

Coordination As An Encumbrance to Effective Transport Management in Nigeria

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Abstract

In Nigeria, the Federal, State, and Local Governments, are responsible for transport planning, development, and management. The Institutional framework for transport development is rendered through numerous agencies at all levels of government, with the various tiers of government having responsibility for a combination of either rail, air, maritime, inter or intra-state waterways, highways, and pipelines. The preponderance of agencies created duplicity of functions and waste in the sector consequently making coordination difficult. This study attempted to examine the impact of lack of coordination by the various modes in the transport system. Secondary data and government records were used in the qualitative approach to ascertain the challenges in the transport sector. The study revealed that despite the enormous resources injected into the transport sector in Nigeria, lack of coordination had thwarted its growth, allowing unhealthy competition by agencies responsible for the overall management of transportation. Consequently, the laxity has left the nation's transportation in shambles, with the road networks in a deplorable state; and a comatose railway system, among others.

Keywords: Nigeria, Coordination, Encumbrance, Transport, Management

Introduction

The responsibility for transportation management in Nigeria rests with several ministries and agencies that made coordination and synergy a herculean task. As will be revealed later, these numerous agencies pursued their organization's interests rather than the country's transport policy objectives. The lack of synergy comes at a higher cost to the government at various levels of policy implementation. Another significant impediment is the lack of clear allocation of responsibility for roads and road traffic control agencies between the federal, state, and local governments. While the Federal Government has exclusive responsibility for developing rail, air, maritime transportation, air and seaports, interstate waterways, highways, and pipelines. The State Governments have jurisdiction over intra-state

highways and, in conjunction with the Local Governments. The Local Governments are also responsible for rural roads and water transport. At each level and particularly at the Federal and to some extent at the State levels, the institutional bodies are of two types namely, the Ministries and the Parastatals or Corporations. The confusion arises whenever there is a need to rehabilitate certain transport facilities in states like the case between the Lagos state and federal government. Most "federal" roads within state capitals are poorly maintained, thereby becoming a challenge to the respective state governments. Instead of the federal government relinquishing control of those federal roads within state capitals to be maintained and tolled by the states, the opposite has always been the case.

This lack of coordination between the agencies responsible for transportation, and the government at the federal, state, and local governments in Nigeria has not permitted the realization of the national transport objectives in the country. No matter the funds invested in the transport infrastructure, the aim would continue to be frustrated if synergy is lacking. There is a need for governments at all levels to establish a legally central transportation agency empowered to coordinate the activities of other bodies in the transport sector. The paper has argued that lack of coordination among the various agencies and ministries, including governments at various levels is a significant deterrent in realizing transport objectives. Public and private investments should not be wasted on providing uneconomic duplicate transport facilities. To benefit from the transportation coordination plan, the Government must be flexible to modify its policies as the need arises, and also ensure proper coordination by providing legal backing to the certain body.

Literature Review

From the Nigerian independence in 1960 up to the end of the 20th century and beyond, the Federal Government of Nigeria through its National Development Plans, (Nigeria F. G., 1985), has prioritized the development of the country's transportation system through the allocation of generous resources. Unfortunately, despite the government's commitment to the overall development of the sector, the disparity in the allocation of funds to the various transport modes coupled with the lack of coordination made the realization of the nation's objective in the sector unfeasible. Ezeife, P.C. and Bolade, A. A. in their article "The Development of the Nigerian Transport System", examined the several bodies responsible for transportation in Nigeria (Ezeife & Bolade, 1984). They also assessed the functions performed by the various ministries and agencies in the sector. Their study is significant for understanding the sectoral tasks of the numerous bodies responsible for transportation in Nigeria. The Transport Sector Reform Implementation Committee (TSRIC), National Transport Policy Options; was a Working Document by the government initiated to tackle some of the lingering issues in the transport sector. The Nigerian government's policy on transportation is that the transport needs of the country should be met with the minimum expenditure of economic resources. (Nigeria F. G., Statement of Policy on Transportation: Sessional Paper, No. 1 of 1965, 1965). With the massive demands on relatively limited resources at the Government's disposal and foreign exchange, Nigeria must avoid excessive development in transport, whether in duplicating facilities or excess capacity. In investing in transport, Nigeria considered the alternative uses of resources in transport and non-transport activities such as education, health to name a few, and in various forms of transport like the roads, railway, airways, and inland coastal, and overseas shipping. The shift in priority of the government from transportation to other sectors was an indication of the huge attention accorded to the sector that needed to be reduced.

