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Cairo and the Greater Cairo Region

Cairo, the largest city on the African continent, has been developing very rapidly for many years. Only one million in 1930, six million in 1965, seven million in 1970 and eleven million in 1983, the capital of Egypt has become one of the world's ten most densely populated urban areas and a metropolis whose influence is felt not only

throughout the country, but far beyond its borders. If the trend noted during the last few years is to continue, Cairo's population is expected to reach 16,500,000 by the year 2000. This rapid growth and development has led to the establishment of a wider geographical and administrative unit, the Greater Cairo Region (70 km from south to north and 60 km from east to west), and extending over three governorates: Cairo, parts of Giza and Qalyubiya.

Short-term Needs

Within the coming years, plans for the development of the Greater Cairo Region must address a number of crucial issues concerning traffic and transportation, land controls, and housing. With regard to the transportation needs of the public, it is believed that future surveys will confirm a necessity for the construction of underground lines, vitally important if the travel



Entry to 6th of October Motorway from Ramses Square.

Photo C.D.C./Tareq Sweilam.

of daily commuters is to be improved. Presently there is only one underground line under construction, but there are three planned and all of them need to be completed before 1990. Therefore, an extensive underground system to meet the needs of the population in the coming years must be designed now and the demands to be made on traffic patterns ascertained in order to solve all foreseeable problems of traffic movement and parking.

