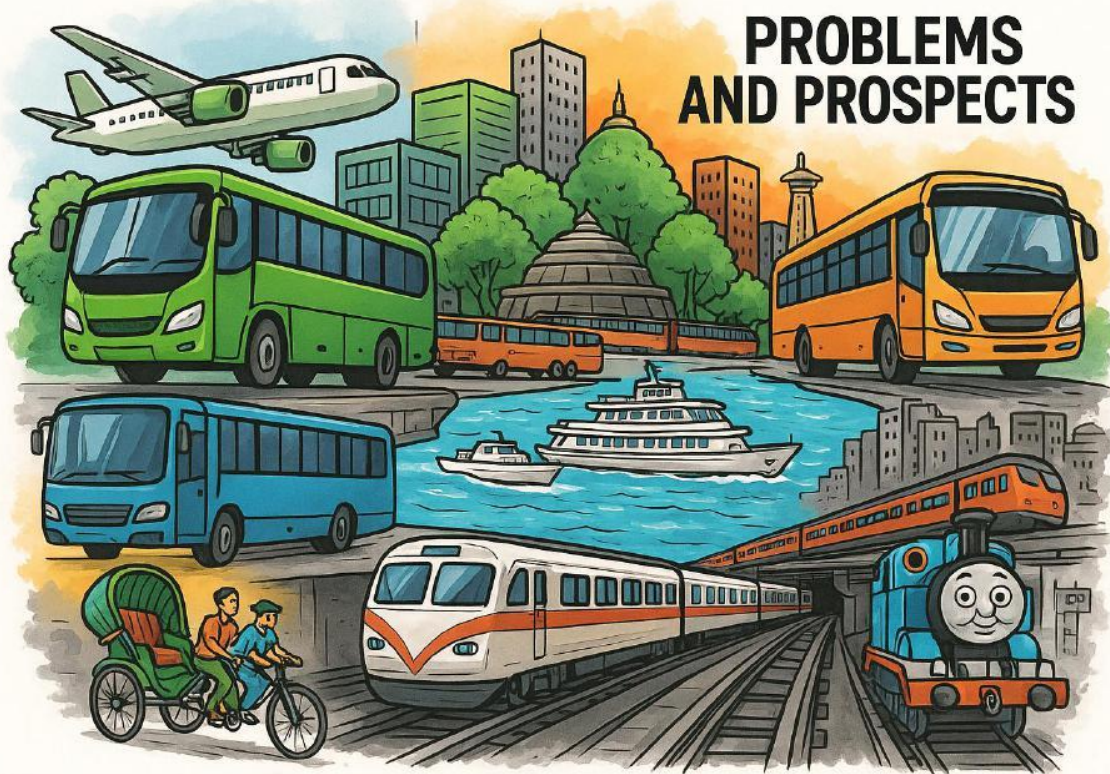


ASIAN STATE

Bangladesh Public Transport System:





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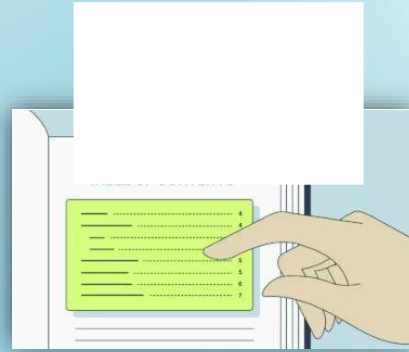
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Editorial Message

Public transport lies at the heart of national mobility, economic efficiency, and inclusive development. In Bangladesh, however, this vital sector faces a critical crossroads. Urban congestion, outdated fleets, poor service quality, and policy fragmentation have turned daily commuting into a struggle for millions. The lack of integrated planning, weak enforcement of traffic rules, and absence of a modern multimodal network have deepened the crisis. Dhaka, one of the world's most densely populated cities, serves as a vivid example of a system under immense pressure.

Yet, the challenges also present opportunities. The expansion of metro rail, digital ticketing systems, and BRT initiatives signal a promising shift. Investments in green, accessible, and safe transport could not only ease congestion but also reduce carbon emissions and enhance public health. The solution lies in bold reforms, public-private collaboration, and long-term vision driven by sustainability and equity.

This edition explores the realities, reforms, and roadmaps of Bangladesh's public transport future. We invite policymakers, planners, commuters, and change-makers to reimagine mobility—not as a burden, but as a backbone of a more liveable, connected Bangladesh. A robust transport system is not a luxury—it is a necessity for a forward-moving nation.



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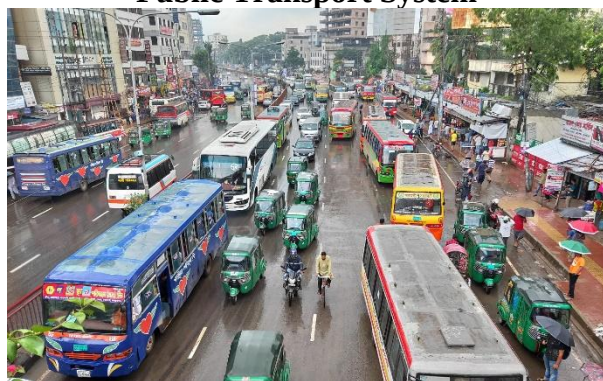


Dr. Neyamat Ullah Bhuiyan

Senior Secretary

Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas
Employment

A Critical Look into Efficiency, Equity, and Urban Mobility Challenges in Bangladesh's Public Transport System



The Crossroads of Mobility

Bangladesh, one of the fastest-growing economies in South Asia, is undergoing rapid urbanization. Cities like **Dhaka, Chattogram, Khulna, and Sylhet** are magnets for migrants seeking better opportunities, and this massive influx has put unprecedented pressure on urban infrastructure. At the heart of this challenge lies **public transport**—a sector that dictates productivity, environmental sustainability, and the inclusiveness of cities.

Yet, the current system is plagued with inefficiency, inequity, and a host of mobility challenges. Commuters endure **daily struggles of long waits, unsafe rides, and inflated fares**, while authorities grapple with **traffic congestion, weak regulation, and inadequate planning**. In this context, a **critical evaluation of efficiency, equity, and urban mobility challenges** is vital to envision a future where transport is not a barrier but a bridge to prosperity.

1. Efficiency in the Urban Transport System

Efficiency in public transport reflects how well resources—time, money, and infrastructure—are optimized to serve maximum passengers at minimum cost. Unfortunately, inefficiency remains the most visible characteristic of Bangladesh's transport system.

1.1 The Daily Gridlock: Dhaka as a Case Study

Dhaka, home to over **20 million people**, is infamous for its traffic congestion. According to the World Bank, the average traffic speed in Dhaka has dropped to **7 km/h—slower than walking pace**. Workers lose **3–5 hours daily** in transit, translating to billions in lost productivity annually.

1.2 Fragmented Bus System

- Over **200 bus companies** operate in Dhaka, many with overlapping routes and poor fleet management.
- Lack of central coordination results in *competition-driven chaos*: buses racing to grab passengers, leading to accidents and delays.
- Absence of smart ticketing forces commuters to negotiate fares, creating both inefficiency and inequity.

1.3 Poor Integration of Modes

Commuters often switch between rickshaws, buses, CNG-run auto-rickshaws, and ferries. Yet, **no unified transport map or schedule** exists. The result is time lost in transfers, fare disputes, and unreliable travel chains.

1.4 Infrastructure Bottlenecks

- Narrow roads (only **7% of Dhaka's land area** is allocated for roads, compared to 25–30% in modern cities).
- Lack of parking management, resulting in **illegal on-street parking**.
- Over-reliance on roads while rail and waterways remain underutilized.

1.5 Financial Inefficiency

Fuel wastage from idling vehicles, maintenance of outdated fleets, and congestion costs the country **over \$3.8 billion annually**. Investment in mass transit projects like **MRT (metro rail) and BRT** has begun, but progress is slow and often delayed due to bureaucratic hurdles.

2. Equity in Urban Transport

Equity ensures that transport systems are accessible and affordable for all citizens, regardless of income, gender, or physical ability. In Bangladesh, transport inequity is a major driver of **social exclusion and vulnerability**.

2.1 Income Disparities

- Public buses are supposed to be the cheapest mode of travel. Yet, **fare hikes without service improvement** disproportionately burden the poor.
- Low-income workers spend up to **25% of daily wages on transport**, while wealthier citizens often shift to private cars or ride-hailing apps.

2.2 Gender Inequality in Mobility

- Women face **sexual harassment, unsafe buses, and lack of reserved seating**.
- A 2020 BRAC study revealed that over **90% of women commuters** in Dhaka reported harassment during travel.
- Many women avoid certain jobs or education opportunities due to unsafe commuting conditions, limiting economic participation.

2.3 Exclusion of People with Disabilities

Public transport infrastructure remains largely **inaccessible**:

- Few buses are wheelchair-friendly.

- Footbridges lack ramps or elevators.
- Rail stations and terminals often lack tactile paving, audible signals, or priority seating.

This exclusion prevents persons with disabilities—over **10% of the population**—from accessing essential services and employment.

2.4 Urban-Rural Divide

- Urban centers like Dhaka enjoy mega projects (MRT, expressways), but **small towns and rural areas** depend on unsafe three-wheelers and poorly maintained roads.
- Seasonal floods cut off entire regions, showing the lack of resilient transport planning for rural communities.

3. Urban Mobility Challenges

Bangladesh's urban mobility challenges are multifaceted, affecting efficiency and equity simultaneously.



3.1 Traffic Congestion

- Dhaka alone has over **1.6 million registered vehicles**, with **70% of trips carried by buses but occupying less than 20% of road space**.
- Private cars account for just 5% of trips but occupy **30–40% of road space**—a classic case of inefficient land use.

3.2 Road Safety Crisis

Bangladesh has one of the **highest road accident fatality rates** globally. Causes include:

- Reckless driving by untrained drivers.
- Weak enforcement of traffic laws.

- Poorly maintained vehicles and roads.

The economic cost of accidents is estimated at **2–3% of GDP annually**.

3.3 Lack of Non-Motorized Transport (NMT) Planning

Rickshaws and cycling remain vital for last-mile connectivity. Yet, **urban planning often excludes NMT lanes**, pushing them into unsafe mixed traffic conditions.

3.4 Air Pollution and Carbon Emissions

- Transport contributes **15% of Bangladesh's greenhouse gas emissions**.
- Aging buses and minibuses emit high levels of particulate matter.
- Dhaka frequently ranks among the most polluted cities worldwide, with public transport being a major contributor.

3.5 Institutional Fragmentation

Multiple agencies—Dhaka Transport Coordination Authority (DTCA), BRTA, City Corporations, and Traffic Police—operate without clear coordination. This fragmentation creates **overlaps, delays, and inefficiencies**.

4. Government Initiatives: Steps Toward Reform

Despite the challenges, several initiatives have been introduced to reshape the system:

4.1 Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) and Bus Rapid Transit (BRT)

- **MRT Line-6** (Uttara to Motijheel) is Dhaka's first metro rail, expected to carry 60,000 passengers per hour once fully operational.
- **BRT projects** aim to establish dedicated bus corridors, though land acquisition and construction delays persist.

4.2 Integrated Fare and Ticketing

Plans are underway for **smart cards and mobile apps** to integrate buses, metro, and trains, simplifying fare payment and travel planning.



4.3 Women-Friendly Transport Policies

- Introduction of **reserved seats for women** in buses.
- **Women-only rides** on metro rail.
- Pilot projects for women-led ride-hailing services.

4.4 Road Safety Strategy

The government has pledged to halve road accident fatalities by 2030 in line with the **UN Decade of Action for Road Safety**. Efforts include stricter driver licensing, awareness campaigns, and blackspot improvement.

5. Toward Efficiency: Policy Recommendations

- **Bus Route Rationalization:** Consolidate operators under a few companies, ensure scheduled services, and reduce unhealthy competition.
- **Smart Mobility Solutions:** Introduce GPS-based bus tracking, e-ticketing, and commuter apps for real-time updates.
- **Multi-Modal Integration:** Align MRT, BRT, buses, and waterways with common hubs.
- **Data-Driven Planning:** Develop a national transport database for evidence-based policy decisions.

6. Toward Equity: Policy Recommendations

- **Affordable Fare Structures:** Introduce subsidies for low-income commuters, students, and the elderly.
- **Gender-Sensitive Planning:** Expand women-only coaches, strengthen anti-harassment laws, and ensure lighting and CCTV in terminals.

- **Universal Accessibility Standards:** Make all new buses and infrastructure disability-friendly; retrofit existing fleets gradually.
- **Balanced Urban-Rural Investments:** Prioritize resilient roads and rural transport hubs to bridge the access gap.

7. Toward Sustainable Urban Mobility

- **Green Transition:** Phase out diesel buses, introduce electric buses and CNG hybrids.
- **Non-Motorized Transport Promotion:** Designate safe bicycle and rickshaw lanes, encourage bike-sharing programs.
- **Transit-Oriented Development (TOD):** Align housing, markets, and offices around MRT/BRT stations to reduce travel demand.
- **Climate Resilience:** Ensure roads, bridges, and terminals are flood-resistant, especially in vulnerable coastal and haor regions.

8. International Lessons for Bangladesh

- **Bogotá, Colombia:** Transformed chaotic buses into an efficient **BRT (TransMilenio)** with dedicated lanes and integrated fares.
- **Jakarta, Indonesia:** Introduced car-free days, bicycle lanes, and water taxis to diversify mobility.
- **Seoul, South Korea:** Centralized bus management, introduced smart cards, and expanded metro systems, drastically reducing congestion.

