

Urban Mobility in Ekiti State: Options for Transformation

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Abstract

Mobility had been adjudged as one of the basic necessities of life such as food, clothing and shelter. This is so because an immobile person or economy is bound to be poor. In a nutshell, immobility perpetuates poverty. To enable people, goods and services to be able to move in freely from one geographical area to the other, governments at all levels always strive to make provision of transportation system one of their cardinal objectives. Attention in most cases is given to the urban areas at the expense of the hinterland based on the fact that a substantial percentage of the economic activities of many nations is concentrated in the urban centres. Despite all these, mobility problems still confront most of the urban centres in the developing countries of the world. This paper which is on urban mobility in Ekiti State examines mobility problems past and present and the various options that can effectively enhance mobility in the urban areas of the state. Data for the study was collected from both the primary and secondary sources. Physical survey of existing transport networks and other facilities were carried out and documented. Previous findings on mobility condition in the study area was also consulted and juxtaposed with the findings from the physical survey that was carried out. Findings from the analysis revealed that while considerable improvements had been made in solving mobility problems in the study area a lot still has to be done to enhance sustainable urban mobility. The paper recommends options such as co-ordination of land uses and transportation planning in the study area preparation of a Master Plan and expansion of urban roads to accommodate increasing population in Ado Ekiti in particular among others for sustainable transport systems in the study area. (Keywords: Urban, Mobility, Options and Transportation).

1.1 Introduction and Statement of the Problem

One of the most engaged human activities all over the world is transportation and it implies moving people, goods, services and information by specific modes some of which are roads, railways airlines and shipping lines (Fadare and Omole, 1991). Transport is very significant to the socio-economic development of a country or nation and also of paramount importance to the realization of the broad development objectives of the average man's social and economic desires (Gattima, 1988; Ogunleye, 2006; Ogunleye, 2013). According to Adefolalu (1981) and Olayemi (1980), the provision of transport facilities, and services is very crucial to the economic political and cultural life of a nation because in one way or the other, there is always the need to collect, assemble, move or transfer and distribute people and things. In the same vein, Filani (1982; 2005, Ogunleye, 2013) rightly observed that the socio-economic development of any society depends to a large extent on the nature and structure of the transportation networks of the society since it provides the arteries through which the economic life stream of society flows (the people, information, raw materials and finished products) which help to build and maintain the society. Leinbarnch (1983) observed that a non-existent or inefficient transport system perpetuates subsistence lifestyle and limits the space of the country's economy.

In the life of any urban centre, demand for transport is inevitable because of the need to shop for food and other necessities. In more complex societies, people travel for recreational reasons, and to attend to personal business needs or as part of their job. Freights is moved within the industrial process, from mine to factory or from field to processing plant to shops or warehouses and to the final consumers. Thus, anything which affects the numbers and location of houses, job, shop, factories or storage facilities immediately affects traffic (Ogunleye, 2006).

It is worthy of note at this point to mention that among the various modes of transport, the road transport (which is the predominant mode in Ekiti State as at present) seems to be the most important especially in the developing countries because to a large extent, a substantial percentage of people, goods and services are moved by road from one geographical area to another. Road networks are so key and important because they provide access to work, markets education and health care centres, they facilitate our social interaction and support our economy and even our competitiveness (Arosayin, 1998, Peter et al, 2005, Ogunleye, 2010 and Ogunleye, 2011). According to Sunday (2011), road infrastructure plays a critical role in the entire transportation chain. It connects other modes of transport and permeates all aspects of modern economic activities in the economy. Road transport infrastructure has enormous influence on economic growth and development and cohesion. It is estimated that road transportation accounts for about 90 percent of the national passenger and freight services and provides access to rural areas where majority of the economically active segment of the population lives.

CBN (2003) documented that the extent to which a nation's landmass is covered by road network is an index of the degree of mobility of people, goods and services within the country, and the quality of the network measures the ease and cost of that mobility. No wonder governments at all levels are constantly investing in the road transport infrastructure to enhance urban and rural mobility. According to Peter et al (2005) in her ten-year plan for transport, in Britain, £180 Billion was sought to improve the condition of all users of Britain's road. Likewise, in India, to meet the supply of raw materials for rapid industrialization, the government in her 5th Development plan spent 20 percent of the development fund on transport. This was done through the improvement of the railways, and the ports and by increasing the number of access roads and the number of trucks on the roads (Arosanyin 1998).

