

Greater Beirut Urban Transport Project by WB



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I BACKGROUND

Geographically constrained, Lebanon suffers from terrible traffic congestion.

Lebanon is a densely populated country with about 500 people per kilometer. About three quarters of the population lives close to the narrow coastal strip, and about 2 million people live in the greater Beirut area. Traffic congestion has been a major problem as the city's infrastructure struggles to accommodate the 200,000 to 300,000 vehicles per day on some of its corridors. About half of the country's 1.2 million vehicles operate in the Greater Beirut, where most citizens travel with private cars, using half of the country's energy consumption. Traffic congestion has increased quickly along with increasing income and population, including refugees from nearby trouble spots such as Syria. Excessive car dependence, lack of reliable public transport, poor road infrastructure, and limited cost-effective solutions exacerbate the traffic situation.



II Challenges and Opportunities for Green Economic Growth

Along with space, Lebanon's knowledge capacity in public transport is constrained.

A number of issues have stood in the way of improved public transport in Lebanon. In the past, these included the difficulties of shaping a common vision among leaders, and getting an accurate estimate of the demand for public transport. Most importantly, Lebanon's narrow strip occupied by mountains, and bordered by the sea, creates physical space challenges. Public transport solutions, which along with road space require land for depots and things like park & ride facilities, take space away from cars. With no public transport projects completed in over 50 years, Lebanon also suffered from institutional planning and implementation capacity weaknesses, made even more difficult in a politically uncertain environment. However, broad understanding among Lebanon's leaders for a need for improved mass transit led them to seek World Bank assistance to identify an innovative solution.

III Solution

Build consensus for new investment in a high quality, inter-city Bus Rapid Transit

(BRT) system.

Lebanon wanted public transport solution that integrates changing transit behavior with providing quality and reliable services. Based on the WBG technical engagement that the KGGTF fund enabled, Lebanon has planned a new investment project in a privately operated public transport program. The heart of the program will consist of three open BRT trunk lines between Beirut and its suburbs, and continuing within Beirut. The plan also includes a network of about 20 lines of regular feeder buses, and the BRT would continue services to secondary cities less than 100 km away. The plan calls for a "high quality" BRT system with pedestrian bridges and escalators, seated buses, and park & ride facilities. The first project would focus on a BRT on the most congested northern approach as well as two lines within Beirut and feeder buses.

IV KGGP in Action

KGGTF(Korean Green Growth Trust Fund) support funded detailed studies of Beirut's most congested corridors to improve traffic conditions and energy efficiency, rationalize transport demand, and reduce GHG emissions. The project funded a field trip of senior government officials to Istanbul, Turkey to see and experience the various modes of public transport systems.

The project also reviewed transport pricing—including gasoline, taxi fares, and tariffs for the planned transit system—as well as review social implications, especially for the poor. The studies helped inform the authorities of the complexity and need for a solution, and helped create consensus with leaders, and urban and transport planners for the investment in a BRT new mass transit project

Q QUOTES

“One of the early findings from the KGGTF involvement is that a small seed fund can go far in creating major ownership for projects and policy shifts.” --Ziad Nakat, Senior Transport Specialist with the World Bank’s Transport and ICT Global Practice

“Land is really the problem. Beirut hugs

the cost and mountains right behind,” said Ziad Nakat, Senior Transport Specialist with the World Bank’s Transport and ICT Global Practice.

“The system planned is a BRT with bus dedicated Lanes, like Korea, with lines connecting all areas of city, and city to outlying areas. This is one of the main innovations,” said Nakat. “The idea is to have a really high quality BRT that will attract people to use it,” he said.

“This is a very concrete project, and one of the early findings from the KGGTF involvement is that a small seed fund can go far in creating major ownership for projects and policy shifts,” added Nakat. “We need to enhance the Knowledge Exchange and have more visits with Korea, the government, the private sectors, and academia.”

