

Our Transportation System is in Crisis – 192

Congratulations to Mr. Austin Jack Warner on his appointment as Minister of Works and Transport! Hopefully now, areas other than POS-centred will be given sufficient attention. For example, access within Chaguanas and access to Point Fortin have been almost completely neglected for many years, if not forever. And, there are (in many instances) such simple solutions that could bring immense results.

One example of a simple solution is the construction of a bridge over the Caparo River in Chaguanas to facilitate the linkage of Edinburgh Boulevard with the Caparo Valley Brasso Road, just east of the Southern Main Road in Montrose. This bridge, which has been proposed to the Ministry more than 15 years ago, could easily be done right away, as there are no squatters or anything obstructing it, and its construction will bring significant relief to west- and southbound motorists, as well as separating the bypass traffic from the urban centre traffic. In fact, I have personally taken technocrats from both the Ministry and the Chaguanas Borough Corporation to the site.

The emphasis of the new Administration for traffic and transportation matters must be transportation management. There would be need for expansion of several components of the transportation system, but these projects would be undertaken, as necessary, as part of the management programme.

Therefore, I suggest the establishment of a Transportation Management Council. Even before that, I would have suggested the current Ministry of Works and Transport divided into two separate Ministries: (1) the Ministry of Transportation, and (2) the Ministry of Drainage and Buildings. Transportation issues, by far,

outweigh other activities in the current MOWT. Drainage requirements are next in line, especially in preparation for and during the rainy season. Transportation and drainage projects and implementation could overwhelm a single Minister. The buildings component generally consists of (1) assessment of major building structures, and (2) maintenance of public buildings. However, I suspect that "Action Jack" would be able to handle it all.

I would like to now review the People's Partnership manifesto 2010 in order to appreciate the focus of the new Administration. It states that "*Our policy on infrastructure will be based on ensuring quality, reliability and maintenance of existing infrastructure while adopting transparent and fair procurement practices.*" This is in keeping with my suggestion of emphasis on management. A "*Road and Bridges Authority will be established to determine the appropriate network of major roads, highways, underpasses and overpasses and the construction of new bridges and the reconstruction of existing bridges.*" It should conduct planning and analysis to meet short-, medium- and long-term mobility needs. It should formulate policies and implement public involvement programmes to secure public understanding and support, and should be responsible for building, expanding and maintaining the road network and improving transportation infrastructure.

Then, "*the most effective modes of transportation will be adopted to move people and goods within Trinidad, within Tobago and between Trinidad and Tobago, all guided by a national transportation study.*" In fact, one of the first things required is completion of the long-overdue Comprehensive National Transportation Study

(CNTS). It is amazing that the last Administration pursued such mega rail and highway projects *inter alia*, in the absence of the results of the CNTS.

Next, "*All development would take place in the context of a land use and physical planning framework and that sustainable development principles will apply. There will be order and purpose in development strategy and execution.*" Land use growth management strategy must be applied to regulate the location, geographic pattern, population density, quality and rate of growth of land use development. It must include not only transportation actions, but also actions dealing with housing, economic development, open space, and community infrastructure. This policy should include consideration of decentralisation of activities.

Next, "*People would be central to the development process; not in word but in deed. Education for all will be a reality.*" And, "*local government will be more meaningful to people and more impactful on community development and there will be many more opportunities for participation and influence by citizens.*" Also, "*The tone of the country will change and barriers will be broken down through consultation, participation, involvement and consensus building. This will help us to achieve unity of purpose in our efforts and partnership and trust in the society.*" It is essential to understand the community's values in order to avoid, minimize, and mitigate impacts as well as narrow the field of alternatives. The community also needs to understand the tradeoffs and constraints behind the process, and to buy-in to the project.

Continued next week.

e-mail: info@ccost.org