

Media Pack

Document #7

Spatial planning, infrastructure, and transport planning for improved trade in Africa

Africa is facing serious infrastructure deficits that impede economic growth. The World Bank (2017) estimates that gross domestic product (GDP) per capita in Africa would increase by 1.7 per cent a year if the continent were to close the infrastructure gap with the rest of the developing world. In addition, trade within Africa is much weaker than is the case in other regions, with intra-African exports amounting between 16 and 17% of total African exports, compared to 59% for Asia (AfDB 2017). This is mostly attributed to poor transport and logistics systems. There are also major infrastructure shortfalls at Africa's economic hubs and ports of entry. They are increasingly congested, crowded, costly, and informal. This stifles productivity and competitiveness, causes hardship and ill health, and generates social unrest and disorder (Collier and Venables 2017; Mills et al. 2017). With an increase in urban population, this poses great challenges but is a potential opportunity if the infrastructure and institutions are created to enable urbanisation and boost intra-continental trade.

Given the above challenges, it is acknowledged that there is need for a thorough understanding of the nature and importance of the relationships between transport and infrastructure provision, spatial planning and the economy. Transport planning and the provision and implementation of transport infrastructure have a strong spatial connection. A relationship exists between land-use and transport whereby transportation infrastructure attracts land-use development and, in many respects, land-use development is unlocked by the provision of high-quality, integrated transport infrastructure and services. Furthermore, while the economic justification for transport infrastructure is understood, consideration should be on its impact on land use and the environment. The provision of transport infrastructure is mainly a public function. On one hand, government financing and investment are justified on the basis of promoting economic growth. On the other hand, the provision of infrastructure has to be sympathetic to spatial needs. Spatial planning cannot be divorced from sustainability, therefore, it is essential to consider land use, sectoral and other economic activity, settlement patterns, legislation, policies, and related initiatives that have an influence on transport.

The main objective of this sub-theme is to develop a clear understanding of the link between transport, infrastructure, the economy and spatial and land-use planning. It also seeks to address the above challenges, interrogate new ways with the view that spatial planning is a tool for ensuring that economic development is stimulated and that the spatial locations of activities, people and amenities have a positive impact on the local, regional and continental economy.