On Ekiti roads alone, the federal government of Nigeria in 2006 claimed to have spent N20.1 billion to complete five federal roads. The completed roads are Ado-Igede, Igede-Itawure, Ifaki- Ikole-Omuo-Kogi State border and limited rehabilitation of Ado-Otun-Kwara State border (The Punch, May 22, 2006). The government of Ekiti State too had allocated several billions of naira to the road transport subsector since her creation. It is worthy of note to recognize at this juncture the level of transformation that is taking place in the provision of road infrastructure in Ekiti State under the Fayemi Administration, it has greatly improved both urban and rural mobility in the state. Notwithstanding this improvement, a lot still has to be done to enhance improved and sustainable urban mobility in the State.

It is no more new to point out that majority of the urban centres in the developing countries of the world are facing a lot of urban mobility problems. This is becoming more worrisome as a result of overall population growth and increasing urbanization which have been overwhelmed by sudden jump in travel demand (Aderamo, 2012). According to Gwilliam (2011), Africa's cities are experiencing rapid population growth (typically between 3 and 5 percent) per year over the past decade and the growth had been driven by anemic economic conditions in rural areas rather than by burgeoning wealth in the cities, with the people fleeing rural areas to escape failing crops, natural disasters, poverty and conflicts. The challenge posed by rapid growth is accentuated by the absence of policies on land use and economic developments. This has led to urban sprawl as migrants from rural areas settle in outer areas where land is cheaply available. According to John et al (2005) virtually all cities of developing countries (especially Africa) face mobility crisis as a result of the following:

- Unplanned haphazard development at the sub-urban fringe without adequate infrastructure, transport and other public services.
- Limited network of roads, often narrow, poorly maintained and unpaved.
- Extremely congested road with an incompatible mix of both motorized and non-motorized vehicles travelling at widely different speeds.
- Rapidly increasing ownership and use of private cars and motorcycles.
- Inadequate roadway accommodation for buses and non- motorized transport.
- Primitive and non-existent traffic facilities control and management often without adequate street signage.
- Extremely high and rapidly rising traffic fatalities especially among pedestrians and motorcyclists.
- Overcrowded, uncomfortable, undependable, slow, uncoordinated, inefficient and dangerous public transport and
- Extremely high levels of transport related pollution, noise and other environmental impacts, especially in large cities.

It is against this background that this paper tries to look at urban mobility in an emergent state of Ekiti with the objectives of examining: urban mobility in Ekiti State (Ado-Ekiti in particular) past and present and to recommend options for sustainable and efficient urban mobility in Ekiti State, Nigeria.

1.2 The study Area

The study area is Ekiti State Nigeria which lies between longitude 4°5' and 5°45' East of the Greenwich Meridian and Latitudes 7°15' and 8°15' North of the Equator. It lies south of Kwara and Kogi State as well as East of Osun State. It is bounded in the south by Ondo State. Ekiti State was created on the 1st of October, 1996. The state carved out of old Ondo State covers the former twelve Local Government Areas that made up the Ekiti zone of the old Ondo State.

However, Ekiti State on creation took off with sixteen (16) Local Government Areas having had additional four carved out of the old ones. Ekiti State has a land area of 6,353km. Ekiti State is in the Southwestern Region of Nigeria. It has sixteen (16) Local Government Areas (Ekiti State Government, 2006)

Ekiti State has a fairly undulating plain, it lies within a beautiful area underlined by pre-Cambrian rock group. Its landscape consists of ancient plains broken by steep sided outcrop rocks which occur singularly or in group of ridges. The most notable of these rocks are found in Efon Alaaye, Ikere- Ekiti and Okemesi Ekiti. Climatically, the state falls entirely within Koppen's A climatic belt. It enjoys tropical climate with two distinct seasons, these are the rainy season (April-October) and the dry season (November-March). Temperature is almost uniform throughout the year. It ranges between 21°C and 28°C with relatively high humidity. The state enjoys an average of 1400mm annual rainfall. The tropical rain forest exists in the south, while the guinea savanna occupies the northern peripheries. (Ekiti State Government, 2006). The high amount of rainfall received in the state to some extent affects the durability of the roads when constructed. Since most of the roads are not provided with drainage system, culverts and standard bridges, most roads are liable to flooding when rain falls thereby compounding the transport problem in the state.

