

Road Transport Administration

1. Introduction

The administrative capacity of government to develop and implement policy is crucial to effective regulation of safety and environmental standards in road transport. It should be based on the principle of centrally defined standards and procedures which have to be applied at the local level.

To achieve effective administration of road transport, there must be effective ways of monitoring the transport situation at central government level, interpreting the transport information and translating it into policy actions, laws, regulations and standards, and finally advising road users and giving instructions to local enforcement officers.

In practice road transport administration involves at least two ministries, the ministry of transport and the ministry responsible for policing. Often it involves more. Local government also usually plays an important role in implementing road transport policy. Achieving effective communication between these agencies is not easy. In developing countries there is often a shortage of trained personnel able to fulfil the demands of government administration, and severe financial constraints apply, which limit possible options for tackling the problems. Consequently institutional constraints are often crucial in determining development of road transport regulation.

The problem is particularly difficult in countries that are making a transition from planned to market economies. In these cases, the role of government in road transport is undergoing fundamental change from provider of transport services to policy-maker and regulator. This involves decentralization of certain areas of decision-making such as investment in and management of road transport services to independent private or possibly state operators, and establishing new monitoring systems needed by government for policy-making. It may also require decentralization of the remaining government functions.

2. Approach

The analysis of institutional problems can be simplified through a framework such as the one described below, which looks at four different aspects of any institutional arrangement.

(a) Functions of organizational units

How are the functions of various organizational units defined? In particular, are the responsibilities for road transport clear for each ministry and other government agency, and are overlaps of responsibility avoided?

(b) Lines of Responsibility

How do supervisory and reporting activities take place between the organizational units? In particular, are there effective ways for the ministry of transport to supervise the agencies responsible for implementing road transport policy at local level and for the ministry to be kept informed of local conditions through clear reporting procedures?

(c) Steering

Are incentives built into the institutional procedures to guide the functions of each organization in a desired way? For example, are there administrative performance targets for routine processes such as issuing driving and vehicle licences which encourage efficient processing? Are there appropriate penalties for failure by enforcement officers to carry out their tasks in the proper manner?

(d) Provisioning

How are monetary and other resources allocated to enable the administrative activities to take place? For example, how are the expenses of collecting monitoring information at local level paid for through user fees, central revenues or other sources?

The final section of this annex uses this framework to summarize the nature of common administrative difficulties encountered when trying to improve road transport regulation and enforcement.

3. Typical Administrative Issues found in Road Transport

3.1 Developing Policy

One major issue frequently encountered is how the ministry of transport can obtain reliable information about road transport on which to base its policies. The problem is particularly serious in countries where the police have responsibility for activities such as vehicle inspection and registration, and driver licensing. In these cases it is not uncommon for the ministry of transport to be unable to obtain basic statistics about the vehicle fleet and licensed drivers, and about the degree to which technical standards in road transport are being adhered to, even though the ministry has clear responsibility for setting these standards.

Ideally in most cases the responsibilities for routine activities such as vehicle inspection and registration should be carried out by agencies reporting to the ministry of transport - this could even be private companies who are contracted or licensed to carry out these functions. Separating responsibilities for vehicle inspection and on-the-road enforcement is also desirable, because it increases the accountability of the vehicle inspectors: enabling the police to enforce traffic standards on a completely independent basis.

Clearly, if the police remain responsible for vehicle inspection and registration then, to enable effective monitoring of road transport, attention has to be paid to the lines of responsibility between police and the ministry of transport in the area of road transport. Possible ways are

through interministerial protocols and agreed management information system procedures implemented at local level.

Even if the ministry of transport has full supervisory control over vehicle inspection and registration, it is common for financial constraints to limit the availability of information. In particular the finance needed for acquiring and maintaining a computerized database is often greater than that available from central sources. In this case ways have to be found to obtain finance through other means - for example from increased charges paid by road users. The cost of data collection should ideally be weighed up against the potential value of the information to government when designing road transport database systems. In some cases in developing countries only minimal information such as that described in the table below could be justified. Such data provide useful basic information to government on which to assess the efficiency and effectiveness of policy-making and also provide a sampling base for further data collection efforts which may be required from time to time.

