MOBILITY CRISIS IN NIGERIA AND THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT'S MASS TRANSIT PROGRAMME¹

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Introduction

The importance of mobility to any nation cannot be overstressed. Wilfred Owen (1968), a renowned transport analyst, once stated that, "immobility perpetuates poverty". An immobile nation is a poor nation. But mobility is impossible without transportation development. Transport affects almost every human being in the course of his or her daily activities and it is difficult to conceive of a situation where transport does not play a significant role in the life of any given individual or society. People have to travel to work, to play, to buy and sell, to obtain professional services, or, simply, to socialize. Yet, moving people, goods and information through space has always required the expenditure of time, money and effort. To expend these valuable resources in such a way as to avoid the attendant problems of immobility is a major task facing any nation. Yet, certain trends appear to be likely in the future. People's quest for mobility and thus, the demand for transport, will continue to increase. Methods and techniques for providing mobility will become more costly. Thus, facilitating mobility will continue to lay a large burden on each country's development programme.

Apart from meeting current demand, many countries, especially in the developing world, are confronted with the need to eliminate transport bottle-necks and to catch up with maintenance and rehabilitation backlogs in transport infrastructure. Because of its dependence on liquid fuels, the transport sector has now become a significant burden on the balance of payments of most countries. For example, a

recent World Bank Report showed that in 1980, of the total energy import bill of \$74 million (N700 million) recorded for oil-importing developing countries, some 50% was accounted for by the transport sector.

Unfortunately, most of the economies of these developing countries are going through a period of chronic crisis, the end of which nobody seems to be able to predict accurately. The major problem, therefore, is how to meet the population's increasing demands for mobility and still ensure developments in other sectors of the economy while expending the available meagre and rapidly dwindling resources. This is why planning for a better transportation system should be considered as an integral part of a nation's overall development programme. It has to be re-emphasised that the relationship between the level and pattern of transport resources and standard of living of a population is a crucial factor affecting the economic and social progress of the nation.

This paper deals with the recent attempts by the Federal government to solve the urban mobility crisis in Nigeria. It is divided into five sections. After this introduction, the mobility crisis in the country is briefly discussed in order to put the later issues in proper perspective. The third section considers the introduction of the Mass Transit Programme by the Federal government; while the fourth part comments on the programme. The fifth, which is the concluding part, **offers** some suggestions on what should be done to improve the existing situation in order to make movement easier and much better, especially in the urban areas.

Mobility Crisis in Nigeria

Since political independence in 1960, every successive government in the Federation has shown much concern for transport planning and development. This concern is reflected in the share of the transport sector out of the total planned public investment. The sector recorded approximately 20%, 24% and 22% respectively in the First, Second and Third National Development Plans. In the Fourth National Development Plan, there has been a decline in planned expenditure to 15%. This may be interpreted, to a great extent, as reflecting the maturity of the transport sector. Moreover, even though the percentage share of the sector oscillated during the period under consideration, the magnitude of actual investment rose from N309 million in the 1962/68 First Plan period to N-10.7 billion in the 1981-85 Fourth Plan period - that is, an absolute increase of about 3,364% in less than twenty-five years. The figures also show that the transport sector has consumed, on the average, 20.3% of the total planned national re-

source outlay since the First National Development Plan period. This means, in essence, that of every Naira of planned expenditure in Nigeria's developmental efforts since 1962, about 20 kobo has been allocated to this sector.

With such huge investments, in the transport sector there have been quite significant physical achievements in road, rail, air, water and pipeline transport. However, despite these achievements, the sector is still faced with many problems which include, among others, inadequate planning, lack of intermodal coordination, insufficient public transport to cope with rising demand, urban traffic congestion, and neglect of rural-to-rural and farm-to-village transport linkages (Filani 1986: 12). All these have contributed to and continue to compound the problem of mobility in the country.