Ekiti State has a total of 2,384,212 people according to the provisional population census figure released after the 2006 population and housing census exercise (Ekiti State Government, 2006). The people of Ekiti form one of the largest ethnic groups in the Yoruba nation. Ekiti's are culturally homogenous and they speak a dialect of Yoruba language known as Ekiti. The homogenous nature of Ekiti confers on the state some uniqueness among the state of the federation.

On infrastructure, things are still far from being excellent. The state of electricity, potable water, refuse disposal system is still below average. Although, work has commenced on a couple of the state roads in recent times. Some of the state, federal and local government roads are in deplorable conditions thereby making some communities to be badly linked. This is hindering socio-economic and political activities of the people.

1.3 Scope of the Study

This paper focuses more on Ado-Ekiti, the capital of Ekiti State more importantly because the bulk of the mobility problems confronting the urban areas in the state manifest in the state capital. Other notable semi-urban areas in the state such as Ikere-Ekiti, Igede-Ekiti, Ikole Ekiti, Ijero-Ekiti to mention but a few have minimal mobility problems which in most cases are manifest on the market days of these communities. However, mention is made of these semi-urban centers in the latter part of this paper for policy implications.

1.4 Research Methods

Data for this work were sourced from both the primary and secondary sources. Specifically, physical survey was carried out on the major roads and other transport related facilities in Ado Ekiti and other medium-sized cities in the state. From the secondary source, an earlier published work titled "Determinants of transport crisis in Ado Ekiti Nigeria" by the author in collaboration with another researcher (Ogunleye and Ibitoye 2005) was consulted so as to be able to make a comparative analysis of urban mobility in Ado Ekiti past and present.

1.5 Urban Mobility in Ado-Ekiti Past and Present: A Comparative Analysis

According to Ogunleye and Ibitoye (2005) in their work titled "determinants of transport crisis in Ado-Ekiti, Nigeria" the deplorable condition of the major and minor roads in Ado-Ekiti was one of the contributory factors of mobility problems in the city. Specifically, the Ikere-old garage-Okesa-Fajuyi-Opopogboro road.

The Fajuyi Iyin road the Ijigbo- Ilawe road and the Matthew- Ijan road were selected with the purpose of looking at their characteristics. Fieldwork exercise revealed that the average width of these roads taken at intervals was 7.7m, that is the right-of way and 1.7m on each side of the roads for pedestrian walkways wherever they existed at all. Most areas along the roads in the metropolis lacked pedestrian walk-way and where they existed were in bad condition thereby resulting to pedestrians struggling with motorists on the right of way that was too narrow for vehicular movement alone. All the roads under examination were tarred long time ago, and were in deplorable conditions as a result of aging and lack of maintenance culture. Along the old-garage-Fajuyi road, specifically around the post office, the road was riddled with port-holes that vehicles found it difficult to ply unless they slow down considerably. This was also the case of the Matthew-road. The study further revealed that drainage system along these roads was nearly non-existent. When rain falls, floods were a common phenomenon. At the "Aba Igbira" junction at Opopogbooro vehicle movement was always brought to a halt whenever it rained. All these hindered efficient mobility of both vehicle and human traffic during the period under consideration.

Considering terminal facilities along these roads i.e. Motor parks, bus-stops, laybys off-street parking lots, on-street parking lots etc, the study showed and reported that the major motor parks for the on-loading and off-loading of passengers by commercial vehicles in the city were in most cases not put into use. Commercial bus/car operators in a bid to make quick and more trips per day abandoned these parks and turned themselves to nuisance in the city.

The parking system around the Central Business District (CBN) Oja Oba axis of the metropolis was nothing to write home about. The volume of vehicles that converge on this area between the hours of 8.00am and 5.00pm daily outgrows the available space for parking. There was no provision for off- street parking thereby forcing motorist to park haphazardly. There were no bus stops for passengers' vehicles to load and off-load passengers along the major routes in the city. Taxi cabs stop indiscriminately to load and off-load passengers. The peak of the problem was always experienced during the Bisi Egbeyemi market days (a four-day periodic market) when both commercial and private vehicles park indiscriminately to partake in the commercial activities. During these days motorists found it difficult to have a free passage.