The World Bank report No. 2833-UNI, on the Nigeria Sixth Highway Project, of 1980, recommended that some transport modes be capitalized to borrow on the market on their credit and issue debenture stock to the Government for their assets. They also emphasized the need for coordination in the transport sector for effective utilization of limited resources. The Federal Government in an attempt to ensure smooth operations in transport in Nigeria created the National Transport Coordinating Commission (NTCC), the former Transport Planning Unit, to perform the tasks of administrative and economic coordination of transportation matters (Bank, 1980). Additionally, the report of the Committee of Experts on NTP for Nigeria, under the chairmanship of Eniola O. Adeniyi, in October 1987 and the document on National Transport Policy for Nigeria in 1993, emphasized the need for the transport sector to move out of the crisis it has found itself. They maintained that there must also be an established and effective institutional framework and machinery for implementing, monitoring, and controlling future development plans, which will lead to efficient intermodal resource allocation, qualitative management, operation, and coordination in the transport sector. In addition, established an influential data bank for planning and policy decisions by building a solid foundation for subsequent policy planning efforts, and infrastructural and service development. The documents reviewed were significant in their assessment of the overall development of transportation in Nigeria, the lacuna in the works is the lack of guidance to streamline and empower an agency to manage transport matters in the country.

Transport Management in Nigeria

The management of transportation in Nigeria as earlier stated was the responsibility of the three-tier of governments (the federal, state, and local), and other agencies of government. It is important at this moment to have an assessment of the duties of the tiers of government regarding transportation in Nigeria. At the Federal level, transport planning and management are the responsibilities of four ministries and fifteen parastatals/agencies. (Bank, 1980). The Ministries are those of National Planning, Transport and Aviation, Works and Housing, and Petroleum Resources. At the same time, the parastatals/agencies are the Nigerian Railway Corporation (NRC), the Nigerian Ports Authority (NPA), the Nigeria Airways Limited (NA) the Nigerian Airports Authority (NAA), the Nigeria National Shipping Line (NNSL), the Nigerian Shippers Council (NSC), the Central Water Transport Company (CWTC), the Government Coastal Agency (GCA), the Niger Dock Nigerian Limited (NDN). National Maritime Authority (NMA), the Nigerian College of Aviation and Technology (NCAT), the Nautical College of Nigeria (NCN), the Nigerian Institute of Transport Technology (NITT), and the recently defunct National Freight Company. Most of the agencies are headed by the Directors General who is responsible to an executive board.

The Federal Ministry of National Planning (FMNP) has responsibility for intersectoral coordination of project proposals from the different sectors of the economy involving Industry, Agriculture, and Transport, to mention a few, within the macro-economic planning framework for the production of the periodic National Development Plans. Investment proposals on each mode of transport are submitted by the agencies listed above to their respective supervising ministries from where they are expected to be harmonized and forwarded to the FMNP. The FMNP has a Transport Unit through which it liaises with the Ministry of Transport and Aviation for the inter-sectoral coordination of transport plan proposals with other sectoral proposals. Similarly, transport project proposals from the State and Local Governments are forwarded with other sectoral projects to the FMNP through each state's Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning (Committee, 2002).

The Federal Ministry of Transport has, among other things, the responsibility for the development and coordination of all modes of transport. Specifically, its functions covered the following broad areas: The formulation of policy for different modes of transport; multi-modal transport planning and coordination and supervision of the transport parastatals/agencies under the ministry; development of transport facilities like the airports, seaports, and river ports and the provision of air safety services and meteorological services; and the training in air and maritime transport and transport technology (Committee, 2002). To perform the above functions, and in addition to exercising its statutory role over the parastatals, the Ministry is organized into six departments. These are the Planning, Research and Statistics, Transport Coordination, and Inspectorate Divisions responsible for policy development, research on all modes of transport, intermodal planning, and coordination, (Committee, 2002). Maritime Services, Finance, and Supplies deal with general administration, budget, finance, and accounts, as well as statutory and legal matters, and Personnel Management.

The Ministry also plays a supervisory role over the following parastatals: i. Federal Urban Mass Transit Agency, ii. Government Inspectorate of Shipping, iii. Joint Dock Labour Industrial Council, iv. Maritime Academy of Nigeria, v. National Clearing and Forwarding Agency, vi. National Inland Waterways Authority deals with the improvement and development of water transportation, river ports, and federal ferry operations; vii. National Maritime Authority, viii. Nigerian Unity Line, ix. Nigerian Institute of Transport Technology, x. Nigerian Ports Authority, xi. Nigerian Railway Corporation, xii. Nigerian Shippers Council, and xiii. Nigerdock Nigerian Limited, (CENTP88/2/11/801, 1987). Like many other sectors, the Federal Government's presence is dominant in the transport field because of the resources both professional and financial investments.

