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Urban Traffic Dilemma and Potential Remedy: Example from Ilorin City, Nigeria

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Abstract

Ilorin is one of the major cities in Nigeria today and its growing strength in both socio-economic affiliations is admirable. However, the city is potently tainted with traffic bottleneck which occasionally results into traffic dilemma accidents and clogging, stampede and free-fight between and among road users include drivers, motor cyclists and pedestrians in some places in the city. Current problems are emanating from bad old roads, narrow streets and multiple pot-holes, abandoned heaps of sand purposely needed for building and construction or refuse wastes, lack of parking space, as well as emergence of mini inter-urban legal (illegal) motor parks' garages in major streets of Ilorin. On the spot observation and the use of scheduled interview provided more insight feelings of the people who are residing in Ilorin city in the recent time. Results reveal urgent attentions are needed to provide more infrastructure and social amenities to the people living in the city. Policy implications in favour of the more deprived areas include stronger community involvement by the local residents and more positive upgrading of roads, expansion of narrowed streets and modern traffic control measures may serve as potential succor to the city traffic problems.

Key words: *Emerging city*, traffic dilemma, clogging, potential remedy

Introduction

A long time ago, transportation has been one of the importance of man's activities in space. Man's ability to move himself and his materials from one point to another on the earth's surface significantly influences his life and his environment. Hartshorne (1993), put forward that resources and needs are spatially distributed in landscape but the areas of desires exist away from the areas of fulfilment and the spatial inequality created calls for interactions and movement within urban setting. Thus, both intra and inter city transportation system bridges this gap bringing people and resources together in both space and time (Tollay and Torton, (1995).

Furthermore, one of the ways by which man organizes the space around him is through the creation of settlement around him and man usually uses transportation as a tool to bring orderliness into the settlement. However, Ogunsanya (2002) emphasized on the inevitability of transportation in the city and related its basic necessities of life. He stressed that man's basic need of food; clothing and shelter could be hardly achieved without transportation. Hence he refers to transportation as "the life wire of our socio- economic and political life". This means that without transportation life as it is today would be inconceivable. Ogunsanya (2002), further explained that when he compared the relationships between transport and city, and states that, transportation is particularly carried out in the existence of a city and the existence of city is greater than demand for transport. He reiterated further those three basic concepts in explaining the human interaction in space by declaring the concept of complementarities, intervening opportunity and transferability-which has a lot to do with transportation.

The explanation so far on the roles play being played by transportation in the city anywhere in the world denotes that transportation is a potent to influence any city growth and development. But on the contrary, what is being witnessed today in the emerging city like Ilorin and many others, is beset mobility problems, and this is what Ogunsanya (2002) declared as "negative externality" or "maker or breaker of the cities".

In conjunction to the above, urban traffic problems are further aggravated by the concentration of most of the working avenues in the same locations, thus that traffic is basically one typical direction during the morning rush hour and

evening peak periods (Okpala, 1980; Onakomaiya and Ekanem, 1981). In Ilorin, the population of new settlers into the city from other major urban areas is hectic. Most especially new comers moving away from the northern parts of the country as a result of occasion religious uproar and sectoral killings, and Ilorin city, no doubt about it, is one of the peaceful living areas in Nigeria. However, the increase in the population of new arrivals is becoming more difficult to ease of traffic flow in the city as reflected in the increasing ‘bumper to bumper’ traffic experienced in the major junctions in Ilorin in recent time.

This work therefore, aims at examining the urban traffic dilemma in Ilorin. It focuses attention on the city which is now potently polluted with traffic holdup occasion with traffic clogging, stampede accidents and at times with free-fight between and among road users in and around Ilorin city.

The study area

Ilorin, the capital city of Kwara State is located on Latitude 8° 30'N and Longitude 4° 35' E, it lies in the plain of the South Western part of Nigeria. The city which lies along Lagos Kaduna highway is about 306km from Lagos, 600km from Kaduna and about 500km from Abuja, the Federal Capital city of Nigeria. At present, the city of Ilorin cuts across three (3) Local Government Areas namely Ilorin West, Ilorin East and Ilorin South Local Government Areas, and it has about twenty (20) political wards. The evolution of Ilorin began with the early traditional areas built up around the township centre (Aderamo, 1990). The trend revealed that the city has four major residential districts which are clearly identifiable on the urban landscape, these are the traditional/core areas such as Oja-Oba, Okelele etc, the transitional/mixed residential zone such as Taiwo, Gaa-Akanbi, the Government Residential Areas (GRA) and the modern well planned housing estates such as Irewolede, Adewole housing estates etc. The creation of Kwara State in 1967 and the choice of Ilorin as the state capital had resulted in its rapid population increase and area expansion.

