



## Port Loading : Economic Effect of Bad Road Along Apapa And Tincan Ports

*Sule Abiodun*

Niomr Research Lagos, Nigeria

---

### ABSTRACT

Lagos is also blessed with other major gateways like the Murtala Muhammad International Airport in Ikeja, but yet the Seaport remains the main pillar and the determinant of not only Lagos state economy but to some extent even Nigeria's economy as a whole because these Seaports remain the largest generator of revenue to the Nigerian nation after petroleum and there is no a single home in Nigeria that has no products directly or indirectly related to these Ports. Interestingly all these aforementioned seaports including most of the Jetties are located within Apapa Local Government Area. The effect of bad road along Apapa and Tincan port has been a trending topic in the research world and this problem has been existing for many years since the colonial masters. The causes of bad roads that lead to congestion of Apapa and Tincan and economic downfall in Apapa local government. Recommendations were made which includes Federal government creating government policies to encourage the establishment of new seaports and jetties like the Dangote deep seaport project currently ongoing at Lekki – Lagos state outside Apapa area to reduce the growing pressures capable of creating bad roads due to increasing import and export of goods through the Apapa ports.

---

**Keywords:** Port, Apapa, Bad Road, Congestion, Tincan Port

---

### 1 INTRODUCTION

Lagos state is the gateway to Nigeria's economy due to the fact of its geographical location to the Atlantic Ocean and blessed with 2 of the biggest seaports in West Africa namely Lagos Ports Complex (Apapa-Wharf) and Tin can Island Port with more than 10 different jetties such as the IBRU jetty, petroleum wharf jetty Waziri Jetty, Folawuyo jetty and some others handling the importation of basically petroleum products ranging from AGO, PMS, Jets oil, kerosene and other non-petroleum products while the ports basically handle the importation and exportation of almost all types of cargos including rice, fish, textile, industrial bulk raw materials, cars, household utensils, foods, liquid cargos such as LPFO, Vegetable oil and occasionally even industrial chemicals such as ethanol as well as building materials among many others.

Apapa and Tincan have featured prominently in the broader literature on Lagos because it is Nigeria's major gateway for international trade. Scholars such as Adefuye (1987); Agiri and Barnes (1987); and Osuntokun (1987), have traced different aspects of the development of Lagos before and since the Cession Treaty of 1861. Infact, some of these works contain significant foresight of various aspects of the port industry and international shipping trade since pre-colonial times. In continuation to the lacklustre post-independence management, an increasing spate of transportation and logistics problems, including road infrastructure decay have negatively affected the smooth ongoing of sea trade in the port city of Apapa and Tincan. In October 2018, transportation and logistics data from the Nigerian Ports Authority (NPA) began to reflect a 7.1% decline in cargo throughput and international shipping lines began to levy a congestion surcharge, an extra \$400 per container passing through the Lagos ports which is due to a bad road (Shipping Position, 2018).

Although Lagos is also blessed with other major gateways like the Murtala Muhammad International Airport in Ikeja, yet the Seaports remains the main pillar and the determinant of not only Lagos state economy but to some extent even Nigeria's economy as a whole because these Seaports remain the largest generator of revenue to the Nigerian nation after petroleum and there is no a single home in Nigeria that has no products

directly or indirectly related to these Ports. Interestingly all these aforementioned seaports including most of the Jetties are located within Apapa Local Government Area. So this implies that if “Apapa is sick, Lagos is sick and if Lagos is sick, Nigeria feels the pain “so based on this reason and in other to make Nigeria returns to her real status the issues affecting Apapa local government such as bad road along Apapa and TinCan port should now be given national attention by all citizens rather than leaving it to be a problem of Apapa Local government alone. Due to the aforementioned reason, this paper looks at this problem to bridge the knowledge gap and proffer solutions.