The third ministry is the Federal Ministry of Works and Housing (FMWH), responsible for highway development and maintenance. Its highways department initiates the federal road programmes very much on engineering needs, sets design standards, prepares preliminary cost estimates, and provides policy guiding the development, construction, and maintenance of the federal road networks. The Planning Section develops long-range, medium, and short-term programmes for regular highway networks. Its functions cover the collection, processing, and storage of traffic and highway-related data and statistics. Other functions include the setting of highway standards and specifications, route selection, right of way, traffic engineering, urban transportation planning, and road safety (Ezeife & Bolade, 1984).

The Design Section prepares detailed and final engineering designs for roads, bridges, and interchanges. It carries out regular reviews of design standards and specifications and evaluates engineering aspects of reports by consultants, while the Construction Section supervises road construction projects and bridges. The Maintenance Section maintains all federal roads, bridges, and ferries; and the Progress and Coordination Section reviews the progress of projects and prepares annual reports and estimates of expenditure for capital and recurrent projects. It also caters for the training and posting of technical staff.

The Ministry of Petroleum Resources is responsible among others, for the planning and development of the nation's pipeline networks. There are thirteen parastatals/corporations at the federal level responsible for one particular mode or the other under the supervision of the Ministry of Transport. These parastatals are quasi-public in authority and semi-business in operations. They are classified into five broad categories based on the functions performed by them. These categories are as follows: those involved in the provision of transport services

only, for example, the defunct Nigeria Airways (Ezeife & Bolade, 1984), which was the nation's flag carrier for International air services and traffic and maintained a near-monopoly in the provision of domestic air services; the NNSL which caters for international maritime traffic and the CWTC which provides interstate water transport for freight traffic.

Those responsible for the development, management, operation, and maintenance of transport facilities. For example, the NPA is responsible for the development, management, and operation of the four seaport complexes; the Nigerian Airports Authority (NAA) caters to the fifteen functional airports in the country, and the Niger Dock Nigerian Limited manages and operates the ship repair yard at Snake Island, Lagos. The area of training and provision of manpower engaged the following institutions: the Nigerian Institute of Transport Technology in Zaria, the Nautical College of Nigeria, and the Nigerian College of Aviation Technology, Zaria (CENTP88/2/11/801, 1987). Specialized services in the transport sector, the Government Coastal Agency, was the clearing and forwarding agency for consignments of the Government and international institutions, while the Nigerian Shippers Council negotiated rates and port charges on behalf of shippers with Conference Lines. The National Cargo Handling Company, (CENTP88/2/11/801, 1987) was a government-owned cargo handling and stevedoring company at all the national seaports, it also handles cargo at the international airports. The Nigerian Railway Corporation (NRC) can be distinguished from the above categories because it combines the development of railway facilities with the provision of services and the training of railway manpower.

The institutional machinery for implementing government policy directives and for decision-making on the services provided by each of these parastatals has an identical structure. The Ministers of the respective ministries supervising the transport agencies or parastatals transmit the long-term policy guidelines to the Board of Directors or the Council of the respective agencies (CENTP88/2/11/801, 1987). The Boards, in turn, implement these policies through each agency's management. The management is headed by a General Manager or a Managing Director, as the case may be, assisted in most cases by several Directors and Assistant Directors. Except for road transport operation which is controlled by the Federal government. Although these Agencies are theoretically expected to maintain economic operations the heavy annual losses recorded by them demonstrate their dependence on annual government subsidies (CENTP88/2/11/801, 1987).

State Governments' responsibility, as stated earlier but not elaborately, in the area of transport included planning, development, control of use, and maintenance of all category 'B' roads in the country and the development of some urban roads. These functions are performed by each State's Ministry of Works and Transport. Some State governments which operate inter-urban and intra-urban road transport services, for example, Lagos and Abuja, have corporations to run them. The institutional arrangement is such that project proposals are submitted to each State's Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning, for intersectoral coordination at the State level, and onward transmission to the Federal Ministry of National Planning, (CENTP88/2/11/801, 1987).

The third tier of government, the local government has responsibility for the planning, construction, and maintenance of intra-urban and rural roads. Each Local Government has a Department of Works that performs these functions, (Nigeria, National Transport Policy for Nigeria Moving out of Crisis, 1993). The Department of Works is usually divided into sections dealing with transport, building, mechanical engineering, and maintenance, especially of roads and bridges. Planning and management of road transportation at this level are still done on an ad hoc basis rather than through any comprehensive planning. It could be said that

transport development and management at the local level is ill-responsive and therefore largely uncoordinated.

The Federal Government in an attempt to ensure smooth operations in transport in Nigeria created the National Transport Coordinating Commission (NTCC), the former Transport Planning Unit, in 1977 to perform the tasks of administrative and economic coordination of transportation matters (Bank, 1980). The 1981-85 Fourth National Development Plan acknowledged the NTCC as the agency responsible for “coordination within the transport sector and rationalization between the sector and all other sectors in the economy.” At its inception, the Commission was expected to coordinate all Federal transport matters and to effect consultative harmonization between states on transport matters. The Board of the Commission was supposed to include all Federal Ministers dealing with transport issues and State Commissioners of Works and Transport. A Technical Board consisting of experts from these Federal and State Ministries was also envisaged.

