



Transport and Mobility

CONGESTION AT THE LIMITS?

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Behind the serious transport problem in the Metropolitan Area of Mexico City (AMCM) lies the predominance of low capacity vehicles both in collective and in private transport. Around 50,000 minibuses and microbuses handle the majority of journeys in the city. Added to these are over 103,000 taxis in the Federal District and probably over 160,000 throughout the city, along with approximately 450,000 vehicles carrying loads. These units use the highways intensively and their fragmented and “home-made”, corporate structure is highly inefficient with low productivity, both for the users and for the carriers and for the city in general. Meanwhile, private transport handles only 19% of journeys but uses 95% of the vehicles, which exceeds the 4 million units in circulation and uses the highest proportion of road space in the city as a whole. The result of the above is extreme congestion and journey stress, particularly serious along the main highway corridors and access roads of the city and during rush hour. One third of all journeys are made in the morning rush hour alone, and these journeys are taking longer and longer. In the second half of the 1990s, we saw the determining dominance of journeys made in Low-Capacity vehicles (cars, vans, taxis and minibuses) which handled over three quarters of metropolitan journeys. A decade before that, only one third of journeys were done in Low-Capacity vehicles; this rapid and negative transformation of the composition of the urban transport service was the result of the application of erroneous government policies, which, for example, decided on the freezing and subsequent removal of the service of 4,000 buses in Mexico City, known as Ruta-100 and the promotion, to offset this, of vans, taxis and minibuses as alternatives for saving public resources, for self-employment and for collective transport. In other words, there was a dismantling of a collective transport system based on government-owned high-capacity resources, promoting in return deregulation, privatisation and fragmentation, further reducing the efficiency and productivity of high-capacity collective transport.

THE PROMOTION OF PRIVATE MOTORISATION

During the 1970s and 1980s, the city saw accelerated demographic growth which, above all, was translated

into territorial expansion. This led to the reinforcement of the “horizontal extensive growth” of the AMCM, which incorporated increasingly outlying areas with less access to infrastructure and services. This was translated into longer, delayed and costly journeys to get to work, schools and services, which make metropolitan journeys and the rise in motorisation one of the most significant aspects of this problem in the city. The oil “boom” of the mid-1980s promoted the purchase of cars. This trend deepened with the signature of the NAFTA, from the second half of the 1990s onwards, the growth in car assembly was explosive.

THE EXPLOSION OF THE CAR

The impressive dynamics of the car industry has been translated, for the AMCM, into an explosive growth of new vehicles which, at the end of the 1990s, was calculated at between 250,000 and 300,000 additional vehicles on average per year. Considering that during this period, the population growth index for the AMCM was reduced to just 1.5% per year on average, the growth rate of the total number of cars in the city is four times greater than the population rate. Under these conditions and after nearly fifteen years of non-construction of major roads, the current Federal District Government (GDF) decided to push forward a rapid road programme, given that the deficit calculated from the same totals 25%. This programme forms part of the sector’s Integral Programme and is complemented by various collective transport measures.

TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAY PROJECTS

As part of this Programme, the most impressive works are the road bridges located in the ravines on the west side, the “Two Tiers of the Ring Road”, the Eje Vial 5 Poniente, the San Antonio motorway exit, giving traffic alternatives in the strategic west zone of the city. We should also mention the progress of the other motorway exits of the Eje Troncal Metroplitano Oriente. Alongside, in collective transport, we have seen renovation of the infrastructure of significant stretches of underground, lines 2, 5 and 9, and nine trains have been introduced on line 2. In addition, the transport capacity of the public bus company Red de Transportes de Pasajeros (RTP) has increased by 50% and 19.4 km of

Metrobus have been introduced. Metrobus has 34 stations and runs 80 articulated buses running on low-emission engines along Insurgentes, one of the city's main avenues. A Cycle Path Project has also been set up, to cover 90 km. In addition, a Suburban Train Project has been decided on, to the northwest, covering 25 km, using the existing railway line.

AND WHAT ABOUT MOBILITY?

Metrobus and the Cycle Paths are brand-new initiatives that lack additional investment in facilities, stations, signposts, dissemination and maintenance in order to allow for their more efficient and optimum use. Also, and in contrast with other major cities, there has been no cultivation of a culture of the added value of collective transport, even less of alternative transport: only 5% of the users of Metrobus and the underground also own cars. Also, with the exception of the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, none of the city's universities has infrastructure or programmes that promote alternative transport. This is particularly serious when the city is expanding territorially in a greater proportion than the population, favouring dispersion and disintegration. As a result, there are elements that are indicative of the fact that metropolitan mobility is being organised along urban corridors that limit the possibility

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