Possible Monitoring Information for Road Transport

The following list gives information that could both be used routinely (presented on an annual basis) plus that which could be used for analysis from time to time, according to the needs of policy-makers.

a) Vehicle Fleet

Number of registered vehicles by type (car, bus, truck etc), size range (seats, tonnes), body type and geographical area (province). Vehicles would include trailers and semi-trailers. Body type includes general (flats, dumper, covered), oil tankers, and other specialized types.

Number of newly registered vehicles by type (distinguishing new imports from changes of ownership).

Other more detailed vehicle information which would be required from time to time includes number of vehicles by axle configuration, age, capacity, make and model.

b) Transport (Operator) Licenses

Number of current licenses by owner type (individual, state/private company) by area.

Number and capacity of licensed buses and trucks by owner type by area.

Other more detailed information includes number of licenses revoked or suspended, nature of operator and reason for revocation or suspension.

c) Driving Licences

Number of current, newly issued, endorsed, revoked licences by category by area.

Other more detailed information which could be required for safety studies includes number of licenses by characteristic of driver (especially age).

d) Operations

Sample survey of truck characteristics, tonnes, tonne-km and commodities carried by small/large truck operators. Similar analysis of bus operation by route/service type.

Periodic classified traffic counts at defined points on main/secondary roads. Estimated vehicle-kms by vehicle type on major routes.

Bus/truck permits issued for single/multiple trips by border post by nationality of operator.

Other more detailed information required (for example, to assess competition) includes sample surveys of fares, tariffs and costs.

e) Accidents and Safety

Road accidents, deaths and injuries recorded by area.

Much more detailed information would be required, including accidents by type of vehicle/service, by location, by cause etc., for road safety analysis.

Incidence of traffic and bus/truck operator/driver license offenses (especially overloading and dangerous driving).

Number of periodic/spot vehicle safety inspections. Number of failures of inspections by vehicle type, by reason.

3.2 Setting and Enforcing Vehicle Technical Standards

In many countries technical inspections of vehicles to ensure minimum levels of roadworthiness are regarded as rather ineffective. The standards are often impossible to achieve without imposing enormous repair costs on many vehicles and/or disruption to road transport services through laying off unroadworthy buses and trucks. Lack of suitable testing equipment can also constrain the scope of the inspections. In practice the inspectors lower the standards so that most vehicles can pass the test. Establishing effective administrative controls over the inspection standards is extremely difficult. Unless the government takes action administrative control becomes even more difficult and the basis for passing the inspection becomes extremely arbitrary and there is enormous scope for corruption. Enforcement efforts generally become seriously undermined.

Under these conditions the options for government to improve roadworthiness are limited. If strict enforcement of the standards is practically impossible and if the government does not wish to abandon the inspections completely, then steps can be taken to define more clearly the essential minimum requirements for passing the inspections. This is the approach adopted by many countries. For example in the Philippines an attempt was made during the 1980's to distinguish between 'musts' and 'needs'. The 'musts' were the standards which all vehicles must reach to pass the test, while the 'needs' were the standards which vehicle owners were merely advised should ideally be achieved for safe operation. This approach offered the potential advantage that basic minimum standards could be set for all vehicles, while owners could receive advice that could be used to make their vehicles even more roadworthy. However, initially these attempts failed because they were only introduced for taxis and school buses and the vehicle owners objected to being discriminated against. This suggests that an appropriate approach would be:

1. to introduce increasingly higher standards of inspections in a step-by-step manner,
2. with widely advertized standards to give vehicle owners plenty of time to adjust to the higher standards,
3. with clear definitions of the new standards to encourage compliance and reduce scope for corruption,
4. applied to all vehicles (starting initially, perhaps, with purely advisory inspections)
5. with inspection charges related to the costs of inspection, so that the necessary equipment can be obtained,
6. supported by a parallel programme of road-side spot checks, widely advertized in the media as part of a road safety campaign, to follow up the effectiveness of the approach.

Consideration could also be given to delegating the vehicle inspection process to a private company. Such an approach is adopted in some African and European countries but requires close regulation by government to ensure that the inspections are carried out in the proper manner.