---

## 2.0 EVOLUTION OF THE LAGOS PORT & ITS SIGNIFICANCE ON APAPA, TINCAN PORT ROAD

Apapa Port and Tin Can Island Port are the two busiest ports in Nigeria and the primary gateways for the import-dependent economy of Africa’s most populous country. Domiciled in Apapa, home to the largest industrial estate in the State, with 725 fully-developed plots (Akintola-Arikawe 1987, 115), the two river ports easily generate the lifeblood of the megapolis and the expansive hinterland economy. The steady development of Lagos as a cosmopolitan centre began in the 1850s when the British imperial power intervened in the chieftaincy disputes between Kosoko and Akitoye (Dioka, 2001). It supported the latter because he agreed to end the slave trade, allow free movement of British merchants and missionaries and ensure unhindered trading relations with the hinterland producers – a prelude for the eventual colonization of Nigeria. The post-cession dispensation of ‘legitimate trade’ in palm produce and other cash crops relied on a Customs Wharf located at the Lagos Island marina, which began life as a slave port, a surf port.

The maritime trade of Lagos in the early 1850s, with a small population of 20,000, could have sufficed with such small port arrangements but with the increase in its population to over 73,000 in 1911 (Akintola-Arikawe, 1987), and its rising profile as a commercial centre, the colonial government moved to create a better harbour for international shipping at Apapa, on the opposite bank of the river. The reasons for this include the need for space in the port which is very small. Second, the indispensable linkage of the port system with the railway line into the hinterland could only be affordably done at Apapa. The requirements for sea trade such as transport infrastructure for port-hinterland communication dictated much of the dynamics. When Lagos was a slave port, the access road network mattered less for the trade: slaves were marched through bush paths and earthen roads from the hinterland to the wharves. With the scraping of the slave trade and the beginning of legitimate trade in cash crops, however, the conveyance of bulky goods, including forest products and imported articles, increasingly came to rely on the constructed road networks. Thus, to facilitate the supply of palm oil and palm kernel from the hinterland in the 1890s, for example, the colonial Governor, Glover, constructed a road from Ikorodu to the beach where trading used to take place between Lagos denizens and the hinterland traders (Dioka, 2001). In this way, according to Fapohunda and Lubell (1987), Lagos was developed by the British as the terminal of the railway and as the major port. In essence, the development of transport infrastructures for Apapa and TinCan, in particular.

Although skeletal use of the Lagos marina as a surf port was made during the last quarter of the 19th century, planning for proper port structures was hobbled by the sand bar across the lagoon mouth. In the interim, passengers and mails were transferred to ‘branch steamers in the roads, but most cargoes had to be transhipped at Forcados’. (White 1970). Further to remedial dredging activities, a 3-berth Customs Wharf began operations in 1911 while planning for the modern port at Apapa continued apace. Despite the wide engineering orchestrations to prepare for the construction of the first four deep-water berths during the decade, the new port opened in 1921, apparently without elaborate hinterland communication design. (Nigerian Ports Authority 2000). Probably, the overarching frugal colonial economy did not provide for this, thus setting an arguable logical precedent for the seeming intermittent recurrence of congestion due to poor transportation networks. Nevertheless, additional berths, transits sheds, warehouses and marshalling yards were constructed in the intervening years. The second Apapa wharf extension which took place in the mid-1960s under the 1st National Development Plan added six more berths to bring the port to the status quo of the immediate post-civil warship in 1970.

Overall, the initial simple transport network for the evacuation of goods from Apapa port was mainly by rail, designed to connect the inland city-centres, agricultural conurbations, major industrial installations, mines and granaries as much as possible. This design also foresaw the emergence of transhipment trade to landlocked West African countries, even though, the access roads were not even tarred at this infant stage. According to Olukoju (2003), by the end of 1921, only six of the 72 miles of road in Lagos were macadamized and had a laterite surface, while the rest had not been provided with any artificial crust whatever. Even fifty years after its inception, in 1970, the road to Apapa Port main gate had not been paved and still with the Military Port Commandant, Brigadier Benjamin Adekunle, counting it as one of the projects he expedited to clear the port congestion that year. Thus, the city, as well as the port had relied mostly on the railway and the waterway to Abeokuta via the Ogun River for access to the hinterland, a mode which competed strongly against the emerging railways up till 1914 (Olukoju 2004).