Let us consider, as an illustrative case, road transport which accounts for more than 90% freight moved, of all and 95% of all passenger movements. According to a recent World Bank Report, Nigeria ranks among the moderately well-connected countries in the West African sub-region with a density of 10 kilometres of road to 100 square kilometres of area. The country has the highest percentage of surfaced roads with 73% of the 30,000 kilometers of main road networks surfaced.

Most of the roads in the country were, however, constructed in the 1960s and 1970s. Unfortunately, a significant proportion of these road infrastructures has been crumbling, most especially since the beginning of 1980s. Some of the roads have been over-used and are inadequately maintained, resulting in their deterioration. Today, according to the same World Bank Report only 30% of all categories of roads in Nigeria can be regarded as being in good condition; the remaining 70% are in different states of disrepair.

The country has the lowest level of motorisation in West Africa with as low as 4 vehicles per 1,000 inhabitants. To compound the problem further, the rate of vehicle growth is much lower than that of population growth. Resulting from this mismatch is a general fall in the level of motorisation in all parts of the country. Since 1982, there has been a substantial reduction in new vehicle registration in all parts of the country. Table 1 shows the situation in Lagos and Jos between 1982 and 1986.

Table 1

NEWLY REGISTERED VEHICLES IN LAGOS AND JOS: 1982-1986

Year	<i>Number of Vehicles</i>	
	Lagos	Jos
1982	72,264	5,600
1983	39,288	2,100
1984	34,136	1,200
1985	30,532	1,400
1986	17,808	500

Sources: Bolade A: *"The National Urban Mass Transit Programme: Review and Reflections* p.6, 1989 Maunder D. and Fourachc: *Public Transport, Provision in Jos*, TRRL Working Paper, No. 219, 1987.

For instance, registration of vehicles in Lagos declined from above 72,000 in 1982 to a little less than 18,000 in 1986 while that of Jos dropped from almost 6,000 in 1982 to 500 in 1986. In Lagos also, registration of commercial vehicles went down from over 5,000 in 1983 to as low as 800 in 1987.

Such a reduction in vehicle fleet is a reflection of the economic recession and the consequent stricter restrictions on all categories of imports which include private vehicles and spare parts. The slump in oil revenue since 1983 has resulted in the institution of a series of economic adjustment programmes in Nigeria. These have involved the strict control of foreign exchange spending and the current Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP). Since the latter (SAP) involved, among other things, adjustment of the local currency (Naira) to international convertible currencies as well as the withdrawal of petroleum subsidy, prices and maintenance costs of vehicles have skyrocketed beyond the reach of individuals, most especially the wage income earners. The example of the astounding and scandalous increases in the prices of different brands of Peugeot cars can be used as illustration. A Peugeot 504'car (ordinary) Saloon which in 1983 sold for less than N9,000.00 now sells for over N120,000.00. The 504 SR model with air conditioning, which sold for a little over N10, 000.00 in 1983 now sells for over N150,000.00. A 505 GL model which sold for N1000.00 in 1983 now sells for more than N200,000.00; while the 505 SR with air conditioning that sold for N-13,000.00 in 1983 now sells for about N250,000.00 (Filani, 1988).

When viewed against workers' personal incomes, especially those in the public sector where the highest paid worker earns less than N30, 000.00 and the country's *per capita* income of less than N3,000.00 per annum, it becomes clear that Nigeria is already engulfed in a serious mobility crisis.

Consequent upon all these are the following:

- (i) High prices prevent the purchase of new vehicles; the astronomical prices of the available limited spare parts make vehicle maintenance almost impossible. For example, in 1979 and the early 1980s a complete car engine comprising the block, crank shaft, piston and rings could be refurbished at a cost of less-than N300.00. To do the same today will cost between N8,000.00 and N-10,000.00;
- (ii) Many previously car-owning families have become earless;
- (iii) Public transport operators are saddled with rickety and ill-maintained vehicles due to the exorbitant prices of spare parts and their inability to purchase new ones to expand their fleet of vehicles.
- (iv) Queues of passengers at major urban terminals and along routes get longer and longer everyday.

