

CHAPTER 2

BACKGROUND & PROBLEM IDENTIFICATION

2.1 Review of Transport in Sri Lanka

Transport Sector plays a main role in any country as it is an essential service which directly affects to the income and productivity. Transport is a key element in the infrastructure and it provides services essential for promoting development. It acts as a life-line linking markets, educational institutions and health institutions etc. As well transport connects cities, towns and villages distributing varied resources concentrated in to one place.

People use transport services to move from one place to another to fulfill their day today necessities. In early ages people used non motorized transport modes such as walking, animal riding, etc for their movements and transport services have been rapidly developed subsequent to the industrial revolution utilizing new technology for developing transport infrastructures.

Transport sector in Sri Lanka divides in to two parts as Freight Transport and Passenger Transport. These transport services are provided by various means of transport such as road, rail, air, sea and pipelines by different types of transport modes. Most modern transport modes require large investment in vehicles, right of way, roadway structure, terminals, administrative and communication plant, and industrial supply infrastructure to provide service.

During 1970s – 1980s much of the transport industry was in public ownership, but with the initiation of open economic system most of them were privatized in many countries, mainly in developed countries. In Sri Lankan context, it follows a two sectoral transport industry in bus transport with regulation. Road development is almost provided by the government and funded by income taxes. No private entity still operates toll paid private highways. But private sector involve in operation of passenger transport in greater extent than the public sector.

Land passenger transport is provided by road and rail modes. Road transport accounts for about 93% of the land transport in Sri Lanka and covers 12000 km of A

and B class road network within the country (Central Bank of Sri Lanka, 2009). Of these, road passenger transport is based on the modes such as buses, three-wheelers and other Para transit modes that operated on the road network centered on Sri Lanka capital, Colombo. In rail transport, the government holds a monopoly while passenger transport by road is shared by the government and the private sector. Rail transport is utilized 1572 km of rail network with the proportion of around 5% of land transport sector. (Sri Lanka Railways, 2010)

Passenger Transport Sector in Sri Lanka confronts many difficulties. Figure 2.1 shows the public transport issues in Sri Lanka. Level of service provided is not in a satisfactory level comparative to the existing demand in Transport Sector. Quality of the Passenger Transport service is deteriorating due to poor condition of facilities, low capacity services, inadequacy and lack of infrastructure for developing the system and this creates poor image of Public transport service. This has led to a modal shift from public to private vehicles creating issues as traffic congestion, pollution and accidents.

In spite of strong subsidies almost every public transit systems cannot generate sufficient income to cover its operating and capital costs. A public transport service in Sri Lanka fails to match the improved quality of transport and complexity of mobility needs that arise with increasing incomes of the population. Even though buses have increased in number, the quality of service, reliability, conditions of bus stops and terminals have continued to deteriorate. The railway service is also plagued by loss in quality and also struggles to meet its timetable requirement due to lack of rolling stock. Even though demand is high, the capacity and service levels on the commuter system are low.