The poor development of Apapa’s road network in the early 1920s inhered from two reasons. One, this was the period the colonial masters

concentrated on opening up the hinterland for the production and evacuation to the coast of essential raw materials such as groundnuts, hides and skins, tin, cotton, cocoa, palm oil and palm kernels. Federal roads were first constructed to serve road motor transport services to Nigerian Railways stations in important agricultural or industrial centres such as Oyo, Ibadan, Osogbo, Zaria, Kano, Potiskum, Enugu, Okigwe, Aba and Port Harcourt. Two, Lugard did not want road transport to compete with the railways, at least, not until 1926 when the government set up the Central Road Board to coordinate the construction of parallel roads to the railways (Oshin, 1990). The first road linking Lagos to the hinterland ran through Abeokuta, Ijebu Ode, Ibadan, and Osogbo to Ilorin in the early 1930s. Thus, the neglect of proper intermodal transport design had begun to be regretted by 1936 when the Director of the Transport Directorate blamed the Nigerian Railway department, which was operating the ports, of “deplorable lack of foresight in laying out the wharves and sheds at Apapa and Port Harcourt without thought of road access”.

Nevertheless, the railways, and Nigeria’s major roads when they began to be constructed, were designed to connect the port gateways with the northern border towns, to facilitate nationwide cargo haulage and transshipment to landlocked North African countries. For example, Road A1 went from Apapa port gate to the Nigerian border, through Iganmu, Ikorodu, Ibadan, Jebba, Jega, Tambuwal up to Sokoto. The A2 began from Warri port gate to the same border, through Benin City, Lokoja, Abuja, Kano, Daura to Kongolam. The A3, a dual-carriage from Port Harcourt Port Road ran to the Chadian border, through Aba, Umuahia, Okigwe, Enugu, Otuorkpo, Lafia, Jos, Kari Potiskum, Maiduguri to Gamboru and a federal Trunk A road goes from Calabar port gate to Maiduguri. The major road under focus in this study, the A1, whose segment in Apapa, the Wharf Road, became dilapidated, likely constructed during the 1945 Colonial Development Act infrastructure campaigns (Olubomehin, 2013), has been expanded over the years by dualization and the addition of side lanes, a double flyover at Ijora junction, an interchange at Iganmu junction and another flyover at Costain junction, to link up with Western Avenue and Ikorodu Road for the northward stretch. Moreover, the road has undergone series of minor repairs and major reconstructions, including in 2017, to mitigate both its carriage failure and the subsequent traffic gridlock under focus. Overall, however, much of Apapa’s trunk and municipal road network had become too dilapidated to support the heavy traffic of maritime cargoes to and from the ports. Figure 1: Shows route list of federal trucks road in Nigeria.



Figure 1: Source: <https://sites.google.com/site/roadnumberingsystems/home/route-lists/nigeria-federal-trunk-roads>

### 3.0 CAUSES OF BAD ROAD & CONGESTION AROUND APAPA AND TINCAN PORTS

#### 1. Seaports & Location

All the major seaports in Lagos including the Lagos Port Complex, Container terminal, RORO Port and the Tin Can Island port as well as over 90% of the jetties in Lagos state such as the Petroleum wharf jetty, Standard flour mill jetty, Waziri jetty, Dantata jetty, Ibru jetty and others

which are collectively serving as the gateways for over 70% of both the importation and exportation of goods (including the refined petroleum products) into and out of the country are all located within the very limited space Area of Apapa without a provision of enough truck holding bays/Trailer parks which are causing tremendous damages to the road both in and out of the port. Figure 2 below shows the front gate of the Lagos Ports Complex (Apapa Wharf) while figure 3 below shows the gate of the Tin can Island Port in Apapa.



