Our Transportation System is in Crisis – 362

I continue the discussion of three weeks, four weeks, and last week, respectively, concerning access traffic problems at the University of the West Indies (UWI) St Augustine. The pursuit of a transit-intensive strategy for moving people to and from the campuses, as well as between the campuses is being recommended in order to minimise the huge need for provision of road infrastructure and parking as a result of the expected very high vehicle demand, and to maximise the provision for people using the campuses. An essential component of a transit system will be the creation of a pedestrian-friendly environment with facilities that are attractive and convenient for all, including the physically challenged and elderly.

A commendable start has been made with the current dedicated shuttle bus service for university students. This has the potential to reduce the volume of individual travel and impact positively on congestion.

Any optimal solution to our transportation problem must take account of the very large number of trips and the congestion caused by school traffic. At every school during the morning drop-off and afternoon pick-up it is almost a nightmare, particularly for the through-traffic with no business at the school, but simply passing by.

A dedicated campus bus transport service would ensure safe, efficient and reliable transport is available for students. Students would benefit from educational opportunities and social, sporting and cultural activities through easy accessibility to campus transit. Employees would also benefit from safe, efficient and reliable transport service. Unlike the campus student service which may be subsidized, the service for campus employees can operate on a commercial basis.

It is proposed that a Campus Transit Management Unit (CTMU) be set up to control and manage all matters concerning transportation for the University. As part of its responsibility, CTMU would be interested in securing a well-organised transit system that delivers high quality student and employee transport services in a safe, cost-effective and environmentally sound manner.

The CTMU would arrange for the contracting and management of a concession by a privately operated transit provision consisting of an appropriate mix of transit vehicles for peak and off-peak passenger demand.

There may be categories of transit routes, as follows: (1) Shuttle services. Scheduled trips are made between and within campuses. Shuttle buses would operate with medium volumes and high frequency during peak hours, and low volumes and medium frequency during off-peak hours; (2) Home-Based Services, where the home is at one end of the trip, either origin or destination. The transit services would not pick up or drop off students and employees at their homes (that is for another phase, discussed below), but at designated, strategic and secure terminal locations; and, (3) Park-and-Ride services.

Park-and-ride is a concept where motorists drive to a carparks which are located well away from the destination, that is, on the fringes, and then travel by scheduled transit to their destinations. Potential parkers are intercepted at the perimeter or further away from the urban centre. If this parking is relatively inexpensive, convenient, and directly connected to a shuttle service from the parking sites into very close proximity to the ultimate destination of the user, the concept would be successful. The location of park-and-ride facilities is critical to their effectiveness. The most effective is nearest the origin of the journey.

Transit vehicles must be sized according to the actual demand, with a duty-based design of the vehicles, i.e. overall concept, floor height, running gear, driving and braking systems. There would be use of conventional and digital radio commands, employing latest computer technology.

The second phase would be for the CTMU to undertake appropriate planning to determine and assess the regions of residence of the users of university, with a subsequent goal of providing long haul transit service between home and university locations, as closely related to door-to-door treatment as economically possible. Communities would be stratified into zones of residence to facilitate computation of (a) the numbers of persons desiring transportation to the university from the various origin zones of residence, and (b) the numbers and mix of long-haul transit vehicles required and their assignment to the various routes to the university.

The CTMU would set high operator performance and maintenance standards and would regulate the operator(s) of the transit system to ensure that services are safe, reliable and comfortable.

It is an advantage to a society that can offer high-quality transit services and other activities suited to walking access. These minimise the creation of second class citizens, or those not owning cars, or who cannot or do not want to drive. According to Professor Vukan Vuchic, in his book “Transportation for Livable Cities,” one of the fundamental characteristics of a livable nation should be the ability to travel conveniently without having to own or operate a car. He

suggests that two sets of policies need to be implemented: transit incentives and auto disincentives. Transit incentives are measures that result in decreased disutility of transit travel, such as increased frequency of service, reliability, comfort, lower fares, and construction of higher-quality transit mode.

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