Considering land uses as generators and attractors of vehicular traffic, the study showed that various land uses such as educational, residential institutional agricultural were huge generators and attractors of vehicular traffic in the study area. These land uses were either places of residence, learning, working, shopping or transacting business which attracted both vehicular and pedestrian traffic resulting in urban mobility problems in the city. Results of vehicular volume studies reported elsewhere (Ogunleye and Ibitoye, 2005) showed that each designated cordon station points to the direction of one or more identified landuses. For example, station one, which is along the Iworoko road, where, the Ekiti State University is situated had a weekly total of 29191.67 P.C.U representing 18.62% of the vehicular volume for the week.

Traffic control and mechanism had to do with traffic control devices which provide visual information for motorists. They include signs, signals, markings and other devices placed on or adjacent to a street or highway by the authority of a public body or official with the power to regulate or guide traffic. Some elementary requirements expected to be met by such traffic control devices include the following:

- (a) it must be capable of fulfilling an important need
- (b) it should convey a clear and simple meaning
- (c) it should be located to give adequate time for response
- (d) it should command the respect of road users and it must be sanctioned by law.

Unfortunately these traffic control measures were scantily provided along the major roads in the city. Findings showed that traffic light control mechanism was non-existent in Ado-Ekiti and this left the control of vehicular traffic in the hands of traffic wardens who are not as efficient as computerized mechanism. Another aspect of traffic control measures is road junctions and intersections. The objectives of intersection control anywhere in the World include (a) utilization of intersection capacity (b) reduction and prevention of accidents and (c) protection of major streets. Fieldwork revealed that poor design of road junctions and intersections along the major roads contributed in no small measures to constant vehicular and pedestrian chaos at these points thereby hindering efficient urban mobility. The most problematic intersections along these roads were the Ijigbo junction, post office round about, polytechnic road round about, the Federal Housing junction along the Iworoko road, the governor's office junction around Ile Abiye along Ilawe road and the Fajuyi park intersection.

Most of these junctions were poorly designed that they hardly served the purpose for which they were built. For instance, the frequent congestion normally experienced during the early morning rush around the Federal Housing junction along Iworoko road became so pathetic as a result of the volume of vehicular traffic around the junction.

Looking at the state of road network characteristics, terminal facilities and existing traffic control mechanisms reported by the findings of Ogunleye and Ibitoye (2005) in their work on determinants of transport crisis in Ado-Ekiti, Nigeria vis-a-vis what is obtainable now along the major roads in Ado-Ekiti, it is evident that some if not all the deficiencies identified as contributing factors to urban mobility crisis had been taken care of or corrected. In the first place, the recent urban renewal programme embarked upon by the Fayemi administration has helped in no small measure in promoting urban mobility in Ado-Ekiti metropolis. Urban renewal which had been used to describe the aggregate techniques developed for the treatment of urban problem on a physical basis has given Ado-Ekiti a facelift in no small measure. The dualisation of the Okeyinmi-New garage axis of the metropolitan road and the actual relocation of the Bisi Egbeyemi market to Awedele Area behind the Textile Industry and outright construction of a dual carriage way (Adunni Olayinka drive) where this market existed before to join the Ijigbo-Ilawe road had totally enhanced efficient vehicular and human mobility in the Central Business District (CBD) area of Ado-Ekiti. The dualisation of the Iworoko road at least to the urban fringe area has also promoted vehicular mobility a great deal.

The reconstruction of some faulty roundabouts and intersections along the major roads is a plus for improved and efficient vehicular mobility in the metropolis. The introduction of traffic light mechanism along major intersections had greatly enhanced free-flow of traffic in these areas and above all, the establishment of the Ekiti State Traffic Management Agency is a step in the right direction. The efforts of the officers of this agency in the enforcement of traffic regulation and control of vehicular traffic have brought sanity to the major roads in Ado-Ekiti metropolis.

Finally, the provision of adequate parking system along the major roads in the metropolis coupled with adequate monitoring and enforcement had contributed immensely to enhanced urban mobility in the city of Ado-Ekiti.

