

engineering report

TRAFFIC AND PLANNING BRANCH OF THE DEPARTMENT OF HIGHWAYS

A Traffic and Planning Branch was created in the (then) Public Works Department in order to provide a permanent survey branch, capable of designing and carrying out transportation surveys, on the recommendation of Wilbur Smith & Associates, Consultants.

Once it was formed it carried out the daily operations of the Transportation Study of 1962 for the above Consultants. This enabled the department to have engineers, and sub-technical staff trained in modern methods of transportation study. The same type of assistance was given to the Consultants when they returned to the island to carry out their second study—Ceylon Highway Planning and Maintenance study.

The main aims of the Transportation Study and the establishment of the Traffic and Planning Branch have been—

1. The analysis of the necessity of new highways, new railroads, canals and other means of transport.
2. To carry out transportation studies on modern lines, in order to ensure that, the most suitable and economic type of projects are undertaken in highway construction, improvements and maintenance.
3. To set up a set of uniform standards for type, dimensions and other physical characteristics, highways, based on results from traffic surveys.
4. Updating the information collected in the Wilbur Smith Study, by carrying out routine traffic surveys, on all highways in the country.
5. Creating a Master Traffic and Highway Plan to determine the priorities for taking up new constructions, improvements and maintenance, for highways.
6. To carry out specific studies for other governmental institutions with interests in transportation.

It has been realised lately that there should be proper planning for highways (and transportation) as unplanned systems result in traffic congestions which in turn result in economic losses. The Traffic and Planning Branch, therefore, has to collect, analyse and interpret data, in order to determine the patterns of growth, trends in modes of transportation, behaviour of pedestrians and motorists, in order to decide on the appropriate projects.

Some of the projects now being handled by the Branch are as follows—

1. ESCAP proposed to conduct a Demonstration Project on Urban Traffic in one of the Asian countries. On submissions made by the Department of Highways, a team of experts was sent to Sri Lanka and they recommended the section on the Galle Road, between Galle Face and Mt. Lavinia, to be taken up in the project. Later it was decided by ESCAP to conduct the Demonstration Project in another country. The Secretary, Ministry of Irrigation, Power and Highways decided to go ahead with the project without foreign assistance. Several improvements have been effected on this portion of the Galle Road, for example, provision of traffic lights at the pedestrian crossing near Bambalapitiya flats, improvement of road edges, improvements to street lighting, shifting of bus halts from congested places, provision of drainage facilities beyond the Dhiwela bridge. Further improvements are being contemplated and it is intended to extend it to other roads.
2. The Traffic and Planning Branch also handles the work connected with the Master Plan for Highway Development. This was proposed by Wilbur Smith and Associates in 1962.

Due to the non-existence of a Master Plan, proper planning or investments in Highway Development also does not exist. The government also has difficulty in identifying projects to be taken up using foreign loans or aid programs.

The work on this plan includes—

1. The creation of an integrated Master Plan, taking industrial, agricultural and economic aspects into consideration.
2. The updating of this plan at regular intervals to include factors that become important for future development of the country.

In order to achieve these objectives the present methods of giving priorities to roads is revised, so that they are based on their importance to the national economy and satisfaction of traffic demands.

Information on agricultural and industrial development potential is being collected to evaluate the degree of dependency on such development, on new highway

facilities. Studies are being carried out to determine the economic need for development of different classes of roads in the present network, by analysis of traffic at selected control stations. The present classification of roads is being reviewed, to formulate realistic design standards in order to achieve the best possible results in the development of roads utilizing the available resources.

After completing the study, the Master Highway Plan will recommend a system of classification, a set of geometric standards, and standards of road reservations, for the future development of highways, and also create an order of priority for them.

3. One of the most recent projects in which the Traffic and Planning Branch is participating in

is the Master Plan for the Colombo Metropolitan Region. The operations connected with this project, are being handled by the Department of Town and Country Planning. This also affords an opportunity for engineers in the branch to give assistance by carrying out any traffic studies and by collecting the necessary data. This branch is to work together with experts in traffic engineering, so that any similar projects that come up in the future, could be handled by them.

REPORTED BY

T. Wijesinghe

Deputy Director

Department of Highways