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Lagos Metropolitan Area in Nigeria is the world's sixth biggest mega-city and it is growing rapidly. Officials estimate that by 2015 the current population of 18m will have swollen to 25m and by 2050 to 40m people, making it one of the fastest growing metropolises in the world.

Nigeria's political capital may formally have moved inland to Abuja, but Lagos remains the country's commercial, economic and financial centre, accounting for as much as 40% of national GDP and attracting the vast majority of the country's private investment.

However, with a large section of the city's population living in poverty and transport expenditures accounting for almost 20% of disposable income for the lowest income groups, transport affordability of the Lagotian urban public transport system is of equal political and social importance as other measures of quality such as efficiency, safety and mobility.

2002 saw the start of the first phase of the Lagos Urban Transport Project, LUTP, involving a \$100m World Bank loan for the construction of a 22km Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Lite system across the Lagos Metropolitan Area to complement the existing 623km of in-traffic bus routes.

The BRT LagBuses replaced the notoriously dangerous molues in 2008. Frequently breaking down and with commission-paid drivers, the molues were frequently involved in road accidents,

packed beyond capacity and stuck in traffic for hours. The LagBuses, operating on their own exclusive right of way for 60% of their journeys, have cut travel times by 33-50% and accidents by 20%, according to official and World Bank estimates.

Although statistics vary tremendously, between 7 and 16 million trips are made in the metropolitan area daily, the vast majority of which are by bus. More than twice the expected number of passengers use the LagBuses daily, frequently causing long queues at bus stops, especially during peak hours.

Even so, the LagBuses account for only 220,000 daily trips, with private cars, motorcycle taxis, mini-buses (danfos) and especially the informal sector servicing the remainder.

Public and private roles

Responsibility for the entire system was given to the Lagos Metropolitan Area Transport Authority, LAMATA, a state government organisation set up as part of LUTP and responsible for the formulation and coordination of transport policy, programmes and services across Lagos State.

The second phase of the project was initiated in 2010, with a further \$190m loan from the World Bank, a \$100m loan from the French Development Agency (AFD) and \$35m from the Nigerian Government's general budget for a further 13 km BRT-Lite corridors. As with the first phase, LUTP objectives are to encourage



the system as a whole by mitigating the coordination problems that commonly undermine the quality of urban transport systems. The introduction of an electronic integrated fare system across the state is a case in point.

Furthermore, the previous and current state administrations have assigned significant priority to metropolitan transport in budgets and planning. The state government has progressively taken on more and more responsibility from the central government which, despite acting as loan guarantor, has played a negligible role which is likely to have contributed to the relatively smooth improvement of the system.

The combination of sufficient local political will and a potent, local authority have proven quite effective, even if it may be too early to judge the overall impact and financial soundness of an urban transport system that has relied heavily on private capital and development lending for its development.

The rise of PPPs

The total investments requirements for transport infrastructure across Lagos State are enormous; estimates lie in the neighbourhood of \$15bn for road and rail infrastructure alone.

Compared to a total annual budget of just over \$3bn, Lagos State Government would be unable to fund these investments itself. Being home to one of Africa's biggest financial hubs, however, Lagos has significant amounts of indigenous capital residing in the private sector. The use of public-private partnerships, PPPs, has become the hallmark of infrastructure and operations financing in the transport sector, much to the satisfaction of Nigeria's traditional funders - international finan-

cial institutions and bilateral aid agencies. Overseen by LAMATA's special PPP unit, Lagotian PPPs take many forms; from franchising over leasing agreements to standard contracting. For example, the LagBus system is operated by seven private operators, which are responsible for buying and maintaining bus fleets and determining service frequency, while the routes are designated by LAMATA.

The strong private sector involvement in Lagos' transport system is evident at all levels - LAMATA is administered as a private sector outfit, with various government and private sector stakeholders comprising its 13-member board.

Waterways

Although waterways have high potential for Lagotian public transport (Lagos translates as lagoon from Portuguese after all), it is heavily under-utilised and demand is low.

Water-based transit currently accounts for less than 1% of daily trips and such low demand is not least due to a widespread fear of death by drowning. However, since opening in 2000, the main ferry operator, Texas Connection, has not had a single accident in stark contrast to the almost daily accidents on the city's congested roads with trip lengths being significantly shorter as well.

LAMATA's Strategic Transport Master Plan, STMP, includes the construction of ten ferry terminals and the development of a water-based transport system but it remains to be seen how the cultural fear of water transport will be handled.

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