Bangladesh can adapt these models with local modifications.

9. A Vision for the Future

Imagine Dhaka in 2041:

- Commuters use **electric buses and metro lines** seamlessly linked by feeder routes.
- Women, children, and people with disabilities travel without fear or barriers.

- Rural residents reach urban markets via **safe, climate-resilient roads**.
- Citizens breathe cleaner air, spend less time commuting, and contribute more productively to the economy.

This is not a distant dream—it is achievable with **strategic planning, investment, and governance reforms**.



Conclusion: The Time for Change

Bangladesh's urban transport system reflects the nation's broader development paradox: rapid growth constrained by weak infrastructure and inequitable access. The inefficiency drains billions from the economy, inequity limits opportunities for marginalized groups, and mobility challenges threaten both health and productivity.

Yet, with bold reforms—integrating efficiency, equity, and sustainability—Bangladesh can transform its transport system into a global model for inclusive urban development. The clock is ticking, and the need for action is urgent. Building such a future is not only about moving people; it is about **moving a nation forward**.



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**Special Interview with
Mohammad Abdur Rouf
Secretary
Bridges Division
&
Executive Director
Bangladesh Bridge Authority
Ministry of Road Transport and Bridges**

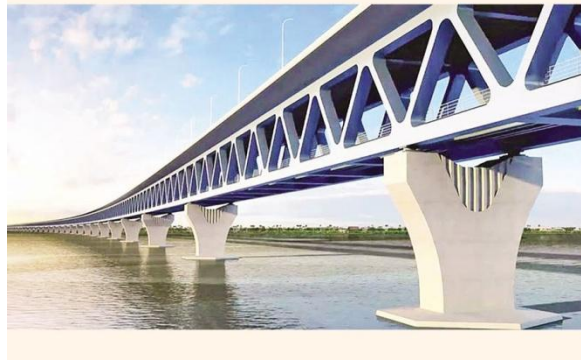
The interview was conducted by Md. Imam Hossain, Country Editor of Asian State's Bangladesh chapter.



Asian State: Which major infrastructure projects currently implemented by the Bridges Division are specifically aimed at enhancing the public transport system?

Mohammad Abdur Rouf: Several key projects undertaken by the Bridges Division are directly linked to improving public transport system/network. Notable among these are the

Padma Bridge, Dhaka Elevated Expressway and the Dhaka-Ashulia Elevated Expressway. These projects are designed to facilitate faster vehicular movement across major urban corridors, enhance intercity connectivity, and support an efficient, mass transit network.



Asian State: How would you evaluate the role of large bridge construction by the Bridges Division in facilitating inter-district public transport?

Mohammad Abdur Rouf: The construction of large bridges has been transformative for inter-district public transport in Bangladesh. The Padma Bridge, for instance, has connected the southwestern region directly with the capital, reducing travel time and transportation costs significantly. Similarly, the Jamuna Bridge has linked the northern and southern regions, enabling the seamless flow of public buses, goods, and passenger vehicles. These structures have essentially redefined national mobility.

Asian State: What initiatives has the Bridges Division taken to ease traffic congestion in Dhaka and other major cities?

Mohammad Abdur Rouf: To mitigate urban congestion, the Bridges Division is implementing multiple expressway projects like the Dhaka Elevated Expressway and Dhaka-Ashulia Elevated Expressway. These are designed to divert through-traffic away from city centers, allowing public transport systems to operate more smoothly. We're also

expanding peripheral roads and connectors so that inter-district transport doesn't rely on congested city roads.



Asian State: How is the Bridges Division coordinating with metro rail, expressway, or Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) projects?

Mohammad Abdur Rouf: The Bridges Division works in close coordination with other agencies under the Ministry of Road Transport and Bridges to ensure that infrastructure projects are integrated. The design of ramps, interchanges, and access points for expressways is done in such a way that it complements metro rail and BRT systems. The goal is to allow smooth modal shifts and maintain an uninterrupted flow of passengers.

Asian State: What role should the Bridges Division play in developing a long-term National Transport Master Plan, in your opinion?

Mohammad Abdur Rouf: The Bridges Division plays a strategic role in shaping the National Transport Master Plan by contributing insights into corridor development, inter-regional connectivity, and multi-modal integration. Our input is vital for mapping the future of transport infrastructure, especially in terms of bridges, expressways, and connectivity nodes that serve both urban and rural regions.

Asian State: In the context of building a Smart Bangladesh, what are your plans for digital transformation and innovation in transport infrastructure?

Mohammad Abdur Rouf: We are integrating digital solutions into all our infrastructure projects. This includes electronic tolling systems, smart interchange management and traffic sensor networks. Our future bridges and expressways will be equipped with Intelligent Traffic Systems (ITS), which will not only streamline public transport operations but also provide real-time data to commuters and authorities.



Asian State: What economic and social impacts have major bridges like the Padma and Jamuna Bridges had on public transportation in Bangladesh?

Mohammad Abdur Rouf: These landmark bridges have significantly boosted the economy by reducing travel time and costs, enhancing trade logistics, and improving access to essential services. For public transport, this means shorter routes, increased frequency of buses, and better service coverage. Socially, it has opened up employment, healthcare, and education opportunities for people living in previously disconnected regions.



Asian State: How is the Bridges Division contributing to improving cross-border connectivity and regional transit with neighboring countries?

Mohammad Abdur Rouf: We are actively working on enhancing regional connectivity through road and bridge infrastructure that links Bangladesh with India, Nepal, and Bhutan. Several projects are underway to strengthen international corridors, streamline border crossings, and enable efficient transshipment. This not only supports public transport but also fosters economic cooperation and regional integration.

Asian State: How are environmental risks and sustainable construction techniques considered during bridge development, particularly when expanding transport infrastructure?



Mohammad Abdur Rouf: Every project undertaken by the Bridges Division goes through a rigorous Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). We prioritize the use of eco-friendly construction materials, sustainable engineering practices, and advanced mitigation technologies. Special attention is given to preserving biodiversity, water flow, and the ecological balance in riverine and wetland areas.

Asian State: What would be your key recommendations to ensure the general public directly benefits from bridge and transport infrastructure?

Mohammad Abdur Rouf: First, infrastructure development must be need-based and people-

centered. Affordable transport fares, route optimization, and safety must be ensured. Second, we should enhance access to these facilities for marginalized and rural communities. Third, infrastructure should be inclusive, efficient, and adaptable to technological changes. Ultimately, it is through synergy between planning, policy, and public engagement that we can maximize the benefits of our transport networks.



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An Exclusive Interview with the
Abu Bakar Md Shahjahan
 Senior Secretary (Rtd), MOPA OF GoB
 Former, Executive Director
 Dhaka Transport Co-ordination Board
 (DTCB)



Asian State: Thank you for joining us. To begin, how would you describe the current state of Bangladesh's public transport system?

Abu Bakar Md Shahjahan: The public transport system in Bangladesh is at a crossroads. On one hand, it is the lifeline for millions of commuters every day, particularly in urban centers like Dhaka and Chattogram. On the other hand, it faces chronic challenges such as traffic congestion, unregulated services, safety concerns, and a lack of coordination among agencies. Despite significant investments in flyovers, metro rail, and expressways, we still lack an integrated, long-term vision for sustainable urban mobility.

Asian State: What do you see as the root causes behind the persistent problems in the sector?

Abu Bakar Md Shahjahan: There are several interconnected factors. First, rapid urbanization has outpaced infrastructure development. Dhaka's population has grown enormously, but its road space remains limited. Second, institutional fragmentation means too many agencies share overlapping responsibilities. Third, enforcement has been weak—laws exist, but compliance is poor. Finally, we have not adequately modernized our fleet; too many buses are old, polluting, and poorly maintained.



Asian State: Congestion and road safety are two pressing concerns. What steps should be prioritized?

Abu Bakar Md Shahjahan: For congestion, we need a comprehensive mass transit system. The metro rail is a welcome step, but it must be expanded and linked to feeder bus routes. Bus route rationalization—organizing routes under fewer, larger companies instead of hundreds of small operators—is critical.

For safety, stricter enforcement is key. But we must also change road culture. Driver training, licensing reforms, and public awareness campaigns are just as important as penalties. Introducing technology such as digital

monitoring, automated signals, and CCTV enforcement will make a huge difference.

Asian State: How can public transport be made more inclusive, especially for women, the elderly, and people with disabilities?

Abu Bakar Md Shahjahan: Inclusivity is often overlooked in transport planning. We must ensure buses and terminals are accessible with ramps, designated seating, and proper signage. Women's safety is another big concern. Special measures such as women-only compartments, better lighting, and stronger monitoring of harassment cases are necessary. If public transport is not safe and accessible for everyone, we cannot call it a success.

Asian State: Environmental sustainability is now a global concern. What role can Bangladesh's transport sector play?

Abu Bakar Md Shahjahan: Transport is one of the largest contributors to air pollution in Dhaka. Shifting toward cleaner fuels, CNG, and eventually electric buses should be a priority. We also need investment in non-motorized transport infrastructure—safe sidewalks, cycling lanes, and shaded pedestrian paths. Sustainable transport is not only about reducing emissions; it is about designing cities that are healthier and more livable.



Asian State: Looking ahead, what would be your top three recommendations for building a better transport future for Bangladesh?

Abu Bakar Md Shahjahan:

1. Develop a National Transport Masterplan that integrates road, rail, waterways, and metro systems under one vision.
2. Strengthen governance and enforcement—reduce institutional overlap, digitize services, and make compliance easier but stricter.
3. Prioritize people over vehicles—design systems for commuters, not just for traffic flow. A people-centered approach will ensure inclusivity, safety, and sustainability.



Asian State: Finally, do you remain optimistic about the future of public transport in Bangladesh?

Abu Bakar Md Shahjahan: Yes, I do. We have challenges, but also great potential. The success of Padma Bridge, metro rail, and BRT corridors shows that Bangladesh can implement ambitious projects. With political will, citizen participation, and better coordination, we can transform public transport from a daily burden into a source of pride.



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Malik Khosru PPM
Former AIG, Bangladesh Police
Trustee, Library Movement Bangladesh

Shaping Tomorrow's Mobility: Opportunities in Reform and Innovation



The way people move defines the way societies grow. Mobility is not just a question of transport; it is the pulse of urban life, the rhythm of economic activity, and the backbone of social inclusion. Yet, as cities expand, populations rise, and environmental pressures intensify, traditional transport systems are increasingly unable to meet the demand. Congestion, inequitable access, environmental degradation, and inefficiency now threaten to paralyze urban areas worldwide. Against this backdrop, the imperative to reshape mobility systems has never been more urgent.

Tomorrow's mobility must be smarter, greener, safer, and more inclusive. Reform and innovation offer a transformative opportunity to reinvent transport infrastructure and governance in ways that address both present-day challenges and future uncertainties. By embracing reforms that strengthen institutions and regulations while integrating technological innovation, cities can foster mobility systems that are efficient, resilient, and equitable. This article critically explores the opportunities that reform and innovation present in shaping the future of mobility. It delves into global and regional perspectives, highlights challenges, and examines how forward-thinking solutions in governance, technology, and design can create inclusive, sustainable transport systems.

Section 1: The Current Mobility Crisis

1.1 Urban Congestion and Productivity Loss

One of the most visible symptoms of failing mobility systems is urban congestion. In many cities, commuters spend hours in gridlock, leading to massive economic losses. Studies suggest that in emerging economies, traffic congestion can consume as much as 2–5% of GDP annually through lost productivity, fuel waste, and delays in logistics.

In Dhaka, Manila, or Nairobi, an average worker spends two to three hours in traffic every day. Such inefficiency not only hampers productivity but also erodes the quality of life, placing enormous stress on workers and their families.

1.2 Inequitable Access

Mobility systems often fail the most vulnerable: the poor, the elderly, women, and people with disabilities. High transport costs, unsafe infrastructure, and limited last-mile connectivity disproportionately burden marginalized groups, excluding them from full participation in urban life.

Equity in mobility is not just about physical infrastructure; it is about ensuring equal access to opportunities in education, employment, and healthcare.

1.3 Environmental and Health Consequences

Transport contributes nearly one-quarter of global CO₂ emissions, with road vehicles as the primary culprits. Air pollution from vehicle emissions is a silent killer, causing respiratory diseases and premature deaths. In countries with weak regulatory enforcement, poorly maintained vehicles exacerbate these problems. Thus, mobility reform is not only an economic or social necessity but also an environmental imperative.



Section 2: Opportunities in Reform

2.1 Strengthening Governance and Policy Frameworks

Effective governance is the foundation of sustainable mobility. Many transport crises stem not from a lack of infrastructure but from weak regulatory frameworks, fragmented responsibilities, and inconsistent policy implementation.

Reforms must focus on:

- **Integrated transport authorities** that coordinate between road, rail, metro, waterways, and non-motorized transport systems.
- **Transparent regulatory systems** that combat corruption and ensure safety and service quality.
- **Long-term masterplans** that integrate land use and transport planning to reduce travel distances.

For example, Singapore's Land Transport Authority (LTA) demonstrates how a centralized agency can harmonize diverse modes of transport and implement policies like

congestion pricing, ensuring smooth urban mobility.

2.2 Financial and Institutional Reform

Financing sustainable mobility requires rethinking traditional approaches. Public-private partnerships (PPPs), congestion taxes, and green bonds can provide funding for large-scale projects. Institutions must also adopt performance-based budgeting, ensuring accountability for every investment in transport infrastructure.

Reform in institutional capacity building—training officials, digitizing administrative processes, and fostering inter-agency cooperation—is equally vital.

