

Analysis of the Level of Safety of Public Transport in a ‘Sustainable Development Goals’ Perspective in the National Context

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Abstract

In 2015, Sri Lanka along with 192 member countries of the United Nations identified the timeliness of the concept of ‘Sustainable Development Goals’ (hereforth referred to as SDGs) and mutually expressed their desire to work individually and collectively to achieve the SDGs by 2030 post the Millennium Development Goals tenure from 2000 to 2015. It can be observed that the diverse nature of the context of the goals and their targets is a cross cutting concern dissecting many sectors and concerns listed by the 17 goals and 169 targets.

Sustainable Transportation in the context of the United Nations has been classified into five dimensions: Accessibility, Affordability, Safety, Security and Environmental concerns. In this context, Public Transport plays a significant role in the sustainable transportation spectrum. Public Transport Safety is analyzed in this study in a global and national perspective in the context of the overall safety in transportation. The study narrows down to the concept of Public Transport safety which is identified as the one of the largest negative concerns in the current arena with a large number of commuters using the same mode at a given point of time involving high human intervention. Two targets listed in the SDGs give direct leverage to Road safety which also apply in the case of Public Transport: SDG target 3.6 - Halve the number of road traffic deaths and injuries by 2020 and SDG target 11.2 - Provide access to safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems for all by 2030.

The Global Sustainable Transport Conference which was held on the 27th and 28th of November 2016 in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan highlighted the importance of sustainable transport in promoting economic and social development while protecting the environment and the main concern was the large number of annual deaths from road traffic accidents along with the environmental impacts of transportation. In both regards, Public Transport plays an important role and the safety assurance of Public Transport is one of the main dominating factors in attracting people to Public Transport modes, which mainly constitutes buses and trains in the national context.

Thus, the study identifies the importance of Public Transport safety to achieve sustainable transportation and SDGs while analyzing the current status of Public Transport using available data and statistics in a national perspective. Apart from studying the pattern of Public Transport in terms of deaths, injuries and related parameters, more concern in the study

focusses on the post 2015 SDG timeframe to evaluate the impact of the SDG framework in the context of road safety and the practicality of achieving the SDGs: target 3.6 by 2020 and target 11.2 by 2030 in the perspective of Public Transport. 90 percent of road traffic deaths occur in low and middle-income countries even though the countries count to only 54 percent of the world's vehicles percentage. Sri Lanka is no different in terms of the crucial impact of road safety and analyzed data from the National road safety council of the Ministry of Transport and the Sri Lanka Police show no decrement in terms of road safety accidents and resulting deaths, injuries and damages. The analysis looks into the impact of Public Transport to the overall safety scenario and the steps that needs to be taken in dealing with Public Transport based safety issues with utmost importance due to the large number of lives involved in the scenario and the attraction factor of people towards using Public Transport as an alternative for their private vehicles.

The number of private passenger transport buses and Sri Lanka Transport Board (SLTB) involved in the accidents and their rate of involvement in an annual and monthly timeframe is analyzed along with the accident type. Thus, an analysis on public transport buses is carried out in an individual and overall (Private and SLTB buses) manner for better understanding. An analysis framework of the Railway sector and accidents in a periodic timeframe along with the category of railway accidents involving the railways is included in the study. Thus, the study analyzes the overall Public Transport in the national context with respect to safety and the reasons involved in the accidents along with evaluating the current position of the transport sector in terms of sustainable transportation in terms of public transport and achieving the SDGs in the national context.

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