Dakar: Decongesting traffic to meet the challenge of sustainable urban mobility

Dakar is home to 25% of Senegal’s population, while occupying less than 0.3% of the territory. The transport sector is responsible for more than one million tonnes of CO₂, i.e., around 40% of the city’s total emissions. These emissions are linked, among other things, to the age of the car fleet (80% of cars are more than 5 years old) and to fuel consumption. Road transport accounts for 99.8% of the sector’s total emissions, of which 14% can be attributed to public transport. Emissions from rail transport are estimated at 0.2%, or 1,100 tCO₂e, of which 78% is produced outside the city. Therefore, to mitigate emissions from the sector, the city is working towards Transit-Oriented Development (TOD).

In a context of rapidly accelerating urbanisation of the Dakar agglomeration, increasing traffic congestion and the intermingling of powers between local actors and institutions, the city created the Executive Council of Urban Transport of Dakar (CETUD) in 1997. Endowed with an Urban Transport Development Fund, CETUD’s mandate is to implement and monitor the application of the sectoral urban public transport policy for the Senegalese region. Today, 80% of motorised journeys in Dakar are made by public transport; nevertheless, the multiplication of public transport actors and operators — the public operator Dakar Dem Dikk, the operators of the Association de Financement des Professionnels du Transport Urbain (AFTU), the small-scale minibuses Cars Rapides and Ndiaga-Ndiaye, and the “clando taxis” — as well as rapid and uncontrolled urbanisation have all made the public transport network disorganised.

Restructuring the public transport network for sustainable, resilient and inclusive mobility

In 2003, the AFTU was created by the Senegalese government to “upgrade the artisanal sector”, in partnership with CETUD, and supported by the World Bank’s PMU (Programme d’Amélioration de la Mobilité Urbaine — Programme to Improve Urban Mobility) and PATMUR (Projet d’Amélioration de la Mobilité Urbaine — Project to improve Urban Mobility), several programmes have been implemented to train and professionalise the actors of the artisanal transport sector — operators, drivers and conductors, controllers and route supervisors.

To address road congestion and reduce greenhouse gas emissions, CETUD developed a Dakar Urban Transport Plan (PUD) in 2007, which was replaced in 2020 by the Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan (PMU) for 2035. In May 2017, the city of Dakar joined the Mobilise Your City network, thanks to which it benefits from technical and financial support aimed at accompanying CETUD in the revision of the 2007 PUD. This support is financed by the French Global Environment Facility and implemented with the support of the French Development Agency.

However, the implementation of urban services is struggling to keep up with the sustained pace of urbanisation. Created in 1987, the Petit Train de Banlieue now carries 15,000 passengers a day, but it still does not play its role as the “backbone” of public transport in Dakar. Therefore, two structural projects are underway to relieve traffic congestion: the Regional Express Train (TER) and the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT). The TER aims to provide the Dakar agglomeration with a rapid mass transit rail system, and to carry passengers from Dakar station to the new urban hub of Diamniadio (phase 1) and to the Blaise Diagne International Airport (phase 2). The cost of the project is estimated at €1 billion, with financing from the Islamic Development Bank, the African Development Bank, AFD and Bpifrance. Once Phase 1 is commissioned, scheduled for the end of 2021, the TER will carry 110,000 passengers per day and is expected to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 19,000 t/year. From 2022, the BRT, financed by the World Bank and the European Investment Bank, should carry 300,000 passengers thanks to a fleet of 144 articulated buses on 18 km of reserved lanes.

a. In some areas of Dakar, the lack of inter-city transport has encouraged the emergence of clandestine taxis, commonly known as “taxis-clando”, which are faster and cheaper than traditional taxis.