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IN THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Kenya We Want Campaign Twitter space held on 20th September, 2022: Inclusive Urban Mobility, Less Highways, More Walkways

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Introduction

Urban mobility, a key development indicator, is one of the main challenges that our cities face today despite massive investments in infrastructure projects. Transport majorly influences sustainability and people's quality of life. Urban areas are confronted with non-inclusive transport systems, transport-related air pollution, noise, congestion, and occupation of public space by traffic, and increased morbidity and mortality rates caused by traffic accidents, pollution, and climate change. The negative effects disproportionately affect vulnerable groups in the community.

The main mobility challenge in Kenyan cities is arriving at the balance between motorized transport (MT), and non-motorized transport (NMT), as major road designs have overly prioritized MT. In Kenya, most implemented road projects are not inclusive and people-friendly. Other challenges faced by urban transport systems in Kenya include: lack of public and stakeholder participation in planning, designing, and implementation of projects, poor allocation of financial resources on projects, lack of regulatory frameworks for implementation of projects, institutional weakness, ineffective public transport systems, poor allocation of road space, and inadequate traffic management systems.

This twitter spaces session targeted to deliberate on these challenges and come up with suitable recommendations to counter the challenges. The session started with preliminaries, which included introductions and agenda setting, followed by a panel discussion and a plenary session which was conducted in the form of a question and answer session.

Preliminaries:

The session was called to order by Michelle Ouma, the Research Officer AAK, who gave a brief introduction to the #KenyaWeWant Campaign. Opening remarks were given by Oloo Adhiambo, Advocacy Officer at AAK, who did the agenda setting. The session started at 8:00 PM and lasted for 2 hours.

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**Panel discussion and plenary session:**

The session was moderated by Prof. Alfred Omenya. To introduce the session, Prof. Omenya highlighted the following;

- Infrastructure and transportation vary in both definition and functionality. Setting up infrastructure enables transport between different places.
- 45% of urban residents in Kenya walk, and therefore, there is a need to facilitate the movement of NMT users. However, Kenya has focused on the provision of infrastructure that supports the movement of the minority (vehicle owners) people in our urban areas.

The Panelists for the session were:

1. Eng. Muguru Wairimu- Transport Planner and Highway Engineer, Secretary Engineers Chapter, AAK
2. Pln. Juliet Rita- Network Coordinator, African Network for Walking and Cycling
3. Pln. Dennis Wakaba- Electric Mobility Specialist
4. Naomi Mwaura- Founder, Flone Initiative.

Engineer Muguru Wairimu:***Definition of inclusive road design and role of different stakeholders in achieving sustainable and inclusive urban mobility***

Key points included:

- An inclusive road design is a design that factors in the function of the road being designed; either MT or NMT needs, in order to identify the best suitable design.
- Currently, the urban transport systems in Kenya are designed to move vehicles and not people.
- Therefore, moving forward, Kenya should look into the implementation of inclusive road designs; that look into the majority of road users and have an equitable share in addressing their needs.
- This can be achieved by making provisions in the Terms of Reference (TOR) given which come in handy in assisting to move roads from just motorist oriented to NMT-inclusive, for example, transport systems in the CBD should cater for reduced motorized transport mode and incorporate more NMT, which is the not the case in most urban areas in Kenya.

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- To achieve inclusive mobility, there is a need for political goodwill. Government should commit to developing roads with modal share where roads being designed and implemented should have a keen consideration of the NMT. For example, the Nairobi express highway was a political project that did not look into the needs of NMT.
- Government should support- Matatu System- which raises the need to adopt a sustainable rapid transit system e.g. by adopting a case study on Tanzania, which has a functional BRT.
- Planning and advocacy for inclusive policies towards road designs is paramount. Associations such as the AAK need to advocate for more inclusive road signs, which include NMT.

Pln. Juliet Rita

Non-Motorised Transport- What is the role of NMT and what's the future of NMT: Framework for Incorporation of the NMT in delivering transport in Urban Areas

Key points from Pln. Juliet Rita included:

- One of the challenges faced in Kenya is the assumption that the best solutions to the issues faced is the development of new policies, new frameworks, or even new institutions. However, at the moment, Kenya is well provided for in regards to legislations and policies guiding its transport systems.
- Generally, Kenya has adequate transport frameworks to guide inclusivity in the transportation sector. Some of these policies include:
 - o National Transport Policy- which describes the need for a modal share of transport needs in the country.
 - o Nairobi Integrated Urban Development Master Plan (NIUPLAN)- the plan envisioned a city (Nairobi) that is compact, brings together mixed land uses with higher densities, and a city where people can access services in a short radius range. The plan also envisioned a city that is healthy, and green and prioritizes public transport.
 - o National Climate Change Action Plan- Which highlights the need for cleaner transport solutions with an emphasis on active and electric transport systems.
- NMT is no longer the slow mode but the future of moving people and goods. The majority of people in rural areas use NMT to access their basic services
- In general, small milestones have been made for the provision of NMT in Kenyan urban areas. There is a need for the implementation of proposed NMT systems, a process that NMS has been seen to focus on.

