

# Our Transportation System is in Crisis – 89

A new public administration team would have been installed by this week. As is customary, a 100-day implementation plan is expected to be presented by the new Government. Today I would like to present my 100-day plan for traffic and transportation.

## **Transportation Advisory Group**

Cabinet should appoint a standing advisory committee to the Minister of Transportation. It is understood that a Minister would have political objectives which she perceives must be implemented in order to satisfy the dictates of her administration. There are also current transport investments, as well as existing plans and plans-to-be-developed for short-, medium- and long-term mobility demands. These must all be appropriately balanced and prioritised.

The committee would comprise key persons in the transportation industry, and would invite participation from specific stakeholders when required. The committee would assist the Minister in establishing a context for choosing among the various options for infrastructure development, management and operation of services provided in the transport sector.

## **Public Participation**

Many people are skeptical about whether they can truly influence the implementation and results of a transportation project, such as a highway, rapid rail transit, or water taxi transit. Others feel that these plans are too long-term to warrant attention. Often the public finds that these projects are difficult to comprehend.

In a democratic society people should have opportunities to debate issues, frame alternative solutions, and affect final decisions in ways that respect the role of the decision-makers. Knowledge should be the basis of such participation. The public needs to know details about a

plan or project to evaluate its importance or anticipated costs and benefits.

The focus of public participation should be on decisions rather than on conducting participation activities simply because they are required, in order to avoid commenting on proposals just before formal decision-making.

The public should be conceptualised as a collection of discrete groups and individuals; each has different interests and different levels of energy for participation. They have needs such as: What issues or decisions affect which specific groups or individuals? How can their ideas be incorporated into decisions? Consensus does not mean that everyone agrees enthusiastically but that all influential groups and individuals can live with a proposal. The more specific the objectives, the better they will guide their involvement.

## **Park-and-Ride Facilities**

This is the concept where motorists drive to carparks which are located well away from the urban centre, and then travel by public transit to their destinations.

The location of park-and-ride facilities is critical to their effectiveness. The most effective is nearest the origin of the journey. In order to maximise the use of existing Government infrastructure, it is suggested that the following sites are best suited for hosting park-and-ride facilities for trips to POS, at least during the weekday: in the south, Mannie Ramjohn Stadium, Marabella; in the south, Ato Boldon Stadium, Couva; in the east, Larry Gomes Stadium, Arima; and, in the west, Hasely Crawford Stadium, Mucurapo. Confidence in security for the parked vehicle is a vital factor, and these stadia already have full-time site maintenance and security. Another large fringe parking site not owned by the state,

and on which an offer may be made by Government for consideration is the Divali Nagar in Chaguanas.

A state-owned company should be charged with the responsibility for planning and administration of park-and-ride facilities. The planning for park-and-ride facilities would require agreement of several issues, including (a) availability of location, (b) provision of alternative accommodation when the site has another conflicting activity having a higher priority, (c) site operator parking charge, including provision of adequate security, (d) transit operator charge, (e) park-and-ride user fees, (f) government subsidy (considered here as part of Government congestion alleviation support); and, (g) continuing and ample publicity for the system so that the commuter is fully aware of the advantages associated with the service.

The policy should be that the lowest user fees should be charged for the furthest locations of park-and-ride facilities. This would discourage motorists from preferring parking at locations nearest to the destination, thereby minimising motorists from having to enter the city.

To maximise passenger occupancy in vehicles wishing to use park-and-ride, parking fees may be charged considering the number of occupants. For example, for each passenger, say \$5 could be taken off of the fee up to a specific minimum charge for the day. This would encourage carpooling. The entire process would have to be monitored so see that vehicles are not recycling passengers outside the gates so as to reduce fares.

## **Signal Synchronization of CRH Intersections**

There is an opportunity to optimise the overall traffic signal operations at intersections along the Churchill-Roosevelt Highway, as well as synchronize them for east-west

traffic flow, as well as other closely spaced intersections. Despite most of these intersections being closely spaced together, there is no coordination or sequencing of signals in relation to each other whereby platoons, queues, or groups of vehicles can travel through a series of signals with minimal or no stopping.

A successful set of timing plans will efficiently handle traffic at all times of the day, for all days of the week and during all weeks of the year. It is important to have knowledgeable personnel involved in traffic signal timing and coordination.

The traffic capacity and speed improvement expected from this measure on the currently severely congested segment of the CRH is likely to be tremendous.

To be continued.

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