2.3 Social and Equity-Oriented Reforms

Mobility reforms must prioritize inclusivity. Policies should mandate universal accessibility in all transport projects, enforce gender-sensitive urban design, and provide subsidized fares for low-income groups. By embedding social equity in policy, reforms can ensure mobility systems that serve everyone, not just the affluent.

Section 3: Opportunities in Innovation

3.1 Smart Mobility and Digital Integration

Technology is reshaping how we move. Smart mobility innovations can help optimize efficiency and convenience:

- **Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS):** Real-time traffic monitoring, smart signals, and route optimization reduce congestion and delays.
- **Mobility-as-a-Service (MaaS):** Platforms that integrate buses, trains, ride-hailing, and bike-sharing into one digital payment and booking system simplify urban travel.
- **AI and Big Data:** Predictive analytics improve demand forecasting, fleet management, and maintenance.

Cities like Helsinki and Seoul already use MaaS to provide seamless, user-friendly travel experiences.

3.2 Electrification and Green Transport

The global shift toward electric mobility presents immense opportunities. Electric buses, rickshaws, and cars reduce emissions, cut fuel costs, and improve air quality. Renewable energy-powered charging infrastructure ensures long-term sustainability.

Bangladesh, India, and China are already witnessing rapid adoption of electric three-wheelers in urban and semi-urban areas, proving that green mobility is not a distant dream but a practical reality.

3.3 Non-Motorized and Active Transport Innovations

Encouraging walking and cycling through dedicated lanes, pedestrian-friendly infrastructure, and safe crossings not only reduces traffic but also promotes public health. Digital platforms that promote bike-sharing or micro-mobility options are revolutionizing short-distance travel.

Copenhagen, for instance, demonstrates how cycling can constitute nearly 40% of daily commutes when supported by infrastructure and culture.

3.4 Autonomous and Future Mobility Solutions

While autonomous vehicles and drones may seem futuristic, pilot projects are already underway. Self-driving buses, freight drones, and connected vehicles could dramatically reduce accidents, improve efficiency, and create entirely new forms of mobility.



Section 4: Case Studies in Reform and Innovation

4.1 Bogotá's Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Revolution

Bogotá's TransMilenio transformed mobility by introducing a low-cost, high-capacity bus

system that rivaled metro systems in efficiency. Despite challenges, it proved how innovation in design and policy could create inclusive, scalable urban mobility solutions.

4.2 China's Electric Bus Transformation

China leads the world in electric bus adoption, with cities like Shenzhen operating fleets of over 16,000 e-buses. This large-scale innovation has drastically reduced emissions while setting an example for other developing countries.

4.3 Europe's Integrated Smart Transport

European cities like Amsterdam and Berlin showcase how integrated smart cards, bike-sharing, and digital apps can create seamless urban travel, blending traditional and modern modes.

Section 5: Barriers to Reform and Innovation

Despite the opportunities, challenges remain:

- **Political resistance** to change and vested interests in maintaining status quo systems.
- **Financial constraints** and high upfront costs of innovation.
- **Technological gaps** in infrastructure and digital literacy.
- **Public resistance** due to cultural inertia or distrust in new systems.

Overcoming these barriers requires visionary leadership, effective communication, and strong public-private collaboration.

Section 6: The Way Forward

6.1 Building People-Centered Mobility Systems

Tomorrow's mobility must prioritize people over vehicles. Transit-oriented development, walkable cities, and inclusive policies can ensure that transport serves society, not the other way around.

6.2 Leveraging Innovation for Development Goals

Reform and innovation in mobility are not ends in themselves but enablers of broader

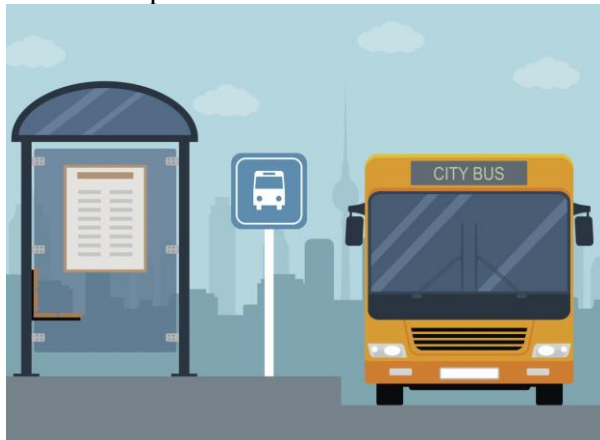
development goals: reducing poverty, improving health, achieving gender equality, and combating climate change.

The UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure) and SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), provide a framework for aligning mobility reforms with global priorities.

6.3 Regional Cooperation and Knowledge Sharing

Countries in South Asia, Africa, and Latin America share similar mobility challenges. Cross-border collaboration, shared innovation platforms, and regional funding initiatives can accelerate mobility reform.

Bangladesh, for example, can learn from India's metro systems, Sri Lanka's bus reforms, or China's electrification programs while sharing its own experiences in river-based transport.



Shaping tomorrow's mobility is both a daunting challenge and an extraordinary opportunity. As urban populations swell and the climate crisis deepens, the stakes have never been higher. Reform and innovation provide the dual engines necessary to transform mobility systems: reform to strengthen governance, equity, and financial sustainability; innovation to unlock smarter, greener, and more efficient solutions.

The future of mobility will not be defined by highways or vehicles alone but by the choices societies make today. By seizing the opportunities of reform and innovation, nations

can build transport systems that are inclusive, sustainable, and future-ready—where mobility empowers people, fuels economies, and protects the planet.

Tomorrow's mobility is being shaped today. The question is whether we will act boldly enough to seize its opportunities.



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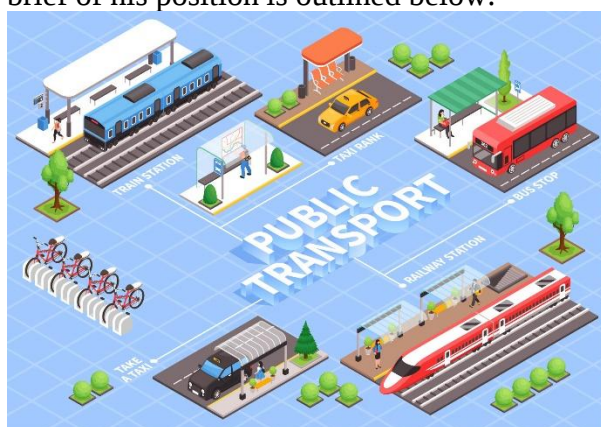
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Abdul Huque

Abdul Haque, one of the most prominent business intellectuals of this era, showed persistence by working day and night and bringing his name to its present state. He is a farsighted thinker and one of the most significant business leaders in Bangladesh who has had immense contribution in strengthening ties between Japan and Bangladesh. He is well-known for his dedication towards social development and his visionary economic thoughts for Bangladesh's development. A brief of his position is outlined below:



Managing Director- Haq's Bay Automobiles Ltd.

President : Bangladesh Reconditioned Vehicles Importers & Dealers Association

Honorary Consul : Consulate of the Republic of Djibouti in Bangladesh.

Former Director : Infrastructure Development Co. Ltd (a GoB owned company)
Commercially Important Person(CIP): Made by the Government of Bangladesh

Former Director : Teletalk Bangladesh Ltd. (Mobile Company)

Member Advisory Board : Strategic Transport Plan for Dhaka (STP)

Former Board Member : Bangladesh Road Transports Authority (BRTA) GoB.

Former Director : Janata Bank (State owned Commercial Bank)

Former President : Japan Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce & Industry (JBCCI)

Former Director : FBCCI

Why Bangladesh Needs a National Transport Master plan Now

Addressing Mobility, Modernization, and Sustainability for an Emerging Economy

The Urgency of Transport Reform in a Growing Nation

Bangladesh, a country of over 170 million people, stands at a crucial crossroads of economic ambition and infrastructural limitation. As urbanization accelerates and rural-to-urban migration intensifies, the cracks in its public transport system have become glaringly visible. Congestion chokes Dhaka and other major cities, unregulated modes of transport dominate roadways, and inefficient inter-district connectivity hampers both commerce and community well-being. In this context, a **comprehensive National Transport Masterplan** is no longer optional—it is essential.

A transport masterplan is a strategic, long-term policy and planning framework that aligns infrastructure development with economic, environmental, and social goals. For Bangladesh, such a framework must go beyond patchwork solutions to deliver integrated, inclusive, and sustainable mobility for all citizens. This article explores the reasons why

Bangladesh urgently needs a National Transport Masterplan, what it should include, and the transformative potential it holds for the country.

1. The Current Crisis: Uncoordinated, Inefficient, and Hazardous

1.1 Urban Congestion and Commuter Fatigue

Dhaka has consistently ranked among the most congested cities in the world. According to the World Bank, traffic congestion in Dhaka alone causes an estimated economic loss of over \$3.8 billion annually due to lost productivity, excess fuel consumption, and health impacts. Commuters often spend 2–4 hours a day stuck in traffic, exacerbating both personal stress and national inefficiency.



1.2 Rural-Urban Imbalance and Regional Disconnection

Beyond the capital, transport facilities in smaller cities and rural areas remain underdeveloped, unreliable, and unsafe. Many upazilas lack proper bus terminals or maintained roads. Rail connectivity is limited and often outdated. This disparity hinders equitable access to education, healthcare, and employment, perpetuating the urban-rural divide.

1.3 Environmental Degradation and Health Hazards

Public transport in Bangladesh is largely dominated by aging buses, diesel-powered vehicles, and unregulated three-wheelers. These emit high levels of carbon dioxide and particulate matter, contributing significantly to air pollution. Dhaka's air quality consistently ranks among the worst globally, and unplanned transport is a major contributor.

2. The Case for a National Masterplan

2.1 Strategic Vision Across All Modes of Transport

A national masterplan can harmonize road, rail, waterways, and air travel under a singular strategic framework. This ensures that development projects complement each other and support national priorities such as poverty reduction, digital connectivity, and regional integration.

2.2 Evidence-Based and Data-Driven Planning

Bangladesh currently lacks a central transport database. A masterplan would mandate the development of a transport GIS (Geographic Information System), enabling policymakers to make data-informed decisions. Traffic counts, vehicle registration data, road safety records, and commuter behavior analysis can help optimize investments.

2.3 Legal and Regulatory Reform

The transport sector suffers from fragmented governance involving the Ministry of Road Transport and Bridges, Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA), local governments, and multiple others. A masterplan should include institutional restructuring, ensuring accountability, standardization, and enforcement of traffic and environmental laws.

3. Elements of a Comprehensive Transport Masterplan

A successful masterplan must be multi-layered, integrative, and forward-looking. Key components include:

3.1 Integrated Urban Mobility

- **Bus Rapid Transit (BRT)** and **Mass Rapid Transit (MRT)** corridors must be expanded and connected to feeder routes and last-mile options (rickshaws, bicycles).
- Smart ticketing, transport apps, and digital scheduling systems need to be introduced.
- Emphasis on **non-motorized transport** (walking, cycling) in urban design.

3.2 Rural Transport Development

- Construction and maintenance of **all-weather rural roads** connecting remote villages to health centers, markets, and schools.
- Introduction of **affordable rural buses** and subsidized transport for marginalized communities.
- Electrification of rural transport hubs to integrate renewable energy use.



3.3 National Rail and Highway Connectivity

- Revamp the rail system with **dual-gauge, electrified tracks** and faster trains.

- Prioritize the development of **inter-district expressways** to connect regional growth centers.
- Build **logistics hubs** with freight terminals for smoother trade movement.

3.4 Waterways and Inland Ports

- Revitalize and dredge rivers to boost inland water transport (IWT), which is cost-effective and environmentally friendly.
- Expand inland ports like **Pangaon and Mongla**, integrating them with road and rail systems.
- Promote **passenger ferries** for tourism and rural-urban connectivity in riverine areas.

3.5 Environmental and Climate Resilience

- Mandate the **transition to electric buses and CNG vehicles** within a time-bound framework.
- Incorporate **green corridors, noise barriers, and urban afforestation** along highways and metro systems.
- Implement **flood-resilient infrastructure** in climate-vulnerable regions.

4. Economic and Social Impact of a Masterplan

4.1 Boosting Economic Growth

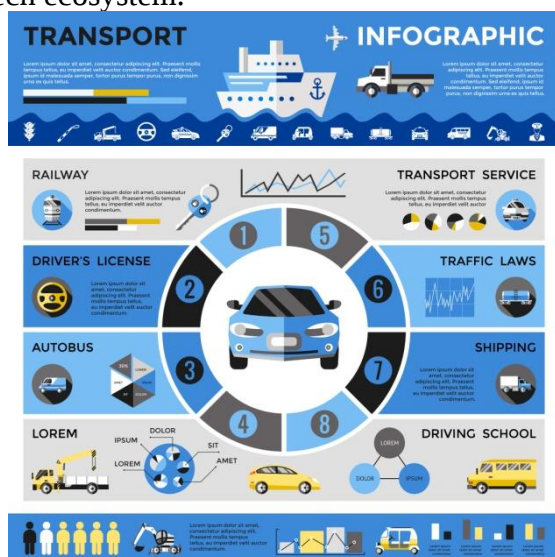
According to the Asian Development Bank, inadequate transport infrastructure in Bangladesh could reduce GDP growth by 2% annually. Efficient transport systems reduce logistics costs, expand labor mobility, and attract foreign investment—especially in manufacturing, export processing, and tourism.