All these have resulted from the serious distortion and gap which has been created between demand and supply of means of mobility among the populace. Indeed, the demand for public transport among Nigerians, especially those living in urban centres in the last two to three years, has increased to a scale hitherto unprecedented.

The Federal Government Mass Transit Programme

In response to the emerging mobility crisis as stated above, the President, General Ibrahim Babangida, in his 1988 budget speech on 1 January, 1988 announced the inauguration of a Federal Government's Mass Transit Programme. A Task Force under the chairmanship of Air Vice-Marshal Yahaya was set up to produce the guidelines on the implementation of the Mass Transit Programme. In the President's-speech, it was also stated that a sum of N-700 million had been earmarked for the programme with three main goals (Bolade, 1989: 7) namely:

- (i) to improve and modernise urban transit services;
- (ii) to improve traffic flow and reduce hardship suffered by commuters; and
- (iii) to lay the foundation for developing a comprehensive and integrated mass transit system in Nigeria.

The Task Force Report which was submitted in March 1988 recommended the strategy of instituting the urban mass transit improvement and modernisation programme which would include, among other things:

- (i) a law to moderate mass transit development strategy with stronger emphasis on the use of local technology-related industries;
- (ii) an integrated mass transit system, to be based on coordinated and harmonized road, rail and water systems; and
- (iii) the development of an extensive mass bus transit system which will constitute the main transit option in many urban centres and inter-city routes with the development of other complementary facilities such as bus priority schemes, traffic management measures, land use controls, and use of fiscal policies to encourage the acquisition of public transport vehicles.

Following the Report and recommendations of the Task Force, a Mass Transit Implementation Committee was constituted in March 1988 under the chairmanship of the then Federal Minister of Transport. This Committee was dissolved in October 1988 and Air Vice-Marshal Yahaya, the chairman of the former Task Force, was appointed the Sole Administrator. The Mass Transit Programme was then taken out of the Ministry of Transport and put under the Presidency.

Although the President's 1988 budget speech stated that N700.00 million would be allocated to the programme, only N151.00 million was actually allocated in 1988. In 1989, the Mass Transit Projects fell within the group of eight projects funded under the N488 million Special Project Fund of the 1989 Budget. This is in addition to other fiscal support for the mass transit programme - including the reduction in tariff for mass transit vehicles, chassis, and spare parts, from 25% to 5%; and cheaper fuel prices for public and commercial transport operators. The range of projects already executed and/or are being executed include (Bolade, 1989: 9) the following:

- (i) **Road-based projects:** relating to the procurement and allocation of buses and spare parts to States; and assistance for developing workshop maintenance facilities; and basic road and traffic improvement measures.
- (ii) **Rail-based projects:** entailing refurbishing and repairs of rolling stock and track improvement for urban commuter rail services at potentially viable centres.
- (iii) **Water-based projects:**-comprising repairs and refurbishing of broken-down ferries, jetties and terminal improvements for commuter ferry services in the riverine coastal centres.

(iv) **Other related inter-modal projects:** specifically, federal-assisted projects so far executed and/or being executed in support of the State's programme includes:

- (a) the procurement and allocation of over 600 buses of five standard types to the States on very soft loan terms; and assistance for developing or strengthening workshop maintenance centres;
- (b) road complementary facilities and traffic management devices for improved traffic flow and better turnaround time for the mass transit buses in the major urban centres;
- (c) repairs and refurbishment of about 19 ferries owned by the Inland Waterways Division of the Federal Ministry of Transport for redistribution to urban centres in the riverine areas;
- (d) repairs and rehabilitation of locomotives and coaches of the Nigerian Railway Corporation as well as track and station improvements for expanded urban commuter rail services - first in Lagos and later in Ibadan, Port Harcourt, Kano and Enugu respectively; and
- (e) improvement of multi-modal interface, technical training assistance for personnel of the State Mass Transit Agency.

