COLUMN

The missing link

Let me start by welcoming you to our first edition of “LinkAfrica”, the African Development Bank’s newsletter dedicated to transport and telecommunications.

As you know, this sector is crucial for the sustainable development of our continent. There simply cannot be any real inclusive growth, opening of land-locked countries, regional integration or substantial improvement in the quality of life of our citizens – especially women – without robust infrastructure.

This newsletter comes at an opportune time to fill a communication gap. “LinkAfrica” is the missing link connecting what the Bank does on the ground with all the various stakeholders in our sector namely ministries, development partners, sector experts, executive agencies, NGOs, media or simply the users of the projects we are privileged to finance.

Indeed, the AfDB has a lot to share in this sector. We are the partner of choice for the financing of transport infrastructure – national, regional or continent wide –, and the Bank has financed structural, innovative projects acclaimed by beneficiary countries and awarded internationally.

The Bank has also built up substantial knowledge and expertise in the transportation sector in Africa, through numerous pertinent economic and sector studies, both carried out and financed either for the Bank or for our clients.

The “LinkAfrica” newsletter aims at sharing this wealth of experience and knowledge, focusing on the development of the human potential, and focusing on the impact of our operations.

Like me, you will probably be touched reading in this edition the testimonies of mothers, businessmen and students telling us how their lives have been transformed since the opening in November 2012 of the Nairobi – Thika Highway.

“LinkAfrica” promises to capture and share more transformational testimonies in 2013.

Happy reading!

Gilbert Mbesherubusa
Vice President Infrastructure,
Private Sector and Regional Integration

FEATURE STORY

Launch of the Nairobi-Thika superhighway in Kenya

“A dream realized”

The Nairobi-Thika superhighway was launched by the president of Kenya Mwai Kibaki and the president of the African Development Bank Donald Kaberuka on 9 November 2012.

Described by the Kenyan president as “the most ambitious infrastructure project in Kenya’s history”, the eight-lane ultra-modern superhighway stretching from the city of Nairobi all the way to the outskirts of Thika town some fifty kilometers away will deeply change the lives of millions of persons.

“The Nairobi-Thika superhighway is a national pride,” said Kenyan president, Mwai Kibaki. “It is the first modern highway infrastructure in Kenya’s history, contributing to achieve the country’s goal of reaching middle-income status by 2030.”

(To be continued p. 5)
New priority areas

The Africa Transport Policy Program (SSATP), 2012 Annual Meetings, held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia from 11-13 December 2012, has adopted new priority areas for 2014-2017. The four cluster areas discussed and adopted by the assembly include regional integration, connectivity and cohesion; urban transport and mobility; road safety; emerging issues and specific needs.

The Africa Transport Policy Program (SSATP) is a well-established international partnership to facilitate policy development and related capacity building in the transport sector in Africa. It comprises of 36 countries, 8 regional economic communities, public and private sector organizations, and international development agencies and organizations. Since its inception, SSATP has become well recognized and respected as the foremost transport policy development forum in Sub-Saharan Africa, bringing together key decision makers and stakeholders, while developing networks of specialists (researchers, operators and consultants) in most transport related fields in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Strong partnership

SSATP is financed by development partners’ contributions to a trust fund administrated by the World Bank. Current partners include the European Commission, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, the World Bank, the African Development Bank, the Islamic Development Bank, the French Development Agency, Austria, Norway, Sweden, and the United Kingdom. Further information about the SSATP is available at: www.ssatp.org

The AfDB, whose delegation was led by Mr Amadou Oumarou, Transport Division Manager, chaired the 6th active part in the SSATP Annual Meetings high level discussions.

AfDB / Mali-Senegal road project

The Road Improvement and Transport Facilitation on the Bamako-Dakar Corridor Project is the African Development Bank (AfDB) Investment Committee’s project of the year. The project is the winner, for the Infrastructure category, of the United States Treasury Inaugural Development Impact Honors Award.

The U.S. Treasury launched the Development Impact honors award competition for multilateral development banks last year in the following categories: education, environment/ climate, food security, health, infrastructure, private sector, women and girls.