Today, Ilorin has witnessed more physical expansion and open-up of new road network resulting in the city enveloping many of the smaller settlements surrounding it. The absorbed settlements are Kulende, Elekoyangan and Polytechnic permanent site campus along Jebba road to the north east. Gaa-Akanbi, Ero-Omo, Olunlade and Ganmo which are found along Ilorin-Ajasse-Ipo road to the south east, Ogidi along Ilorin-Kaiama road to the west,

Sobi Barracks, Alagbado along Ilorin-Shao road to the north and Agunbelowo, Olorunsogo, Odota etc. along Ilorin-Lagos road to the south west (see Fig.1). Ilorin is very accessible both from outside and within the city, new roads are being constructed, while old ones are being rehabilitated, these accessibility roads are always clogged up when workers are going or returning from work.

Ilorin population was projected with an annual growth rate of 2.84% (NPC.1991) and at the 2006 head counts; the city has reached 766,000 by population (NPC, 2006). Although, Ilorin developed as an administrative centre both economic and social activities have greatly influenced its growth in recent times. The major occupations of the indigene are farming, pottery making, and weaving. There are also a greater percentage of the people who engaged in trading activities, while others are self employed in various other areas such as mechanics, carpentry, artisans among others.

Problems of Traffic Jam and Clog

The beauty of an urban center is found on its organized space to ease accessibility to various locations of desired requirements. Unfortunately, the arrangement and use of space is not properly organized in major urban centers in Nigeria and Ilorin in particular. Motor park for inter and intra transportation systems need to be properly done and users feel the impacts. However, in Ilorin at present time, people are not having good access to organized motor parks and garages in the city, and this causes a lot of problems which are enumerated here-in:

- Lack of parking space on major roads,
- Lack of parking meter- gauge/ parking ticket where there are parking lots,
- Narrow major and feeder roads,
- Bad constructed roads with attainable pot holes,
- Abandoned heaps of sand for building and construction,
- Deficient function of traffic lights,
- Lack of education to road user i.e. Okada riders,
- Parades of advertisement by different individual/organization on the major roads,
- Un-organized legal motor parks,
- Legion of traders on the highway/major roads.

Causes of Road clog in the City of Ilorin

The demand for accessibility is occasioned by the introduction of transport system and its spatial effect. This suggests that the demand is cyclic in nature, responding to new technological development and spatial re-organization of phenomena (Ogunsanya, 2002). Thus, there goes along some factors that are causing road clog up in Ilorin city, and among the factors are:

- Increased in population from other urban and rural areas into Ilorin,
- Increased spatial expansion,
- Patterns of expansion,
- Role play by mix-up of land use,
- Introduction of mini-parks around Ilorin for inter-city services,
- Introduction of modern traffic lights.
- Itinerant services by Tri-cycle (Keke-Napep) and Motor cycle (Okada).

The population of Ilorin in 1963 was 208,546 (Oloru, 1998); and by the population census conducted in 1991, Ilorin population was put at 581,929 (NPC, 1991). The city has reached 766,000 by population conducted in 2006. This figure portrays Ilorin as a tremendous population growing city and the effect of this growth is not only felt on socio-economic development, but also on pressures on infrastructural facilities (Ahmed, 1996). One of the ways by which human beings organizes in space around themselves is through the organized spatial expansion. But what is being witnessed in Ilorin today is heralded by haphazard development resulting into amoebic pattern of development which shows some deficient in road and street plans from the past. This however, has brought about irregularity instead of orderliness into the Ilorin city and its immediate neighbouring settlements.

One other cause of traffic dilemma in Ilorin is the role played by land use as an important part of accessibility, whereas, patterns of development influence the type of transportation systems that are needed to serve the populace, conversely, road plays an integral role among other facilities that influence land. However, transportation as an integral part of land use faces series of challenges in Ilorin city and its environs. One among major problems it faces is emergence of mini-motor parks at almost every major road in Ilorin (see

Tables.1 and 2).This problem is not culminated with noise pollution caused by touts calling for passengers to board their buses, but also the emergence of these mini-motor parks added to traffic chaos in Ilorin.

