

Our Transportation System is in Crisis – 216

Public expectations are usually low concerning the delivery of infrastructure requirements and they are often quite predictable. We expect the following, for example, in no particular order:

- That there will be no water in our taps during the dry season;
- That there will be frequent flooding in Port of Spain, Caparo Valley, and Claxton Bay during the wet season;
- That there will be very limited maintenance of watercourses, such as rivers and drains;
- That there will be very limited maintenance and upkeep of public buildings, and associated facilities;
- That there will only be improvements to traffic congestion problems when Government can provide more roads and lanes for motorists;
- That access to subsidised fuel, as well as to a conveniently located parking spot is our entitlement;
- That we are not contributors to the traffic congestion problems; it is just that there are too many cars in TnT;
- That management of traffic means to simply (1) create one-way routes, (2) remove on-street parking, and (3) install traffic markings and signs;
- That traffic signals cannot provide adequate control, and that the authorities are doing their best application with the limited ability of traffic signals, and that traffic signalled intersections should be removed at the earliest and replaced with either (1) one-way routing systems, or (2) roundabouts, or (3) interchanges, according to which is able to be fitted.
- That the Priority Bus Route (PBR) is a wasted asset, and that it should be better used by either (1) creating a one-way couplet with the

Eastern Main Road, that is, letting the PBR be one way two-lane westbound and the EMR one-way two-lane eastbound; or (2) creating car-pooling and HOV operations on the PBR through 3-plus persons during peak hours, in addition to the PTSC buses and maxi-taxis and the 1000-plus single-occupant PBR-pass holders;

- That a PBR-pass is to be given as a prerequisite for public officials;
- That there will continue to be no enforcement of traffic speeds and improperly loaded vehicles and ill-secured goods;
- That public transport refers to the operations by the Government-owned Public Transport Service Corporation (PTSC), while all other transit providers are the exclusive commercial enterprise of individual private operators such as maxi-taxis, taxis, PH, and private school transport, with concern for a duty to serve only as a function of their business activity;
- That public transport is only for those who have no access to a car;
- That we will always aspire to be car owners, and that public transport will always be viewed as the mode of last resort;
- That it is not the responsibility of elected local or parliamentary representatives to demand reliable and convenient access to public transport for those who need it.
- That taxi and maxi-taxi operators are to be blamed for the disorganised and unreliable state of the transit industry, and that regularisation of PH operators will provide much needed auxiliary transit to relieve patrons.
- That, while our decision-makers have a general interest in comprehensive planning in the delivery of infrastructure, their primary concern is for short-term

facilities, with the highest possible impact; and if they are again elected, then the rest will be dealt with down the road; and most importantly, planning severely reduces the time available to produce quick results.

- That we do not usually have a say in the decision-making process, and that might not bother us except when the implementation of those choices directly affects us. A recent example of that was the rapid rail project of the last Administration. Most people were unconcerned about what the Government was doing on this project and the likely consequences. It was only when the farmers and other residents in Cunupia, Longdenville, etc. realised that their quality of living was going to be changed as a result of the project that they agitated.

From the above, one should be able to deduce that the main problem is lack of management and belief. We have never been taught to believe in the great power of infrastructure management systems. The management of public facilities and their associated institutions has never been a priority for our decision-makers, largely because (1) the technocrats themselves often do not appreciate the need for and capability of infrastructure management, and (2) these are seldom ribbon-cutting activities. And thus hardly ever make the news headlines. But they do result in the highest benefits for users and non-users alike, if only they are ever implemented.

Therefore, for example, the recommended solutions to transport problems are always (1) add this or that, (2) buy this or that, (3) change this or that, etc. Maintenance, monitoring, and stakeholder involvement, which are all fundamental components of good management are hardly ever part of the assessment.

If public infrastructure management is given its rightful role, then the delivery of services will be vastly improved and maintained, and our expectations will also be adjusted upward accordingly.

Happy New Year!

e-mail: info@ccost.org