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- Kenya Urban Support Programme (KUSP) project through the Urban Development Department of the World Bank Group focused on putting money directly into NMT.
- Kisumu recently launched its sustainable mobility plans, which look into achieving more walkways and cycling paths, a step that all other counties ought to emulate.

Dennis Wakaba:

What is the status in terms of frameworks around electric mobility, and what are the projects the government and private sector are involved in, challenges and opportunities in electric mobility?

Key points from Dennis Wakaba included:

- Electric mobility is a relatively new concept being accepted in Kenya. Electric mobility has so far existed for 10 years in Kenya with the first electric vehicle coming in in 2011.
- However, the policy is a challenge for the sector due to its non-existence, but key players in the sector are working closely with government agencies eg Kenya Bureau of Standards (KEBS), on the issues of electric mobility
- There is a lack of a framework which defines what an electric vehicle is. Essentially electric vehicles don't have engine capacity.
- Kenya has focused on investing in green energy, where at least 92% of the power produced is renewable energy. This supports electric mobility. Counties have a role to play through incentivizing the urban mobility agenda through supportive infrastructure eg charging points for electric vehicles
- Implementation of Electric mobility can start on a small scale from our homes to actually having policies guiding the sector
- Currently, Kenya has over 30 companies dealing with electric vehicles and the sector is well organized
- Currently Kenya has 4 electric buses and 700 to 1000 electric vehicles in total. Most of the electric buses are for pilot studies on the success of electric mobility in Kenya; with charging ports being present in go-downs. However, efforts are being made to ensure the charging ports are made available to the public.
- Smart mobility entails transport that is predictable and comes in handy to curb challenges of climate change.

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**Naomi Mwaura*****Public transport vs vulnerable groups. What is the status of inclusivity of public transport in Kenya?***

Key discussion points from Naomi included:

- Women form 60% of commuters in Nairobi City. However, family cars are mostly used by men, and this makes women less likely to use the private cars
- Alternatively, Public transport- buses and taxis are the key transport modes most women use in Nairobi
- Women are more concerned about safety when they are looking for the best suitable transport system to use.
- Vulnerable groups need to be considered while making designs for our transport systems.
- In regards to gender and an inclusivity factor in road designs;
 - Women and children walk a bit differently compared to other road users, and this really matters while coming up with road designs. This raises the need to assess access and security along the roads hence it influences road designs maybe by the inclusion of ramps and bumps, traffic security lights, etc.
- Women as professionals (in the transport sector) lack gender professional provisions leading to incidences of stigma, sexual harassment and lack of sanitary stations. These are some of the challenges women reported they face as they work in the transportation sector.
- According to recent research by the Flone initiative looking into the accessibility of public transport for elderly women and women with disabilities, one of the key issues that were established was that there was weak coordination of transport initiatives which the current government is trying to address. The research indicated that government agencies were implementing independent plans and projects with little or no coordination, which sometimes resulted in duplication of existing issues.

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SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS FROM Q&A AND PANEL DISCUSSION

1. All infrastructural projects geared towards transportation should include everyone, to a point of even having spaces where children can play.
2. There is a need to change our perspective as a country, especially during the preliminary stages of designing and detailing a project
3. There is a need to put into consideration what materials are used for projects based on transport systems. The government; both at national and local levels, should seek expert guidance on what is to be used in order to ensure optimal functionality of the transportation systems.
4. We need to look into the disconnect between available legislation on land use planning and transport planning
5. Advocacy on the use of NMT should be done adequately. This will lead to the funding of more NMT-oriented projects. E.g. implementing soft projects such as the construction of bridges over a river which will encourage more walking and cycling
6. There is a need for change in the perception of walking vs the use of vehicles. This will include the development of indicators of walking and cycling and, eventually, encourage the provision of better NMT systems
7. Electric mobility is the way to go as it will save Kenya a lot on foreign importation by reducing the costs of importing fuel.
8. Advocacy is key for the success of electric mobility in Kenya. In addition, national and county governments should ensure the development of policies for the sector and actively participate in the provision of necessary infrastructure geared towards electric mobility, such as charging stations.
9. Development of local spaces- which accommodates the growth of e-mobility, will be key not only in Kenya but also for all African countries. This will, in turn, lead to increased employment opportunities.
10. There is a need to push for more inclusive and livable streets. This will result in improved cleanliness and livability of a city, security, and business when more people are walking and cycling.
11. Solutions required are local and can be implemented immediately with available infrastructure put already in place therefore funding is not an excuse
12. Planning of projects should also look at groups not only as users but also as professionals.

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13. Vehicle modification to accommodate special groups should be incorporated in the transportation sector.
14. User recommendation surveys to vet if the objectives of projects have been met should be frequently done especially during the time at which the project has been opened to be put into use.
15. Public awareness around inclusive transportation is paramount as a means to achieve optimal functioning transport systems in our urban areas.

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