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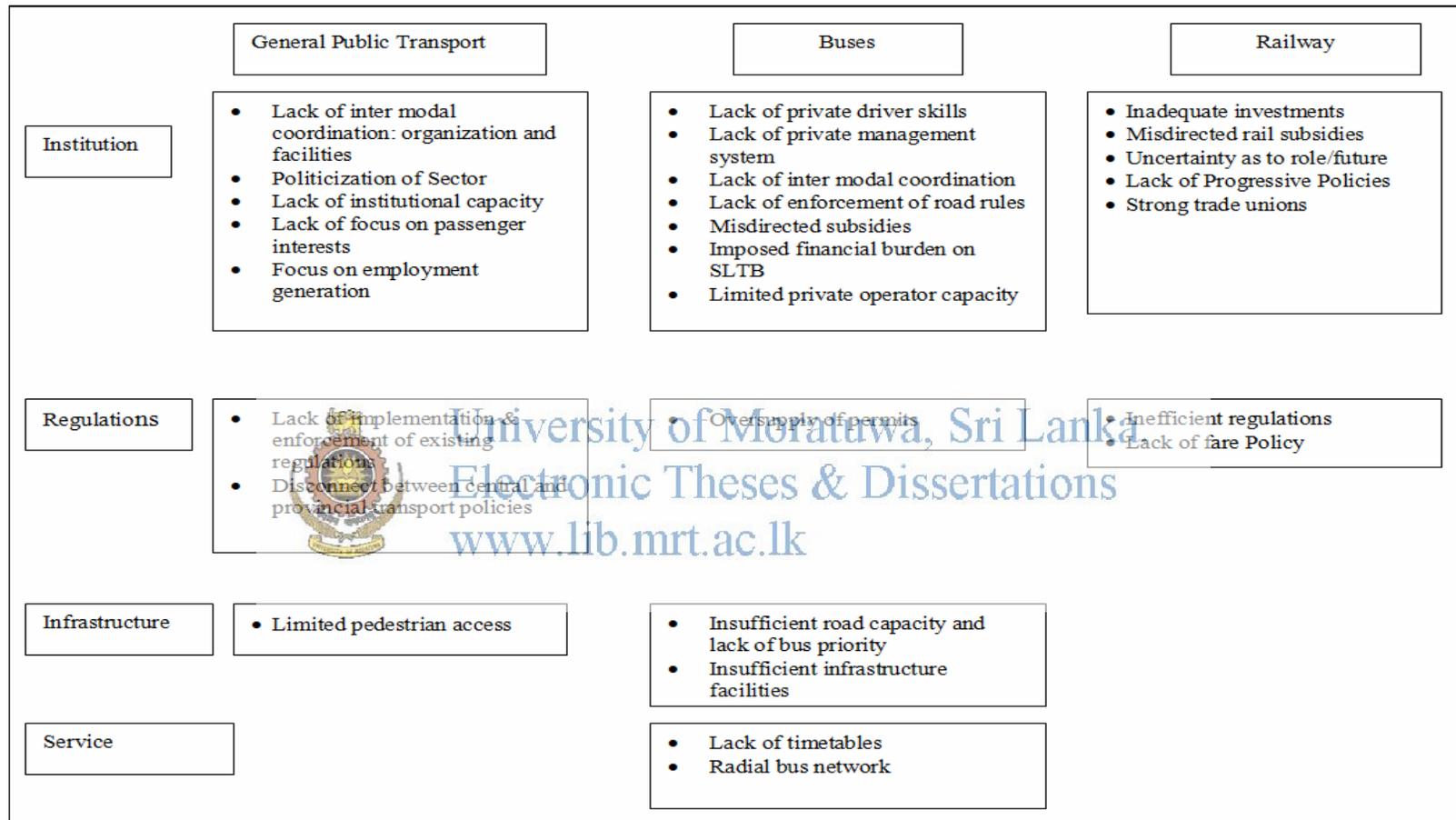


Figure 2.1: Public Transport Issues in Sri Lanka
 Source: JICA Study on Urban Transportation Development-2006

2.2 Necessity of Transport Database & Key Performance Indicators for Sri Lanka

The above issues of Land Passenger Transport Sector in Sri Lanka reveal that proper transport planning is essential for the development and to get viable solutions for respective sub sectors. Awareness of transport variables are needed for transport planning and regulation. Transport database is a fundamental source for awareness of transport variables and it directs to proper transport planning.

Regularly maintained transport data base consists time series data in different variables and these time series data are important to forecast future trends and developments. However collection of transport statistics regularly by different transport related institutions is important to maintain transport databases.

In the Sri Lankan context, the appropriate bodies responsible for collection of data, storage and analysis have not been established as yet. This is a common issue for all transport authorities and other transport related institutions, organizations for planning transport related projects and policy decision making. Due to lack of transport databases, performance indicators are not used for proper evaluation and planning by transport related organization.

Collection of data is important to create transport related performance indicators and these indicators will reflect future trends on transport and enable to take strategic actions for transport related problems. As such formulation of Transport database and Performance Indicators are very important for Sri Lanka as concentration of transport data in to a one place is vital for easy reference for those who interested in transport sector.