The road in pictures and testimonies

The crossing over the Falémé before and after development

From left to right: A. Oumarou (AfDB), J.-N. Guillossou (SSATP), Justice Runji (SSATP)

The road construction has had many benefits. Settlements have become villages and villages are growing. The villages on the other side of the Ballé are now accessible in any season. Financially, people are better off, because they used to have to pay FCFA 5000 FCFA to reach a village 12 kilometres away. It’s not enough for drinking water for themselves and for their animals too. It’s not enough in the dry season, there is no water, rainfall drops and the wells dry out. The road construction was led by Mr Amadou Oumarou, Transport Division Manager, chairman took an active part in the SSATP Annual Meetings high level discussions.

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AfDB-funded Thika Superhighway, a masterpiece for East Africa

The new superhighway has started yielding impressive and visible results. Commuters are enjoying faster, reliable comfortable and more affordable journeys. The time taken to traverse Thika town and Nairobi has dropped from 2-3 hours to 30-45 minutes. The huge traffic snarl ups that used to occur are a thing of the past.

The traffic road traverses Kasarani, Githurai, Ruiru, Juja and ends at Thika River Bridge in the Thika district. The total population living along the road is approximately 1 million persons.

The AfDB financed the project (ADB) has contributed the largest share of the USD 360 million total cost.

Road safety and regional integration

Transport operators especially passenger vehicles, heavy goods trucks (domestic and regional to Ethiopia and Somalia), and non-motorized road users are among the beneficiaries of the project. Also included are horticultural and dairy farmers along the road who require an efficient and reliable transportation system.

Over the past, traffic road accidents along the busy highway have been a common feature. But the upgrading of the highway has started providing adequate capacity, considerably decreasing the accident rate by minimizing vehicle conflicts with traffic interchanges and by providing separate service roads for local and non-motorized traffic.

The Thika superhighway is a major component of regional integration in East and Southern Africa, which will make it possible to connect Cairo to Cape Town. People living along the Nairobi-Thika Highway are experiencing a sigh of relief following the completion of the works on the new highway.

Launch of the Nairobi-Thika superhighway

“Traffic movement on this road used to be crazy. But now the superhighway has opened up areas like Kimelou and beyond Thika. It is now recording an average of 20-30 clients walking through our doors on a good day, either to make queries or to make a purchase,” says James Mwangi Muturi, Managing Director A Plus Motors Limited.

Compared to the traffic along Mombasa road. Waiyaki Way, Ngong or Jogoo road, Nairobi-Thika road has a comparative advantage given its size and number of lanes, enabling easier and faster movement of traffic.

“Previously, clients were put off by the traffic on this road when we told them that we are located along Thika road. But all that has changed now,” says Mwangi.

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Case study: Senegal’s Single Window

A powerful tool to facilitate trade

Three African countries that have introduced a Single Window now score better than the three poorest performing countries of the European Union. One of them is Senegal, which introduced a Single Window in 2004.

“Senegal now ranks higher than several EU countries in terms of trade facilitation.”

This testimonial from Ibrahima Diagne, Chairman of the African Alliance on e-Commerce, astonished the participants to the workshop organized by the African Development Bank in December 2012 in Tunisia. Senior government officials from 21 countries joined their forces and formed the AFRI-Commerce, a network of national Single Windows. One of the benefits of a regional arrangement is that an exporter’s application to trade can be transferred to the import country, where the data is received as an import transaction. Traders have electronic access to all the requirements for trade in the destination country.

At the same time, plenty of cost and paperwork are eliminated. A regional Single Window can also facilitate customs transit, particularly if the design involves a regional transit agreement between the participating countries.

Implementing Single Windows

Affordable technical solutions for Single Window systems are well available commercially. An entirely African-made Single Window solution “Orbis” was developed and first implemented in Senegal. Encouraged by the Senegalese example, 13 other countries joined their forces and formed the Afrique Alliance for e-Commerce to expedite introduction of electronic solutions trade facilitation in Africa. Useful guidelines, standards and recommendations for implementation are brought available by the United Nations Economic Conference for Europe (UN/ECE), which coordinates the global work on trade facilitation under UN. It recently launched a new Trade Facilitation Implementation Guide, which contains a number of instruments, case studies and other materials for the support of implementation.

