

COMMUIQUE ISSUED AT THE END OF THE 3RD QUARTERLY ROUNDTABLE ON THE ABUJA INFRASTRUCTURAL DEVELOPMENT BY THE FORUM OF BUILT ENVIRONMENT PROFESSIONALS FCT CHAPTER, CONVENED BY THE CENTRE FOR URBAN TRANSPORTATION STUDIES (CUTS), AFRICAN UNVIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (AUST) GALADIMAWA, ABUJA, NIGERIA.

TUESDAY SEPTEMBER 26, 2023

1.0 Preamble:

1.1. The Centre for Urban Transportation Studies, African University of Science and Technology, Galadimawa Abuja convened its quarterly roundtable for the Built Environment Professionals for the Federal Capital Territory Chapter on Abuja Infrastructural Development. The roundtable which is 3rd in its series and 2nd for 2023, was held on Tuesday 26th September, 2023 at the **AUSTInspire Auditorium** Material Science Department, African University of Science and Technology Galadimawa, under the theme; “Understanding the Transitway Concept in the Federal Capital City”.

1.2. The forum provides a platform for a collaborative effort between the Centre, the University Community and the Built Environment Professionals to deliberate and brain storm on knotty issues that militate against the critical infrastructure development in the Federal Capital City of Abuja.

1.3. As always, participants, were drawn from the University Community, the People Living with Disability (PWD), some invited guests and above all the seven Built Environment Professional Groups in the FCT including; Nigerian Society of Engineers (NSE), Nigerian Institute of Quantity Surveyors (NIQS), Nigerian Institute of Architects (NIA), Nigerian Institute of Surveyors (NIS), Nigerian Institute of Town Planners (NITP), Nigerian Institute of Builders (NIOB), and Nigerian Institute of Estate Surveyors & Valuers (NIESV).

2.0. Welcome Address

2.1. The welcome address was delivered by the Programme Coordinator of CUTS, Sir Chris Eze Ezeilo. The coordinator while wishing the participants a fruitful deliberation highlighted the key objectives of the Centre and the successes achieved with previous roundtables to include;

- The call for proper coordination among professional bodies and Federal Capital Territory Administration (FCTA) in the implementation of the transport infrastructure in the Federal Capital City.
- The need for material testing and establishment of more material testing laboratories in the FCT, as the panacea for the reduction in the rate of building collapse in FCT with its attendant costs.

3.1. Keynote Paper

The Keynote address with the theme “Understanding the Transitway Concept in the Federal Capital City” was delivered by the Chief Executive Officer of the Centre for Urban Transportation Studies, CUTS, and former Secretary Transportation in FCTA and pioneer Director of Transportation, Engr. Chris Nna Chigboh, OON. He began his presentation by quoting Socrates as follows:

by far the greatest and most form of wisdom is that needed to plan and beautify cities and human communities.

Continuing, he emphasized the importance of the collaborative efforts of key technical professionals in the planning and implementation of critical infrastructural development in a city such as Abuja. He lamented the delay in the implementation of the Abuja City Transitway, designed to stem the anticipated traffic congestion in the city. This, he stated, was the major challenge that bedeviled Lagos as a nation’s capital, leading to the relocation of the capital to Abuja.

3.2. He reiterated the fact that transportation makes cities “liveable”, and that “liveability”, a multidimensional concept that has a bearing on the quality of life, has transcended the realm of environmental and land use planning. According to him, they now incorporate economic and infrastructure development and must be addressed to solve the current challenges of urban development in the Federal Capital City. It is, therefore, pertinent to state that the lack of proper coordination in the phased implementation of the FCT master plan, especially as it affects the Transitway, has particularly created major bottlenecks that affect the liveability of the beautifully conceived city of Abuja.

3.3. It is necessary therefore, that the Transitway which includes the Rapid Rail Transit and Exclusive Bus Lanes should be implemented as soon as possible, if the worsening traffic congestion occasioned by the population explosion in the city is to abate. The keynote speaker, earlier in his presentation, graphically demonstrated the key challenges

and bottlenecks of moving 40,000 commuters in one direction and in an hour, using different modes of urban transportation, and pinpointed the reason for the existence of the current traffic challenge in the Federal Capital City. His demonstration showed that in major city centres across the world, urban transportation is operated, using a combination of other modes of transport, motorized and non motorized systems of transportation. He stressed that this concept had been captured already in the Abuja Master plan but left behind at the point of implementation, owing to the lack of proper coordination and understanding of the characteristics of Transitways.