Table 1: Legal and Authorized Motor Parks in Ilorin

S/No	Park	Location	Route
1	Ajasse-Ipo/Offa	Offa-Garage Area	Offa/Osogbo
2	Kaima/Igbeti	Oloje-Garage Area	Baruten/Kaima
3	Lagos/Ibadan	Saw-Mill Area	Lagos
4	JebbaBode-Saadu	Maraba Area	Jebba/Minna
5	Kano/Kaduna	Akerebiata Area	Kano/Jos
6	Lokoja/Abuja	Offa Garage Area	Okene/Abuja

Source: Author's Compilation.

Table 2: Recent identified Illegal /Unauthorized Motor Parks in Ilorin

S/No	Park	Location	En-route
1	Saw-mill	Odota	Ilorin-Lagos
2	Oja-Tuntun	Baboko(Abdul Azeez road)	Ogbomosho
3	Queen Elizabeth	AP Petrol Station-Suru-Lere	Ilorin- Ibadan-Lagos
4	Bata Shop	Agaka	Gambari/Ogomosho
5	Isale Oja	Oja-Oba	Onisha/Porthacourt
6	Adifa	Oja-Oba	Oke-Oyi/Jebba
7	Palace Cinema	Okeita	Afon/Amoyo/Idofian
8	Gambari Junction	Gambari	Shao/Babanloma/Jebba
9	Shao Garage	Ode Sanda	Shao/Bacita/Jebba
10	Opomalu-Junction	Emir's road	Lagos
11	Oja Ipata	Okesuna	Oke-OyiAgbeyangi
12	Obbo road	Off-Taiwo road	Ibadan/Lagos
13	Railway junction	Total Petrol Station(Emir's road)	Onisha/Calabar/P-harcout
14	First bridge	Emir's road	Lagos
15	AP petrol	Murtala Way	Abuja/Kaduna/Kano/Jos
16	Challenge Bookshop	Murtala Way	Lokoja/Okene/Abuja
17	Keystone Bank	Unity road	Lagos
18	IBTC Bank	Unity road	Lagos
19	Kuditat Ijaiya House	Offa Garage Road	Kaduna/Kano
20	Sango	Kulende Estate Junction	Lagos

Source: Author's Compilation.

Results and Discussions

The result from the calculation of the Nearest Neighbour Analysis (NNA) indicated that R_n is 1.05 (see appendix). This equally shows that spatial distribution of Illegal parks in Ilorin is moving towards a 'Perfect Random'(King,1962).The noted implications of this is that, at any regular distribution of spatial phenomenon that is found in an area of uniform or flat terrain, such may lead into a network of road clog or jam. This undoubtedly situation attracts a larger population into a settlement (Idachaba, 1985; Ahmed, 2009).

The issue of defining a park as legal or not legal to serve as a mini- motor park as claimed by the Unions-the National Union of Road Transport Workers (NURTW) and the Road Transport Employer's Association of Nigeria (RTEAN) as no illegal parks without approval in Ilorin was unfounded. But the claims by the authorities of the Federal Road Safety Corps, the state government and the local government in Ilorin city are attainable. Thus, most of the mini-motor parks around Ilorin city are not legally approved and thus, constituted nuisance, retarded easier traffic flow progress in the city. The situation also added to traffic dilemma such as; occasional traffic accidents and clogging of vehicles which are already and commonly taken over the city transportation system in Ilorin city.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The effort of this research was centred on the investigation of urban traffic problems in Ilorin city. The work attended to some causes of the traffic clogs and jam-packs in Ilorin, resulting from increased in population of in-migrants into the city for socio-economic, political and security reasons. From the tables presented in the preceding part, the investigation shows that large proportion of mini-motor parks around the city give support to menace of noise pollution and aggravation of clogs on major roads in Ilorin.

Regrettably, according to the results of Nearest Neighbour Analysis conducted which indicates R_n as 1.05 or random distribution. Though Ilorin stand out as a levelled terrain that is ecologically suitable for infrastructural facilities development and network collection that will continue attraction of a large population in and around it. But the facilities like; good road networks are not sufficiently provided resulting into traffic dilemma being witnessed

hitherto. But if all the noted abnormally are put into proper checks, all the traffic dilemma being witnessed in the city would have been put to rest.