So far, many States have established transport companies for the operation and management of both the Federal-allocated and State-owned buses. In some cases such as Lagos, Bendel and Ondo States, ferry services are being provided in addition to the running of buses. The most common features of the situation in the States are revealing (Bolade, 1989:10):

- (i) They operate not only an intra-urban service but also intra-state and inter-state services.
- (ii) Many States have relied completely or substantially on the Federal-aided buses for the establishment of the State transport services.
- (iii) Many States require substantial working capital and infra-structural back-up for full operations,
- (iv) Many State Transit Agencies are adopting the use of two to three bus types.
- (v) Many State-owned operators are yet to get the full co-operation of the private operators with whom they should provide mutually complementary services.

Some Comments

The Federal government's Mass Transit Programme is now about three years old but its effective take-off in most of the States is between one-and-a half and two years. It is, therefore, pertinent to say that a critical assessment of the programme's performance, most especially in terms of meeting its stated or implicit objectives, may be premature. This is more so because investments in transport projects or programmes, especially those on infrastructures, are lumpy and indivisible, requiring a long period of gestation and pay-off. It may, in fact, require at least three to five years of sustained investment and programme implementation before one can meaningfully and critically assess the Mass Transit Programme. Furthermore, since the objectives of the programme were stated in broad terms without specified targets to be met, performance evaluation becomes more difficult. There are no specific criteria against which to measure the performance. This caveat notwithstanding, what is intended here is to give a preliminary evaluation of the programme, showing its impacts for the future.

There, is no doubt, that the introduction of the Mass Transit Programme is one of the bold steps taken by President Babangida administration since its inception in 1985, for the improvement of the country's transportation system. The acceptance of the Federal government in January 1985 that a mobility crisis existed in the country and its subsequent intervention and direct funding are all praiseworthy. It is difficult to imagine what would have happened had the Federal government not intervened at the time it did, especially in the procurement and distribution of buses. For one thing, mobility in Nigeria's major cities would have been almost completely paralysed leading to possible social disorder and chaos. Immobility in the major urban centres would have affected national productivity and development potential.

The moderating effect of the Mass Transit Programme, particularly on fares chargeable by the private sector, cannot be over-emphasised. The programme has expanded transit service availability through the infusion of over 2,000 buses into the national bus fleet since its inception. It is plausible to contend that but for the presence of these Mass Transit vehicles in the Nigerian transport service market, the private vehicle operators would by now have been charging socially unacceptable fares.

Apart from satisfying a proportion of demand for movement, the Mass Transit Programme has also assisted in reducing unemployment, however small, in the various parts of the country. The creation of transport corporations, the operation and maintenance of the vehicles and the administrative machinery for the programme in the different States provide avenues for additional jobs in the labour market.

In general, therefore, it can be said that although mobility problems still abound in different parts of the country, particularly in the major cities and along intercity routes, so far, the Federal Mass Transit Programme has had some salutary effects; not only in expanding the level of available transit services but also in moderating the fare fluctuations in the transit service and at the same time providing employment opportunities for Nigerians.

All the above positive impacts notwithstanding, certain basic problems and issues still persist. If not carefully considered and treated such problems and issues may eventually cripple the programme.

These include inter alia the following:

- (i) There is the question of ownership structure, financing, control and management. For example, what roles should the private and public sectors play in the provision of mass transit services in Nigeria? Is there any rationale for the creation of State-owned transport companies especially at a period when previously government fully-owned companies are being privatised and/or commercialised?
- (ii) What type of technology choice should be adopted? Is the country ripe enough or is it being effectively prepared for the development of an indigenous technology in the area of vehicle production and the fabrication of spare parts for mass transit vehicles?
- (iii) There are the issues which relate to ensuring the continuity and sustenance of the programme after the military might have left and the advent of civilian administration starting from 1992.
- (iv) Finally, there is the issue of appropriate institutional machinery for effective planning, coordination, programme execution, monitoring and continuous evaluation.