4.2 Empowering the Workforce

Public transport is a social equalizer. Women, students, the elderly, and low-income groups rely heavily on buses and trains. Safe, clean, and affordable transport increases labor force participation, especially among women, and reduces gender-based exclusion.

4.3 Creating Jobs and Innovation

The construction and maintenance of new transport systems will generate thousands of skilled and unskilled jobs. Simultaneously, the integration of digital ticketing, fleet management, and transport apps opens up new areas of innovation for Bangladesh’s growing tech ecosystem.



5. Lessons from Other Countries

5.1 India: National Transport Development Policy Committee (NTDPC)

India launched the NTDPC to coordinate multi-modal transport planning and infrastructure investment. It promoted urban mass transit, rural roads under the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana, and integrated freight corridors.

5.2 Vietnam: National Transport Development Strategy

Vietnam’s transport policy focused on reducing dependence on motorcycles and expanding rail and water-based transport. It also emphasized environmental standards and emissions controls, many of which are relevant to Bangladesh’s context.

5.3 Rwanda: Smart Mobility and Sustainability

Despite limited resources, Rwanda has introduced smart mobility solutions like centralized bus tracking, cashless payments, and electric minibuses—all backed by a national vision plan. It shows that political will

and strategic focus matter more than GDP per capita alone.

6. Challenges in Implementation—and How to Overcome Them

6.1 Institutional Coordination

Solution: Create a **National Transport Coordination Authority (NTCA)** to manage implementation, monitor KPIs, and ensure inter-ministerial collaboration.

6.2 Funding and Investment

Solution: Utilize a mix of **public-private partnerships (PPPs)**, international development assistance (World Bank, ADB), and **transport bonds** issued through capital markets.

6.3 Political Will and Continuity

Solution: Enshrine the transport masterplan in a **national policy act** passed through Parliament, ensuring cross-party support and long-term continuity beyond electoral cycles.

6.4 Citizen Resistance and Behavioral Change

Solution: Launch nationwide **awareness campaigns** on the benefits of public transport, road safety, and environmental sustainability. Offer **incentives** for commuters to switch from private to public modes.

7. A Vision for 2041: What Could Success Look Like?

If implemented correctly, by 2041—the year Bangladesh aims to become a developed nation—the country could boast:

- A **smart, green transport network** across all districts.
- Seamless **intermodal travel** using a single national card or mobile app.
- **Zero-emission buses** and widespread electrification of transport fleets.
- A **safe and dignified commute** for millions of citizens.
- A significant reduction in **road fatalities**, carbon emissions, and commuting time.

Such transformation would not just improve movement—it would **redefine citizenship, expand opportunity, and propel Bangladesh into a new era of inclusive prosperity.**



Conclusion: The Time Is Now

Bangladesh has the ambition, the demographic advantage, and a growing economy—but lacks the coordinated infrastructure to match its development goals. The transport sector, as it currently stands, is a bottleneck to progress. Without immediate, comprehensive, and forward-thinking planning, the country risks compounding its urban chaos, rural exclusion, and environmental degradation.

A National Transport Masterplan is not merely a technical document—it is a social contract. It is a promise to future generations that Bangladesh will invest in their mobility, safety, dignity, and prosperity. The time to act is not tomorrow—it is now.



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An Exclusive Interview with the
Abu Momtaz Saad Uddin Ahmed
Chairman

Bangladesh Road Transport Authority- **BRTA**

Asian State: How would you evaluate the current state of Bangladesh's public transport system?

Abu Momtaz Saad Uddin Ahmed: Bangladesh's public transport sector is rapidly expanding. Every day, millions of passengers in Dhaka and other major cities depend on public transportation. However, a lack of discipline, traffic congestion, infrastructural limitations, and insufficient buses remain major challenges. Initiatives such as the metro rail, BRT, and bus route rationalization have already started, bringing positive prospects for change.



Asian State: What do you think are the biggest problems in the public transport sector?

Abu Momtaz Saad Uddin Ahmed: The biggest problems are—

1. Excess vehicles compared to road capacity.
2. Lack of coordination in the transport sector and owner–driver conflicts.
3. Lack of discipline and passenger-friendly management.
4. Urban–rural transport disparity.
5. Absence of eco-friendly transport.

Asian State: What measures has BRTA taken to tackle traffic congestion and discipline issues?

Abu Momtaz Saad Uddin Ahmed: In Dhaka city, we have introduced bus route rationalization, planned dedicated bus lanes, and designated stoppages. To maintain traffic discipline, we have strengthened driver training, mobile courts, and law enforcement. In addition, road safety campaigns are being run to raise public awareness.

Asian State: What plans are there to improve public transport in districts and upazilas outside Dhaka?

Abu Momtaz Saad Uddin Ahmed: We aim to extend safe and modern transport services to passengers in districts and upazilas as well. For this, we are expanding inter-district modern bus services, upgrading regional terminals, and encouraging transport companies. BRTA's regional offices are also being strengthened so they can resolve local issues more efficiently.

Asian State: What effective initiatives are being taken to improve passenger services?

Abu Momtaz Saad Uddin Ahmed: To ensure comfortable journeys for passengers, we have introduced e-ticketing, which brings transparency in fare determination. Special seats are allocated for women and children on buses. Moreover, initiatives are underway to

introduce modern, air-conditioned, and electric buses.

Asian State: What steps is BRTA taking to reduce road accidents?

Abu Momtaz Saad Uddin Ahmed: We are focusing on stricter driving license issuance, driver training, enforcement of road safety laws, and raising public awareness. Every accident is followed by an investigation, and those responsible are held accountable. Additionally, we have introduced a smart driving test system to ensure only skilled and qualified drivers can take to the roads.

Asian State: What is your perspective on introducing e-ticketing and digital services in public transport?

Abu Momtaz Saad Uddin Ahmed: Digitalization is one of our top priorities. Through e-ticketing, fare transparency will improve and passenger hassles will be reduced. Moreover, online services for vehicle registration, fitness certification, and license renewal are being introduced to make BRTA more passenger-friendly.

Asian State: What are the future plans for using modern technology and eco-friendly vehicles in the transport sector?

Abu Momtaz Saad Uddin Ahmed: We are promoting electric buses and CNG alternatives. At the same time, we are planning to introduce smart traffic systems, GPS monitoring, and intelligent transport systems. These will make vehicle management and road safety more efficient.

Asian State: What measures are being taken to reduce government–private sector coordination gaps?

Abu Momtaz Saad Uddin Ahmed: We are holding regular coordination meetings with owners' associations, drivers' unions, local administrations, and city authorities. The goal is to bring everyone under a unified policy

framework. Coordination among various government ministries—such as the Ministry of Road Transport, Local Government, and Police Administration—is also being strengthened.



Asian State: Where do you want to see Bangladesh's public transport system in the next 10 years?

Abu Momtaz Saad Uddin Ahmed: Our goal is to build a safe, modern, eco-friendly, and disciplined public transport system within the next decade. With the implementation of metro rail, BRT, bus route rationalization, and the introduction of electric buses, we hope Bangladesh will become a model for South Asia.



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Abdul Latif Molla

Chairman

Bangladesh Road Transport Corporation-
BRTC

Bangladesh Road Transport Corporation (BRTC): Services and Activities

Past, Present, and Future Prospects



With Bangladesh's economic growth, urbanization, and rapid population increase, the importance of public transport has multiplied many times over. Every day, millions of people depend on buses, trucks, freight transport, and inter-district communication systems for their mobility. In this regard, the state-owned Bangladesh Road Transport Corporation (BRTC) has played a vital role.

Established in 1961, this institution was founded to ensure reliable passenger and freight transport in the national interest, provide citizen-oriented transport services, and maintain fair market pricing. Today, BRTC is not only engaged in passenger transportation but also contributes significantly to driver training, human resource development in the transport sector, and the fulfillment of special state responsibilities when required.

This article provides an in-depth discussion of BRTC's services, activities, achievements, limitations, challenges, and future prospects.

1. Establishment and Historical Background

1.1 Origin during the Pakistan Era

In 1961, during the period of East Pakistan, the government established the Road Transport Corporation. Its purpose was to break the monopoly of private bus owners and introduce affordable transport for the common people.

1.2 Restructuring after Independence

After Bangladesh's independence in 1971, the government restructured BRTC and entrusted it with new responsibilities. Despite the post-war devastation, it played a special role in passenger and freight transport.

2. Organizational Structure and Administration

BRTC is an autonomous organization but operates under the Ministry of Road Transport and Bridges.

- **Board of Directors:** The Chairman, Directors, and government-nominated members formulate policies.
- **Head Office:** Located in Dhaka, the capital.
- **Depots and Regional Offices:** Spread across the country, where buses, trucks, and special vehicles are maintained.

3. Key Services and Activities

3.1 Passenger Transport Services

BRTC is one of the largest state-owned bus service providers in the country.

(a) Urban Transport

- Operates city buses in Dhaka, Chattogram, Rajshahi, Khulna, Sylhet, and other major cities.
- Provides special services for universities, government offices, and industrial workers.
- Fares are government-regulated, making them more affordable for the general public.

(b) Inter-District Transport

- Runs buses from Dhaka to almost all district towns, including Cumilla, Chattogram, Rangpur, and Barishal.
- Offers a range of services, including luxury air-conditioned buses.

BRTC Bus and Truck Depots

- **Bus Depots:**
BRTC operates 22 bus depots across the country to manage its intercity and city bus services.
List of Depots:
Dhaka City: Joar Sahara, Motijheel, Kallyanpur, Mirpur Double Decker, Mohammadpur, Gabtali, Gazipur, Narayanganj, Narsingdi
Districts: Cumilla, Chattogram, Sylhet, Bogura, Pabna, Sonapur, Rangpur, Khulna, Tungipara, Dinajpur, Jatrabari, Mymensingh, Barishal
- **Truck Depots:**
There are 2 main truck depots, located in Dhaka and Chattogram, used primarily for transporting government goods.

BRTC Training Centers and Institutes

BRTC operates training facilities nationwide for human resource development.

- **Training Institutes:** 4 in total
- **Training Centers:** 19 across the country

Main Training Institute:
Joydebpur, Gazipur – the principal Driver Training Institute (DTI) of BRTC.

Training Center Locations:
Gazipur (Central Training Institute), Barisal, Bogura, Chattogram (Truck), Cumilla, Dinajpur, Jessore, Jhenaidah, Joar Sahara (Dhaka), Khulna, Mirpur-12 (Dhaka), Narayanganj, Narsingdi, Pabna, Sonapur (Noakhali), Sylhet, Utholi (Manikganj), Tungipara (Gopalganj), Tejgaon (Dhaka).

Summary Table:

Type	Number	Locations
Bus Depots	22	Joar Sahara, Motijheel, Kallyanpur, Mirpur DD, Mohammadpur, Gabtali, Gazipur, Narayanganj, Narsingdi, Cumilla, Chattogram, Sylhet, Bogura, Pabna, Sonapur, Rangpur, Khulna, Tungipara, Dinajpur, Jatrabari, Mymensingh, Barishal
Truck Depots	2	Dhaka, Chattogram
Training Institutes	4	Joydebpur (Gazipur – main) and others
Training Centers	19	Gazipur, Barisal, Bogura, Chattogram, Cumilla, Dinajpur, Jessore, Jhenaidah, Joar Sahara, Khulna, Mirpur-12, Narayanganj, Narsingdi, Pabna, Sonapur, Sylhet, Utholi, Tungipara, Tejgaon

(c) **International Routes**
BRTC operates cross-border bus services to **India (Kolkata, Agartala)**, which strengthen bilateral connectivity and trade.

3.2 Truck and Freight Transport

BRTC's truck fleet is used for transporting government goods, especially:

- Relief and emergency supplies
- Food grains and essentials
- Construction materials for government projects
- Special support during disasters

3.3 Specialized Transport Services

- **School Bus Service:** Operates in Dhaka for both public and private school students.
- Separate services for **women and working passengers.**
- Special transport services during **national events, sports tournaments, or elections.**

3.4 Training and Human Resource Development

BRTC operates Driver Training Institutes (DTIs) to provide professional driver training, including:

- Training for heavy vehicle drivers
- Road safety and traffic law courses
- Initiatives to train women drivers

This contributes not only to employment but also to reducing road accidents.



4. Achievements and Positive Impacts

1. **Reliable alternative:** Compared to private operators, BRTC is more trustworthy to the general public.
2. **State responsibility:** Responds first during emergencies, disasters, and national needs.
3. **International connectivity:** Enhanced road links with neighboring countries.

4. **Human resource development:** Trained thousands of professional drivers employed both domestically and abroad.

5. **Intercity safety:** Recorded relatively fewer accidents in long-distance travel.

5. Challenges and Limitations

1. **Financial losses:** Difficult to survive without regular government subsidies.

2. **Fleet modernization issues:** A large portion of its vehicles are old and inefficient.

3. **Corruption and mismanagement:** Lack of transparency in operations.

4. **Competition:** Dominance of the private transport sector in the market.

5. **Infrastructure issues:** Narrow roads, congestion, and poor management reduce efficiency.

6. Future Prospects and Actions Needed

6.1 Fleet Modernization

- Introduce electric and hybrid buses.
- Use fuel-efficient and eco-friendly technologies.

6.2 Digital Services

- Online ticketing and vehicle tracking.
- Service delivery through mobile apps.

6.3 PPP Initiatives

- Implement new projects in partnership with the private sector.

6.4 Regional Connectivity

- Launch bus services with Nepal, Bhutan, and Myanmar.

6.5 Research and Training

- Conduct research to reduce road accidents.
- Promote women-friendly transport initiatives.

