# **VoxDev**

## Land Transport Infrastructure

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## Land transportation in developing countries

- Land transportation investments are substantial
  - \* World Bank's portfolio: \$33.2B, 10% of total lending
  - \* National govts spend up to 10% of GDP on infrastructure

- Infrastructure plays an important role in the economy
  - \* Facilitates market integration
  - \* Enhances long-term productivity
  - \* Improves the competitiveness of local actors in global markets
- We review:
  - 1. The land transportation landscape in developing countries
  - 2. Frameworks for evaluating the gains from transportation
  - 3. Lessons learned about the impact of land transportation
    - \* Interregional transportation
    - \* Intracity transportation

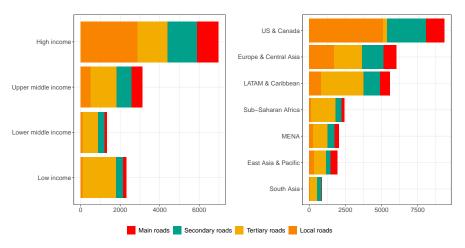
#### Cost of transportation

- Land transportation is more expensive in developing countries
  - \* Road transport costs per tonne-km: \$0.17 in Central America vs. \$0.02 in USA (Osborne, Pachón, and Araya 2014)
  - \* Trade costs increase with distance  $4-5\times$  faster in Africa than in the US (Atkin and Donaldson 2015)
  - \* Median trade costs in Africa are  $5\times$  those in the rest of the world (Porteous 2019)

- High costs can stem from:
  - \* Little, sparse infrastructure
  - \* Low quality, reliability
  - \* Market power of operators and intermediaries
  - \* Expensive or ineffective procurement

## Quantity of transportation

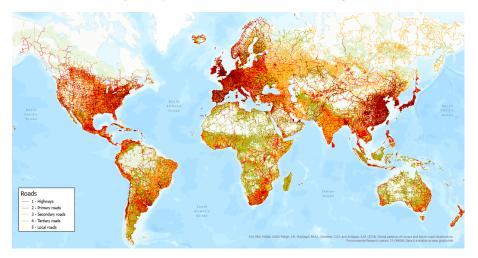
Figure: Road extent per capita



Notes: Population-weighted average across countries of a given income/region of the country's road extent per million inhabitants in 2018. Road extent information is taken from data compiled by Meijer et al. (2018).

#### Spatial Distribution of Roads across the Globe

Figure: Spatial distribution of roads across regions



Notes: This figure shows the worldwide spatial distribution of roads using data from the World Bank

#### Spatial Distribution of Railways across the Globe

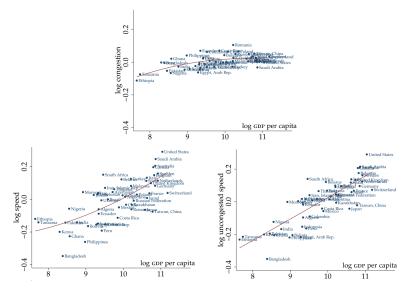
Figure: Spatial distribution of railways across regions



Notes: This figure shows the worldwide spatial distribution of railways using data from the World Bank

## Quality of urban transportation vs. GDP per capita

Figure: Relationship between speed and congestion with income per capita



Notes: This figure shows the relationship between speed and income per capita. Source: Akbar et al. 2023a

## Quality of transportation

Land transportation services in developing countries are also lower quality:

Low rates of road paving Mesquita Moriera et al. (2013) and Foster and Briceno-Garmendia (2010)

■ Uncertainty in travel time  $\rightarrow$  lower use, higher inventories Iimi et al. (2019) and Datta (2012)

■ Lower capacity
Coşar and Demir (2016)

■ Crime and corruption payments Olken and Pande (2012)

 $\blacksquare$  Slow urban speeds – congested & uncongested Akbar et al. (2023b)

## Challenges: Procurement & placement

- Procurement and placement decisions are complex processes
  - \* Strong institutions to function well

 $lue{}$  Corruption  $\rightarrow$  inflated costs, poor quality

Chen (2023) and Collier, Kirchberger, and Söderbom (2016)

- \* Quality, costs difficult to observe
- \* Institutions can improve outcomes:
  - \* audits (Olken (2007), Indonesia)
  - \* e-procurement (Lewis-Faupel et al. (2016), India, Indonesia)

- Political, ethnic favoritism can bias placement
  - \* Worse in non-democratic periods Burgess et al. (2015), Kenya
  - \* Favor resource extraction Bonfatti and Poelhekke (2017), Africa
  - \* Used to buy votes Bonilla-Mejía and Morales (2023), Colombia
  - \* Lucrative contracts go to relatives Lehne, Shapiro, and Vanden Eynde (2018), India

## Challenges: Financing

- Government revenue in developing countries is low as a share of GDP
  - \* Incentivize Public-private partnerships (PPP)?

