
APPENDIX E: BANK TRANSPORT STAFF INTERVIEW RESULTS

A random selection of 36 out of 122 staff (specialists and task team leaders) was made; 20 from Washington, DC, headquarters; 16 from Regions.

Regions: All Regions and anchor¹ covered.

Dates: Interviews conducted between August 2005 and February 2006

Assessment of Client Needs (Relevance)

In which countries have you worked in the recent past? (last 5 years).

Detailed list contains 67 countries, covering all Regions.

To what extent has maintenance been a problem in these countries in your experience?

ROADS: Most interviewees confirmed that sustainability is still a problem; they mentioned weak funding flows, road funds that were only modestly successful, weak institutional capacity, lack of government commitment, maintenance based on equity or political considerations rather than need, and networks too large for available funds. Positive trends were experienced in a few countries, and there has been some success with road authorities, maintenance management systems, and capacity building both for governments and contractors. In Africa the SSATP is believed to have a positive impact. Performance management contracts have had some success, especially in Latin America (CREMA).

RAIL: Only minor problems reported.

OTHER MODES: Not seen as problem areas.

To what extent has the Bank assisted these countries in the transport sector through technical assistance and advisory services?

There is not enough ESW in some cases; technical assistance is often not done soon enough and sometimes lacks ownership; technical assistance from other international finance institutions (IFIs) (sometimes of low quality and offered on a grant basis) can be a problem; some countries are well supported by donors, and in these cases there is no shortage of funds for technical assistance—but other countries are comparatively neglected. Absorption capacity of technical assistance can be an issue, as is the lack of continuity and institutional memory. Some respondents felt that institutional and policy support was relatively less successful, but good results were reported for procurement. Most people thought that technical assistance was more effective when it was linked to investments rather than when it was a freestanding initiative. Dissemination of knowledge was often carried out on an ad hoc basis.

The Bank has a good reputation for high-quality work and is close but not necessarily at the cutting edge of knowledge in roads. It has a unique depth of resources and is particularly good at assisting with road financing. The SSATP is seen as doing good work at the strategic level.

Some countries (Iran, Kuwait) have been more focused on acquiring know-how and skills.

To what extent has the Bank encouraged these countries to get involved with the private sector? Please give examples, if possible.

Concessions were mentioned for several countries, especially in railways and ports; there were also a few toll roads. Most concessions appear successful, but some respondents mentioned difficulties caused by collusion. Some respondents noted that key success factors included being involved at the earliest possible stage, having the capacity to deal with the private sector, and having a supportive regulatory framework. The fact that the Bank can now cover the cost of redundancies in loans is seen as significant. The Bank has also had successes in assisting the development of emerging contractors and phasing out force account operations and in developing competitive bidding and procurement procedures, as well as performance maintenance contracts.

In ports there are good opportunities for contracting the cargo handling services. Trade facilitation committees involving the private sector have proved successful.

Public institutional change in Asia is less rapid, because traditional practices are valued highly and incremental change is often preferred. The “confrontational” style of Western practice (competitive tendering, staff rationalization, and so forth) is disliked by many.

Bank Approach

General Comments

Some interviewees thought the Bank was too risk averse, although others believed that a 5-year project horizon was often too short to achieve meaningful institutional change and that the Bank should not be too ambitious to achieve everything in one project.

“Continuity can be important. The Bank should think very carefully before it stops support to a borrower because of nonperformance or serious disagreement. Once we walk away, we lose our ability to influence, and other IFIs often simply take our place.”

“Business processes have become more cumbersome, and task managers have less freedom than in the past. This is partly linked to decentralization

and is complicated by safeguard issues. Greater bureaucracy has slowed decision making and placed additional burdens on task team leaders.”

“The ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach with procedures is wrong, but there are signs that this is changing. You cannot treat Zimbabwe and Poland the same way.”

“It took longer than expected to reverse the decline in transport infrastructure spending because until the Country Assistance Strategies were updated, infrastructure was not seen as a priority by some staff.”

“The Bank should be more prepared to enforce conditionality, especially where the filling of key posts is concerned; this is the call of the country director.”

“We have a special responsibility in small countries because our impact may be huge, whereas in large economies our impact is much smaller.”

Eighty percent of Bank-funded transport projects are road or road related. Do you agree with this modal split, or should we be doing more in the other transport sub-sectors and in urban transport?

Some respondents believed that what the Bank is doing reflects the needs of the borrowers and that roads were the Bank’s strength. Other respondents thought the Bank was overly biased toward roads and claimed it had gained a reputation as a “roads bank” and that certain borrowers went to other IFIs for finance for other modes.

