UBERN MOBILITY SOLUTIONS FOR THE POOR-
BEST PRACTICE EXAMPLES IN URBAN MOBILITY AND EMPLOYMENT FOR THE URBAN POOR

Bernard Gyergyay

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to present best practice examples in mobility and employment. First, by providing a background overview on mobility, the urban poor and employment. Second, by presenting 4 best-practice examples from Africa, Asia and Middle East and North Africa, that highlights best-practice solutions solutions of how employment for the urban poor in mobility can be improved, whilst achieving the second objective of improving urban mobility by reducing congestion and providing better public transport options. Third, there will be a summary of the key elements of each best practice example that will be summarised in recommendations to improve employment in mobility. The suggested model supports the recognition of employment in mobility that each city looks into detail, help those element to formalise and finally to ensure that those who are employed also receive a share of ownership so that they can own income generating assets. Further the conclusion highlights that many questions about economic value and other models is not fully understood yet and more needs to be done to improve the job creation aspects in mobility, particularly for the urban youth. This will influence future UN-Habitat and partners policies on this topic to highlight the need to produce clearer guidances on employment for the urban poor within urban mobility projects and can be used as the basis for further normative activities.

Keywords: Urban Poor, Employment, Accessibility, Mobility

1. Introduction

This paper is based on a research paper by Bernard Gyergyay (Urban Mobility Consultant for UN-Habitat) on 'Urban Mobility Solutions for the Poor' which is currently in the process of being published by UN-Habitat. The research illustrates best practice examples from around the world where mobility solutions have specifically helped the urban poor to leave poverty. This was mainly achieved by creating mobility solutions that improve access of the urban poor to employment and education opportunities and other key services. From this research it became apparent that employment within mobility is an important step for the urban poor to set up a livelihood, particularly for the unemployed urban youth. The UN Secretary Generals priority area of Youth is particularly presented in this paper as it looks into ways of using youth as a agent for positive change in the urban setting. Improvements in the employment...
conditions within mobility can improve mobility services for all citizens but especially the urban poor by providing better accessibility, cheaper services and safer services.

Whilst conducting the research on ‘Urban Mobility Solutions for the poor’ it became apparent that best practice examples in employment in mobility, especially in the context of youth has not been documented well in the academic nor in the professional paper, particularly within the UN system. The aim of this paper is to present best practice examples in mobility and employment. First, by providing a background overview on mobility, the urban poor and employment. Second, by presenting 4 best-practice examples from Africa, Asia and Middle East and North Africa, that highlights best-practice solutions of how employment for the urban poor in mobility can be improved, whilst achieving the second objective of improving urban mobility by reducing congestion and providing better public transport options. Third, there will be a summary of the key elements of each best practice example that will be summarised in recommendations to improve employment in mobility. The suggested model supports the recognition of employment in mobility that each city looks into detail, help those element to formalise and finally to ensure that those who are employed also receive a share of ownership so that they can own income generating assets. Further the conclusion highlights that many questions about economic value and other models is not fully understood yet and more needs to be done to improve the job creation aspects in mobility, particularly for the urban youth. This will influence future UN-Habitat and partners policies on this topic to highlight the need to produce clearer guidances on employment for the urban poor within urban mobility projects and can be used as the basis for further normative activities.

2. Background on POVERTY, URBAN MOBILITY, and employment

2.1 The Concept of Poverty

The Millenium Development Goals are focusing international attention more sharply on poverty reduction. The international target proposed by the Millennium Development Goal has been widely adopted, namely in 2015 to reduce by half the proportion of people living in extreme poverty. Poverty often appears as an elusive concept, especially from the perspectives of researchers and policy makers in developing countries. The best definition of poverty remains a matter of considerable academic argument. Poverty is also viewed as a lack of opportunities, powerlessness, and vulnerability. The definition of poverty can also include not being able to see a doctor, not being able to go to school, not able to access a job and work in dangerous conditions.

In general, poverty is a condition that is experienced over time and is the outcome of a process. While many are born into poverty and remain in it, others experience the condition at one or more stages of their life and move in and out of it. As Green (2008) suggests, poverty is often embedded in social structures that exclude the poor. Social exclusion can be understood as those processes of discrimination that deprive people of their human rights and result in inequitable and fragmented societies. For many poor people in developing countries, the inability to access jobs, education, and health facilities is viewed as the most serious constraint on their quality of life.