The Bangladesh Road Transport Corporation (BRTC) remains an inseparable part of the country's public transport system. Despite its limitations, it has earned the trust of the people. As a state-owned entity, its role during disasters, in international connectivity, and in providing affordable services is commendable.

If BRTC can ensure modernization, transparency, financial discipline, and technology-driven management in the future, it will not only remain a government transport provider but also emerge as one of the driving forces of a sustainable, inclusive, and safe transport sector in Bangladesh.



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Mofiz Uddin Ahmed

Additional Secretary (PRL), Ministry of Finance

Building a Sustainable and Inclusive Transport Future for Bangladesh

Paving the Way to Progress

Bangladesh is on a fast-track journey toward middle-income status and infrastructural modernization. As a country with rising urbanization, increasing economic activity, and strategic geographic placement, transport connectivity is not merely a development objective—it is a national imperative. Yet, challenges like congestion, regional disparity, carbon emissions, and accessibility gaps continue to hinder inclusive growth. Amid these complex dynamics, the **Bangladesh Bridge Department (BBD)** has emerged as a pivotal agency in shaping a transport future that is sustainable, integrated, and inclusive.

This article explores how the Bridge Department's ongoing and future initiatives contribute to a greener, more connected Bangladesh, and how a long-term, multi-modal strategy can ensure no one is left behind.

1. The Role of Infrastructure in Sustainable and Inclusive Development

1.1 Connecting Communities and Economies

Transport infrastructure links people to jobs, markets, education, and healthcare. In Bangladesh, over 60% of trade and passenger movement occurs through road-based networks. However, the lack of safe and direct crossings over major rivers historically limited regional connectivity and increased logistics costs. Bridges and elevated expressways—both existing and envisioned—are reshaping these dynamics.



1.2 Inclusion through Access

A truly inclusive transport system ensures **women, elderly citizens, persons with disabilities, and rural populations** have equitable access to mobility. This involves both physical access (ramps, pedestrian walkways, feeder roads) and economic access (affordable toll rates, accessible public transit connections).

1.3 Sustainability through Green Design

Sustainable transport prioritizes reduced carbon emissions, resilience to climate change, and ecological sensitivity in project planning. As part of Bangladesh's commitment to SDGs and the Paris Agreement, major infrastructure agencies—including the Bridge Department—must integrate green standards into design, construction, and maintenance.

2. The Bangladesh Bridge Department: Mandate and Evolution

2.1 Establishment and Structure

The **Bridge Division** was formed in 2008 under the Ministry of Road Transport and Bridges to oversee the planning, implementation, and management of major bridge-related infrastructure. It operates through the **Bridge Authority**, which executes megaprojects in coordination with the Roads and Highways Department (RHD) and other stakeholders.

2.2 Mission and Mandate

- Planning and executing large-scale bridge, tunnel, flyover, and expressway projects.
- Ensuring structural safety, quality, and environmental compliance.
- Facilitating cross-river and inter-district connectivity.
- Promoting public-private partnerships (PPPs) and foreign investment.



3. Signature Achievements: Laying the Foundations of Future Mobility

3.1 The Padma Multipurpose Bridge: A Symbol of Sovereign Strength

The **Padma Bridge**, completed in 2022, is the largest infrastructure project in Bangladesh's history and a landmark for national engineering capability. Stretching 6.15 km, it connects the southwestern region—home to over 30 million people—with Dhaka and other economic centers.

Impact:

- Reduced travel time between Dhaka and Khulna from 8 hours to 4 hours.

- Boosted trade, agriculture, and tourism in 21 districts.
- Enabled rail connectivity via the second level of the bridge.

3.2 Dhaka Elevated Expressway

Inaugurated in 2023, this project connects the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport with central Dhaka, significantly reducing commuting time and easing congestion. It is the first PPP-based expressway, highlighting the potential of private sector involvement.

3.3 Karnaphuli Tunnel (Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Tunnel)

This underwater tunnel beneath the Karnaphuli River in Chattogram is the first of its kind in South Asia. It will reduce city congestion and enhance port-centric trade logistics.

4. Looking Ahead: The Vision for a Sustainable and Inclusive Transport Future

4.1 Key Goals

- **Connectivity:** Ensure seamless, multi-modal links across all regions.
- **Equity:** Promote accessibility for all social and economic groups.
- **Sustainability:** Build climate-resilient, low-emission infrastructure.
- **Innovation:** Use digital tools and smart infrastructure management.

4.2 Priority Projects in the Pipeline

- **Second Padma Bridge (Feasibility stage)**
- **Dhaka Circular Expressway**
- **Rampura-Amulia-Demra Expressway**
- **Tongi-Bhulta-Araihazar-Madanpur Expressway**
- **Metro Rail Extensions connected via flyovers**

These projects are designed not only for vehicular convenience but also for regional integration and environmental compliance.



5. Building Sustainability into Bridge and Transport Design

5.1 Eco-Friendly Construction Practices

- Using **low-carbon concrete**, recycled materials, and LED lighting.
- Installing **solar-powered toll booths** and surveillance systems.
- Promoting **river training** and soil stabilization to reduce erosion.

5.2 Climate-Resilient Engineering

Many of Bangladesh's bridge and tunnel projects are now designed to withstand **cyclones, flooding, riverbed shifting, and salinity**. Design innovations include **elevated plinths**, reinforced embankments, and **disaster monitoring systems**.

5.3 Encouraging Modal Shift to Rail and Waterways

The Bridge Department's megastructures increasingly include **rail components** (like Padma Bridge), supporting Bangladesh Railway's long-term expansion. Several bridges also facilitate **intermodal freight movement** between road and water routes.

6. Inclusion in Practice: Making Infrastructure Equitable

6.1 Gender-Responsive Infrastructure

- Separate lanes or spaces for women on expressways and toll areas.
- Facilities like restrooms and breastfeeding corners at service areas.
- Lighting and surveillance to improve safety for all genders.

6.2 Accessibility for People with Disabilities

- Ramps and elevators at footbridges and toll plazas.

- Tactile paths and audible signals in collaboration with local authorities.
- Braille signage in new construction.

6.3 Regional Upliftment

Bridge projects are increasingly being planned in **neglected regions**—such as Haor, hill tracts, and char areas—ensuring their inclusion in the national mobility network.

7. Governance, Transparency, and Innovation

7.1 E-Governance and Smart Monitoring

- **Bridge Management Systems (BMS)** track structural health in real time.
- **Digital tendering** improves transparency in project procurement.
- Use of **GIS-based mapping** to track road-bridge integration.

7.2 Public-Private Partnerships (PPP)

Projects like the **Dhaka Elevated Expressway** and **Rampura Expressway** showcase successful PPP models where the Bridge Department provides oversight while private partners deliver construction and operations.

7.3 Research and Capacity Building

The Bridge Department has initiated collaboration with BUET and international consultants to:

- Train engineers in **climate-adaptive design**.
- Explore **drone-based inspection** and **AI-based traffic forecasting**.
- Establish an **Infrastructure Research and Innovation Cell (IRIC)**.

8. Challenges and Pathways Forward

8.1 Land Acquisition and Resettlement

Solution: Accelerate digital land records, ensure compensation packages are transparent and gender-sensitive.

8.2 Environmental Clearance and Delays

Solution: Establish a pre-approved **Green Project Guideline** with DOE coordination to expedite compliance.

8.3 Urban-Rural Coordination

Solution: Create a **National Infrastructure Integration Committee** involving LGED, RHD, BBA, and City Corporations for unified design and budgeting.

8.4 Maintenance Overlooked

Solution: Allocate a fixed percentage of every project's budget to **lifespan maintenance**, not just construction.

9. International Partnerships and Global Alignment

Bangladesh Bridge Department is working closely with:

- **Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA)** for technical feasibility studies and co-financing.
- **World Bank and ADB** for capacity development, particularly in ESG compliance.
- **China Communications Construction Company (CCCC)** for tunnel technology.

All projects align with:

- **UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**
- **Bangladesh Delta Plan 2100**
- **Perspective Plan 2041**

10. Imagining the Future: A Day in 2041

By 2041, a citizen traveling from **Barisal to Sylhet** might take an **electric bus** to the **Padma Bridge railway station**, catch a high-speed **inter-regional train**, and then seamlessly connect to **MRT and flyovers in Sylhet**, all under **one smart ticketing app**—safe, fast, inclusive, and green.

The **Bridge Department's vision** is instrumental in realizing such a scenario. With forward-thinking policies, integrated planning, and citizen-focused execution, Bangladesh can become a **regional leader in sustainable infrastructure development**.



Building Bridges to the Future

A sustainable and inclusive transport future is not built on asphalt alone—it is constructed through vision, responsibility, equity, and innovation. The Bangladesh Bridge Department, with its proven track record and expanding mandate, is uniquely positioned to deliver the backbone of such a future.

Bridges are more than physical structures—they symbolize unity, ambition, and transformation. If supported with strategic planning, environmental care, and people-centered design, the work of the Bridge Department can usher Bangladesh into a new era where mobility becomes a right, not a privilege—and where infrastructure serves both prosperity and the planet.



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Krishibid S.M. Suhrab Uddin

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Transportation is not just about moving people; it is about enabling economies, shaping societies, and connecting futures. As nations grow, so do their transport challenges. What begins as localized gridlock in a few major cities soon spills over into regional bottlenecks, national economic losses, and international competitiveness concerns. For developing countries, where rapid urbanization and population growth outpace infrastructure, transportation evolves from a daily nuisance into a full-blown national crisis.

This article explores how urban gridlock becomes a national concern in growing nations. It examines the structural causes of transport tangles—poor planning, weak governance, fragmented institutions, and financial constraints—while highlighting global and regional case studies. Finally, it identifies

strategic pathways for untangling the mess: integrated planning, institutional reform, technology adoption, sustainable mobility, and inclusive policies.

Every morning, millions of people in the world's growing nations wake up knowing they will spend hours stuck in traffic. What was once considered an inconvenience confined to urban centers has now escalated into a national issue. Traffic congestion and inadequate transport systems now threaten economic productivity, environmental sustainability, and social equity.

Urban gridlock is no longer just about vehicles and roads—it is about governance, planning, and priorities. For many countries, the transition from rural to urban society is happening at breakneck speed, but their transport systems remain outdated, fragmented, and unprepared. The result: cities choked by congestion, economies bleeding productivity, and societies divided by unequal access to mobility.

This article traces the evolution of urban gridlock into a national concern, unpacking the transportation tangle that growing nations face.

Section I: The Rise of Urban Gridlock

1. Rapid Urbanization

According to the United Nations, 90% of future urban growth will occur in Africa and Asia. Cities like Dhaka, Lagos, Nairobi, and Manila are swelling beyond their transport capacities. Roads, designed decades ago for smaller populations, now face overwhelming pressure.

2. The Private Vehicle Explosion

In the absence of reliable public transport, middle-class populations turn to motorcycles, cars, and ride-hailing apps. This “motorization boom” worsens congestion, road accidents, and emissions.

3. Informal Transport Dominance

In many growing nations, informal systems—rickshaws, minibuses, tuk-tuks, matatus—dominate daily mobility. While flexible and

affordable, they operate chaotically, often unregulated and unsafe.

4. Gridlock's Ripple Effects

- **Economic:** Billions lost in productivity as workers sit idle in traffic.
- **Social:** Inequity as poor communities endure longer, costlier commutes.
- **Environmental:** Increased emissions and poor air quality.
- **Psychological:** Stress, reduced leisure, and lower quality of life.

Section II: Transport as a National Concern

Urban congestion spills into national-level issues:

- **Trade Competitiveness:** Delayed cargo at ports and highways undermines exports.
- **Regional Connectivity:** Poor transport limits rural access to markets, education, and healthcare.
- **Energy Security:** Fuel imports rise as congestion wastes millions of liters daily.
- **Political Stability:** Public frustration with transport inefficiency often sparks protests and erodes trust in government.

Nations cannot view transport merely as an urban engineering challenge—it is a strategic national priority.

Section III: Core Challenges in the Transportation Tangle

1. Infrastructure Deficit

Road density, public transit capacity, and logistics hubs are far below demand. Investment lags behind population growth.

2. Institutional Fragmentation

Multiple agencies regulate transport—one for buses, another for roads, another for urban planning—leading to overlapping mandates and conflicting policies.

3. Governance and Corruption

Permit mafias, unregulated syndicates, and politically connected cartels resist reform.

4. Financial Constraints

Public transport requires high upfront investment, yet governments often depend on loans, aid, or unsustainable subsidies.

5. Behavioral and Social Issues

Car-centric culture, disregard for traffic laws, and lack of awareness about sustainable mobility perpetuate chaos.

6. Technological Lag

While smart transport systems exist globally, many nations lack digital ticketing, GPS tracking, or traffic management systems.

Section IV: Case Studies

1. Dhaka, Bangladesh

Dhaka loses an estimated **5 million work hours daily** due to congestion. Informal buses, rickshaws, and inadequate roads dominate. The government is introducing metro rail (MRT-6) and bus route rationalization, but institutional resistance slows progress.

2. Lagos, Nigeria

With over 20 million residents, Lagos epitomizes chaotic mobility. Informal minibuses (danfos) rule the streets. The Lagos BRT system is a step toward order, but population growth outpaces improvements.

3. Manila, Philippines

Jeepneys, a symbol of Manila's culture, contribute to congestion and emissions. Modernization programs aim to phase them out, but political pushback persists.