- Little research on these arrangements
  - \* Some evidence PPPs are not necessarily improvements over public provision Trebilcock and Rosenstock (2015) and Fabre and Straub (2023)
  - \* May be more expensive in the presence of market power Bogart and Chaudhary (2012)

- Increased attention on Land value capture models Suzuki et al. (2015)
- Information on costs can be difficult to obtain

# Conceptual Framework to evaluate Infrastructure Effects

## Evaluating the benefits of infrastructure

- Seminal approaches focused on the time/cost savings:
  - \* Compare new transport options with the best alternative technology (Fogel 1964; McFadden 1974)
  - \* Railways in the US generate negligible effects

- Two fundamental challenges:
  - 1. Identification:
    - $\star$  Infrastructure not randomly placed  $\to$  confounded causal inference
  - 2. General equilibrium effects:
    - \* Spillovers to regions not directly treated: Relocation/reallocation increase benefits
    - \* Relocation or growth?

#### Identification: Historical route instruments

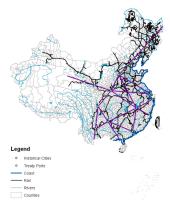
#### Historical route or city instruments predict actual routes

■ Path-dependence:

(Martincus, Carballo, and Cusolito 2017; Banerjee, Duflo, and Qian 2020)

#### Instrument:

- Historic routes predict modern routes (relevance), and ...
- May be independent of recent productivity, amenity shocks (exogeneity)



Banerjee, Duflo, and Qian (2020)

#### Identification: Incidental connection instruments

#### **Incidental connection** instruments

- Infrastructure connects major points of interest
- Some places along the way get connected by chance

#### **Instrument:**

- Least-cost paths
  Faber (2014), Morten and Oliviera (2023), and
  Fenske, Kala, and Wei (2023)
- Shortest routes

Banerjee, Duflo, and Qian (2020), Jedwab and Moradi (2016), Ghani, Grover Goswami, and Kerr (2016), and Garcia-Lopez, Holl, and Viladecans-Marsal (2015)



Faber (2014)

## The challenge of general equilibrium effects

- Relocation or growth?
  - \* Empirical tests assume spillovers are local  $\rightarrow$  exclude nearby areas
  - \* Challenging if spillovers are not spatially concentrated
- $\blacksquare$  Transportation networks  $\rightarrow$ 
  - \* Changes in production output, prices, wages, trade and commuting shares
  - \* Price and income effects in all locations
- New economic geography models of trade and iceberg transport costs
  - \* Compute the economic impacts in all regions
    Allen and Arkolakis (2014), Redding and Rossi-Hansberg (2017), Allen, Arkolakis, and
    Li (2020), and Allen and Arkolakis (2022)
  - \* Apply gravity to commuting Ahlfeldt et al. (2015)
- $\blacksquare$  "Market access": sufficient statistic that aggregates impacts via access to trade Donaldson and Hornbeck (2016) and Ahlfeldt et al. (2015)

# **Interregional Transport**

## Rail: Periphery to port

- Colonial governments developed many rail investments in LI and MI countries
  - \* Resource extraction and exports

■ Empirical evidence of positive impacts on GDP:

Jedwab and Moradi (2016), cocoa areas in Ghana

- \* Empirical (spatial) tests for spillovers find limited evidence of relocation
- \* Ability of factors to relocate is key for gains to materialize Banerjee, Duflo, and Qian (2020), China

Policy relevance for modern investments unclear

#### Rail: Connecting regions to each other

- $lue{}$  Evidence (largely from India) suggests rail connections  $\rightarrow +$  economic impacts
  - \* Improves market access
  - \* Expand local industries

- Evidence from the literature:
  - \* Donaldson (2018) Ricardian model of trade
    - \* Large gains from 19th century rail in India
    - $\star$  Model  $\to$  own trade share is sufficient statistic for welfare
  - \* Fenske, Kala, and Wei (2023) least-cost instrument
    - \* Colonial rail made connected cities in India larger
  - \* Jedwab, Kerby, and Moradi (2017)
    - $\star\,$  Urban path dependence from rail connections in Kenya

