

THE PROBLEM STATEMENT

2.5 RURAL TRANSPORT OPERATOR SURVEYS

Problem: Traditionally, rural transport planning has focussed on improvement of infrastructure

Solution: Undertake surveys to identify the problems and constraints faced by rural transport operators

BACKGROUND

Rural transport planning is placing less emphasis on infrastructure development, and more on the provision of transport services which meet the local community and individual needs. Notwithstanding the need for participatory enquiry, there is still a need for the traditional surveys that establish the nature of the existing transport framework, and identify the opportunities for development. These surveys provide an inventory of transport services and an appraisal of transport productivity. They can help to pinpoint measures (technical, institutional and financial) for improving efficiency.



TRANSPORTER SURVEYS

Transporter surveys are supply side surveys that describe the nature of the transport system, its scale and productivity, its bottlenecks and the scope for its development. These are questionnaire-based surveys applied to vehicle operators (persons running a passenger or goods transportation business) drivers of vehicles employed by a transportation business or farmers or other businessmen who transport their goods and produce in their own vehicles (refer to **Appendix D** for a sample transport operator survey).

Operators of all motorised and non-motorised vehicles whether used for goods movement, passenger movement, or a combination of the two can be interviewed to yield information that can be wide-ranging, covering:

- vehicle productivity and costs;
- utilisation;
- tariffs and fare structures;
- route structures;
- operating practices;
- organisational structures within the industry.

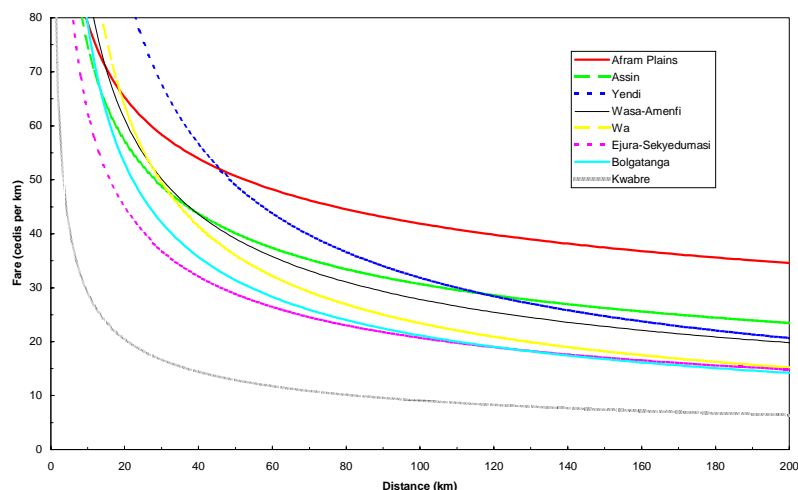
Operators are likely to be a useful source of information concerning constraints on the provision of services to rural and isolated areas. They are also likely to have candid views on regulatory policy, as well as providing an insight on vehicle design and maintenance.

Drivers and operators may be one-and-the-same, but equally drivers may be employees of the vehicle owner or may hire the vehicle from the owner on a daily basis. Where they are not one-and-the-same, driver interviews may yield a different perspective on operating practices. Drivers can also be a source of information on vehicle productivity and costs comparable to that derived from the vehicle operators, particularly in the case where the driver is hiring the vehicle. This source is particularly useful in the informal or non-corporate sector, where vehicle owners may keep few records of vehicle utilisation.

General information

Relates to vehicle type, ownership, load capacity (passengers / goods), crew composition, use (passenger or goods transport) and type of operation (whether on a "for hire" basis or on regular routes). Information can also be collected on the routes on which the vehicle is driven relating to road quality, distance, time, trip frequency, passenger and goods charges (see **Figure 1**) and how these differ between the wet and dry seasons.

Figure 1: Comparison of fares between districts in Ghana



Demand for services

Interviewees can be asked how long they have to wait for a reasonable number of passengers or load of goods before they will set off and, in the case of goods transporters, how and where drivers find their loads.

Other factors affecting business

The functioning of the business in terms of passenger fares, goods charges, routes and vehicle utilisation, can be assessed in relation to: a) Demand for services; b) Vehicle maintenance; c) Road quality; d) Fuel costs; e) Journey times; f) Terrain and seasonal access constraints; g) Ease of access to urban bus and truck parks, and g) Regulations.

Vehicle operating costs and maintenance

Questions relating to vehicle age, tax, insurance, fuel type and costs, responsibility for maintenance and servicing, frequency of servicing, vehicle utilisation and availability of spare parts are put to the interviewee.

Payment for vehicle

Establish how the vehicle has been/ is being paid for, the ease of availability of credit and the reasons for purchase of any particular type or make of vehicle. In short, the quality, type and affordability of vehicles available to transport operators.

REFERENCES

Ellis S D and J Rutter (2001). An investigation into the constraints on the availability of motorised transport services in rural Ghana. The Rural Transport Knowledge Base, TRL Ltd, Crowthorne, UK. www.transport-links.org/knowledgebase.htm