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Studies (Social Exclusion Unit, 2003) of the urban poor and mobility in developed countries indicate surprising similarities with urban poor in less developed countries. The catalogue of problems – availability and physical accessibility of transport, cost of transport, services and activities located in inaccessible places, safety and security, ignorance of service possibilities and restricted travel horizons – feature in both groups of countries. The main differences are in the severity and consequences of the effects of the problems.

2.2 Urban Mobility and the poor

The urban poor cannot afford private cars or motorcycles and do not benefit from automobile-focused transport interventions. In fact they suffer a disproportionate share of external costs (accidents, pollution). Poor are especially vulnerable to traffic impacts such as pollution and danger from accidents, partly due to modal choice and poor road use behaviour. Poorest groups rely heavily on Non-Motorised Transport (NMT) but transport planners often neglect the need to make these more affordable, accessible and safer.

Location of poor settlements in relation to services and employment means the poor often travel longer distances and journeys are more expensive to access services. The mobility of the urban poor can be seen to play a role in the diversification of livelihood; the access to production inputs, building up stores of saleable assets, social support networks related to works, market information, credit, and training and employment.

A comprehensive public transport systems like underground railway, light rail or even Bus Rapid Transit have very clear benefits but require huge investments. However, a concept of this kind is doomed to failure because of the low purchasing power of the poor in society (the majority), who cannot afford the tariffs required to cover the high investment costs.

This is why publications referring to the issue nowadays often argue that it is the para-transit supply that meets the transport requirements of the poor best in terms of fares and flexibility, and in some cases, a symbiosis of paratransit and the poor is assumed. In addition, the impressive job creation effects are stressed that arise thanks to the use of small-capacity vehicles (motorised tricycles, rebuilt pick-up trucks, mini-vans). Constraints on the development or behaviour of the informal transport sector, may take away the only source of livelihood for some of the very poor. The poor naturally produce services that are affordable and to the standard of the poor. Well planned and low-cost transport services can greatly reduce the difficulties of getting to education and health services.

2.3 Mobility as a Job creator

In India, for example, the job of rickshaw puller or cycle-rickshaw driver is typical of the poorest, who are often recent migrants to urban areas. There are an estimated 3 million cycle rickshaws in India, providing an estimated 6 to 9 million jobs for low-income people (AITD, 1996, p.124). More needs to be done to protect the urban poor providing mobility services. Evidence shows that improving the job conditions has also a positive impact on the operational aspects (safety, quality of service) for the whole transport system.²

Global Urban Youth unemployment has reached a high. In many MENA cities over 30% of the Urban Youth are unemployed. This leads to a situation of frustrated youth which can have big impact on the functioning of the whole city. UN General Secretary Ban Ki-Moon has recognised this by including it into his 5 year plan. Urban mobility services provide many job opportunities for the youth, they suffer from the informatility as they are unable to retain much of their income. The best practice examples show how urban youth can find employment and build up assets for the future.

3. Best-Practice Examples

Case Studies are set in the context of the key issues in ‘Urban Mobility, Poverty and employment’ that were identified in the background section by presenting examples from Africa, Asia and Middle East and North Africa.

3.1 Cycling out of poverty in Africa

Bicycles are a typically low-cost form of private transport, suited for short trips. In some areas bicycles may be a tool for targeting the mobility of low-income people. Interventions that promote bicycles could contribute to the welfare of the urban poor and the economic activities of petty traders and hawkers (due to carrying capacity, speed, and range capabilities). Bicycles may also play a direct role in creating sustainable livelihoods though employment opportunities for unskilled workers (driver skills are typically lower and maintenance is less skill-intensive). The emphasis in this mode is labour-intensive rather than capital-intensive. Bicycles, for examples, may be widely owned and used, allowing the rider to travel long distances for low marginal cost. Bicycles are threatened by growing motorization, loss of street space and other changes in the urban environment, i.e. urban sprawl (meaning longer journey times).

