

# Lebanon from the south to north up



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Lebanon had been experiencing a dynamic economy, enjoying high growth rates, an increased inflow of foreign capital, as well as, a steady increase in the capita income. However, after the civil war, transportation system of Lebanon deteriorated to the extent that it does not comply with Mobility requirements and needs[1].

The country continues to operate under aging transportation facilities that were severely damaged during the civil war. Therefore, this can be seen as chaotic and unsustainable. This combines with the unusable railway system, an increased number of licensed automobiles, coupled with poor road network. Road network in Lebanon constitutes primary and secondary roads and highways. The highways are classified according to their role and characteristics of the traffic they serve. An extensive network of roads covering over 4000 miles constituting serves Lebanon. Most roads, particularly within the Beirut area and most remote areas, the transportation system, have remained in a poor condition. An increased number of licensed automobiles have caused congestion in public roads.

In addition, the railway system has remained largely unutilized due to the effects of civil war. Other public infrastructures that were affected by the civil war cover the airports, the electrical power supply, and the Telecommunication services that were considerably damaged due to the aftermath of the civil war[2]. The existing road transportation system lacks a coherent organization of the public, since the public has become over reliant on the use of private cars and underutilized public transport relative to international standards. The public lacks coherent patterns to provide sound and sustainable alternatives to the automobile. Furthermore, there is an

inequitable distribution of the supply of the public transport over the market. Major markets such as Beirut and Tripoli have remained underserved, hence; experience severe competition among road transport operators. The Lebanese railway network began in 1980. However, the public infrastructures have been experiencing conflict in the struggle to provide citizens with an efficient mobility system.

Through history, it is possible to trace the establishment of the railway system that began in late 20th century. The railway system connects prime urban areas, as well as, neighboring countries such as Iraq, Turkey, and Syria. Due to socio-political struggles experienced in most countries in the Middle East, the developments of public utilities have become unimaginable[3]. The civil war and posttraumatic recovery in Lebanon led to uncertainty to the future of transportation infrastructure. The railway system that began in late 20th century was terminated because of political problems.

Initially, the railway line was intended to connect Beirut and Damascus in order to provide Damascus with accessibility to the port. The Beirut Damascus railway line continued operating, and made travel possible from Europe to Africa without changing trains. In addition, the line served as an important means of transportation to people both from the South to North up to Syria[4]. The aftermath of the Lebanese Civil war led to a considerable damage to the rail network and interfered with the transportation system that gradually ceased. The failure of the rail network causes congestion on roads that led to difficulties in mobility to distant areas.

Statistics pertaining to transportation patterns in Lebanon began recently, during the civil war, there were unreliable public transportation system. Thus, there is a need to upgrade the transportation system by reviving the rail network. Hence, the Lebanese government should do more research on the possibility of reviving the rail network since; it will provide an opportunity to make Beirut affordable and have efficient connections with neighboring cities that are on the Mediterranean and beyond[5]. The population of Lebanon is unevenly distributed with more than 90% of the Lebanese staying in urban areas. A large majority of the population are concentrated within the coastal areas such as Beirut and Sidon. This uneven distribution of the population has led to regional disparities. There is mobility of many people into and out of Beirut; however, they experience transportation problems. The government, as well as, transportation experts have made substantial efforts to combat this issue, but have faced many problems including financial constrains to implement the projects.

Lebanon experiences a large per capita public debt that has made publicly funded projects not to be possible. The Lebanese government has made emphasis on privatization to ensure that the damaged public utilities are restored. In addition, the government has made pledges apply proceed of sales in order to minimize public debt and the budget deficit. There have been reforms made towards ensuring that qualified technocrats are involved to address fundamental economic programs, and make reviews on further savings that can be achieved through reforms of the income tax system.

The war made transportation system to be silenced whereas private transportation companies ensured a short term-term solution to the issue.

However, private bus and taxi operators suffered due to the monopolization of the bus depots by independent companies. This had contributed to a sectarian struggle that has contributed to the division in Lebanon today[6].

Lebanese government has spent large sums of money to reconstruct and maintain the roads by paving and improving the road quality. However, the country still experiences inadequate capacity due to budget deficits in the allocation of funds channeled for road construction and maintenance.

Economic development has been hugely uneven in Lebanon which has made the government fail in reducing economic and social inequalities in various communities[7]. However, the President has made efforts to reduce the inequalities by pursuing development projects in various societies, in the north and south that had been traditionally neglected.

The status of public infrastructure is poor. There are poor facilities on roads for pedestrian crossing on highways. This is coupled with insufficient public lighting, poor quality road surface, absent road markings, as well as, particularly curvy and small roads. These have contributed to congestion on roads. Thus, the years of civil war in Lebanon and post-traumatic recovery have contributed to uncertainty for the future of the public transportation system. Three key developments have taken shape in Lebanon. These includes the Cola transport hub, the Charles Helou Bus station, and the Dora transportation hub that have embodied the existing failures and conflicts in Lebanon[8].

Since Cola and Dora transportation hubs are located underneath populated highway bridges, they operate as productive intersections. The cross roads are used for social interactions and economic growth. Most travelers would

move to these hubs remarkably early in the morning to conduct their businesses, while mini-buses and taxis transport commuters between the shores[9]. The residential areas surrounding the hubs make the roundabouts provide a layered activity.

They were removed from statically enforced characteristics of infrastructure thus providing a platform enabling the operation of private transport companies[10]. In conclusion, Lebanese civil war devastated the economic infrastructure and significantly affected the country's national output and its ranking in the Middle East. In the post-traumatic years, Lebanon has made substantial improvements undo some of the damages through assistance from both bilateral and multilateral donors by renewing the efforts to bring about sustainable development and economic growth.

Based on the information gathered from this study, it is evident that Lebanese economic developments have been slowed due to poor basic services and public utilities, such as infrastructure, water and power supply, communication. In order to sustain a rebound in economic growth, the government should put a lot of effort in upgrading public utilities especially mainly, transport, communication, water, and power supply. For example, under an orderly planning and implementation of road maintenance through sufficient budgetary allocations, transportation system can be improved to a point that decreases production and distribution costs of other economic activities[11]. In addition, the government should reconcile plans to ensure a substantial increase in infrastructure with the aim of maintaining macro-economic stability, as well as, reducing the country's net burden. The country should be stable politically, and put in place growth enhancing

policies that are necessary to achieve sustainable expansion in economic growth.

Furthermore, the government should aim at reducing the high debts that should remain to be a medium term-priority. The thriving financial sector should work under a continued strong supervision and regulation. Therefore, in order to sustain economic growth, and translate economic expansion into a broader social gain, the government of Lebanon must strengthen public finances, make efforts to upgrade public infrastructure, in order to improve the business environment. These conditions will ensure that Lebanon gains exceptional resilience in the face of financial crisis, as well as, a capacity to rebound and thrive.

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