*Figure 2: Shows the front gate of the Lagos Ports Complex (Apapa Wharf)*



*Fig.3: Showing the gate of the Tin can Island Port in Apapa*

## **2. Petroleum Tank Farms & Location**

All the petroleum tank farms which are supplying over 90 % of the entire refined petroleum products into Nigeria and which are daily collectively handling over 5 000 trucks a day are all located within the same Apapa area. This enables all petrol tankers to ply the surrounding of the port everyday for distributions of fuel in the city of Lagos and causes a lot of damages to the road.

## **3. Holding Bays & Trailer parks**

All the ports in Apapa and many of the tank farms have no enough holding bays and or trailer parks for their trucks coming in to discharge or load goods /cargo in Apapa which causes gridlock in the port and damages to the roads around Apapa and Tincan Port.

## **4. The Volume of Imports & Exports**

The capacity of the trunk A roads in Apapa with some of them constructed since the late 1960s are getting too smaller to be able to contain the present rapidly growing volumes of an influx of cargos/goods coming into Nigeria. The Apapa Oshodi express which is a wide road mostly used by cargo trucks and petrol tankers for the distribution of goods is in a bad shape although it's ongoing construction. The breakdown of any trucks on this road causes damages to the road. Figure 4 shows a bad road and a breakdown truck in Apapa.



*Fig.4: Showing a picture of a bad road and a broken-down truck in Apapa*

#### **5. Defective Rail systems**

The decaying railways and rail tracks in Apapa and the entire rail systems in Nigeria have pushed the trains out of the business of conveying seaport cargo's ranging from liquid to bulk cargo as well as moving out containerized cargo and the returning of empty containers into the Ports. All cargo trailers use road transportation to transport goods as a result of the defective rail system around the Apapa axis which keeps damaging the road and causing bad effects on the economy

#### **6. No Trucks Regulations**

No appropriate timetable for operations of trucks /tankers coming or going out of Apapa i.e. either to work during night hours between 1800 hrs to 0600 hrs (GMT) for container trailers/trucks or in the morning hours between the 0600 hrs to 1800 hrs for petroleum tanker's trucks. Since all trucks ply Apapa road, they cause more damage on the road and affect the economic activities around Apapa and Lagos state.

#### **7. Defective Law Enforcement Agencies**

Many of the law enforcement agencies in charge of the roads in Apapa such as the LASTMA, Police, Road Safety Agency, VIO, Association of Road Transport Workers etc. are not working effectively in order to curtail or control the vehicles /trucks causing congestions and bad road in Apapa and people often say "the more the congestion, the more dilapidated the road becomes". There are allegations that some of them even connive with the truck drivers to enable them to use the roadsides in Apapa as their parking spaces/trailer parks while waiting to load or even look for new jobs within the Apapa area.

**8.** Police stations in Apapa do not have enough available spaces for the parking of arrested vehicles associated with crimes (traffic violations), accident-related or for clients and visitors visiting those police stations. As a result, many of these vehicles in the hands of the police are continuously being parked along the roads for example the Area "B" police command opposite the Leventis office at Ijora-Apapa is a very good example. Due to the parked number of trucks and trailers, the roads have become dilapidated.

---

## **4.0 CONCLUSION**

The bad road along Apapa and Tincan port has proved Herculean since the new millennium. Its incidence and impact worsened with the success of the concessions which prioritized private sector-led port operations. With the outlook of the Nigerian economy being bright coupled with possible exponential growth in agriculture, more exports from the Lagos ports system are expected. Although the government seemed handicapped for ready solutions, the latter-day efforts by the Goodluck Jonathan and Muhammadu Buhari administration to rehabilitate the major roads around Apapa and Tincan port began to yield some results from mid-2019 following the barring of inner-city roads to truck traffic. However, the long-term sustainability of such ad hoc measures is unpredictable.

At this point, would like to reemphasize once again that rehabilitating or reconstruction of bad roads along Apapa and Tincan ports area will help increase our import and export activities as well as save time and money in one hand and directly influences the growth of our national economy in the other. Otherwise, the rate at which the bad road in Apapa keep increasing is also having an increasingly negative effect on the economy of Nigeria

### **4.1 RECOMMENDATION**

The following recommendations were made to reduce the bad economic effect of bad roads along Apapa and Tincan ports.