The government accepted the principle of coordination and worked on the theory that each mode of transport could perform some operations more effectively than any other mode. For example, airlines have an obvious advantage in speed while river transport is generally superior to other modes in the movement of bulky goods at low costs. Passengers and freight should be carried by that form of transport that incurs the least economic cost in furnishing the service, as distinguished from its price to users, (Ezeife & Bolade, 1984). This aspect of transportation has remained a significant impediment in the intermodal management of Nigeria’s transport system.

In the Nigerian situation, the existing institutional machinery for transport development can be evaluated based on efficiency in the overall performance of the transportation system and subsystems. Issues involved in such evaluation of performance include the extent of consolidation of the various institutions and agencies, transport coordination, resource allocation, project implementation, ownership and control of transport parastatals, and overall management of the transport sector. Some eighteen separate and autonomous bodies in the form of ministries, parastatals/agencies, and corporations have been identified. The main problem here lies not only in the sheer number of these institutions but in the apparent compartmentalization of transport functions among them. The ministries would seem to have been functioning almost independently of one another. Each parastatal has also been concerned mainly with preserving its financial autonomy with little or no consideration for the impact on the activities of other parastatals and the overall objectives of national transport policy.

Poor intergovernmental coordination is a significant challenge for transport development in Nigeria. In the road subsector, the lack of coordination between the federal, state, and local governments has brought about the haphazard nature of road network development in many parts of the country. In some cases, secondary (feeder) state roads are well developed while the federal trunk routes into which the feeder routes open are left uncatered for. This situation was particularly evident during the Third National Development Plan (1975-80) period when the Federal Government took over 16,000 kilometres of former state roads (Nigeria F. G., Third National Development Plan 1952-1968, 1975). Many state governments went ahead to develop some of the other remaining roads while those taken over by the Federal Government were neglected.

Further issues that arise from the lack of effective coordination among the three tiers of government relate to traffic management and control, especially on urban roads. It is not clear whether the responsibilities of each tier of government include traffic management and

control of roads under their respective jurisdiction. This absence of clarification has led to conflicts between the federal government and some state governments. For example, the Federal Ministry of Works prevented the Lagos state government from converting some traffic lanes on certain busy federal highways in the Lagos metropolitan area into “buses-only lanes”, a measure that could have provided unimpeded traffic flow to mass transit commuters during morning and evening periods. Also, the Road Safety Corps introduced by some states was banned by the Federal Government. This was to avoid duplication of functions by the traffic control agencies.

This situation has been made possible and aggravated by the absence of a consolidated National Transport Commission vested with legal powers to harmonize the activities of all the institutions and agencies taking into consideration the overall national objectives in the transport sector. Resulting from this situation is the seemingly wasteful competition among certain modes, the oversupply of facilities in some areas, and inadequate supply in others. Unfortunately, the NTCC has not been able to perform effectively the task of transport coordination as its original creation was not backed up by the necessary legal and statutory powers. Also, inter-ministerial conflicts at the federal level and the inadequacy of the required professional manpower for the NTCC have hampered the effectiveness of the Commission. Faced with the actual realities of such ineffectiveness the Commission was, in 1985 reverted to a National Transport Coordinating Department which, is an integral part of the Federal Ministry of Transport and Aviation (Nigeria, Third National Development Plan 1952-1968, 1975).

Conclusion

The paper has argued that the lack of coordination among the various agencies and ministries, including governments at various levels is a significant deterrent to the realization of the national transport objectives. Public and private investments should not be wasted on providing uneconomic duplicate transport facilities. To benefit from the transportation coordination plan, the Government must be flexible to modify its policies as the need arises, and also ensure proper coordination by providing legal backing to the certain coordinating body. Failure to organize and streamline the activities of the numerous agencies responsible for transportation and the three tiers of government has left the nation's transport system in shambles. This is despite the huge resources devoted to the development and maintenance of transport infrastructure in Nigeria's annual budget. The challenge unfortunately can only be addressed if there is proper coordination at all levels of government.

Transport coordination in Nigeria has not received adequate attention from scholars likely due to preponderance or duplicity of functions by the three tiers of government and its agencies responsible for the sector. The lack of interest could stem from the confusing and overlapping roles the agencies are expected to perform. However, whatever may be the reason, this paper attempted an assessment of the damage caused by the ambiguous roles expected by government agencies in the management of transportation in Nigeria. The paper revealed that unless there is a clear allocation of functions to state agencies responsible for transportation, the problems will remain unabated.

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