What is a Transitway?

Engr Chigboh defined the Abuja Transitway as the backbone of Abuja transportation system. The first of its kind in Nigeria. It is a 50-metre wide corridor that accommodates double carriageway of exclusive bus lanes and an 11-metre reservation for future rail development. The Transitways are proposed to connect the major heavy traffic generating land uses, e.g. Banex Plaza, Hilton Hotel, Eagle Square, Christian Ecumenical Centre, Transportation Centre and the Main Railway Station, Wuse Zone 3 Neighbourhood Centre, and Uthako Market. He further said that these locations are on line 1. The Old Federal Secretariat, Area 3 Mosque, Area 10 Neighbourhood Centre, Transportation Centre/ Main railway Station, National Mosque, Eagle Square, Gimbiya Street Area 11, Old CBN, Garki 2 Neighbourhood Centre, on Line 2 (see map 1 and diagram 1).

Lines 1 and 2 meet at Central Area at the Transportation Centre near Bolingo Hotel which is the nerve center/hub and serves as the intermodal station of the city. Regional railways coming from North, South, East and West terminate at this centre.

All the above locations are in Phase 1. He noted that irrespective of the fact that about 80% of the road systems in Phase 1 of the capital city have been built there is still traffic congestion. This indicates that the solution may lie in the development of Transitways (Lines 1 & 2) which will offer the citizens of Abuja the opportunity of riding on a modern bus service. In accordance with the Abuja masterplan the said Transitway would have been Service in phase 1. The rail component was planned to be added when the critical mass has been established. The layout and cross-section of the Transitway is as shown attached as Appendix 1 and 2.



Map 1.

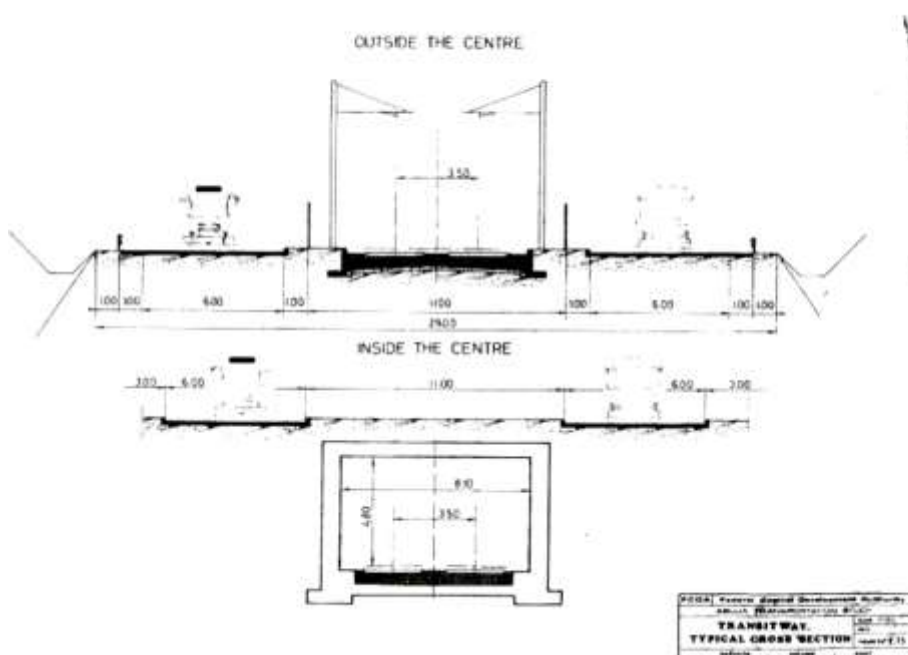
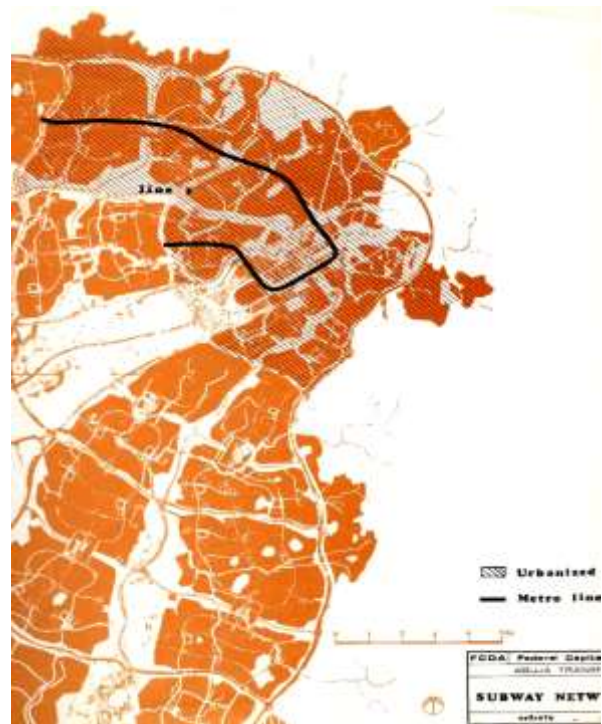