Perhaps before treating each of these issues, it is necessary to give a conceptual clarification and definition of the term "Mass Transit" for two main reasons, namely:

- (i) to correct some of the misunderstandings on the meaning and scope of the Mass Transit Programme by several writers in the newspapers and discussants on the electronic media; and
- (ii) to put into proper perspective the discussion on each of the issues raised above.

The term "Mass Transit" connotes high capacity means and modes of transport moving large volumes of people within a given network and with reasonable turn around time (Hay 1977: 265-267). Such movement of people *en masse* can generally be accomplished

through the rapid rail system (that is, subways, underground rails, me-tros), light rail systems, tramways and monorails, bus systems and, where feasible, waterways. Any or a combination of these modes has its own peculiar technical and operational characteristics not only in terms of ownership structure and control but also in terms of implications for investment.

Several deductions can be made from the above definition. First, it is clear that although all modes and means of mass transit are public transport, not all public transport modes can provide mass transit services. For example, taxis and mini-buses (e.g the *danfos*) are not vehicles for mass transit. Thus, although such vehicles as taxis and mini-buses play some important roles in facilitating mobility of urban inhabitants, they do not qualify to be described as mass transit vehicles.

Secondly, mass transit services are not a rural affair. For the low and dispersed demand characteristics of rural traffic, mass transit is not appropriate. Thus, the occasional calls by some Nigerians for the extension of the mass transit services to the rural areas arise from misconceptions of the true meaning of the term.

Thirdly, and most important, only very few cities in Nigeria today qualify for the provision and efficient running of mass transit services. Mass transit services cannot and should not be limited to intra-urban movement. Each State should examine its socio-economic environment and movement requirements of its inhabitants and then decide whether intra-city or inter-city or a combination of both should be its priority in the execution of its Mass Transit Programme.

Having made the above clarification, we can now return to the main issues raised earlier.

Ownership Structure, Financing and Control

A mass transit system consists of three major elements: the right of way (that is, the road bed, rail-line or waterways), the equipment which is the vehicle, and operation in terms of the personnel used in running the vehicle on the right of way.

In the Nigerian context, the provision of the right of way has always been the responsibility of the public sector, i.e the governments. The issue, with respect to ownership and control, therefore, relates to the provision, operation and management of the equipment - the vehicles. In Nigeria, the practice has been that the public and the private sectors compete for the provision and operation of equipment of intra-urban and inter-urban mass transit system. Public sector participation, until the inception of the Federal government's Mass Transit Programme, was limited to the municipal and state government levels.

Moreover the history of such public sector participation in the provision of mass transit services was marked by woeful failures. This is the more reason why some people are genuinely worried about the present heavy involvement of government in mass transit services. The question being asked is whether it is reasonable for States to create their own bus transport companies under the prevailing national socio-economic setting when several of the previously government fully-owned companies are either being privatised or commercialised.

Several options have, therefore, been suggested as to the forms which the structure of ownership, financing and management of mass transit can take (Bolade 1987). The four most common options include:

- (i) total public sector financing, ownership and operation;
- (ii) public sector financing and ownership with private sector operation (i.e. operation of facility and/or service by contract to the private sector);
- (iii) public and private sector joint financing and ownership with private operation (i.e. joint ventures floated on commercial company principles); and
- (vi) fully private sector financing, ownership and operation.

Past experience and the reality of the present economic situation in the country do not seem to favour options (i) and (ii), that is either total public sector or private sector ownership, financing and operation. The failure of previous attempts by the public sector and the general attitude of Nigerian workers to the running of enterprises which wholly belong to government do not favour full ownership and operation of mass transit by the public sector. In fact, reports concerning the operations of some of the newly created state-owned bus companies are, to say the least, not very encouraging. There are already allegations of poor procurement procedures and misuse of meagre financial resources; extensive pilferage of spare parts; and general lack of discipline among staff. Some of the companies are already recording heavy financial losses.