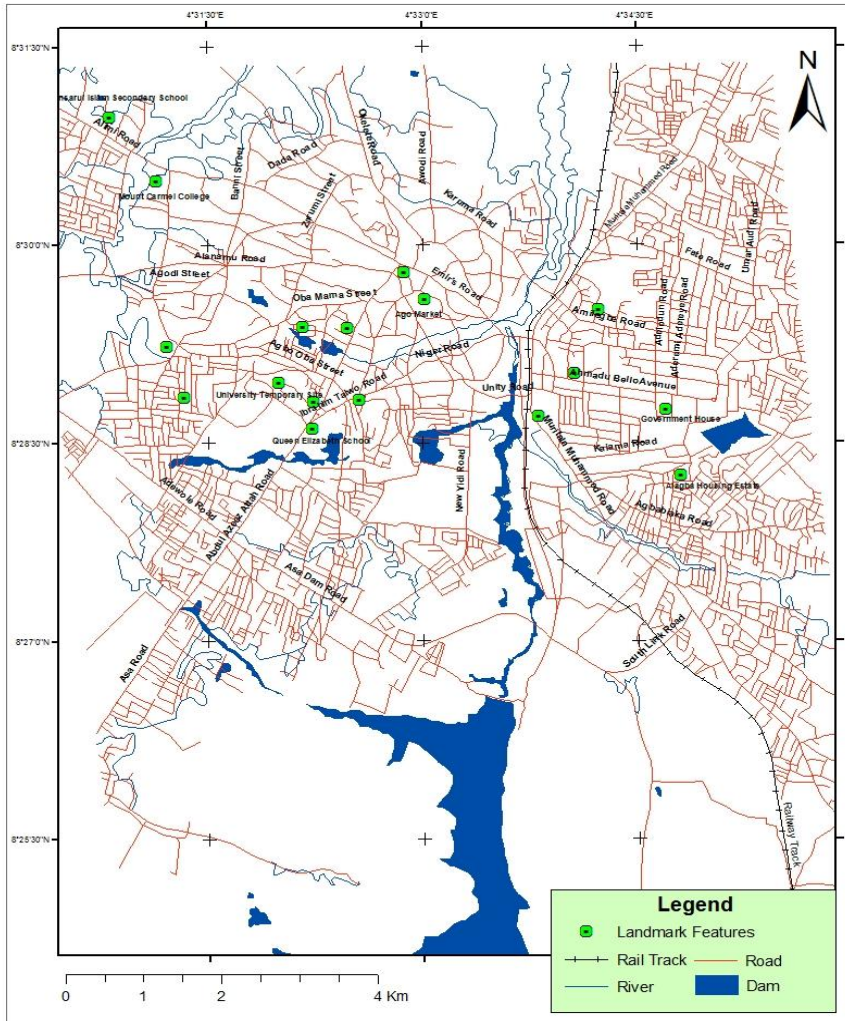
The following suggestions are put forward to serve as solace to impinge problems of traffic dilemma in Ilorin if the city is to move forward like other emerging cities not only in Nigeria, but in other Africa and world at large:

- The road users in Ilorin must be educated when to use a certain road or avoid a certain road to their advantage;
- Most of the narrow streets that serve as feeder roads to the main roads within the city must be equally upgraded, this will protect the road users from being stranded and get opportunity to reach their destination on time;
- Parking space must be provided for road user even if they will pay on number of hours they use in the lot, this has been the practice in advanced world, and it equally serves as one of the methods of traffic control;
- There should be a standing policy that will not allow an individual or a private organization to dump heaps of sand by the road side for more than twenty(24) hour, either for building and/or construction on the major roads;
- Most of the major roads in Ilorin need a total up grading rather than patch-up or cut and paste on pot-holes, since most of the roads have been constructed many decades ago;
- The generality of the road users need more orientation on how and when to use traffic lights erected around major roads in the city. Most road user like; Okada riders and some pedestrians do not nr deliberately obey the light directive.

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Figure 1: Major Roads arteries in Ilorin City Nigeria



Source: Ministry of Land Survey, Ilorin Kwara State Nigeria