

RETHINKING URBAN SPACES DHAKA AND BEYOND



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Urbanisation trends and sustainable transport

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 28

demand-responsive transport services by any means. Even the elevated motorways/busways will not solve the problems; rather they will cater to different types of traffic, likely car owners. Instead, a commuter or

systems as the existing railroads crisscross some major urban cores. Moreover, Dhaka has unique potential for circular waterways development as it is surrounded by rivers and waterways. This also could accommodate a circular rail system to further ease the traffic load of the city.

of our economy, providing millions of people with access to jobs, goods and services. In core urban areas of the city, streets need to be viewed as places of exchange—both social and economic—and traffic speeds need to be tuned to facilitate that exchange, not high-speed mobility. Streets can become destinations worth visiting, not just thruways to and from the workplace (Toth, 2011). Transit stops and stations can make commuting by rail a pleasure. Major rail stations might be destinations and lifestyle centres that may further blend our commute with our lives. People around the world are increasingly using stations, not just as places to catch a train, but as centres for leisure and business. Of nearly a million weekly visitors to London's St. Pancras station, a quarter come to eat, drink or shop rather than to take a train. Rail stations may play a broader role than providing a means of access to rail networks.

They are increasingly the focal points of major towns and cities and can be centres of economic activity in their own right. This trend will continue as stations become places of experiential retail and also provide facilities such as gyms, hairdressers, meeting spaces and offices. Rail services may focus on the total journey, as passengers seek out the trip that offers the most efficient means of getting from A to B. Information and communication technology based integrated journey information and seamless connections to other transport modes will create a hassle-free, holistic travel experience. Walking facilities and non-motorised transportation shall be the lifeblood of our urban cores. The consequence of these requirements is what is known as transit-oriented development, which may be taken as compact, mixed use,

pedestrian and cyclist friendly development oriented towards the use of public transport—this is what Dhaka should adopt for ensuring a sustainable future for transportation and the city.

Being the administrative, commercial and cultural capital of Bangladesh, the mega city Dhaka has a major role to play in the socioeconomic development of the country. But the existing transportation system is a major bottleneck for the development of the city. Bangladesh has made remarkable achievements in developing its transportation system during the last four decades; however, many problems in its business, management, and planning remain. In many cases, previous policies have focused on the construction of additional road infrastructure and capital-intensive, high-cost transport projects with little consideration for future needs, environmental sustainability and land-use consequences. With the graduation from the least development country category, the government and city authorities should take decisions more judiciously to invest in future urban infrastructure, and be realistic while selecting appropriate mass transit options, taking into account long-term needs, and implementation and financial issues. It is important to ensure that the transport sector issues are being addressed in a holistic manner with an integrated policy approach rather than the piece-meal sub-sectoral approach that has been adopted so far. The government's policy of providing long-term public investment should support for developing a creative and smart city; and to realise that, Dhaka may adopt a rail-based mass transit system in a mixed land use and compact city form,

which should be developed in a planned and comprehensive manner integrated with efficient land use as well as walking and cycling facilities and other modes of transport that respects commuters' choices and ensures door-to-door services for well-balanced goals that respond to economic, environmental, and social challenges. Stakeholders need to agree on a comprehensive transport strategy plan, ensuring the co-existence of different modes of transport. There must be strong political support and competent management for smooth implementation with clear-cut provisions delineating the respective roles of the different planning and implementing agencies.

To advance with innovations for achieving sustainable development, it is imperative that choices are made, not exclusively on past practices, but also on forthcoming potentials and favoured outcomes. The future balanced mix of transport modes for sustainability is something that will be created, not entered into. Looking forward to 2030, 2040 or 2050 entails us to think in applied terms in the expectation of pushing the limits of inventive reasoning and creative thinking. We are usually thought of as conventional; but there is a need to continue with farsightedness and look into what technological changes are taking place around the globe to grasp innovative reasoning and creative thinking anticipating the present into what's to come in the future.

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From the experience of the mega cities of the world, it is seen that a road system alone cannot satisfy the need for transportation of such a large city like Dhaka.

PHOTO:
UN/KIBAE PARK

suburban railway system like Mumbai (having several routes connecting to neighbouring suburban districts and growth centres) can be developed along existing rail corridors through planned development for suburban commuter trips that can easily be integrated into the central railway

To enhance the development effects of the rail system, the construction of urban facilities (compact and mixed-use types) at and around the stations for the improvement of inter-modal connectivity is important. The rail network can make an unrivalled contribution to the sustainable growth

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