A fully private sector ownership appears not to be feasible with the current high cost of acquisition, maintenance and operation of vehicles. Since the private sector is essentially profit-motivated, it is doubtful if it can continue to operate profitably without charging fares that will be socially unacceptable to the populace.

Thus, we are left with options, (ii) and (iii) in which the public and private sectors are involved. With the high cost of mass transit equipment, and the scarcity of foreign exchange, it seems imperative that the Federal government will continue to be actively involved in the mass transit programme, most especially in the procurement of vehicles and their spare parts. The major challenge, therefore, is how

to develop a strategy which will ensure continued government participation and, at the same time take advantage of the operational and management efficiency that characterises the private sector.

In option (ii), the public sector, apart from providing the right of way, is responsible for acquisition of equipment, including spare parts. The equipment is then contracted/leased to private sector operators appointed as franchisees. The private operators can then be charged such subsidised rents which will allow them to make reasonable returns while charging socially acceptable fares. In such a situation, the fare structure will have to be agreed upon between the private operators and the governments.

Alternative (iii) calls for a joint venture between public and private sectors in terms of floating companies on a commercial basis. If this option is taken, it will require heavy government involvement in terms of the proportion of shares owned, especially in the first five years of the companies' operations, in order to put the companies on a sound footing. Later, government shares in such companies could be sold to the general public.

Whichever type of ownership structure finally emerges, continued government roles and assistance in the provision of mass transit services in Nigeria is inevitable. This is because mass transportation has, over the years, acquired the properties of a social service requiring heavy subsidies in different parts of the world, including Nigeria. For example, in federated countries, such as Western Germany and the USA, the Federal government normally assists in financing the capital costs and sizeable operating costs of major urban mass transit projects. In fact, in the USA, the federal operating assistance to state and municipal mass transit authorities was as high as \$875 million and \$545 million in 1982 and 1985 respectively (Bolade 1989). Such financial assistance has also been recorded in the United Kingdom from the central to local governments. In some other regions such as the Scandinavian countries, local governments are fully responsible for both capital and operating subsidies; while in Australia, state governments are fully responsible. Thus, if the social service nature of the urban mass transportation is to be respected in Nigeria, a system of subsidies must be developed to allow the provision of the services at a socially acceptable level of charges.

Technology Choice

One of the major recommendations of the Yahaya Task Force on Mass Transit Services is the adoption of "a low to moderate mass transit development strategy with stronger emphasis on the use of local technology and related industries". The intention of this recommendation is to facilitate the development of an indigenous technology

and a programme of made-in-Nigeria mass transit vehicles. It also involves the standardization of vehicles and fabrication of spare parts. While Air Vice-Marshal Yahaya, the then sole administrator, made concerted efforts to standardize vehicle type used in the provision of mass transit, limiting them to three or four types, the efforts of the vehicle assembly plants at developing indigenous technology or indeed, at transferring technology have been quite questionable. Thus, as stated by Balogun (1989), "reliance on the local assembly plants in their present form for internalising bus transit technology is a ruse". He contended that while considerable prospects exist in the metals, plastics and rubber categories, encouragement and patronage from local assembly plants have been unimpressive and are at the expense of promoting foreign input.

The attitude of the vehicle assembly plants is further compounded by the structural deficiency in Nigeria's steel plants. It is well known that over 70% of the components of a vehicle are made from steel. Of these, flat sheets make up 60% of the vehicle. Unfortunately, despite the huge investments on the nations' steel plants, there is no provision for the production of flat sheets and other malleable grades of mild and high tensile steel required for the production of various vehicle components (Ahlbrecht 1989). Thus, the various vehicle assembly plants still depend upon the importation of material inputs from abroad. With the scarcity of foreign exchange, it is difficult for the assembly plants to operate efficiently. Consequently, they all run at a very low capacity utilization rate and cannot meet the demand for bus production required for mass transit service.

Unless positive steps are taken to compel the vehicle assembly plants to utilize the available local resources within the country to the fullest, Nigeria can never hope to produce a truly Nigerian vehicle.