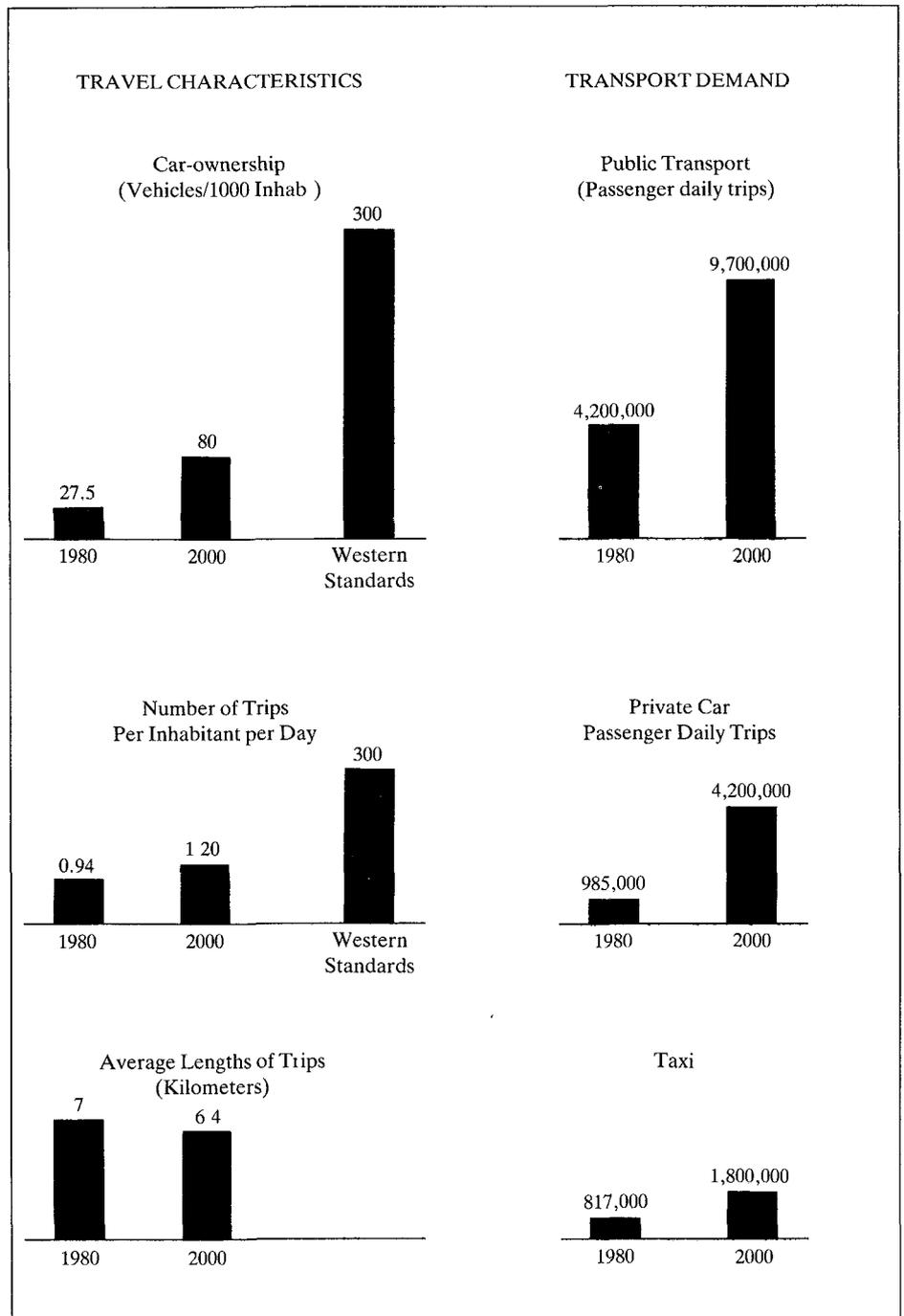
Private Transport

Cairo's road system is as complex and heterogeneous as the various components and the city itself. Each district has a network corresponding to the means of transport used at the time of its development. The recently created districts of Giza and Heliopolis have a generous network of streets well suited for motor vehicles. In older areas, built at the beginning of this century, however, the main roads were intended for the use of horse-drawn carriages and tram lines, and are inadequate for the present-day needs, with cars, lorries and buses creating a havoc in these areas. Still, other more historic areas were designed for the use of pedestrians only.

Most streets not specifically designed for motor traffic except for limited local service, do have restricted speed limits. However, because of the unique geometry of some of these streets, they could be made to accommodate a greater volume of traffic.

The Nile divides the city into eastern and western parts. The five bridges currently in use and joining the two banks of the river serve also as focal points of the principal arteries in the road network of the region. A sixth bridge is presently under construction at the 26th July Street.

Existing roads are used not only for traffic, but also for parking.. There are few parking facilities in the centre of Cairo, except for a few public parking areas which have limited capacities for not more than 300 to 400 cars, creating an enormous problem. The main difficulty is in the Central Busi-



Travel Characteristics and Transport Demand in 1980 and 2000.

Source Greater Cairo Region Master Scheme GOPPI/OTUI-IAURIF.

ness District, where the number of available parking places is estimated to about 6000 spaces. Saturation inevitably occurs at peak hours of the day, especially at noon. In order to meet the growing demand for more parking space, additional facilities must be envisaged for the near future. The use of aerial photography and a complete mapping of the city are probably the best means of studying and solving the problem in the most efficient way possible.

While there are few traffic problems on the outskirts of the city, the centre continues to suffer from an inadequate road system which cannot accommodate the increasing number of vehicles. The implementation of a coherent traffic programme for the city centre should increase the overall capacity of the network, without the necessity of any major changes in the existing street network.

Railways

Misir Station, the main terminal in Ramses Square, connects Cairo with northern and southern provinces of the country. There are two major lines serving the Greater Cairo Region: El Marg, serving the region to the north-east, and Helwan, serving the southern suburbs between Helwan, the former spa which has become a large industrial centre, and Bab al-Louk.

The El Marg line, 13.8 km from Misir Station to the terminal at Kobri al-Limun, operates on the average, four trains per hour with diesel-powered engines. The Helwan line is fully electrified, including the signal system, and operates trains every five minutes during peak hours (6 to 8 a.m. and 2 to 6 p.m.) and every ten minutes the rest of the day. The daily volume of travellers at Kobri al-Limun and the Bab al-Louk Station (Helwan) during the peak hours exceed 5,000 and 10,000 passengers per hour respectively. These two major railway lines will eventually be part of the 42-km underground system currently under construction, which will begin at Helwan and end at El Marg.

Table 1 Vehicles in Greater Cairo

Vehicles		Year			
		1980	1981	1982	1983
Passenger Cars	Private	210,432	272,565	331,268	369,082
	Taxis	40,851	45,951	50,689	59,822
	Others	4,821	4,962	5,436	5,648
Subtotal		256,104	323,478	387,393	434,552
Buses	General	2,549	3,086	3,183	3,237
	Special	5,495	7,006	8,006	10,213
	Tourism	750	784	854	922
	School	584	654	667	698
Subtotal		9,378	11,533	12,710	15,070
Trucks	Trucks	44,791	61,656	71,423	74,167
	Trailers	1,543	5,522	6,378	7,897
Subtotal		46,336	67,178	77,801	82,064
Total		311,818	402,189	477,904	531,686

Annual Average Growth in the Number of Vehicles

With the number of vehicles increasing each year, the traffic problem in Greater Cairo is worsening and demands an urgent solution. Motorcycles, which are also on the increase (63,900 in 1980 to 98,500 in 1983), exacerbate the problem even further since they are free to move as they please. Table 1 indicates the increasing number of vehicles that need to be accommodated in Greater Cairo.

Conclusions

The construction of underground lines and multi-storey garages are steps in the right direction for solving the transport problems of Greater Cairo and should greatly improve the flow of traffic. Some positive results can already be foreseen: long chains of buses being largely eliminated, smoother running traffic, and reduction in delays, the number of accidents and travel time required for commuting.