Diagram 1.

3.4. The first phase of this development would have focused on the northern corridor towards the Papal Ground as shown in the map below. However, pressure from several quarters prevailed hence there arose uncoordinated development which continued till date.

In fact, there is a need for a study to determine how the development at the fringes (see diagram 2) will access the Transitway. A possible link could be at the sector centres which are placed every 5 km along the Transitway as shown in map 2.



Map 2.

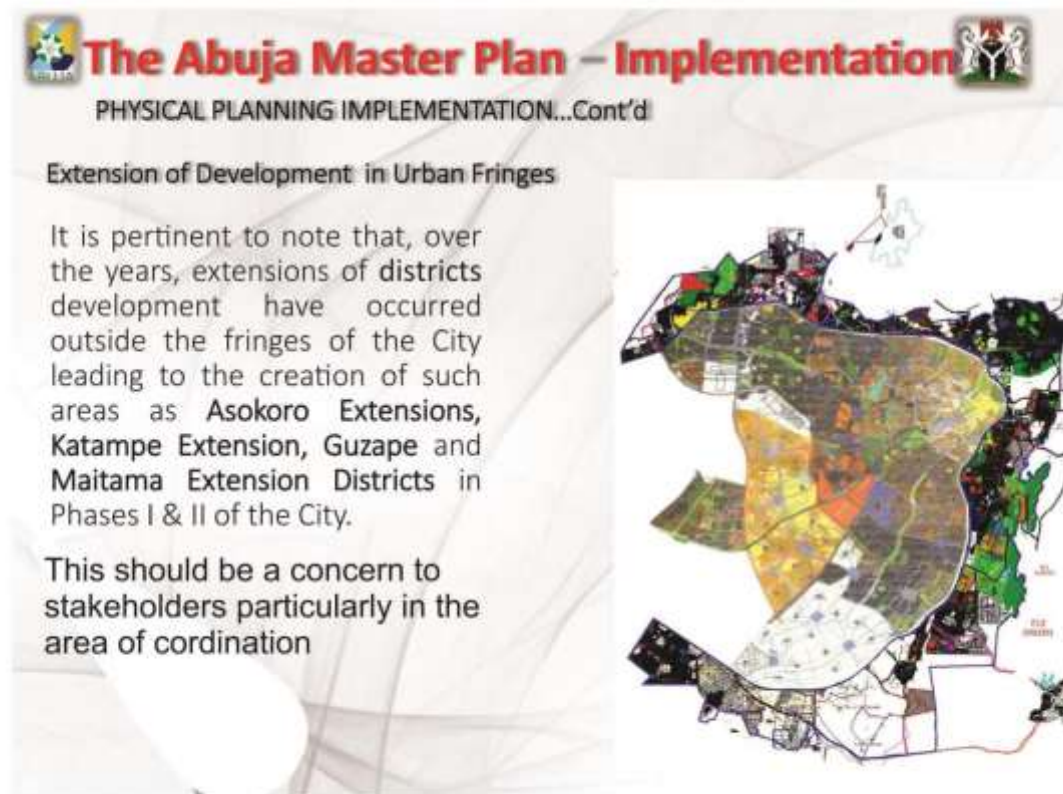


Diagram 2.