This case study presents examples from Kenya which traditionally has a very low modal share for bicycles. Over the last couple of years the share of bicycles has even decreased further due to increased motorization. Generally the cycling environment is poor; there is little action that can help improve the current cycling environment.

Many Kenyans have a vision on how they can use a bicycle to improve their livelihood, but they don’t have enough money to buy a bicycle in one go or it is impractical and dangerous to use one. For farmers, traders, bicycle taxis, waste collectors with bicycles, water vendors, etc, the bicycle is a tool to cycle out of poverty and improve their wellbeing. Projects like Bike4Work, Bike2rism, Bike2Clean, Bike 4Water, Bike4School by the charity ‘Cycling out of Poverty’ (CooP) provide goods examples how bikes can be used to reduce poverty. This case study shows how people can cycle out of poverty by setting up their own business. These projects were supported by UN-Habitat.

Bike2Clean is an example of 'CooP' project. Gasiapoa Waste Management Services in Kisumu collects waste from households in the informal settlements and the city centre of Kisumu city. Gasiapoa has more than 400 clients, and is fast expanding also with clients from more upmarket areas and hotels. One of the reasons we can expand is because of the innovative idea of CooP-Africa to use tricycles for collection.

Before tricycles were introduced the waste collectors had to walk, which was very time-consuming, and the more upmarket areas and hotels were not easy accessible. And in cases of emergency for instance when a hotel called for immediate waste collection pick-up trucks had to be hired. Through Coop-Africa Gasiapoa Waste Management Services received the opportunity to buy the tricycle. This means that the company can collect double as much waste as before, which also doubled the income which will lead to further expansion of the company.

The role of the bicycle in creating employment is not well recognised in many Kenyan cities. Bicycles owners that use their bicycles for a commercial purpose may organize themselves into associations, and thus create the capacity to mobilize savings from members and negotiate with local authorities. Operators may then be given formal recognition by local authorities.4

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Such as the Victoria Boda Boda SACCO, which is a saving and credit society to boda boda riders in Kenya set up with an aim to lend bicycles, networking and mobilize youths into economic activities. Since establishment the Victoria Boda Boda SACCO activities have included the mobilization of youth into economic activities, offering of saving opportunities and loans.

The bike still doesn’t receive the place it deserves in many African cities. In order to make cycling more secure the general public and decision makers need to become more aware that cycling is an important mode for the urban poor and other residents. Especially the number of livelihoods it can create\(^5\) by developing creative ways how bicycles can be used as an income generator.

### 3.2 Nairobi Bus Cooperatives - SACCOs

**Introduction**

Developing cities around the world are struggling to provide affordable and efficient transportation to their citizens. Rising incomes and the wish to travel more comfortably lead to increasing motorisation among the urban middle class, which entails higher levels of congestion, air pollution and road traffic accidents. Meanwhile, low income groups are often left with inefficient, unreliable and unsafe public transportation options.

Bus services are crucial for the poor to access employment as well as social services. However, efforts to improve the urban bus system have to deal with numerous obstacles. In many developing cities, bus operations are only partly regulated. Much of the passenger traffic is handled by the informal public transport sector (paratransit), using minibuses and vans. Frequently, such services evolved to cater for those parts of the population which had no

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access to any formal public transport for many years. Individual entrepreneurs were filling the gap, providing necessary services without receiving any kind of support from public bodies. These operations may today still serve a welcome and necessary supplementary role in many cases, but free entry to the transport market can lead to traffic jams, pollution, unsafe vehicles, unscheduled stops, decline in the quality of services, and businesses serving only profitable lines. Besides, paratransit often entails inhumane working conditions, violent competition, and criminal-style structures (Kaltheier 2002). Drivers frequently lack the necessary licence (Joewono and Kubota 2007), and their careless driving style renders many informal minibus operations highly dangerous for passengers.

Nairobi had a population of 3.14 million in 2009 with a population density of 4509 persons per km². Para-transit has a modal share of 24% and is dominated by 14-seater Matatus as public buses failed to cater to the demand. A low income commuter travelling in the peak hours every day would have to spend at least 20 per cent of his monthly earning on commuting. Matatu owners earn enough to fall under the high income category. The drivers and the conductor are typically low income (Intellecap, 2012).