1. Additional Holding bays and Trailer parks should be created where necessary by the major stakeholders handling trucks/tankers operations in Apapa such as the Tank farms, the Ports as well as the Jetties especially the petroleum product handling jetties such as the Petroleum wharf jetty, Ibru jetties, Folawiyo jetties and others.
2. A timely and fixed Apapa Major stakeholders' meeting should be created especially involving major stakeholders in Apapa including companies and organizations like the Nigerian Ports Authority, Mobil, Dangote Group, Total, Nigerian Shippers, Flour Mills of Nigeria plc and the Ceddi Towers among others.
3. The Rail system should be revived to be handling the containerized cargoes coming through the Apapa ports as well as in the returning of empty Containers to the ports. Additionally, special wagons capable of handling some liquid cargoes such as the Black oil, AGO and DPK petroleum should also be reintroduced into the rail system to handle these liquid cargoes as this will push out many trailers and tankers coming in to operate in Apapa to convey same cargo.
4. All truckson the truck A roads in Apapa should be rehabilitated especially the Creek road, Wharf road and others with possible expansion.
5. Petroleum tank farms should be relocated from Apapa to some other locations outside Apapa because this will help drastically reduce the number of tankers with the potential of creating bad roads coming in to load in Apapa at their various tank farms.
6. New government policies should be enacted encouraging the establishment of new seaports and jetties like the Dangote deep seaport project currently ongoing at Lekki – Lagos state outside Apapa area to reduce the growing pressures capable of creating bad roads due to increasing import and export of goods through the Apapa ports.

## REFERENCES

- Adefuye, A., Babatunde, A., and Jide, O. (1987). *History of the Peoples of Lagos State*. Lagos: Lantern Books
- Akintola-Arikawe, J. O. (1987). *The Rise of Industrialism in the Lagos Area*, in *History of the Peoples of Lagos State* edited by Ade Adefuye, Babatunde Agiri and Jide Osuntokun. Lagos: Lantern Books.
- Dioka, L. C. (200). *Lagos and its Environs*. Lagos: Genius Press.
- Shipping Position (2018). [Nigeriaports.gov.ng/Lagos-port/daily-shipping-position/](http://Nigeriaports.gov.ng/Lagos-port/daily-shipping-position/)
- Fapohunda O. and Harold L. (1987). *Lagos: Urban Development and Employment*, quoted in A.G. Adebayo, "Lagos: The Choice and Position of a Federal Capital" in *History of the Peoples of Lagos State* edited by Ade Adefuye, Babatunde Agiri and Jide Osuntokun. Lagos: Lantern Books
- Nigerian Ports Authority Handbook (English and French). (2000). Lagos: Nigerian Ports Authority.
- Olubomehin, O.O. (2018). *Development of the National Trunk Roads in Nigeria and the Socio-economic Impact, 1960–2013*. Available on: [https://t2m.org/wpcontent/uploads/2014/09/Oladipo%20O%20Olubomehin\\_Development%20of%20the%20National%20Trunk%20Roads.pdf](https://t2m.org/wpcontent/uploads/2014/09/Oladipo%20O%20Olubomehin_Development%20of%20the%20National%20Trunk%20Roads.pdf).
- Olukoju, A. (2003). *Infrastructure Development and Urban Facilities in Lagos, 1861-2000*. Ibadan: IFRA.
- Olukoju, A. (2004). *The Liverpool of West Africa: The Dynamics and Impact of Maritime Trade in Lagos, 1900-1950*. Trenton: Africa World Press.
- Oshin, O. (1990). *Rail and Road Transports Competition in Nigeria, 1904-1950* in *Modern Nigeria: A Tribute to G. O. Olusanya* edited by Toyin Falola. Lagos: Modeller.
- White, H. P. (1970). *The Morphological Development of West African Seaports* in *Seaport and Development in Tropical Africa* edited by B. S. Hoyle and D. Hilling, 11- 25. London: Macmillan.