4. Bogotá, Colombia

Before reform, Bogotá's transport resembled today's Dhaka or Nairobi: chaotic, informal, and unsafe. The TransMilenio BRT system reorganized routes and transformed commuting. While not without flaws, it shows how chaos can be structured into efficiency.

5. London, UK

London demonstrates the value of a unified transport authority (TfL), integrating multiple modes (bus, tube, rail, cycling). It highlights how institutional coordination can deliver efficiency and sustainability.



Section V: Pathways to Untangle the Mess

1. Integrated National Transport Policy

- Shift transport from a city issue to a national priority.
- Align transport with economic, environmental, and social goals.
- Develop long-term masterplans with clear timelines.

2. Institutional Reform

- Create unified metropolitan and national transport authorities.
- Curb corruption and cartel influence through transparent regulation.
- Build capacity in planning, enforcement, and service delivery.

3. Infrastructure Investment

- Expand mass transit: metro, BRT, suburban rail.
- Modernize highways, ports, and logistics hubs.
- Prioritize **transit-oriented development** to link housing and transport.

4. Technology Adoption

- Digital ticketing and e-payment systems.
- GPS and real-time passenger information.
- Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS) for traffic management.
- Electric vehicles and charging infrastructure.

5. Financial Innovation

- Public-private partnerships (PPP) for metro and BRT projects.

- Land value capture and congestion pricing.
- Targeted subsidies for vulnerable groups.

6. Social Inclusion

- Gender-sensitive transport design.
- Accessibility for elderly and disabled passengers.
- Affordable services for low-income commuters.

7. Behavioral Change

- Campaigns promoting public transport over private cars.
- Road safety education to reduce accidents.
- Incentives for cycling and walking.

Section VI: Future Outlook

1. Climate and Sustainability

Transport accounts for nearly 25% of global CO₂ emissions. Green mobility—electric buses, renewable-powered metros, and cycling—must be central to reforms.

2. AI and Smart Mobility

Artificial intelligence can optimize routes, predict congestion, and enable autonomous shuttles. Data-driven decisions will reshape mobility.

3. Regional Connectivity

For nations like Bangladesh, Nepal, and landlocked African states, regional transport corridors (road, rail, waterways) will be vital for trade and integration.

4. Resilient Infrastructure

COVID-19 showed the need for adaptive systems. Future transport must be resilient to pandemics, disasters, and climate shocks.

5. Mobility as a Right

Transport is not just infrastructure—it is access to opportunity. Treating mobility as a citizen's right will reframe policy from profit to people.

The transportation tangle of a growing nation is more than clogged roads—it is a crisis of planning, institutions, and priorities. What begins as urban gridlock soon evolves into a

national concern, threatening economic growth, environmental health, and social cohesion.

The solutions lie not in piecemeal fixes but in **coordinated national strategies** that integrate infrastructure, governance, technology, and citizen needs. Lessons from Bogotá, London, and Lagos show that transformation is possible. For growing nations, the choice is stark: remain trapped in gridlock or leap forward into a future of smart, inclusive, and sustainable mobility. The road ahead is complex, but one truth is clear: *without solving transport, no nation can truly grow.*



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Congestion, Corruption, and Capacity Crisis in the Transport Sector

The transport sector forms the backbone of any modern economy, connecting people to opportunities, markets, education, and healthcare. In Bangladesh, home to more than 170 million people and one of the world's fastest-growing economies, the importance of an efficient and transparent transport system cannot be overstated. Yet, three interlinked challenges—**congestion, corruption, and capacity crisis**—continue to undermine the sector's ability to deliver safe, reliable, and sustainable mobility.

Dhaka, the capital city, has become a symbol of the country's transport chaos. Endless traffic jams, poorly maintained buses, reckless driving, and weak regulatory enforcement portray a grim picture of urban mobility. Beyond Dhaka, transport bottlenecks also affect highways, ports, and rural connectivity, hampering the nation's competitiveness and quality of life. The costs are staggering—lost productivity, environmental degradation, increased road accidents, and diminished public trust.

This article critically examines the roots and impacts of congestion, corruption, and capacity crises in Bangladesh's transport sector. It also explores pathways for reform and innovation that could lead to a more sustainable, inclusive, and efficient future.



Part I: Understanding the Crisis

1. Congestion – The Everyday Gridlock

Traffic congestion in Bangladesh, particularly in urban areas, is among the worst globally. Dhaka has been ranked multiple times as one of the most congested cities, with commuters spending hours in traffic daily. The causes of this congestion are multifaceted:

- **Overdependence on road transport:** Over 70% of passengers and 60% of freight rely on roads, putting immense pressure on highways and city streets.
- **Insufficient infrastructure:** Despite recent megaprojects like flyovers, metro rail, and expressways, the demand for mobility far outpaces infrastructure growth.
- **Unplanned urbanization:** Rapid growth in cities has led to poorly designed roads, narrow streets, and inadequate pedestrian facilities.
- **Lack of integrated planning:** Absence of coordination between buses, rail, waterways, and non-motorized transport worsens inefficiency.

The consequences are immense: billions of working hours lost, rising fuel consumption, air pollution, and declining mental and physical health for commuters.



2. Corruption – The Hidden Roadblock

Corruption remains a systemic challenge in Bangladesh's transport sector. From licensing to traffic enforcement and infrastructure projects, corruption erodes efficiency and public trust. It manifests in several ways:

- **Bribery in licensing and permits:** Many bus operators acquire licenses through bribes rather than compliance with safety standards, leading to unfit vehicles on the road.
- **Tender manipulation:** Major infrastructure contracts often suffer from favoritism, inflated costs, and substandard construction due to collusion between contractors and officials.
- **Weak enforcement:** Traffic police often resort to rent-seeking behavior, turning violations into sources of informal income rather than penalties for deterrence.
- **Transport syndicates:** Powerful groups of transport owners and labor unions dictate fares, routes, and policies, undermining government regulation.

This entrenched corruption not only discourages investment but also perpetuates inefficiency and inequity in mobility.

3. Capacity Crisis – The Overloaded System

Even if corruption and congestion were resolved, the sector faces a **capacity crisis**—the inability of current infrastructure, institutions, and services to meet the growing demands of a rapidly urbanizing nation.

- **Insufficient public transport:** Despite high demand, Bangladesh lacks a structured, modern public bus system. Instead, fragmented, privately operated fleets dominate.
- **Poor multimodal integration:** Railways, waterways, and roadways often function in isolation rather than as part of a coherent national transport plan.
- **Limited institutional capacity:** Agencies like the Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA) and city corporations lack adequate manpower, technical expertise, and autonomy.
- **Neglected rural transport:** While urban mobility dominates attention, rural areas often lack paved roads, reliable buses, or connections to markets.

The result is an overloaded, inequitable, and inefficient system that struggles to keep pace with economic and demographic changes.



Part II: Impacts of the Triple Crisis

1. Economic Costs

- The World Bank estimates Dhaka's traffic congestion alone costs **billions of dollars annually** in lost productivity.
- Delays in freight transport increase logistics costs, making Bangladeshi exports less competitive.
- Corruption inflates infrastructure costs, draining resources that could fund better services.

2. Social Inequities

- Public transport is unreliable and unsafe, disproportionately affecting the poor, women, students, and elderly.
- Informal and exploitative practices by transport syndicates prevent equitable access.
- Disabled commuters face almost complete exclusion from the system.

3. Environmental Damage

- Idle vehicles contribute to Dhaka's ranking among the most polluted cities.
- Lack of clean transport initiatives worsens carbon emissions and air quality.

4. Safety Crisis

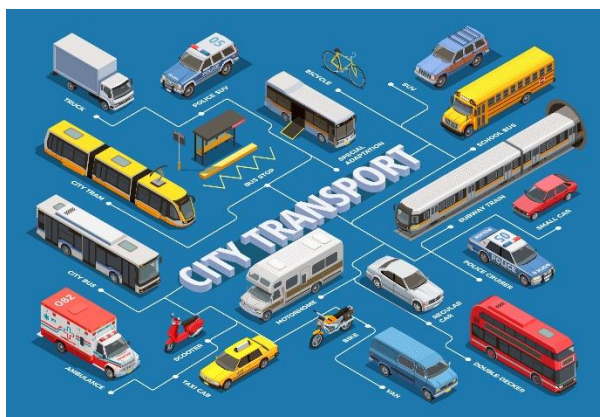
- Bangladesh records one of the world's highest road accident fatality rates.
- Poor vehicle fitness, reckless driving, and lax enforcement exacerbate risks.

Part III: Pathways for Reform and Innovation

Addressing congestion, corruption, and capacity crisis requires **holistic, multi-pronged reforms**. Piecemeal solutions will not suffice.

1. Tackling Congestion

- **Expand mass transit:** Scaling up metro rail, bus rapid transit (BRT), and commuter rail to provide alternatives to private vehicles.
- **Promote non-motorized transport:** Safer pedestrian walkways and cycling infrastructure can reduce short-trip congestion.
- **Traffic management technologies:** Intelligent traffic signals, GPS tracking of buses, and real-time commuter apps can enhance efficiency.
- **Decentralized urban planning:** Encouraging growth in secondary cities to reduce pressure on Dhaka.



2. Combating Corruption

- **Digital governance:** Online systems for licenses, fines, and permits reduce human discretion.
- **Transparency in procurement:** Open bidding platforms and independent oversight can curb contract manipulation.
- **Empowering regulatory bodies:** Strengthening BRTA and anti-corruption watchdogs with autonomy and accountability.
- **Civil society engagement:** Involving citizens, NGOs, and media in monitoring and exposing malpractice.

3. Overcoming the Capacity Crisis

- **Institutional reform:** Creating a central transport authority to coordinate multimodal systems.
- **Investment in rural mobility:** Expanding feeder roads, rural bus services, and waterways for balanced development.
- **Public-private partnerships (PPP):** Leveraging private investment with accountability frameworks.
- **Human resource development:** Training engineers, planners, and administrators to handle modern mobility challenges.

4. Embracing Innovation

- **Green transport:** Introducing electric buses, CNG-to-electric conversion

incentives, and renewable energy-based infrastructure.

- **Smart mobility solutions:** Ride-sharing regulation, integrated digital ticketing, and real-time information systems.
- **Data-driven planning:** Using AI and big data to optimize routes, schedules, and traffic flows.

Part IV: Case Studies and Lessons

Bangladesh can draw lessons from countries that transformed their transport sectors:

- **Bogotá, Colombia:** Revolutionized urban mobility with Bus Rapid Transit (TransMilenio).
- **Vietnam:** Integrated waterways and roads to improve freight efficiency.
- **India:** Delhi Metro set an example in transparency, efficiency, and sustainability.

These cases highlight the potential for Bangladesh to replicate and adapt global best practices with local context.

Part V: Towards a National Transport Masterplan

The crises underscore the urgent need for a **National Transport Masterplan**. Such a plan must:

- Integrate road, rail, waterways, and air transport into one coherent framework.
- Align with climate commitments under the Paris Agreement.
- Ensure inclusivity by addressing the needs of women, rural populations, and marginalized groups.
- Establish clear accountability mechanisms across ministries and agencies.
- Secure sustainable financing through PPPs, international donors, and innovative revenue models.



Bangladesh's transport sector stands at a crossroads. Congestion, corruption, and capacity crisis have turned mobility into a national headache, dragging down economic growth, harming the environment, and creating social inequities. But these challenges are not insurmountable. With strong political will, institutional reform, technological innovation, and inclusive planning, Bangladesh can transform its transport system into a model of sustainability and efficiency.

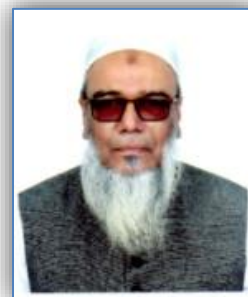
The urgency cannot be overstated. Every day of inaction deepens economic losses, environmental damage, and human suffering. The future of mobility in Bangladesh depends on bold reforms today—reforms that prioritize people over syndicates, transparency over corruption, and long-term planning over ad-hoc fixes.

The road ahead is challenging, but with the right vision, Bangladesh can chart a new course—one where mobility is no longer a burden, but a bridge to prosperity and equity.



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Broken Buses and Burdened Commuters: A Daily Struggle for Millions



Public transport is the backbone of any modern society. It connects people with opportunities, drives economic activity, and ensures social inclusion. Yet in Bangladesh, especially in its major cities like Dhaka and Chattogram, the public transport system has become synonymous with frustration, chaos, and inefficiency. The image of dilapidated buses crawling through traffic-choked streets, overloaded with commuters clinging to doors and windows, paints a grim reality that millions face every single day.

The crisis of broken buses and overburdened commuters is not just a matter of inconvenience. It is an urban emergency that affects productivity, public health, and social well-being. This article takes a deep dive into the structural, institutional, and human dimensions of the problem, exploring its roots, its consequences, and the urgent reforms needed to build a safer, reliable, and inclusive transport system for Bangladesh.

1. The Current Picture: A System in Collapse

Bangladesh's public transport system, dominated by buses, is grossly inadequate for its rapidly growing urban population. Dhaka alone accommodates more than **20 million people**, with at least **40% relying on buses daily**. Yet the available fleet is outdated, poorly maintained, and often operated in unsafe conditions.

- **Old and Broken Fleet:** Many buses on Dhaka's streets are decades old, unfit for service, and often fail road safety standards. Cracked windshields, malfunctioning brakes, broken seats, and toxic emissions are everyday realities.
- **Overcrowding:** With demand far outstripping supply, buses routinely carry double or even triple their intended capacity. Commuters hang on to doors, roofs, or ride standing in dangerously cramped conditions.
- **Unregulated Operations:** Multiple private bus companies compete aggressively for passengers, often disregarding safety and service standards. There is little central regulation of routes, schedules, or maintenance.