Programme Continuity

Strictly speaking, issues pertaining to urban mass transportation are constitutionally state and local government responsibilities. The current intervention of the Federal government could be regarded as a necessary and inevitable technical assistance in curtailing the apparent urban mobility crisis and meeting public transport requirements which by the prevailing socio-economic setting, have become basic needs. This type of intervention by the Federal government is straightforward and much easier to implement under a military regime with a more or less unitary form of government. What would happen when, under a civilian administration, the party in power at the Federal level differs from that of the state levels. The experience of

the Second Republic in Nigeria is still very fresh in our memory and does not require any elaboration here.

Although one can confidently assert that if the prevailing economic situation continues and vehicle prices continue to increase, no reasonable Federal administration can afford to play down the importance of continued provision of mass transit services. Any attempt to do this may lead to social upheaval and perhaps the collapse of not only the economy but the government itself. This statement notwithstanding, it is necessary for the present military regime to establish such a strong and viable institutional framework and machinery for the Mass Transit Programme such that any in-coming civilian administration will find it difficult to destroy. The present management structure for the programme does not provide that kind of machinery.

Institutional Framework and Machinery

As stated earlier, the Mass Transit Programme is roughly three years old at the Federal level. However, within that period the machinery for managing the programme has witnessed some problems and changes. The Yahaya Task Force originally recommended a semi-autonomous management structure which could take the programme out of the direct control of the then Ministry of Transport. However, at the implementation stage this recommendation was jettisoned and a committee was constituted to manage the programme under the Ministry of Transport, with the Minister as the chairman. Of course, as envisaged by the Yahaya Task Force, the redtapism that characterises affairs in ministries, in conjunction with some extraneous factors, almost crippled the programme within six months of its commencement. The situation was so bad that the President had to dissolve the Committee in October 1988. He retained Air Vice-Marshal Yahaya as the sole administrator to reorganize and put the programme back on its original course from which it had drifted.

The efforts of Air Vice-Marshal Yahaya as sole administrator of the programme should be commended. With a strong determination to succeed, consistency in firm decision making, especially with regards to procurement and distribution of buses and standardization of vehicles, the effects of the programme began to be felt. Yahaya's firm hold on the programme and the paths of success charted by him became quite obvious at the national seminar which the Federal Mass Transit Programme organized in Kaduna in March 1989. With the kind of drive and effective leadership provided by the sole administrator within seven months of his running the programme, the announcement of his appointment as the Federal Minister for Industries on the last day of the Kaduna seminar came as a shock, especially at a point in time when he himself was meeting with state

commissioners of transport, charting the future course of the programme. The relevant issue here, of course, is the second change in the leadership of the programme management only seven months after the first change. A new sole administrator, Air Vice-Marshal Ishaya Shekari (rtd) was appointed. He, too, was recently replaced by yet another sole administrator. Without any prejudice to the leadership qualities of the successive sole administrators, frequent changes in management leadership do not provide the required stable atmosphere for the successful implementation of the programme. The programme needs a stable management structure especially at the Federal level. Such a structure should be built around a few core permanent highly-trained transport researchers' and professionals who can give sound professional advice and guidance, whenever required.

The Way Ahead

The continued development of urban mass transit in Nigeria is imperative. This assertion is based on four premises:

- (i) Despite government's concerted efforts at improving the economy and the Structural Adjustment Programme, it is difficult to foresee any major changes from the present situation in the immediate future.
- (ii) With the restrictions on imports and the continued decline in the value of the naira relative to the hard currencies, prices of vehicles and their spare parts will continue to rise, and perhaps, far beyond the reach of individual private potential buyers.
- (iii) Consequent upon (i) and (ii) above, the growth of vehicle fleet will continue to be low and there will be an increase in the number of earless families and individuals.
- (iv) Urban population growth will continue to rise much higher than that of vehicles, and the level of motorization will continue to decline. It is generally believed that, at an annual growth rate of 5.8% not less than twelve cities in Nigeria will have reached the over 1 million population mark by the year 2,000. It has also been projected that metropolitan Lagos alone might record about 1.5 million by the date.