## High-speed passenger rail

- We know less about these newer types of passenger trains
  - \* Evidence from China suggests that productivity and workers' welfare increase

- Evidence from the literature:
  - \* Tian and Yu (2023) effects on firms
    - $\star$  HSR increases export volumes and labor productivity in China
  - \* Barwick et al. (2022) effects on workers
    - \* HSR reduces exposure to extreme pollution and high temperatures

#### Highways: Periphery to port

- Highways connecting remote areas to ports/major cities can be transformative
- However, initial conditions matter for the materialization of these effects
- Evidence from the literature:
  - \* Agricultural areas may further specialize, leading to slower manufacturing growth
     Faber (2014), China; Jedwab and Storeygard (2022), African countries
  - \* Industrial areas in particular benefit
    Ghani, Grover Goswami, and Kerr (2016), India; Martincus, Carballo, and Cusolito (2017), Peru
  - \* Trade integration improves allocative efficiency, markups Asturias, García-Santana, and Ramos (2019), India
  - ... and integrate labor markets, promoting specialization
     Morten and Oliviera (2023) and Pellegrina and Sotelo (2023), Brazil;
     Baldomero-Quintana (2022), Colombia

## Highways: Connecting regions to each other

- Highways connecting small/medium cities may generate on net positive gains
- However, not all regions benefit equally
- Evidence from the literature:
  - \* Benefits are largely net positive
  - \* Large dispersion between regions with some areas declining in some cases Bird, Lebrand, and Venables (2020) and Lall and Lebrand (2020), BRI Central Asia; Coşar (2022), Turkey; Sotelo (2020), Peru
  - \* Models ignoring GE effects, rerouting understate benefits Fan, Ti, and Luo (2023), China
  - \* Where highways should be placed matters for benefits
    - Climate change erodes benefits Balboni (2023), Vietnam
    - ★ Biases for resource extraction, large cities → miss out on gains Bonfatti and Poelhekke (2017), Africa; Alder (2023), India

#### Rural or last-mile roads

Rural roads encourage technology adoption and sectoral reallocation

Asher and Novosad (2020) and Shamdasani (2021), India; Gebresilasse (2023), Ethiopia

... but the most remote areas fail to see increases in income

Alder et al. (2022), Ethiopia; Mitnik, Sanchez, and Yañez (2018), Haiti; Asher and Novosad (2020) and Shamdasani (2021), India

- With some important exceptions:
  - \* Gertler et al. (2019), highways in Indonesia
  - \* Brooks and Donovan (2020) river bridges in Nicaragua

Initial conditions and institutions matter to materialize the gains

## Areas for future work: Interregional transportation

- How important is road quality versus quantity?
  - \* Is the muted relationship between rural roads and incomes related to quality/capacity/costs?
- Relationship between infrastructure and distortions/market failures?
  - \* Deviate from the iceberg assumption: include a transportation sector
  - \* Market power in the intermediary sector
- How at risk are transportation networks to climate change? (Balboni 2023)

 Do transportation networks generate environmental externalities in GE? (Araujo, Juliano, and Bragança 2023)

# **Intracity Transportation**

#### Intracity transportation

- What is the economic impact of highways, subways, buses, BRT?
  - \* Bus Rapid Transit (BRT)  $\rightarrow$  buses with dedicated lanes
  - \* Can also think of policies like tolls, HOV lanes
- Shares similar framework as interregional transportation
  - \* Gravity to commuting flows instead of tradeflows
  - \* It can also generate GE effects
- However, there are some key differences:
  - 1. Transit primarily moves **people** (commuters) vs. goods
  - 2. Transit options also attempt to address externalities (congestion, smog, etc.)

#### Road transit and urban economic geography

- Infrastructure promotes sprawl, but less available evidence than for the US Bluhm et al. (2023), Many developing countries
- Connecting commuters to jobs leads to higher gains than just time saved
  - \* Increasing market access → more benefits in GE Tsivanidis (2022), BRT Bogotá
  - \* Residents on upgraded routes directly value benefits
    Gonzalez-Navarro and Quintana-Domeque (2016), road paving Mexico
- Total use of public transit decreases with income
- However, transit investments may not be pro-poor due to GE effects:
  - \* Relocation effects matter