“We should be doing more in the modes other than roads, but have we really got a critical mass of knowledge in these areas? It is interesting that now we have an aviation specialist; more aviation projects are being generated. We need to ensure we have a mix of people with the right experience.”

“We should get involved less in intercity highways and more in integrated rural development.”

“We are beginning to do more rail projects, but urban transport is neglected—this is unfortunate,

considering the extent of urban growth anticipated.”

Several interviewees believed the Bank should do more in urban transport (especially bus transport) but noted that the preparation of urban projects takes much longer and the transaction costs are high. They are more complex, and there are multiple stakeholders and safeguards issues, so they are riskier. Yet there is little incentive for task managers to take on these difficult projects, so task team leaders will not always promote them.

“We should not try to force our own agenda onto borrowers. In Madagascar the Bank was keen to put the clean air issue on the transport agenda, but this was not a priority for the government.”

Other interviewees claimed the Bank should be doing more in waterways, ports, logistics, safety, and air pollution.

Bank Performance (Efficacy, Efficiency, and Outcome)

Reasons for Project Success

- Innovative projects or aspects of projects
- Commitment and ownership by the clients
- Good supervision by experienced staff and continuity of team members
- Large impact on peoples’ lives
- Strong leadership by key implementation manager or key politician
- Adaptability to changing conditions
- Good funding streams for future sustainability.

Reasons for Unsuccessful Projects

- Lack of client commitment and ownership
- Too many objectives and design too complex for capacity of borrower
- Corruption and vested interests
- Political interference
- Implementing agency too inexperienced and not supported
- Insufficient attention to sustainability issues
- Opposition by affected communities.

How well do we monitor and measure project efficiency and outcomes? How could we do better?

“Some indicators are too easy to achieve and are not a stretch; others are impossible to measure so it doesn’t happen. Often there are too many indicators, and they can vary from project to project.”

“We focus too much on the physical aspects rather than efficiency and outcomes.”

“There is some evidence that economic analysis is manipulated if the economic rate of return is not high enough.”

“Indicators should be simple and measurable.”

“We need to improve our monitoring capacity.”

“Our rural indicators are improving, but we need more work on urban indicators. Compliance is a problem.”

“We should take more cognizance of the lessons of evaluation.”

“It is important for the borrowers to have ownership of the indicators; they often lack the capacity to monitor or consider that other priorities are more important.”

“We should put more emphasis on freight tariffs as indicators.”

“We need to do more impact assessments, but they can be expensive.”

“Project objectives should be carefully crafted.”

“The discount rate we are using (12 percent) is often too high. The Poverty Reduction and Economic Management Network sometimes uses 4 percent. The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development uses 5 percent or 6 percent.”

“There is insufficient understanding of economic analysis by some transport staff, and results may sometimes be manipulated to ensure the result is in the required range.”

“Indicators for rural roads should include accessibility and outcome (number of trips), supported by cost-benefit analysis, the Highways Design and Maintenance Model, and feasibility studies. Local access roads are better approached through cost-effectiveness analysis and ranking.”

“My perception is that we lack experience in some areas because a number of senior specialists have retired.”

“There is often a tendency to underestimate costs and overestimate benefits in the Project Appraisal Document.”

“Transport strategy should also be measurable, so that we can assess how well it is being accomplished.”

“Performance-based budgeting by ministries of finance can put pressure on transport agencies to invest in results measurement.”

“In the East Asia and Pacific Region there is a ‘gatekeeper’ who monitors indicators proposed in transport projects.”

Support for Work

From where do you receive the most support or advice when you require it, to enable you to perform your tasks effectively? Indicate those most important to you.

- Peers (95%)
- Transport anchor (60%)
- Information systems (50%)
- Guidelines/manuals (20%)
- Other: e-mail forums, support staff, Web site (5%)
- SSATP (75%, Africa respondents only)
- Brown bag lunches and other events (65%)
- Management (35%)
- Formal training (15%).