The system is effectively **broken buses for burdened commuters**—a vicious cycle of inefficiency, danger, and indignity.

2. Human Costs: Commuters in Crisis

The greatest sufferers of this dysfunctional system are the commuters themselves—workers, students, and ordinary citizens whose daily lives revolve around transportation struggles.

- **Lost Productivity:** On average, Dhaka residents lose **3–4 hours per day** in transit. This equates to billions of hours wasted annually, stifling economic output.
- **Health Consequences:** Overcrowding, long waits, and pollution take a toll on physical and mental health. Stress, fatigue, and respiratory diseases are common among regular commuters.
- **Safety Risks:** Reckless driving, unfit vehicles, and lack of emergency protocols make accidents frequent. Many commuters, especially women, face harassment in overcrowded buses.
- **Gender Inequality:** Women in particular suffer disproportionately. The lack of safe and accessible transport limits their participation in the workforce and public life.

Every broken bus is not just a mechanical failure—it is a denial of dignity, safety, and opportunity for the people who depend on it.



3. Structural Causes Behind the Breakdown

The collapse of Bangladesh's bus system is not accidental; it stems from deep-rooted structural flaws:

1. **Poor Urban Planning:** Rapid urbanization has not been matched with coordinated transport infrastructure.

Roads are narrow, unplanned, and often encroached by illegal structures.

2. **Lack of Investment:** Public investment in mass transit has been minimal compared to demand. Unlike many Asian megacities, Bangladesh still relies heavily on outdated buses instead of expanding metro, BRT, or rail networks.
3. **Fragmented Governance:** Multiple agencies—Dhaka Transport Coordination Authority (DTCA), Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA), and city corporations—operate without proper coordination.
4. **Corruption and Weak Enforcement:** Unfit vehicles get fitness certificates through bribery, untrained drivers get licenses, and bus owners bypass safety rules with impunity.
5. **Profit-Driven Model:** Most buses are privately owned, and operators prioritize profit over passenger welfare. They engage in dangerous competition for passengers, ignoring schedules and safety standards.

4. Broken Buses, Broken System: Symbol of a National Crisis

The broken bus is not just a vehicle problem—it symbolizes the **larger dysfunction in Bangladesh's public transport sector**:

- **Institutional Weakness:** A lack of centralized authority results in fragmented policies and poor enforcement.
- **Social Inequality:** Only wealthier citizens can afford private cars or ride-hailing services, while the majority remain stuck in poor-quality public transport.
- **Environmental Damage:** Old buses emit harmful pollutants, making transport a major contributor to Dhaka's air pollution crisis.

- **Public Distrust:** Citizens lose faith in government promises when their daily commute is defined by chaos and indignity.

5. Case Study: Dhaka's Bus System

Dhaka is often cited as one of the **most congested cities in the world**. The broken bus system is at the heart of this crisis.

- The city has an estimated **6,000 registered buses**, but only a fraction are roadworthy.
- There are more than **200 competing bus operators**, creating disorganization and chaos at bus stops.
- Initiatives like the **Bus Route Rationalization (BRR)** project were launched to streamline services, but progress has been slow due to resistance from vested interests.

The outcome: Dhaka's citizens remain trapped in a cycle of **daily suffering with little relief in sight**.



6. Consequences for the Economy and Society

The dysfunctional transport system carries **heavy economic and social costs**:

1. **Economic Losses:** According to the World Bank, traffic congestion in Dhaka alone causes losses of **\$11 billion annually** in lost work hours and wasted fuel.
2. **Barrier to Development:** Poor mobility reduces access to education, jobs, and healthcare, stunting social progress.

3. **Global Image:** A broken transport system undermines Bangladesh's image as a rising economy, discouraging investors and visitors.
4. **Urban Inequality:** The poor bear the brunt of transport chaos, deepening social divides.

7. The Way Forward: Opportunities for Reform

Despite the dire picture, opportunities exist to fix the broken system:

a. Fleet Modernization

- Phasing out old, unfit buses and replacing them with modern, eco-friendly vehicles.
- Incentivizing electric buses and clean fuel technologies.

b. Route Rationalization

- Reducing the number of competing operators and consolidating them under regulated authorities.
- Introducing scheduled services with digital ticketing for efficiency.

c. Strengthening Governance

- Empowering a single transport authority with oversight powers.
- Strict enforcement of vehicle fitness, driver training, and safety rules.

d. Investment in Mass Transit

- Expanding metro rail projects beyond Dhaka.
- Scaling up Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) systems.
- Investing in suburban rail to reduce pressure on urban buses.

e. Inclusive Transport Policies

- Introducing women-friendly buses and secure transport options.
- Ensuring accessibility for persons with disabilities.

f. Public-Private Partnerships

- Leveraging private investment with strict accountability frameworks.
- Encouraging innovation in ride-sharing and integrated ticketing.

8. Learning from Global Examples

Bangladesh can learn from other Asian cities:

- **Delhi, India:** Implemented CNG buses to cut emissions.
- **Jakarta, Indonesia:** Successfully launched BRT to ease congestion.
- **Seoul, South Korea:** Reorganized its bus routes under centralized management, improving efficiency.
- **Beijing, China:** Invested heavily in metro systems, reducing dependency on buses.

Adapting such models can guide Bangladesh toward a more sustainable transport future.



9. The Human Side of Reform

Reforms must not just focus on vehicles and infrastructure but also on **human dignity**.

- Ensuring **commuter comfort** with clean, reliable buses.
- Providing **fair wages and training** for bus drivers and conductors.
- Building a culture of **courtesy and safety** in public transport.

The ultimate goal should be to transform commuting from a daily struggle into a **safe, efficient, and respectful experience**.

Conclusion: A Call for Action

The broken buses and burdened commuters of Bangladesh tell a story of neglect,

mismanagement, and missed opportunities. But they also present an urgent call to action. Without a functional, inclusive, and efficient public transport system, the nation's economic growth, social equity, and environmental sustainability remain at risk.

Bangladesh stands at a crossroads: continue with a broken, chaotic system, or embrace reform and innovation to build a future where transport empowers rather than burdens its citizens. For millions of commuters, the choice is not abstract—it is the difference between exhaustion and dignity, between frustration and hope.



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Public Transport Reform: Bridging Political Will and Practical Solutions

Public transport reform has emerged as a crucial issue in both developed and developing nations. While the demand for sustainable, efficient, and inclusive public transport has grown with rapid urbanization, political inertia, weak governance, and fragmented institutions often hinder implementation. Bridging the gap between political will and practical solutions requires a multidimensional approach that integrates strong leadership, evidence-based policymaking, inclusive governance, innovative financing, and citizen engagement. Drawing upon global examples—from Europe's integrated transport systems to Asia's rapid transit innovations and Africa's paratransit challenges—this article explores the intersection of politics and practice in advancing public transport reform. It argues that political will must be translated into institutional capacity, financial commitments, and practical solutions to meet the transport needs of the 21st century.

Public transport systems are the backbone of urban and regional economies. They connect people to jobs, education, healthcare, and social opportunities while reducing congestion, pollution, and dependence on private vehicles. Yet, in many countries, public transport is

marked by inefficiency, underinvestment, and mismanagement.

The challenge lies not in identifying solutions—many of which are well known—but in creating the political will and institutional frameworks necessary to implement them. Public transport reform is inherently political, involving negotiations among governments, unions, private operators, and the public. At the same time, it is also deeply practical, requiring technical expertise, planning, and financing.

This article examines how political will and practical solutions can be bridged to achieve meaningful reform in public transport systems worldwide.



Historical and Global Background

The Evolution of Public Transport

Public transport systems date back to the 19th century, with horse-drawn carriages and trams forming the earliest networks in European and American cities. The 20th century saw the rise of motor buses, metro systems, and commuter rail, often backed by large-scale state investment.

In the Global South, postcolonial governments initially invested in state-run bus and rail services. However, economic crises, rapid urbanization, and structural adjustment programs of the 1980s and 1990s weakened many public transport systems, leaving informal and private operators to fill the gaps.

Current Global Trends

- **Europe:** Strong emphasis on integration, electrification, and multimodal systems. Cities like Vienna,

Zurich, and Stockholm showcase successful models.

- **Asia:** Rapid transit expansion in China, India, and Bangladesh shows strong state-led investment.
- **Africa:** Reliance on paratransit (minibuses, matatus, tro-tros) dominates, with reform efforts focusing on regulation.
- **Latin America:** Pioneered Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) systems in Bogotá, Curitiba, and Mexico City.

These examples highlight the diversity of contexts but also underline a common challenge: aligning political promises with implementable solutions.

Current Challenges in Public Transport

1. Underinvestment and Financial Constraints

Many governments prioritize roads over mass transit, leading to inadequate funding for buses, trains, and metro systems.

2. Institutional Fragmentation

Multiple agencies often oversee different aspects of transport, resulting in poor coordination and overlapping mandates.

3. Political Populism vs. Long-Term Planning

Politicians may favor visible short-term projects (e.g., flyovers) over less glamorous but vital systemic reforms.

4. Inequality and Accessibility

Public transport often fails to serve women, people with disabilities, and low-income groups adequately.

5. Environmental Concerns

Diesel buses and poorly maintained fleets contribute to air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions.

6. Resistance from Stakeholders

Unions, private bus owners, and informal transport operators may resist reforms that threaten their livelihoods.

The Role of Political Will

Why Political Will Matters

Political will is the driving force behind policy implementation. Without commitment from leaders, even the best-designed transport projects fail. Successful public transport reforms—such as Bogotá’s TransMilenio or London’s congestion pricing—were possible because political leaders championed them despite opposition.



Barriers to Political Will

- Short electoral cycles discourage long-term planning.
- Pressure from vested interests (e.g., car lobbies, private operators).
- Public resistance to change (e.g., fare increases, new regulations).

Building Political Will

- Framing public transport as an economic and social necessity rather than a cost.
- Linking reform to national priorities such as climate change, employment, and public health.
- Ensuring visible “quick wins” that demonstrate benefits to citizens early in the reform process.

Practical Solutions to Public Transport Reform

1. Institutional Reform

- Establishing unified transport authorities (e.g., Transport for London, Singapore’s LTA).
- Reducing overlaps between ministries, municipalities, and regulators.

2. Integrated Planning

- Coordinating land use and transport policies.
- Prioritizing transit-oriented development (TOD).

3. Financing Models

- Public–Private Partnerships (PPPs) to leverage private investment.
- Dedicated taxes or subsidies for public transport (e.g., fuel taxes, congestion charges).

4. Technology and Innovation

- Introduction of intelligent transport systems (ITS).
- Digital ticketing and real-time tracking.
- Transition to electric and hybrid fleets.

5. Stakeholder Engagement

- Involving unions, private operators, and communities in planning.
- Communication strategies to build public trust.

6. Case Studies

- **Bogotá, Colombia:** BRT system transformed mobility but faces challenges due to political turnover.
- **London, UK:** Strong political leadership enabled congestion pricing and integrated Oyster card ticketing.
- **Dhaka, Bangladesh:** Introduction of metro rail and BRT reflects growing political will, though challenges in coordination remain.
- **Addis Ababa, Ethiopia:** Light Rail Transit (LRT) showed ambition but struggled with sustainability due to weak planning and financing.

Bridging the Gap: Politics Meets Practice

To bridge political will and practical solutions, reform must focus on three pillars:

1. Policy and Governance

- Long-term mobility master plans insulated from electoral politics.
- Independent transport authorities with clear mandates.

2. Capacity and Institutions

- Training professionals in transport planning and management.
- Building institutional memory to withstand political changes.

3. **Citizen-Centered Reform**

- Designing systems around inclusivity, affordability, and accessibility.
- Building accountability through citizen feedback mechanisms.



Future Pathways

1. Sustainable Urban Mobility

Cities must shift from car-centric planning to mass transit, cycling, and walking.

2. Climate-Resilient Transport

Adopting electric fleets, renewable-powered metros, and climate-smart infrastructure.

3. Regional Integration

Cross-border transport links (e.g., BRTC services between Bangladesh and India) can enhance connectivity.

4. Digital Transformation

AI-driven traffic management, autonomous buses, and integrated apps will reshape mobility.

5. Inclusive Transport

Special focus on women, children, elderly, and differently-abled passengers.

Public transport reform sits at the intersection of politics and practicality. Political will provides the vision and legitimacy, while practical solutions ensure implementation and sustainability. Global experiences show that reforms succeed when leaders commit to long-term planning, institutions are strengthened, and citizens are engaged in the process.

Bridging the gap requires a shift in mindset: public transport should be seen not as a subsidy-dependent sector but as a driver of economic growth, social inclusion, and environmental sustainability. With the right combination of political leadership and practical innovation, public transport systems can become the lifelines of equitable and sustainable societies worldwide.



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From Chaos to Coordination: Pathways to a Smarter Public Transport System



Public transport is the lifeline of urban and rural economies, providing affordable mobility, reducing congestion, and cutting environmental costs. Yet in most parts of the world, particularly in developing nations, public transport remains characterized by chaos: unregulated operators, fragmented governance, unsafe vehicles, and inefficient routes. The costs of such chaos are enormous—measured not only in lost productivity but also in social inequities, pollution, and compromised quality of life.

This article explores the journey *from chaos to coordination* in public transport. It argues that achieving smarter transport systems requires a shift from fragmented policies to integrated strategies, supported by political will, institutional capacity, technology adoption, and citizen participation. Drawing on global examples from Europe, Africa, South Asia, and Latin America, as well as lessons from Bangladesh, it identifies the barriers to reform

and outlines the pathways toward a modern, sustainable, and coordinated public transport system.

