

KARACHI BRT AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY AND INSTITUTIONAL VIABILITY

Anam Rafiq

ABSTRACT

In the last decade, cities worldwide have recognized the pressing need for high quality transport to challenge the growth of rapid motorization. Karachi, being one of the fastest growing cities in the world with a unofficially recorded population of 22 million, coupled with inefficient traffic management schemes, lack of integrated planning, ageing public buses and a turbulent political history, is failing to meet the needs of its residents. Travelling from one place to another has become very time consuming, as many people have to change multiple buses just to reach their end destination in dire conditions.

Despite living in times of greater mobility, our society has become more polarized. This heightened mobility has gravely disadvantaged particular members of society, such as low-income residents, children, women and the elderly, according to Prof. John Adams public lecture in 2009 at University College London. Longer commuting times, congested roads, and elevated carbon dioxide levels have now shifted global perspectives into reassessing their values; resulting in the emergence of mass transit mega-projects.

There is an absence of critical research and analysis on understanding the underlying issues in previous failed transport interventions. This paper aims to analyze past projects and assess the direction of transport policies to form an understanding of why many projects have not been successful, focusing in particular on the policy and institutional aspects and what are the implications for the current Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system. Then by analyzing two emerging cities with different urban, political and financial contexts, lessons for Karachi have been extracted keeping Karachi's urban context in mind.