

14 Years in the Making, DART Brings Mobility to Dar es Salaam

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Until recently, extreme congestion was the story of life for commuters in Dar es Salaam, with rush hour commutes of up to four hours in one direction. Congestion was so extreme, with up to four hours of traffic daily for commuters, that drivers didn't even attempt to travel into the urban core. Thanks to Dar es Salaam Bus Rapid Transit (DART), the first phase of which opened on May 10 2016 after over a dozen years of intense work on the part of ITDP Africa and its partners, the Tanzanian capital is beginning to alleviate some of its worst mobility problems. The 21 km first-phase corridor is already serving 160,000 people per day and will carry 400,000 when the full bus fleet is in place.

Success in Tanzania may be a harbinger for the future, as Africa is the most rapidly urbanizing region in the world. By 2030, Dar es Salaam is expected to have more than 10 million people who will generate 23 million trips per day. Without a large-scale public sector intervention, the looming increase in travel demand would have led to ever worsening congestion, causing more and more people to switch from daladalas – the shared minibuses that make up the majority of informal transit service in Dar es Salaam – to private vehicles. This scenario would have added to existing congestion, pollution, and road safety problems in the city. By just one measure of the slow pace at which Dar es Salaam's traffic crawls, in 2007 average peak hour speeds were at 10-12 km/hour.

DART's origins go back to 2002 when ITDP found the city to be a willing partner for BRT



DART stations include new pedestrian crossings, improving the streetscape of Dar.

under then mayor Kleist Sykes and a cooperative city council. In partnership with the World Bank, USAID, and UNEP, ITDP oversaw a feasibility study as well as business and administrative planning. It also provided ongoing support throughout the planning stages of the project.

Year by year, the project moved along slowly but surely. Concept designs were completed in 2005. The DART agency was formed in 2007 and environmental planning was completed the same year. In 2008, the World Bank approved funding, but DART suffered a setback in 2008 when the construction tender failed after receipt of non-responsive bids. The contract was then re-tendered in a different format, splitting the initially large single package into seven smaller packages. The lowest evaluated bidder withdrew in May 2011 when the contractor was unable to take possession of the site because the compensation for businesses and property owners could not be completed in time. A contract with the next bidder, who ultimately took the project forward, was signed in December 2011.

Construction of the first phase finally began in March 2012 after the World Bank approved additional financing. In 2013, the city added center-aligned BRT lanes and median stations on Morogoro Road, one of the city's main thoroughfares, and soon embarked on DART's most daring feature: a fully dedicated BRT-only street running through the city center. The ITDP team pushed for high-quality cycle tracks parallel to the BRT corridor, as well as safe, universally accessible sidewalks and at-grade pedestrian crossings to the BRT stations.

As construction progressed, the project faced the challenge of establishing bus operating companies and attracting investors. ITDP worked



Passengers wait to board the BRT in the station.

with the DART agency to incorporate the daladala industry as shareholders in BRT operating companies, relying on its firsthand experience from other cities like Johannesburg and Cape Town. The project isn't without its controversies, however, starting with the economic impact. Although over 1,000 construction jobs were created through this project, local workers were employed mostly on a contract basis in entry-level positions.

Corridor management also has been a challenge. Tuk-tuks and motorbikes frequently commandeer the bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure than runs parallel to the BRT corridor, and incursions of motorbikes on the busway contribute to delays and safety risks. To address these challenges, motorbike drivers are now required to get off and push their vehicles across the busway if they wish to cross to the other side of the road.

Information technology has streamlined fare collection in the DART system, with customers paying with smart cards when entering the stations. The contactless cards can even be recharged using mobile money—a popular form of payment over the mobile phone networks. Still, IT has not been fully integrated into the BRT system, so passengers do not yet have

On the whole, DART has dramatically reduced commute times for Dar es Salaam residents who live along the BRT corridor, who previously faced upwards of four hour commutes daily, now are seeing that reduced to 45 minutes on the BRT.

real-time information on bus arrivals.

Despite these issues, DART is moving forward with plans to cover the entire city with BRT service via a 130 km network of segregated busways and more than 200 km of feeder routes. DART's second phase, which will involve the laying of BRT infrastructure on Kilwa Road from the central business district to Mbagala Rangi Tatu in Temeke Municipality, is expected to begin soon.

On the whole, DART has dramatically reduced commute times for Dar es Salaam residents who live along the BRT corridor, reducing 3 and 4 hour-commutes to 45 minutes. The project has the potential to be truly transformative, curbing sprawl and improving urban life in Tanzania. Even if there are some kinks to work out in future phases, DART is already breathing new life into Dar es Salaam and increasing its economic competitiveness in the East Africa region.



DART runs as transit mall along Morogoro Road, through the downtown of the city, a lively area with a great deal of transit demand.

¹ David Mfinanga & Erick Madinda (2016). Public Transport and daladala service improvement prospects in Dar es Salaam.