Summary of Comments

Overwhelmingly, people find support from their colleagues (peers). The anchor is considered important, and to a lesser extent management ad-

vice, training, brown bag lunches, guidelines, and systems are seen as helpful. All respondents from Sub-Saharan Africa mentioned SSATP, but there were two distinct groups—those who strongly supported it and those who thought it was not worth the resources put into it. Other points raised were as follows:

- Several people criticized the transport Web site as being out of date (even though it was steadily being upgraded during the interview period).
- Three respondents mentioned the poor quality of support staff.
- The Transport Forum and Transport Learning Week were seen in a positive light, especially by staff in the field.
- The e-mail forums whereby comments or advice were sought are seen positively, and people do seem to make use of this facility.
- Brown bag lunches are important to Washington staff. The country office staffs prefer to use videoconferencing. It was also mentioned that field staff could not file directly into IRIS [an internal Bank database], which led to a backlog building up of documents to be filed.
- Many respondents referred to a lack of resources in the anchor, which led to fewer think pieces being produced. The lack of international experts to lead thinking in the anchor, especially in roads and railways (after the departure of Ian Heggie, Lou Thompson, and Kenneth Gwilliam), was mentioned by several respondents.

Most respondents preferred to consult with peers before management for advice unless the query was of a political or strategic nature. This was partly due to perceptions that access to management is not readily available; the exception was Latin America and the Caribbean, where management was often the first choice.

Coordination/Communication with Others

To what extent is it easy to coordinate and share good practice (scale of 1–5, where 5 is very easy)?

	Average score	
	Head-quarters	Field
Between regions in the transport sector	3.3	2.7
With staff in country offices or HQ if you are in a country office	3.9	3.9
With the anchor staff	3.3	2.8
With staff in other networks	2.9	2.6
With other parts of the World Bank Group such as IFC and MIGA	2.6	2.2

Comments

The most positive aspect is the strong coordination between headquarters and the field, with both sides ranking this highest. For other areas of coordination/communication the perception in the field offices is poorer because it is more difficult for them.

Communication/coordination with other networks or parts of the Bank Group may have been scored low in some cases because there was little need for such activity on the part of some of the respondents.

Workload

How much time have you spent away on missions in the last 12 months? Do you think your workload is about right, too low, or too high?

All interviewees averaged 4.0 months on mission; headquarters-based staff working in Regions averaged 4.6 months; anchor staff averaged 3.6 months; field staff, 3.7 months; and all staff based in Washington, 4.2 months.

Fifty percent of staff spends between 4 and 9 months on mission, and there is a strong correlation between those spending more than 4 months away from home and the perception that

their workload is too high. In terms of workload, 53 percent said too high, 40 percent said about right, and only 7 percent said too low. It was observed that those who responded “too low” had only been with the Bank for a short time.

Change

If you could change the way we do just one thing in the Bank, what would it be and why? (Comments made by three or more respondents are shown in bold.)

- **Greater commitment to change poverty is necessary, especially in Africa.**
- **We need to work more efficiently and smartly. We need smart support staff that is knowledgeable about information technology, and proactive.**
- **We need to disseminate more effectively; we are all too busy to share innovation successfully.**
- **We need less pressure on task team leaders to improve operational quality and dissemination effectiveness and to ensure we stay abreast of developments in our field.**
- **The anchor needs more funding and resources.**
- **We need less micromanagement, and task team managers need to be empowered with more responsibility for decision making.**
- **Decentralized staff, such as disbursement officers in country offices, should have more responsibility.**
- Perhaps we should work less with Trust Funds—they are too restrictive.
- We need to make quicker decisions (no objections).
- **More flexibility is required in the application of the safeguards policy.**
- We need more advice, orientation, and help for new staff.
- We should take road safety more seriously.
- **More people with extensive operational experience are needed.**
- We need more effective donor harmonization should be sought.

- Ways should be devised to reduce the high transaction costs in project management such as vertical integration. If we are to scale up, it is important to streamline procurement and go beyond traditional contracting systems.
- The Transport Sector Board should have more power to intervene when things are going wrong (others opposed this and thought it ran counter to the decentralization initiative).
- We should be doing more to help people help themselves.
- We should not be funding recurrent expenditures.
- We should cut down on support personnel who do not add value.
- Good technical managers are not necessarily good administrative managers and may need further training.
- Reinvigorate thematic groups.
- **There are too many reviews, checks, and balances. In the end they become counterproductive and can reduce productivity.**
- The budget for project supervision should be linked to the complexity of the projects involved.
- **It is questionable whether the matrix system adds sufficient value.**
- Sufficient resources should be provided for training for country office staff.
- More cross-regional support work should be encouraged.
- **There should be more movement of staff between the Regions.**
- Locally recruited staff should have the same opportunities as internationally recruited staff.
- There should be more incentives for Head Office staff to work in field offices.
- **We should undertake more urban transport projects, but this requires greater preparation resources and perhaps more specialized staff.**
- We should be less prescriptive and listen to our clients.