![Figure 3: Modal Share of Nairobi](http://www.uitp.org/knowledge/pdf/Report_on_statistical_indicators_of_publictransport_performanceinS-SA.pdf)

The Kenyan government plans to phase out the 14 seater Matatu for higher capacity vehicles, because it has identified the Matatus as one of the major reasons for congestion on the road. The phasing out of Matatus would impact of close to 50,000 families (7 per cent of the total population in Nairobi). To avoid this situation the national transport policy proposed formation of ‘Savings and Credit Co-operative Societies’ (SACCOs) with various stakeholders of the Matatu industry in order to purchase higher capacity buses.

A SACCO stands for savings and credit cooperative and extends to any type of industry, not exclusively transport. A group must register at the Ministry of Co-operative Development and Marketing to become a recognized SACCO. In the case of matatus, a group will register to become a SACCO identifying itself mainly with the route where it is operating. SACCOs play a leading role in the transition process from helping matatus to become more formal. The plan is that a more organized matatu industry can lead to a more profitable industry, through higher capacity vehicles. There are a number of issues with that plan:

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- SACCOs would take approximately 5-10 years to strengthen their balance sheets and leverage them for loans. After the purchase of a higher capacity vehicle, the members of the SACCO would get dividends once a year and wouldn’t have daily income which is why they are unlikely to get rid of their 14 seaters.
- High capital expenditure of the buses is another issue for current Matatu owners.
- The SACCO system lacks any operational regulation so that service quality is very unlikely to improve.

The Kenya Bus Services, a leading private bus operator based in Nairobi, is currently operating as a franchise business model that could be the basis to gradually formalise the para-transit in Nairobi.

The below ‘Franchising Model’ internalises the negative externalities of para-transit operations such as pollution, accidents, congestion and wasteful competition by putting individual para-transit owners under one umbrella.

**Figure 4: The Franchise Model suggested by Kenya Bus services (Source: Mukabanah, 2012)**

![Franchising Model Diagram](image)

Figure 4 illustrates the ‘Franchising Model’. The core idea behind this model is that the operator/franchisor is in the center of the model. On an upward level, the model suggests that there will be a number of different operators/franchisors that will be licensed and controlled by the government ideally by the Metropolitan Transport Authority. On the medium level the operator/franchisor will be responsible to enforce and set the standards for central works (vehicle standards) and central training (staff standards) in a dialogue with the respective operators/franchisors.

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agencies. On the bottom level the operator/franchisor will provide support functions (e.g. accident recovery, law support, accountants) to the franchisees and enforce standards for vehicles and staff of franchisees. The operator/franchisee does not own any vehicles and earns its revenue from support functions and a percentage fee of revenue per vehicle. The franchisee owns the vehicles and is responsible for fulfilling the standards set by the operator/franchisor.

Employees can also benefit from the more formal structures that are regulated and enforced by the operator/franchisor. In order to work for a franchisee crews need to be train to the standards set by the operator/franchisor which improves job security as crew members can work for any franchisee. Through the operator/franchisor back office function crew can access legal services in cases of accidents, medical services and pension benefits. The franchise would be financed by individual bus owners and individual SACCOs that could be set up by bus staff creating buses that are owned by employees of bus staff that own an income generating asset.

3.3 ASIA: Rickshaws India

Rickshaws are a significant means of transport and conveyance in India. There are currently estimated to be 8 million rickshaw pullers in India. 95 percent of these rickshaw pullers are victims of high daily rental fees making it nearly impossible to earn enough income to ever own a rickshaw in their lifetime. The underlying cause behind this vulnerability is that Rickshaw Pullers are constrained by lack of access to basic formal banking services such as loans, savings and insurances. This case study highlights two examples of rickshaws, financing and improvement of service.

The Rickshaw Bank\(^8\) is designed to provide a means of self-employment to the poor and the marginalized rickshaw community. The central idea is the issue of an asset-based loan to the rickshaw puller for which instalments are repayable on a daily repayment plan with one-year duration. Full and timely repayment leads to ownership of the rickshaw being handed over to the puller. This concept is in contradistinction to the existing practice in which an equivalent amount of a daily rental fee is paid to rent the vehicle, possibly for the lifetime of activity, with no scope for ownership. The Rickshaw Bank provides the target community with an income generating asset the rickshaw, and allied services thus promoting micro entrepreneurship among urban poor and rural migrants.