Tsivanidis (2022), BRT Colombia; Balboni et al. (2020), BRT Dar Es Salaam

#### Roads and congestion

- New mobile data: Developing country cities have very slow speeds.
  - \* Speeds in high income countries are 50% faster than low income country cities Akbar et al. (2023b), India
  - \* Speeds are slow even at uncongested times Akbar et al. (2023a), India

- Commuters have inelastic demand for departure times:
  - \* Congestion taxes may be ineffective
    Kreindler (2022), Jakarta; Akbar and Duranton (2017), Bogotá
- Less available evidence on other congestion policies
  - \* HOV lanes mitigate delays in Jakarta Hanna, Kreindler, and Olken (2017)
  - \* Addressing encroachment: routes may be promising policies Akbar et al. (2023a)

#### Roads and other externalities

- Vehicles generate more negative effects than just congestion:
  - \* Greenhouse gases, carbon monoxide, particulate matter
  - \* Accidents → morbidity, mortality
  - \* Noise

- These externalities impose very high costs for welfare:
  - \* It is very difficult to measure these externalities
  - $\ast\,$  How to design instruments that replicate Pigouvian taxes

- Regulating these externalities is challenging
  - We know little on how to design policies for regulating vehicle externalities Davis (2008) and Oliva (2015), Mexico City
  - Messaging about accidents in Kenyan minibuses effective in reducing accidents Habyarimana and William (2015)

## What is the right amount of public transportation?

- Public transit networks tend to trade off
  - \* frequency of service
  - \* more extensive network

- Evidence from the literature:
  - \* More minibuses increase welfare by decreasing wait time in Cape Town Conwell (2023)
  - Optimal BRT network would be more extensive in Jakarta Kreindler et al. (2023)

- Importance for studying several questions
  - \* Informal transportation modes in developing countries
  - \* Design the optimal frequency of buses or trains
  - \* Motorization

## Subways, light rail and cable cars

- $\blacksquare$  Globally, urban rail causes decentralization, but to a lesser extent than roads Gonzalez-Navarro and Turner (2018)
- Urban rail and cable cars connect residents to opportunity in the form of:
  - \* formal employment Zarate (2023), Mexico City
  - \* non-criminal employment Khanna et al. (2022), Medellín
  - \* collaboration and innovation Koh, Li, and Xu (2023), Beijing
- Subway expansions can substitute for car use and lead to improved air quality Gendron-Carrier et al. (2022), globally; Gu et al. (2021), China
- ... but low quality may hinder demand
   Gaduh, Gračner, and Rothenberg (2022), Jakarta

#### Areas for future work: Intracity transit

- What policies would be effective at improving the quality of public transit?
- What is the substitutability or complementarity between transit options?
  - \* Origin-destination surveys
  - \* How does this affect the magnitude of the gains to residents?
- Does the geography of a city matter for optimal infrastructure investments?
  - \* Pancakes vs. pyramids Lall et al. (2021)
  - \* Skyscrapers revolution Remi Jedwab and Baum-Snow (2023)
- Impacts of increased motorization, ride share apps, and other gig services?
   Rhotenberg and Du (2023)

## General Overview and Areas for Future Research

#### Summing up

- Recent research has studied land transportation in developing countries
  - \* Infrastructure investments have the potential to generate large gains
  - \* These investments can also generate substantial regional inequalities
  - \* Still questions on how to finance them
- GE models have facilitated nuanced analysis of transportation investments
  - \* As a whole effects are aggregate
  - \* They are not just a reshuffling of economic activity
- Intercity transit options:
  - \* Benefit relatively more developed areas than rural ones
  - Lead to more specialization
  - \* The gains depend on the initial conditions
- Intracity transportation:
  - \* Has shown to generate significant gains in productivity
  - \* GE affects can make them less pro-poor

#### Future Research

- Emerging research is leveraging **novel data** to study several questions:
- The dynamic impacts of infrastructure:
  - \* Relationship with climate change
  - \* Relationship with path-dependence: capital and labor
- Interaction with market failures: pollution, market power
  - \* Market power in the transportation sector
  - \* Pollution generated by roads and transport
- The distributional consequences of transit investments
  - \* Effects along the income distribution
  - \* Dynamic models to study sorting Warnes (2021)
- Characterizing the optimal transportation network
  - \* How does it depend on the geography and initial conditions?
  - \* Can it generate a big push?

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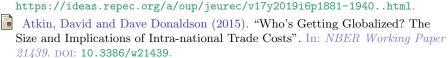
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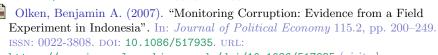
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