1.6 Options for Sustainable Urban Mobility in Ekiti State

Ekiti, an emergent State in Nigeria is undergoing tremendous and significant transformation that will naturally attract upsurge in population especially in the major urban areas. The recent noticeable improvement in the transportation system in the state capital which is one of the indices of measuring the live ability of a city will naturally increase the urbanization trend in the city thereby resulting to population explosion. Records from the National Population Commission showed that the population of Ado-Ekiti according to the population census of 1991 was 157,519. In 2006, the population of the city had risen to 308,626 according to the population census of 2006. It is projected that by the year 2020, the population of the city could be 900,000 or more. Giving this scenario, urgent steps should be taken to plan for the nearly unavoidable projected population increase. The government of the day should be thinking seriously about Ado-Ekiti beyond urban renewal so as to be able to cater for the challenges this population increase will pose.

Therefore, for effective and sustainable road transport system that will enhance urban mobility in Ekiti State. The following recommendations are inevitable.

- (1) There is need to coordinate land use and transportation planning in the urban centres (Ado-Ekiti in particular) to promote and enhance urban mobility.
- (2) A master plan for Ado-Ekiti is long overdue and should be pursued vigorously without further delay.
- (3) There is the need to construct ring roads to cater for through-traffic (which have nothing to do with the city but must compulsorily pass through it) to further decongest the major roads in the city.
- (4) Expansion of urban roads to accommodate projected population increase in Ado-Ekiti in particular because of the various developments springing up in the city. The various educational institutions, Federal and State agencies and offices, commercial, industrial and recreational activities and facilities will further increase the demand for transport in the city.
- (5) Provision of comfortable, dependable, fast, coordinated, efficient, and safe public transport.
- (6) Construction and improvement of more township roads to reduce pressure on the major roads. A good example in Ado-Ekiti is the Pet-tim-onala- Housing-Afao road which can partially serve as a ring road that is capable of taking care of through-traffic going to Ikere from Iworoko road.

- (7) Urgent completion of the dualisation of Ado- Iworoko road so as to adequately cater for the volume of vehicular traffic moving towards the Ekiti State University campus on a daily basis.
- (8) Completion of the street lighting along the major roads in Ado-Ekiti to provide illumination for both vehicular and human traffic in the night thereby enhancing their efficient mobility.
- (9) Drainage facilities should be provided where they are not available and substandard ones should be dismantled to pave way for the construction of standard ones that can conveniently drain rain water when it rains. It is a fact that inadequate and substandard drainage facilities result in occasional flooding of roads during the raining season. This affects traffic flow and reduces the life span of the roads.
- (10) Provision of more off-street parking facilities in some designated areas of the city, lack of off-street parking facilities results in on-street parking which reduces the space meant for vehicular movement thereby hampering free flow of vehicular traffic.
- (11) There should be regular and adequate maintenance of the major and minor roads. The Agencies for this should be well funded to carry out their duties effectively.
- (12) There is the urgent need for the establishment of an agency for the measurement of the performance of roads in the state. Government can borrow a leaf from the developed countries such as (USA, Canada, UK, France, Germany) where such agencies have been established to get feedback from the end-users of these roads on their performances. Attention is now shifting from mere road network facility provision to the actual performance of such roads for efficient service delivery.
- (13) Regular and Comprehensive transportation study is recommended for our urban centres. A time-series data on various components of urban traffic is of great importance to city planners interested in future transportation planning. The pattern of vehicular traffic flow along the major roads in our cities should be monitored regularly so that the design capacity of these roads is not exceeded.
- (14) There is also the need for improved traffic management in the cities.
- (15). Improved traffic education for both motorists and pedestrians through radio and television jingles, workshops and seminars.
- (16). Underage driving and reckless driving that can lead to avoidable accident on our roads should be discouraged.
- (17). There is the need for relocate some of the markets along the major roads in some of our semi-urban centres in the State. This will allow for improved mobility in such communities and safety of lives and properties during their market days.
- (18). Dualisation of Ikere-Ekiti township major roads are highly recommended.
- (19). Some Growth pole centres should be identified in Ekiti State and such Growth pole centres should be made to undergo rapid transformation by the establishment of government offices both State and Federal industries and other commercial activities. This will help to reduce pressure on Ado-Ekiti, thereby reducing her mobility problem.
- (20). Development of modernized agriculture that can attract the unemployed youths to the rural areas thereby reducing pressures on the urban centres.

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