



Book review

Public Transport Planning and Management in Developing Countries, Ashish Verma and T.V. Ramanayya (2015) Boca Raton: CRC Press, £54.39 (Hardback) £44.79 (ebook) ISBN 9781466581586

With much of the world's population growth taking place in the cities of the developing world, the authorities in these cities are struggling to manage their transport infrastructure and services (Freeman, 2013). This is especially true for megacities in countries such as India, where rising per capita incomes are leading to increased private vehicle use and urban traffic congestion (Kutzbach, 2009) – thereby quickly reaching and even surpassing the congestion, carbon emissions and air pollution levels of developed countries. At the same time many of the developing world's residents, notably the urban poor, continue to suffer from low levels of mobility and limited access to opportunities, whilst the infrastructure and transport services they are using are unsafe, polluting and unaffordable (Amos, 2008).

With sustainable transport now being mainstreamed across several Sustainable Development Goals and targets set by the United Nations in their 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, it is essential that academics and practitioners with an interest in developing countries are provided with a text that deals with issues of public transport systems planning and management, acknowledging a context that differs from a developed country's perspective on at least three counts:

1. Developing cities have a large captive passenger market for whom affordability of public transport is a significant concern, alongside an upcoming choice-passenger market with demands that at times conflict with the needs of the former;
2. Governments have limited capacity and resources with which to manage a good quality integrated public transport system, and are therefore forced to let the market operate unscheduled paratransit or informal public transport services in isolation or alongside an often marginal regulated public transport system;
3. Many urban public transport systems in developing countries cities operate in hostile road environments with high congestion levels, overcrowded buses and trains, a lack of infrastructure and facilities (including stop and crossing facilities), and limited access and egress into sometimes large, inaccessible informal or unplanned areas.

It is perhaps surprising, then, that only a handful of books explicitly deal with public transport and mobility concerns in developing countries (Iles, 2005; Dimitriou and Gakenheimer, 2011; Behrens et al., 2016); this does not do justice to the uniqueness and size of the problem of planning and managing public transport systems in such countries.

Public Transport Planning and Management in Developing Countries by the Indian scholars Ashish Verma and T.V. Ramanayya is a new addition to this handful, and purports to cover a range of issues that concern the planning and management of public transport systems in the developing world. The book begins with a description on the changes in demographics, levels of urbanisation, and infrastructure that have occurred in India since independence in 1947. The authors then provide an overview of the various land-based transport modes, and their

characteristics. After characterising the issues of public transport specific to developing countries from the perspective of users, planning, operations, and funding, relying on examples from India, the authors move on to discuss techniques of transport planning in rural and urban areas. In a chapter on the management of public transport the authors summarise the various standard techniques of traffic control, traffic management, travel demand management, and survey techniques, before ending the book with a discussion on the resources requirements and economics of public transport.

Clearly the authors have expended a great deal of effort in writing a comprehensive and accessible introduction to public transport planning and management. However, the under-resourced developing world practitioner may have turned to this book in search of a structured guide to planning and management within the constraints of their particular environment. They will instead have found a book concerned mostly with the Indian experience – although the title does suggest differently – with some lengthy and technical sections dealing with specific local Indian issues without providing much context, such as a case study on the Bangalore Metropolitan Transport Corporation (BMTCL). Other sections could have been more public transport specific (such as the chapter on management of public transport) or are too general for the reader to be able to site them in the context of a developing country (such as in the chapter on modes and their characteristics). For example, as an academic and practitioner in an African city, I had hoped to read about alternative or developing country-specific public transport planning and management strategies and techniques; instead, I read an overview of techniques from established, developed country-based, textbooks on transit capacity, transport modelling and traffic engineering and control, such as those by Vuchic (2005) or Ortúzar and Willumsen (1999). Including a discussion of the four-step travel demand model and rail corridor identification model in great detail without analysing their role and value in developing world public transport concerns (such as data scarcity, informality and captivity), is a missed opportunity.

Unfortunately, the publishers are to be called to task for not proposing a less all-encompassing book title, one that indicated a focus on the India transport situation upfront, misleading the developing world practitioner searching for a text long overdue.

Nevertheless, this new publication will appeal to students, academics and practitioners who have a specific interest in public transport planning and operations in India, as it provides a good overview of the concerns and challenges in that country. In addition, the book will no doubt motivate other developing world researchers to follow suit and share their insights about this increasingly important area of study.

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