Cities are growing at unprecedented rates. By 2050, two-thirds of the world's population will live in urban areas. With this growth comes immense pressure on public transport systems. In many cities, public transport is chaotic—marked by overlapping routes, private cartels, weak regulation, congestion, and safety risks. For citizens, this chaos translates into wasted hours in traffic, higher costs, and daily stress. For governments, it means inefficiency, lost productivity, and strained infrastructure.

The challenge is clear: *how do we turn chaos into coordination?* How can governments, institutions, and communities design smarter, more efficient, and inclusive public transport systems? This article addresses those questions, emphasizing that coordination—not just infrastructure investment—is the real key to success.

The Global Picture: Transport Under Pressure

1. Chaos in Public Transport

Chaos in public transport manifests in different ways:

- **Overcrowding** in buses and trains due to inadequate fleets.
- **Unregulated operators** competing for passengers, leading to unsafe driving.
- **Fragmented governance**, with multiple agencies overseeing roads, buses, and railways but rarely coordinating.
- **Environmental burdens**, with old vehicles emitting high levels of pollutants.
- **Social inequities**, as poor and marginalized communities often have the least access to reliable transport.

2. Case in Point: South Asia

Cities like Dhaka, Mumbai, and Karachi face severe transport challenges. In Dhaka alone,

commuters lose an estimated 5 million work hours daily to traffic congestion. The lack of integrated transport planning has allowed informal operators to dominate, resulting in inefficiency and accidents.

3. Global Lessons

- **London:** Transport for London (TfL) shows the value of a unified authority coordinating multiple modes—bus, tube, rail, cycling, and walking.
- **Bogotá:** The TransMilenio BRT system reorganized chaotic bus routes into an efficient, integrated network.
- **Addis Ababa:** Light rail investments highlight Africa’s efforts to shift toward modern, coordinated systems.

Core Challenges in Public Transport

1. Institutional Fragmentation

Multiple agencies manage licensing, route permits, road safety, and urban planning. Without coordination, projects overlap, funds are wasted, and policies conflict.

2. Political and Economic Interests

Transport reform often collides with vested interests, such as private bus syndicates or political elites benefiting from the status quo.

3. Infrastructure Gaps

Developing nations face poor-quality roads, limited depots, and outdated terminals, restricting service reliability.

4. Financial Constraints

Public transport projects require heavy upfront investment, yet many governments lack resources or rely heavily on donor funding.

5. Social and Behavioral Barriers

Passengers often mistrust public transport due to delays, safety issues, or harassment. Cultural preferences for private cars further weaken ridership.



Why Coordination Matters

1. Efficiency

Coordinated systems reduce duplication and optimize routes, saving fuel, time, and money.

2. Accessibility and Equity

Integrated planning ensures that vulnerable populations—women, children, the elderly—have safe, affordable options.

3. Environmental Gains

Shifting passengers from private cars to efficient public transport can reduce emissions by up to 40%.

4. Economic Productivity

Reliable public transport boosts urban competitiveness by reducing lost work hours and improving mobility.

Pathways to a Smarter Public Transport System

Transforming chaos into coordination requires **multi-dimensional pathways**.

1. Institutional Reform

- Establish unified metropolitan transport authorities (e.g., TfL model).
- Strengthen regulatory capacity to enforce safety and service standards.
- Reduce political interference by creating independent transport commissions.

2. Strategic Planning

- Develop integrated transport master plans.
- Align land-use and transport planning (transit-oriented development).

- Focus on multimodal integration—bus, rail, metro, cycling, and walking.

3. Technology and Smart Solutions

- **E-ticketing** for transparency and ease.
- **GPS tracking** to improve route management and passenger information.
- **Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS)** for traffic flow optimization.
- **Electric and hybrid buses** for greener fleets.

4. Financial Sustainability

- Public-private partnerships (PPPs) to mobilize investment.
- Cross-subsidies from profitable routes to social routes.
- Innovative funding models like land value capture.

5. Citizen-Centered Approaches

- Participatory planning to reflect community needs.
- Gender-sensitive design (e.g., safe spaces for women).
- Affordability policies for low-income groups.

Case Studies

1. Dhaka, Bangladesh

Dhaka's "Bus Route Rationalization" project seeks to reorganize fragmented bus services into coordinated routes under a few companies. While implementation remains slow, it shows the potential of coordination. The metro rail (MRT-6) marks a major shift toward smart urban mobility.

2. Bogotá, Colombia

Before the TransMilenio BRT, Bogotá's bus system was chaotic and dominated by informal operators. The city reorganized the system into a regulated, integrated BRT network, reducing congestion and pollution while boosting ridership.

3. Seoul, South Korea

Seoul's integration of smart cards for buses and subways demonstrates how technology can unify systems, making transfers seamless and data-driven.

4. Nairobi, Kenya

The chaotic matatu (minibus) system is slowly being brought under formal regulation, showing how even informal networks can transition toward coordination with government leadership.

Future Directions

1. Climate-Smart Transport

Decarbonizing transport is critical to achieving net-zero targets. Electrification of fleets and renewable-powered metro systems will dominate future reforms.

2. AI and Data Analytics

Real-time traffic monitoring, predictive analytics, and AI-based route optimization will enable smarter systems.

3. Regional Integration

Cross-border bus and rail systems will enhance mobility in regions like South Asia, ASEAN, and the EU.

4. Inclusive Mobility

Smart transport must be inclusive—addressing accessibility for disabled persons, safety for women, and affordability for the poor.

5. Resilient Infrastructure

COVID-19 underscored the importance of flexible, resilient systems that can adapt to pandemics, disasters, and climate shocks.

From chaos to coordination is not merely a slogan—it is a transformative journey for public transport systems worldwide. The pathway requires **political will, institutional reform, strategic planning, technology adoption, financial innovation, and citizen participation.**

The ultimate goal is to make public transport not only a service of necessity but also a system of choice. When people willingly choose buses, metros, or trains over private cars because they are safer, faster, cleaner, and more affordable, then coordination has succeeded.

The world's cities are at a crossroads. Without reform, chaos will deepen, straining economies and societies. With vision and coordination, however, public transport can become the

backbone of sustainable, inclusive, and smart urban futures.



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Planning the Unplanned: Institutional Barriers and Strategic Gaps



Planning is often hailed as the backbone of development, governance, and social progress. Yet, across the globe, a significant proportion of policies, projects, and urban or rural development programs suffer from inadequate planning. This inadequacy is not always the result of ignorance or lack of resources—it is frequently shaped by **institutional barriers** and **strategic gaps** that constrain effective implementation. Institutions that are fragmented, under-resourced, or politically influenced fail to provide long-term direction, while the absence of coherent strategies widens the gulf between vision and reality.



This article examines how “planning the unplanned” has become a recurring challenge in governance, infrastructure, and social development. Drawing on global and regional examples—from urban sprawl in South Asia to climate adaptation failures in Africa and public sector inefficiencies in Latin America—it explores the institutional and strategic bottlenecks that perpetuate ad-hocism. Finally, it offers a roadmap for overcoming these barriers, stressing the importance of capacity-building, integrated governance, citizen participation, and long-term strategic vision. Planning is both a science and an art. It involves anticipating future challenges, setting goals, and designing pathways to achieve them. Successful planning can transform societies, while weak or absent planning can lock nations into cycles of inefficiency, inequality, and crisis.

The phrase “*planning the unplanned*” reflects a paradox: when institutions fail to prepare adequately, governments are forced to respond reactively, often at greater financial and social costs. For example, cities overwhelmed by unregulated urbanization later struggle with housing shortages, traffic congestion, and environmental degradation. Similarly, governments that neglect disaster preparedness face devastating human and economic losses during floods, earthquakes, or pandemics.

This article interrogates the roots of such failures by identifying **institutional barriers**—the structural constraints that hinder effective governance—and **strategic gaps**—the absence of coherent direction, integration, and foresight. By exploring these dimensions, the article argues that building resilient planning systems requires reforming institutions and bridging strategic divides.



Historical and Global Context

Evolution of Planning

Planning as a discipline took root in the industrial age, when cities grew rapidly and governments had to manage land use, infrastructure, and services. Post–World War II reconstruction highlighted the importance of long-term state-led planning, giving rise to five-year development plans in newly independent nations across Asia and Africa.

By the late 20th century, however, neoliberal reforms, decentralization, and political fragmentation weakened centralized planning mechanisms. In many countries, short-term political priorities replaced long-term strategies. The COVID-19 pandemic further exposed the fragility of institutions unable to cope with systemic shocks.

The Global Reality of “Unplanned” Development

- **Urbanization:** Informal settlements now house over 1 billion people worldwide, many without basic services.
- **Climate Change:** Despite global agreements, most national adaptation strategies lag behind commitments.
- **Infrastructure Gaps:** According to the World Bank, developing nations face a \$1 trillion annual shortfall in infrastructure investment, often due to poor planning and execution.

Institutional Barriers

Institutions—government bodies, legal systems, and administrative frameworks—are central to planning. Yet, they often act as barriers rather than enablers.

1. Fragmentation of Authority

When multiple agencies handle overlapping responsibilities without coordination, planning suffers. For instance, in Dhaka, Bangladesh, over 40 agencies deal with urban services, resulting in fragmented and contradictory plans.

2. Political Interference

Institutions are vulnerable to political cycles. Leaders often prioritize short-term, visible projects (flyovers, roads) over systemic reforms (public transport, waste management). This undermines continuity and long-term vision.

3. Bureaucratic Inefficiency

Weak capacity, lack of training, and outdated processes slow down planning. In many developing nations, approvals for infrastructure projects take years due to bureaucratic bottlenecks.

4. Corruption and Rent-Seeking

Resource diversion and patronage politics cripple institutions. Funds earmarked for housing, transport, or climate adaptation often fail to reach intended beneficiaries.

5. Lack of Data and Evidence

Many institutions lack reliable data systems, leading to guesswork in planning. Without accurate demographic, environmental, or economic data, policies remain misaligned with realities.

Strategic Gaps

Strategic gaps refer to the absence of coherence, integration, and foresight in policy and planning.

1. Vision-Implementation Gap

Governments often produce visionary documents (e.g., “Smart City” agendas) without realistic implementation roadmaps.

2. Sectoral Silos

Transport, housing, health, and environment are planned separately, ignoring interdependencies. This leads to inefficiencies, such as building new housing without nearby schools or transit systems.

3. Resource-Strategy Mismatch

Plans frequently fail due to unrealistic assumptions about funding, human resources, or technology.

4. Lack of Resilience Thinking

Many strategies ignore long-term risks such as climate change, demographic shifts, and technological disruption.

5. Citizen Exclusion

Planning often remains top-down, ignoring local needs and knowledge. This creates mistrust and reduces public support for reforms.



Case Studies

1. Urban Sprawl in South Asia

Rapid urbanization in cities like Dhaka, Karachi, and Kathmandu shows how weak institutions and strategic gaps create unplanned settlements. Lack of coordination between housing authorities, municipalities, and transport agencies leads to congestion and environmental degradation.

2. Hurricane Katrina, USA (2005)

Despite being a developed country, the U.S. response to Katrina revealed institutional paralysis and strategic gaps in disaster preparedness. Poor coordination between federal, state, and local authorities amplified the tragedy.

3. Climate Adaptation in Africa

African nations face severe climate risks, yet many lack effective adaptation plans. Institutions are weak, funding is inconsistent, and strategies often remain donor-driven rather than locally grounded.

4. COVID-19 Pandemic

Globally, the pandemic exposed institutional weaknesses in public health systems. Countries

without strong strategic foresight struggled with medical supply chains, hospital capacities, and vaccination rollouts.

Bridging Institutional Barriers and Strategic Gaps

1. Building Institutional Capacity

- Investing in training and professional development.
- Establishing independent planning commissions insulated from political cycles.

2. Integrated Governance

- Creating unified authorities (e.g., Transport for London model).
- Promoting inter-ministerial coordination.

3. Evidence-Based Policymaking

- Building reliable data infrastructures.
- Encouraging research-policy linkages.

4. Citizen Participation

- Involving local communities in planning processes.
- Using participatory budgeting and digital platforms for feedback.

5. Financing and Accountability

- Linking budget allocations to performance metrics.
- Increasing transparency in procurement and resource allocation.

6. Resilience and Foresight

- Mainstreaming climate adaptation and disaster preparedness.
- Using scenario planning and foresight analysis in policymaking.

Future Directions

1. **Digital Transformation:** Use of AI, GIS, and big data for predictive planning.
2. **Green Planning:** Aligning urban growth with sustainability goals.
3. **Regional Cooperation:** Cross-border planning for migration, infrastructure, and climate resilience.
4. **Decentralization with Accountability:** Empowering local governments while ensuring oversight.

5. **Institutional Memory:** Creating archives and knowledge hubs to reduce dependency on individuals.



Planning the unplanned is both a warning and an opportunity. It highlights the costs of institutional inertia and strategic gaps while pointing toward the need for systemic reform. Strong institutions and coherent strategies can turn planning from a reactive exercise into a proactive driver of sustainable development. Ultimately, the challenge is not a lack of ideas but the **translation of vision into action**. By addressing institutional barriers, bridging strategic divides, and engaging citizens, governments can escape cycles of ad-hocism and build resilient futures. The key lies in creating planning systems that are not only technically sound but also politically supported, socially inclusive, and strategically forward-looking.



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