3.3 Vehicle Size and Weight Regulations

Overloading of trucks is often regarded as one of the most serious problems in road transport because of the additional damage to infrastructure and associated maintenance costs, which are not borne by the road users responsible. Opinion is divided about how to deal with this. The call for stricter enforcement is commonly heard. However, there is an increasingly held view that

enforcement is virtually impossible because of institutional constraints: ultimately enforcement officers do not apply the rules because there are substantial incentives to connive with truck operators to evade the law. Attempts to counter these incentives with stricter supervision or monitoring systems have not proved effective, so there is increasing interest in changing the nature of the incentives by placing responsibility for road maintenance at a more local level, coupled with appropriate incentives to keep the roads in good condition at minimum cost. (See other Road Transport Web sites for further discussion on this issue.)

Even with the present administrative systems for road transport, much can be done to improve the enforcement of road vehicle size and weight regulations as follows.

Ensure that the size and weight regulations are based on economic criteria

It is not unusual for the maximum axle load and gross vehicle load limits to be much lower than the optimum. Strict enforcement would not allow efficient use of road transport vehicles and impose substantial additional transport costs. In practice everyone ignores the regulations except when enforcement officers want favors from the truckers. This fails to check even extreme overloading and undermines enforcement efforts generally.

Make the regulations clear to road users and enforcement officers

In many cases the rules are not clear. The highway authority may have its own design standards which were the basis for regulation in the past (as in CIS countries), there may or not be national size and weight regulations, vehicles have their own gross weight specifications which may be used for enforcement purposes, there may be bilateral agreements allowing certain foreign trucks to use the country's roads subject to other regulations, and there may be informal understandings about the rules for other foreign trucks (especially where national regulations are regarded by neighboring countries as a barrier to international road transport markets).

Advertize the regulations clearly

Even when the rules are clear, road users and enforcement officers may not understand them completely. This calls for advertizing the rules clearly, especially at the weigh-bridge control points.

Place responsibility for managing weigh-bridge stations on the highway authority

The highway authority has the greatest interest in minimizing road damage so, provided regulations are based on economic criteria, they are the organization most likely to enforce them.

Maintain the weigh-bridge equipment

Often the equipment does not work in the proper manner and so measurements cannot be used for enforcement purposes. Appropriate means of financing the weigh-bridge stations is usually the problem and this can be tackled as part of the measures adopted to improve financing of road

maintenance. (See the World Bank Transport Sector [Roads and Highways Web page on Road Financing and Road Funds](#) for further details.)

Put in place effective coordination measures at local level

The police and highway authority have to work together to enforce size and weight regulations at local level and the regulatory authority at central level has to be able to monitor enforcement. This can be achieved with minimal staff at weigh-bridge stations, provided there are procedures for stopping and checking vehicles and for informing the regulatory authority about checks made. In some countries lack of effective procedures and mistrust among agencies results in staff from several agencies working in weigh-bridge stations and other roadside control points. This can increase the number of checks and delays to vehicles, and considerably increase bribes paid by transport operators.

Gain support for enforcement from road users

With weak enforcement there is no incentive for legitimate operators to obey the rules because they would only be placed at a competitive disadvantage compared to other operators. Building up support for enforcement among road users is vital. This requires the regulatory and enforcement agencies to establish a dialogue with road users, possibly through periodic round-table meetings involving representative organizations (transport customers, trucking associations, freight forwarders and major operators). If a Road Board is established to manage road maintenance, this organization could coordinate discussions on enforcement matters.

3.4 Human Resource Development

The lack of adequately qualified and trained staff in the regulatory agencies is often a major constraint on removing institutional bottlenecks to more effective regulation. Major issues in road transport include how to improve:

- 1) policy-making capacity of central agencies, especially through developing skills in planning and economics (to base regulations more firmly on economic principles);
- 2) information management to strengthen monitoring of the road sector;
- 3) capacity in developing and implementing road safety programs;
- 4) driver training and examination standards;
- 5) vehicle roadworthiness inspection standards; and
- 6) capacity in drafting regulations which would support policy objectives.

This is part of a general problem affecting administration of road transport - see the World Bank Transport Sector [Roads and Highways Institutional and Sector Management Web page](#) for further details.