Guest Editor’s Note

Transport Policy, Planning, and Financing in Asian Developing Countries: Selected Papers from the 15th World Conference on Transport Research 2019

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1. INTRODUCTION

The 15th World Conference on Transport Research organized by the World Conference on Transport Research Society (WCTRS) was held on 26–31 May 2019 in Mumbai, India. The WCTRS provides a forum for the interchange of ideas among transport researchers, managers, policy-makers, and educators from a perspective that is multi-modal, multi-disciplinary, and multi-sectoral. The World Conferences provide an opportunity for leading transport professionals from all countries and areas to convene and learn from one another. The WCTRS has 34 Special Interest Groups (SIGs) under nine Topic Areas from A to I, and a chair of each SIG managed a session at the 15th World Conference.

Topic Area H, which is “Transport in Developing and Emerging Countries,” is accompanied by three SIGs, and I am a chair of SIG H1, “Transport Policy, Planning, and Financing in Developing Countries.” More than 20 papers were presented in six oral sessions, and these papers pertained to issues of policy, planning, and financing in developing and emerging countries in places such as Asia, Latin America, and Africa. However, most of the papers in the 15th World Conference focused on topics of Asian countries, particularly India. As a result of a rigorous peer review process, five papers were selected for this special issue on Asian Transport Studies.

2. BRIEF REVIEW OF SELECTED PAPERS

The first paper, by Ishikawa et al., examined the association between individual capability and travel time expenditure in 17 developing cities with person-trip survey data collected by Japan International Cooperation Agency. The authors also explored the mechanism of how the capability affects travel time expenditure, with a particular focus on mediation and moderation effects of residential location choice on travel time. Mediation and moderation effects were estimated in Hanoi, Vietnam, in 2004, and the results indicated that residential location choice influenced the association between individual capability and travel time expenditure significantly.

The second paper, by Qudratullah and Maruyama, investigated the data sending rate and survey completion rate of smartphone-based travel surveys and conducted a smartphone-based travel survey in 2015 and two additional surveys in 2017 in cities in Afghanistan. The authors improved the recruitment method in 2017 by introducing an incentive provision, female survey conductors to recruit females, and assistance in using the application. These improvements increased the data sending rate significantly; however, the effects on the survey completion rate were limited.
The third paper, by Bhatt et al., conducted a performance assessment of public bus service operators, namely, Road Transport Corporations (RTCs) that provide inter-city bus transit services in India, to highlight the prevailing inefficiencies in the current systems. Data envelopment analysis was used to quantify the performance attributes, and the RTCs were then ranked based on these indices. The associations among these RTC performance rankings across several attributes were studied using Spearman’s rank correlation.

The fourth paper, by Wang et al., identified the opportunities and challenges faced by value capture (VC) implementation in China and explained how local governments and local transit agencies have dealt with regulatory barriers. The findings offered several insights: (1) the macro-environment, regulatory framework, and supportive policy environment provide opportunities to adopt VC projects, (2) the regulatory challenges of land transactions and the lack of a property tax system restrict the application of VC, and (3) institutional capacity is vital to implementing VC.

The final paper, by Poulose and Mahalingam, explored the feasibility of offering flexible term concessions as a real option over two ongoing Build-Operate-Transfer highway projects in India. The forecast made from actual data using geometric Brownian motion and the risk neutral valuation through spreadsheet analysis indicated positive values and risk reduction with the flexibility. Subsequent interviews with key stakeholders in the sector revealed some of the barriers to implementing flexibilities in Indian public-private partnerships.

3. SUMMARY

SIG H1 of WCTRS, “Transport Policy, Planning, and Financing in Developing Countries,” focuses on multi-disciplinary studies involving policy, planning, and financing in developing and emerging countries. The policy aspects cover institutional capacity, governance structures, capacity building of both government and private entities, policy and decision-making practices, pricing of infrastructure services, etc. The planning aspects cover how well transport infrastructure plans are integrated with overall urban, national, and regional plans, as well as economic plans. The financing aspects cover innovative financing and funding issues in transport, including road funds, cost-recovery from users, public–private partnerships, and local government finance, including fiscal decentralization.

As developing and emerging countries face unique challenges and issues related to the transport policy, planning, and financing in each region, country, province, city, town, and village, we need to address these aspects to solve the challenges and issues. The five papers can contribute to our society by providing us some insights.

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