

The two most important characteristics in the performance of the transportation system are mobility and accessibility, and these terms need careful appreciation. Mobility refers to how frequently you travel, and is commonly measured as the product of the number of persons or vehicles and their distances travelled. Accessibility refers to how easily you travel between activities, or the overall difficulty in getting from an origin to a destination. While both terms are important, the latter estimates land-use-transportation connectivity and so is a more important measure in determining transportation policy.

Accessibility is generally quantified as an aggregate measure of the land-use activity and closeness of land-use activity opportunities of a given type to a particular location. Mathematically, accessibility of a geographical zone  $i$  for a specific activity is the summation of the product of the attraction of zone  $j$  and the deterrence expression due to the cost of travel between zones  $i$  and  $j$ . Attraction in zone  $j$  is typically the measure of activity in zone  $j$ , such as the number of jobs, or people, etc. Cost of travel is usually the travel time between zones  $i$  and  $j$ .

Work trip accessibility was computed by using zones comprising the Administrative areas in Trinidad and Tobago, and an attractiveness index of employment from the Central Statistical Office (CSO) data. Administrative areas consist of two city corporations, three borough corporations and nine regional corporations in the case of Trinidad.

The work trip accessibility rank for Trinidad was determined as follows:

1. Tunapuna / Piarco
2. City of Port of Spain,
3. San Juan / Laventille
4. Couva / Tabaquite / Talparo

5. City of San Fernando
6. Borough of Chaguanas
7. Diego Martin,
8. Princes Town
9. Penal / Debe
10. Siparia
11. Sangre Grande
12. Borough of Arima
13. Mayaro / Rio Claro
14. Borough of Point Fortin

The Borough of Point Fortin is the lowest ranked in Trinidad in terms of ease of connectivity to work and travel, and so Government's considerations to improve transport linkage between Point Fortin and San Fernando through construction of a new highway as well as other ideas for public transport in the region and water taxi stops at La Brea and Point Fortin, are very important. The regions of Siparia and Penal/Debe, which are also on the lower side of the ranking, will also benefit from these transport improvements. The Government's proposed growth pole of economic development for the South West Peninsula will be of tremendous benefit for these regions.

In February 2012, a large group of environmentalists began a protest against the construction of the highway from San Fernando to Point Fortin and which will pass through Mon Desir Delhi Road in Fyzabad and Debe. They are claiming that schools, temples and an orphanage among other things will be destroyed. They call themselves the Re-Route (Debe to Mon Desir) Highway Movement, and over the last few weeks, protest action has been intensified and they are demanding that Government change the route so that it bypasses their communities. They have set up camp and planted fruit trees on a piece of cleared land near the Debe market.

Most major highway projects evoke a degree of antagonism from

persons who may be adversely affected, as well as others who object from a philosophical viewpoint. Nevertheless, it is essential that everyone who may be affected have the opportunity to respond. Lines of communication must be established and trust must be built with the stakeholders.

But, have all affected stakeholders been identified, and what is the strategy for providing comprehensive stakeholder involvement in the project? So far, I am seeing in the media the opposition by a group to the project, and that they do not want the route? Clearly, the group does not trust the Authorities. Why? What is the route that they want; why has that not been detailed and presented in the media as well? Are all the stakeholders against the project; if not, why have the others not been heard? What are the physical, social and environmental impacts associated with the project? What optional routes are available, and what are the consequences?

My suggestion is that the overall project be restructured in the following order of implementation (the segment from Golconda to Debe is already underway):

1. Dualling of the South Trunk Road / Southern Main Road to a four lane highway from Gulf City to St. Mary's Junction in South Oropouche;
2. Connector Road from St Mary's Junction, South Oropouche, to Fyzabad;
3. Extension of the Solomon Hochoy Highway from Fyzabad to La Brea, including La Brea Connector Road; and,
4. Extension of the Solomon Hochoy Highway from La Brea to Point Fortin.

While the above are going on, the Authorities could work on solving the segment between Debe and Fyzabad.

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