively (DTCB, 2005). Dhaka's road network is nearly 3000 km (of which 200 km primary, 110 km secondary, 50 km feeder and 2640 km narrow roads) with few alternative connector roads; only 400 km footpath, of which 40 percent are being occupied illegally by vendors and others, is available for pedestrians (DTCB, 2005). There are no effective bicycle lanes and safe walkways even. Although a 39-km long railroad passes through the heart of the city, it has little contribution to its transport system due to policy constraints. Likewise, Dhaka is surrounded by waterways, but it is not likely designed to serve the city.

Although the motorisation levels in Dhaka is still very low compared to similar sized cities of the world, the rate of increase of various types of vehicles in recent years is significant and unbalanced. Dhaka has a substantial share in energy consumption as the central place of intense transportation use and economic activities. Dhaka alone has about 37 percent (as high as 55 percent excluding the motorcycles) of the total motor vehicles registered in the country; and about 70 percent and 80 percent of the country's total buses and private cars, respectively. Today the mega city Dhaka is one of the world's most crowded and congested cities. As per World Bank (2017) analysis, many residents in Dhaka often lack access to basic services and in the last 10 years,

average traffic speed has dropped from 21 km/hour to 7 km/hour, only slightly above the average walking speed. Its traffic congestion eats up 3.2 million working hours per day and accounts for a loss of at least BDT 550 billion a year. Many have expressed their apprehension that Dhaka is destined to be the world's largest slum if we make further delays to take corrective measures. Its traffic congestion not only causes increased costs, loss of time and psychological strain, but also poses serious threats to our socioeconomic

transportation of such a large city like Dhaka. Road transport has, in particular, revolutionised lives, bringing great flexibility and widening horizons; but an over-concentration on road transport has a price—for health, for the economy and for the environment (RHTD, 2013). Policies for more and more road construction have clearly failed to cope with ever increasing demand from rapid motorisation, resulting in a vicious circle. As continued road building to cope with increasing demands for transport is not

(54 in Asia). The Tokyo metro (130 lines) alone carry as many as 14.6 billion passengers annually. There are about 400 light rail systems worldwide, while over 200 new systems are being planned.

Whether urban rail (metro, commuter or light rail) is essential or not for efficient transport in large developing cities depends on the city and pattern of development itself. When high-density urban development expands widely but employment remains centralised, buses and private

without the development of an extensive rail network. High-speed, frequent, and reliable rail services have helped expand the area within commuting distance, while allowing employment to grow apace in central Tokyo.

Hong-Kong, Singapore, Seoul, Mumbai, Malaysia and Taipei have also adopted rail-oriented strategies. Delhi Metro is very popular and is being extended to cover many major parts of the City. Commuter Rail services are the life line of Mumbai City. The two most rapidly growing nations of Asia, China and India, have been increasingly introducing urban rail systems, especially the metro, in many big cities in consideration of its capacity to cater to long-term growth. With the rapid development of the national economy and the speeding up of urbanisation, the rail transport is gradually becoming the main way of the urban public transportation globally. The rail transit, as a kind of large capacity, high speed, safety and punctual transportation, not only improves the accessibility of urban traffic, but also raises a new commercial circle. It has a huge impact on the development of urban commercial spaces and to the improvement of citizens' living standard.

The railways in Bangladesh have the potential to play a key role in the context of regional connectivity and trade, and can be a sustainable mode of urban transport. For a large city like Dhaka, especially when it reaches a stage where the concentration of travel demand cannot be efficiently handled by the road-based system, the development of an urban rail system becomes essential. The existing infrastructure and social condition of Dhaka have not enough provision to introduce bus-only lanes and bus prioritisation. Due to lack of sufficient road capacity and limited scope for future expansion, bus services alone will not be able to meet the future transportation demands of the mega city Dhaka. The population of greater Dhaka is expected to be 36.0 million by 2024 with estimated total 70 million person trips a day (STP, 2005). To carry this huge load and considering the long-term investment benefits, heavy-rail based metro systems (like New Delhi) is necessary for the metropolis. The secondary corridors may then justify bus rapid transit (BRT) systems, which may also feed the metro. BRT cannot be an alternative option for heavy rail system to provide

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environment. With its present situation of traffic systems, the city stands in dire need for a radical transformation in the structural sense. Until and unless there is an immediate and effective solution, the system will collapse. We need to take a comprehensive view of the present shortcomings and future potentialities of the metropolis to identify and work out plans for formulating strategies to standardise the efficiency of traffic flow and the effectiveness of the transportation system because choices about transportation system determine the kind of city we want to live in. To maintain the economic viability of this city and to keep its environment sustainable, an efficient mass transportation system is imperative.

From the experience of the mega cities of the world, a road system alone cannot satisfy the need for

environmentally or financially sustainable, the desired transport plan for Dhaka must be multi-modal and well-integrated, and use the best features of all modes of transport that can complement one another. The challenge of the exponentially growing Dhaka can be met by moving its future development patterns in more sustainable directions through rationalised and accessible transports which are inclusive and transit oriented. Rail transit has the potential—it is a demand responsive, rapid, cost-effective and environmentally benign urban passenger transport. World cities are increasingly using rail-based mass transit to meet the growing demands and cope with developmental challenges. As of October 2014, 157 cities in 55 countries around the world host approximately 160 metro systems

cars may not be able to provide efficient transport facilities to the mass people and in this case urban rail with coordinated feeder services becomes predominantly important for carrying large volumes of traffic. The Japanese system of urban transportation by rail, and its medium-range, high-speed railway network is a model for all to emulate. Japan's mass transit systems as well as railways are the envy of the world: fast, clean, frequent and punctual; they are an example to other nations of what can be achieved when government, business and science co-operate for the benefit of all. Tokyo's extensive urban transport system, among the most highly developed in the world, is largely characterised by an intensive use of rail systems. It is likely that the population and employment growth in the Tokyo Metropolitan Region would not have been achieved



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