Core Business Strategies of the Rickshaw Bank:
1. Rickshaws are technologically superior leading to increased customer demand.
2. Rickshaws are provided to pullers in groups of five. The pullers, who are members of the Rickshaw Bank, form garages in different parts of the city to manage their savings, repair the rickshaws, update business records, and collect rent.
3. Repayment is collected on a daily basis. Since the puller has a daily earning pattern, the repayment is collected on a daily basis.
4. Formal financial institutions provide the loan on commercial rates and advertisement space behind rickshaws is sold as an additional source of revenue.

The services offered by the Rickshaw Bank have a positive impact on all aspects of the triple bottom line. First, it has enabled pullers to own a rickshaw in a reasonable timeframe. Second,

\(^8\) Rickshaw Bank (2012) A ray of hope for thousands of toiling humans. 
http://rickshawbank.org/
pullers have been able to increase their income levels because their daily rental fees are lower than other alternative financing options. In addition, the newly designed rickshaws have enabled them to handle more clients during the day, which has increased their earning power. Third, pullers have also economically benefited because they now have access to a sound financial resource in case they need to borrow money for other ventures. The Rickshaw Bank has a positive impact on the social conditions for rickshaw pullers as well. The program also has made the rickshaw pulling business a more respectable profession. It also created safer roads since the program offers pullers driving tips.

**Ecocabs: Fazika, Punjab India**

Ecocabs is the name given to the traditional Indian cycle rickshaw operations after adding to it facilities like dial-a-rickshaw. These are cycle rickshaw services made available on phone call at door step through the network of call centres, similar to dial-a-cab/taxi service. Introduced in a town, Fazilka located in the state of Punjab in India in June 2008, the scheme is first of its kind in the country and in the world. Aimed at improving the unorganized cycle rickshaw transport in the town and providing affordable means of mobility to city residents, the scheme has been a success in the city and has earned accolades nationally and internationally.

A pro-poor mobility scheme, the scheme has not only provided affordable mobility choices for the city residents, but it has also generated employment as a source of livelihood for about 0.3 million families.

**Figure 5: Photos: Ecocabs in Fazilka, Punjab (India)**

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10 http://ecocabs.org/gallery/
The rickshaw in India can be an income generating asset for the urban poor. Cycle Rickshaws can also promote public transport and reduce the need to own a private vehicle. The rickshaw can be integrated as a feeder improving connectivity to public transport and offer door-to-door trips within the neighbourhood.

3.4 MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA – GENDER

Introduction

Expansion of transport networks can facilitate many positive impacts on women’s and men’s lives. However, inequitable distribution of benefits from improved transport exacerbates gender and income disparities. Transport planning in MENA and other regions does not routinely address gender issues. Women’s involvement in transport activities is essential to the productive and reproductive well-being of households. The uniqueness of woman-specific transport problems deserves special attention and planning on behalf of planners and policymakers.

The MENA female labour force participation is significantly lower than other regions, female youth unemployment is very high, and entrepreneurship opportunities for females are limited due to reduced accessibility to education and job opportunities. These are made worse as women are usually excluded from job opportunities in the transport sector which reduced income-earning activities for women and promote gender equity in society and the household. World Bank has completed a research study into gender and transport issues for MENA. The findings from this study suggest that access to transport can facilitate access to education and economic opportunities which can contribute to greater mobility, autonomy, and empowerment even in contexts with strong socio-cultural constraints on women’s mobility. But often specific measures are needed to jump start economic opportunities for poor women with limited mobility.

This case study also identifies priority areas for public action to improve women’s mobility and enhance their access to economic opportunities and empowerment. First by looking at ways to highlight gender-based violence in the transport sector and second by creating transport services by for women by women.

Figure 6: (World Bank Julio Etchart, Morocco, 2011)
3.5 Harassmap

Improving Personal Security: Risks of sexual harassment, gender-based violence and crime are major constraints on urban female mobility and access to employment. Measures to address these risks can include: employing more security officers in transport terminals with strengthened security for hours when most women travel; hiring female security officers. The ‘Harassmap’ is an example of how harassment whilst travelling can be recorded.