3.5. The Speaker noted that along the Transitway in Line 1, between the “Interchange Centre” (Eagle Square) on Line 1 and also on Line 2 are already existing exclusive bus lanes. Also existing are viaducts on these lines within the Central Area. He advised that these facilities (exclusive bus lanes) should be extended from the Central Area. to Banex Plaza and Wuse Zone 3 toward Wuse end, and Garki II to old Federal Secretariat at the Garki end.

3.6. The Speaker urged the authority to develop the “Sector Centres” as part of the Transitway Development. A Sector Centre is a mini Central Area located on average 5km from each other along the Transitways S1 and S2. The Size of the Sector Centre is about 100 Hectares of land on average serving 4 districts, with a reservation for “Park and Ride”. The “Park and Ride” is a parking lot at the metro station within the Sector Centre where commuters can park their vehicles and board buses or the metro to the city centre to reduce traffic congestion in the Federal Capital City. He warned that care should be taken to avoid the misuse of the Sector Centres when developed.

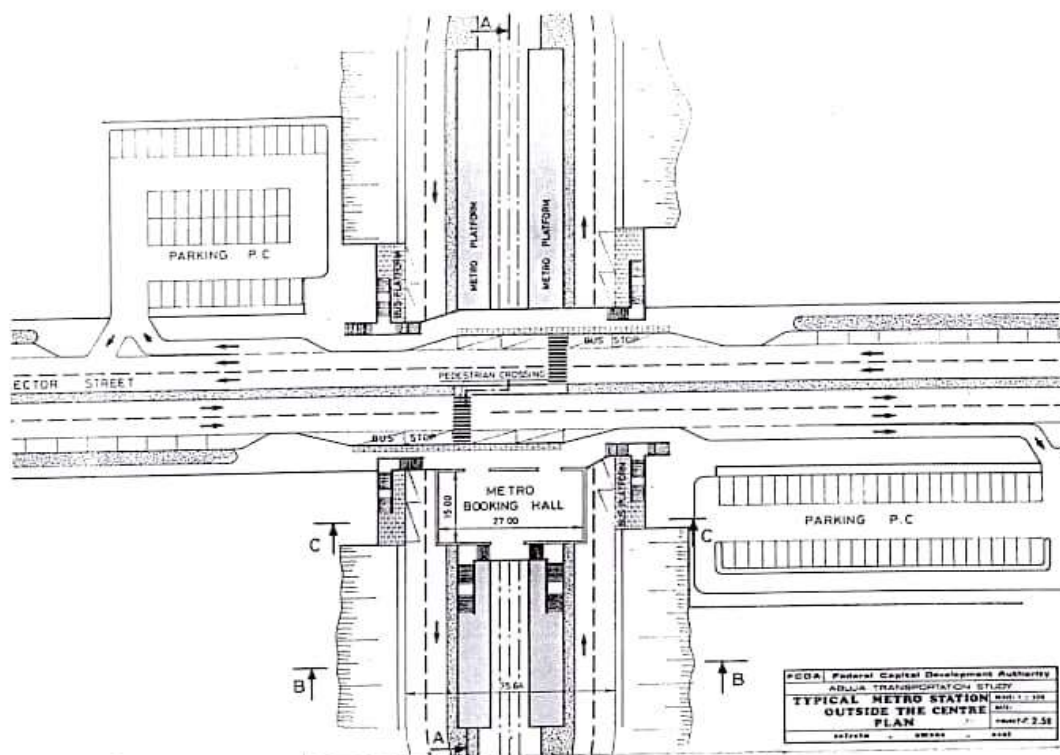


Diagram 3.

3.7. The presentation ended with a challenge to the participants on the need for advocacy amongst each group of professionals in the FCT, to educate their members particularly those working with the FCT Administration. This advocacy should focus on the need for coordination and the training and retraining of professionals to acquire the necessary competencies and capacity to plan and supervise the effective implementation of the critical infrastructure in the city for efficient public transportation in the Federal Capital City as provided for in the master plan.