Because of the increased functions of these urban centres, large volumes of intra-urban and inter-urban movements will be generated. Such movements will increase the demand for mass transit services if mobility would not be totally paralysed in the major cities. Such a situation, therefore, calls for further intensification of efforts to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the mass transportation system in the country, developing not only the bus system but also the rail and

water transport systems where feasible. This is the only way by which the sufferings of the great masses of commuters in the country can be alleviated and a mobility crisis prevented.

It cannot be overstressed that a Mass Transit Programme needs careful and painstaking planning. But planning cannot and should not be done in a vacuum. Hence the urgent need for an URBAN MASS TRANSIT POLICY in Nigeria. While the efforts so far made by the Federal and State governments are noteworthy, sustained efficiency and effectiveness of the programme warrants a national policy. It is within the framework of such a policy that directions can be given to the programme in terms of goal formulation; systems specification; project selection; programme implementation; as well as monitoring and evaluation. The call for an urban mass transit policy also brings **into** focus again the issue of a National Policy on Transportation. In 1986, the present administration set up what was called "The Committee of Experts on National Transport Policy" to fashion out, in nine months, the nation's transport policy till the year 2,000. The committee submitted its report in 1987; but up till now, the government has not come out with any white paper on it. As already stated elsewhere, the Federal government's view on that report is long overdue. This is more so because the Urban Mass Transit Policy advocated here should get its guidelines from an overall National Transport Policy.

In terms of an institutional framework for effective planning and implementation of the programme, the present arrangement whereby it is put under the Presidency is favoured. However, notwithstanding the alternatives chosen among those given earlier for ownership structure as well as financing and control, there is the need to create a FEDERAL MASS TRANSIT AUTHORITY which, housed under the Presidency, will be assigned specific functions that will include, among others:

- (i) issuing guidelines, in consonance with the provisions in the National Urban Mass Transit Policy, for the operations of the programme at the State and local government levels;
- (ii) providing equipment vehicles and spare parts;
- (iii) arranging and implementing the contractual agreement with the private operators if the franchise system (option (ii) in section III above) is adopted;
- (iv) providing regulatory supervision, monitoring and continuous evaluation of the activities and operations of the Mass Transit Programme;
- (v) coordinating the activities of all agencies responsible for the Mass Transit Programme; and

arranging for research activities on such important issues as changes in the populations being served by the mass transit programme, their socio-economic characteristics, their changing travel behaviour and pattern, and the continuous relationship between demand and supply; the land use patterns in the urban centres and the general ever-changing spatial organisation of economic activities and development in all the areas being served. It is such research activities that can allow effective monitoring and evaluation of the programme from time to time, making purposeful planning possible.

These recommendations are in addition to those contained in the body of the paper in terms of vehicle standardization, continued government subsidy on the programme, and making determined efforts to encourage or, if possible, compel the vehicle resources. Attempts should be made to find ways of restructuring some sections of the nation's steel plants for the production of flats. Although this may now be a very costly exercise, it is a sacrifice that the country may have to make as a nation in order to expand the scope of developing indigenous technology.

The suggestions above are necessary but not sufficient conditions for improving mass transit services and curtailing a mobility crisis in the country. There is a need for continued full political commitment on the part of the present military government and the in-coming civilian administration. There is also a need for political stability, efficient and judicious resource utilization and consistency in policy.

Notes

1. This paper is an updated, modified version of a public lecture delivered by the author at the Ogun State University, Ago-Iwoye, Nigeria, on Thursday, 27 April, 1989.
2. For example, the Shagari administration (1979-1983) — an NPN-controlled Federal Government — was not favourably disposed to the activities of the Road Safety Corps introduced in Oyo State by the Bola Ige administration — a UPN-controlled State Government. This laudable programme which had a significant effect on the reduction of accident rates on the State roads was eventually cancelled as a result of inter-party rivalry.

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