Harassmap is a social initiative implementing an SMS system for reporting incidences of sexual harassment in Egypt. This tool gives women a way to anonymously report incidences of sexual harassment as soon as they happen, using a simple text message from their mobile phone. Harassmap’s use of new mobile technology and innovative marketing is changing social outreach in Egypt, while invoking an older tradition of public safety for women. By mapping SMS reports on a public website displaying location and details provided by the victim, the Advocacy Online Map creates a powerful documentation of the extent of the problem. The Assistance Information provides victims with a list of services that will pinpoint hotspots to increase police presence in high harassment areas. The entire Harassmap system acts as an advocacy, prevention, and response tool, highlighting the severity and pervasiveness of the problem, as well as offering proactive responses.11

Figure 7: http://harassmap.org/

3.6 Woman Taxis

http://www.youthaward.org/winners/harassmap
The woman taxis are an example which improves mobility choices for woman and it improves employment opportunities in transport for woman. The service is designed by woman for woman.

In Tehran, the capital of Iran with 12 million people, a woman only taxi service has been set up which only employs female taxi drivers and only pick up female passengers. Given the fact that Iran is an Islamic country, men and women are often separated. However, taxis are a bit different. Taxi’s operate on a “group share basis” where men and women ride together. Due to this there have been a lot of complaints as men don’t behave correctly in taxis. This situation led to the creation of the Women's Wireless Taxi, a private company that employs over 700 female drivers. It has been said that the women’s taxi service empowers women; others claim the opposite, that it does more to segregate them in society. Being a taxi driver has also given female taxi drivers independence and it changed the perception of woman in society.\(^{12}\)

**Figure 8:** A woman taxi driver waits for a passenger in a women-only taxi service in Tehran on May 4, 2008 ([http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1847151,00.html#ixzz1yyaYYk1t](http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1847151,00.html#ixzz1yyaYYk1t))

Efforts need to be made to alter societal attitudes and gender discrimination in transportation policies\(^ {13}\). Awareness-raising and capacity building for transport agencies and service operators: Building gender awareness within the organizational structures of transport related ministries as well as private sector transport businesses, transport unions, etc.. Increase job opportunities for woman in the transport sector.

4. Lessons, Conclusions and Recommendations

More information is needed to inform policy makers about the impact of these interventions and urban planning on the poor, within efforts to improve the quality and access of mobility\(^ {14}\). There is a need to analyse:

\(^ {12}\) [http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1847151,00.html#ixzz1yyaK7cDb](http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1847151,00.html#ixzz1yyaK7cDb)


1. transport patterns: (trip rates and journey purposes, distances, role of public transport for social and recreational purposes)
2. travel needs and problems: (service availability, affordability, quality of services)
3. who are the urban poor?: (the heterogeneity of low-income groups, participatory poverty analysis, poverty impact indicators to measure poverty reduction)
4. level of services in communities (i.e. health and schools)
5. activities of the urban poor: (livelihood activities, reproductive, personal investment activities)

The urban poor may have adapted to unreliable public transport services by task sharing among the extended family units in order to make a living. These coping mechanisms should be recognized and strengthened. Transport is linked to social relationships and the maintenance of social links and networks which are used in crisis.

Transport is critical to reducing poverty\textsuperscript{15}. However, simply building more roads is not going to alleviate poverty, and may make poverty worse. In order to maximize the impact on poverty alleviation, some general guidelines can be specified:

a) Improve travel for the modes most commonly used by the poor, specifically walking, cycling and transit. In urban areas, this can best be done by investing in BRT, cycleways, and improved pedestrian facilities.
b) Focus on labour intensive as opposed to capital intensive mobility options

c) Make work in the sector more formal by giving people rights.Focus on improving work conditions for the urban poor working in mobility as this will improve livelihood, this will lead to service improvement, safer, more environmentally friendly mobility that caters better for the new middle classes so that the new middle class dont chose the car.

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Awaiting research from: Dorothy McCormick - Nairobi University African Centre of Excellence for Studies in Public and Non-Motorised Transport (dmccormick@uonbi.ac.ke)

Web resources


http://harassmap.org/