4.0. Panel Discussion

4.1. In his contribution, Dr. Erukora Joe Okoli, the Chief Executive Officer of Abuja Graduate School, commended the Keynote Speaker and the CEO of CUTS on his passion for urban transportation and his vision for orderly implementation of the Abuja master plan and the Transitway. He emphasised that the doubts expressed by some observers in London in the late 1970s, at the launch of the master plan, about the capacity of Nigerians to implement the plan has manifested in the lack of coordination in implementation more than 40 years later. He, however urged the organisers of the roundtable to continue the advocacy. He advised that the forum should devise a plan to incorporate Renewable Energy in the Transportation Planning of the Federal Capital City.

4.2. The representative of the Nigerian Society of Engineers emphasized the importance of public awareness and enlightenment in the understanding of the concept of the Transitway and other development challenges in the Federal Capital City. In his opinion, an enlightened populace will demand the immediate implementation of the Transitway to ease the level of suffering in commuting to and from the Federal Capital City for work and business. He further reiterated the importance of further training for the technical staff of the FCDA. According to him, this will foster institutional memories and technical competence about the letter and spirit of the Abuja Master Plan.

4.3. A similar contribution by the representative of the Nigerian Institute of Surveyors, blamed the political class as the group responsible for the lack of coordination in and implementation of the Abuja master plan. He opined that the political class constitute the major stakeholder that needs and should be enlightened about the orderly and coordinated implementation of the development of the Abuja Master Plan. He enjoined the Centre to evolve a proper strategy to engage the political class with public awareness of the dangers of lack of effective coordination in the implementation of the plan.

4.4. Also Contributing, Mr. Agbo Christian Obiora, the National Secretary of the Association of People Living with Disabilities, emphasized the importance of adhering to the provisions of the Enabling Act for People Living with Disability (PWD) in planning and implementation of critical infrastructure development projects in the city of Abuja. He highlighted the importance of access for PWD in public buildings, transportation infrastructure and parking lots in the city. He reiterated the importance and penalties attached to the defaulters of the laws. He encouraged everyone to get a copy to familiarize themselves with the law since the grace period for implementation will end by 31st December 2023.

5.1. Closing Remarks

5.2. The Host and President of the African University of Science and Technology (AUST) Abuja, Prof Peter Azikiwe Onwualu, while apologizing for coming late due to official engagement, formally welcomed the participants to the University and to the 3rd quarterly roundtable with the stakeholders. He commended the Chief Executive Officer and the entire team of CUTS for keeping up with the organization of the roundtable.

5.3. He observed with regret the negative impact of disorderly and uncoordinated implementation of the city masterplan on the environment, including traffic congestion, flooding, and indiscriminate springing up of shanties and subsequent demolition without notice and in consideration of the plights of the occupants of the shanties. He cited examples of organized public transportation in cities across the globe where he has

visited and congestion charges usually introduced to discourage the use of private vehicles in the city during peak periods. He agreed that the restoration of the Master plan particularly the implementation of the Transitway as discussed in the roundtable will ameliorate some of the present challenges witnessed in the Federal Capital City.

6.0. Recommendations

At the conclusion of the deliberations the forum arrived at the following resolutions:

1. It is necessary for the Federal Capital Territory Administration to embark on the development of the Transitway as quickly as possible, this will help in decongesting the city of Abuja.
2. There is a need to provide public transportation as provided by the Master Plan and that particular attention must be paid to making them accessible to people living with disabilities.
3. All planning, especially transportation planning must incorporate ideals of Renewable Energy given the current global concern over Climate Change.
4. Abuja City authorities should ensure improved planning and prioritization of the development of critical infrastructure, in particular Transitways. There are opportunities for private sector involvement in this area as part of Transit Oriented Development (TOD).
5. There is need for continuous public enlightenment for the general public and other stakeholders.
6. A call for increased advocacy on the part of the Built Environment Professionals to enhance the level of awareness of members in the design, approval and execution of infrastructure projects in the FCT.

7.0. Vote of Thanks.

Dr. Emma Ossai, the Divisional Head in charge of finance and public utilities gave a moving vote of thanks, appreciated the participants for their positive contributions in the roundtable, and urged them to get more involved in planning subsequent events, particularly in the next quarter.

The meeting ended with the recitation of the second stanza of the national anthem.

Chief Cosmas Uzodimma
CUTS

Dr. Prisca Onuoha
AUST