Introduction of a Single Window requires a number of improvements in the trading environment including simplification, harmonization and standardization of documents, procedures and requirements.

Senegal now ranks higher than several EU countries in terms of trade facilitation.

Senegal went up from rank 136 in 2008 to 84 in 2012. Senegal now ranks higher than countries such as Mauritius, South Korea and El Salvador. On average, each additional day that a product is delayed prior to being shipped reduces trade by approximately 1 percent. The time saved by Single Window can therefore have significant economic impact on a country; for example in El Salvador the estimated savings are 1.4% of GDP. At best, the Single Window reduces clearance time down just a few minutes.

A Regional Single Window

The next step in development toward entirely paperless trade is establishment of a regional Single Window arrangement, or rather – a network of national Single Windows. One of the benefits of a regional arrangement is that an exporter’s application to trade can be transferred to the import country, where the data is received as an import transaction. Traders have electronic access to all the requirements for trade in the destination country.

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ANALYSIS

Connecting Africa

International benchmark, regional challenges

The main gap in the African infrastructure value chain is the national and regional backbone that underpins the delivery of broadband capacity to government, academia, businesses and individual users,” says an assessment by the African Development Bank.

According to the AfDB Transport and ICT department, Africa has seen a spectacular growth of international bandwidth since the Connect Africa Summit held in Rwanda in 2009.

Increasing private investments

The assessment of Post Connect Africa Summit produced by the African Development Bank identifies that much has been achieved in terms of connecting the capital cities and major towns in at least half of the African countries due to private sector investment and public broadband projects.

The Northern Africa is served by a variety of cables with a total bandwidth of well over 10 terabytes. The Eastern coast of Africa that has seen a completion of a number of cables has also seen a dramatic increase of international bandwidth to about 7 terabyte. The completion of undersea cables is expected to increase the current bandwidth in the western coast of Africa from around 4 terabytes to 27 Tbps by the end of 2013 and over 50 Tbps in 2014.

The dramatic increase in Africa’s international fiber bandwidth has definitively ended the continent’s dependence on satellite communication.

The end of monopoles

By next few years Africa will have no lack of international bandwidth, estimated at some 50 Tbps in 2012, largely sufficient capacity in the short and medium term to meet the demand of end users in the key aspects of quantity (amount bandwidth), quality (alternative and secure international routes) and competitiveness.

The main gap in the African infrastructure value chain is therefore the national and regional backbone that underpins the delivery of broadband capacity to government, academia, businesses and individual users.

Over 30 countries in Africa have yet to build the adequate backbone networks that support social and economic growth. This deficit is unevenly distributed among countries with some, such as Morocco, Tunisia and South Africa which have a significant density in terrestrial network, while others, such as most of the countries in ECCAS have virtually no national infrastructure. The major regional broadband gap is in west, central and eastern Africa.

THE FIGURE OF THE DAY

Tanzania: Annual 11% increase in road accidents

Innovative Pilot Project to curb down accidents

Road safety in Tanzania is among the worst in Sub-Saharan Africa with the trend of reported accidents worsening at an annual rate of 11%.

In order to support the Tanzanian government’s initiatives aimed at curbing road traffic accidents (which include the adoption of a National Road Safety Policy, the establishment of a National Road Safety Agency, the implementation of a Driver and Vehicle Examination and Licensing...), the African Development Bank has recently approved a standalone road safety pilot project.

This project, the first ever of its kind designed by the AfDB, will have very important outcomes. Its success will open the door to its replication in other countries.

The road safety pilot project is designed to implement multi-sector road safety measures: enforcement, road infrastructure safety, road safety education and campaign, road accident investigation and recording on the Dar es Salaam-Morogoro road which serves high traffic volume with significantly high heavy trucks and has high road crash risks for three years, rescue and emergency services. The project will help accelerate the transfer of road safety knowledge and rapidly build local capacity.

It will also serve to demonstrate how road safety stakeholders organize and coordinate to achieve specific road safety targets. It will help achieve quick results and obtain performance benchmark to convince decision makers and expand in a national road safety programme. Last but not the least, it will also contribute to the regional road safety knowledge building.

The project will be replicated if it proves to be successful.