

RECOMMENDATIONS OF WORKING GROUP NO.3
(TRANSPORT: ROAD, RAIL AND AIR CONNECTIVITY,
BORDER AREAS PROGRAMME)

The Meghalaya State Planning Board Working Group No.3 covering Transport including Road, Rail and Air connectivity, Border Areas Programme met at 3.00 PM on Saturday 4th October 2008, in Hotel Pinewood, Shillong. The following members were present:

1. Shri Kajal Kumar Das Roy - Member, Meghalaya State Planning Board
2. Shri Thomas A. Sangma - Member of Parliament, Rajya Sabha
3. Shri E.P. Kharbhih - Secretary, Transport Department
4. Shri H.M. Shangpliang - Commissioner, Transport Department
5. Shri P.S.G.Lyngdoh - Chief Engineer, PWD (Roads)
6. Shri S. Chyrmang - Chief Engineer, PWD (Roads: NH)
7. Shri M.M. Sun - Jt. Secretary, PWD (R&B)

The following recommendations were made by the working group.

TRANSPORT – ROADS AND BRIDGES

A. Rural Roads

1. It is proved that rural roads are catalytic for economic development and poverty alleviation in rural areas. Hence this objective is to be pursued with more vigour. This is essential for giving access to services like health, education, administration etc.
2. In future it should be the target to connect all habitations with all weather roads and upgradation of these rural roads should be done keeping in mind the huge untapped potential in the State.
3. Intra village roads should be given priority in the 11th Plan starting with the villages having a population of more than 1000.
4. During the 11th Plan period GIS application for rural roads database management for planning and maintenance may be undertaken in a phased manner.
5. All programmes supporting construction, management and planning of rural roads for all weather connectivity must fall under one umbrella organization.

6. The State could not compile the road length constructed by different agencies under funding from different sources. The same should be compiled to get the actual road length of the State and the actual road density. The present road density is based only on PWD road length.
7. Construction of a road should not be taken up (from the state fund) to connect a village having a population of 250 or more.

B. State Highways (SHs) and Major District Roads (MDRs)

1. Since the condition of state highways and major district roads is very bad it is suggested that funds available from Ministry of Development of North Eastern region (DoNER), CRF, E&I etc. are totally utilized for improvement, widening, strengthening etc. of these roads on the basis of traffic density.
2. It is suggested that conversion of semi permanent (SPT) bridges to reinforced cement concrete (RCC)/Prestressed bridges on SHs and MDRs is taken up on a priority basis from state/central funds.
3. It is also suggested that PPP be encouraged for improvement and development of SHs and MDRs including conversion of SPT bridges.

C. Town Roads

1. It is suggested that the Urban Affairs department should be involved in construction, development and beautification of town roads.
2. Laying and maintenance of water supply pipelines on PWD roads should be undertaken by the PWD as deposit work, otherwise the regular maintenance is expensive since improper laying of water supply pipelines and their poor maintenance cause heavy leakages which further damage the pavements.

D. Maintenance

1. Once assets are created it is most essential to maintain the same. There is over 8000 kms. of roads under PWD (Roads). The condition of SHs and MDRs are poor and rural roads are very poor. This is mainly due to non availability of adequate maintenance funds as per requirement i.e. as per recommendation of Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRT&H), Government of India/Indian Roads Congress (IRC), poor planning by the department, irregular maintenance activities by the M.Roll labs. and staff of the department.

2. To quote from the Report of the 12th Finance Commission, “it is far more important to ensure that assets already created are maintained and yield services originally envisaged than to go on undertaking commitments for creating more assets. We notice that maintenance of roads and bridges has not been given adequate importance by the states. We are, therefore, recommending additional grants separately for maintenance of roads and bridges and maintenance of buildings.”
3. A huge amount (50%-55%) of maintenance grant is spent annually for making payment of salaries to Work Charge Staff (Surplus) and M.Roll labs. At present maintenance grant per km. is roughly Rs. 68000/- including salary of Work Charge Staff and M.Roll labs. which is quite inadequate. Hence it is recommended to increase the maintenance grant as per recommendation of Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRT&H), Government of India/Indian Roads Congress (IRC).
4. It is understood that the department has no policy for proper planning of maintenance of roads and it is totally left on Executive Engineers (E.Es) and Sub-Divisional Officers (S.D.Os). It is recommended that the department officers in the rank of Superintending Engineer (S.E) and Additional Chief Engineer (Addl. C.E) carry out assessment of damages (SR/PR/FDR etc.) of SHs and MDRs in advance and frame the estimates for carrying out the work in the next year. This amount is to be kept separately and released on the recommendation of the Additional Chief Engineer.
5. It is recommended that the maintenance activities of the supervisory staff and M.Roll labs. be improved.
6. Top priority should be given to the maintenance of roads to sustain the assets created and reap the benefits.

E. Resource Mobilization

1. Independent road fund: It is a fact that there is no scope of PPP in rural road construction and maintenance as the traffic intensity is very low. Government of India has created a dedicated Road Fund by imposing cess on petrol and diesel. Some states eg. Karnataka, UP, Assam, Mizoram have also set up a dedicated

road fund for creating resources. This may be done in our State by imposing cess on petrol, diesel, limestone, coal, stone, metals, sand etc. This fund may be utilized proportionately for development & management of roads.

2. Innovative funding options other than borrowings – This may be adopted by charging the beneficiaries. This may be made applicable to the road users in coal mine areas of the State.

F. Miscellaneous

1. It is highly recommended that all spill over schemes from 7th Plan to 9th Plan are completed by 2009-2010 and the 10th Plan by 2010-2011.
2. The Bank of Sanction (BOS) as on 1.4.08 is 1:5.97 which is very much on the higher side. The BOS in a particular financial year should not exceed 1:3 (i.e. three times the plan outlay excluding the common outlay of a particular financial year).
3. Sanction of plan schemes are unavoidable and sanction should be accorded proper planning and should not be driven by politics.
4. The department needs to frame a Road Development Plan/Vision 2020. Once it is approved it can serve as a guiding reference for formulating a comprehensive master plan for the State.

G. Research and Development

1. R&D is an integral part of any development. It is suggested that a special amount is earmarked for R&D every year and the R&D wing of the department should be strengthened.

H. Training/Capacity Building

1. As per World Bank objective, “capacity building is strengthening of governments and education of government officials.” Hence arrangements are to be made for imparting training to staff from senior level to the very juniors for developing skill, competence and for general upgrading of performance ability.
2. Arrangements are also to be made for imparting training to the contractors.

I. Computerization/E- governance

1. It is understood that the department is still not fully computerized and not brought under E-governance. It is highly recommended that by the end of 3rd year of the

11th Plan this is done. Sufficient budget provision may be made in the financial year 2009-2010 for the same.

TRANSPORT – AIR CONNECTIVITY AND RAIL CONNECTIVITY

A. Air Connectivity

1. It is the recommendation of the working group set up for the 11th Planning Commission, Government of India, that expansion/modification of some existing airports be taken up in North Eastern Region to make them operational for scheduled flights. Hence it is recommended that:
 - a) Extension/Improvement of Umroi airport, Ri Bhoi district is completed during 11th Plan period.
 - b) Extension/Improvement of Baljek airport, West Garo hills district is also completed during 11th Plan period.
 - c) The private sector is playing a crucial role in the development of airline and airport sector. Hence the private sector may be encouraged to assist in the expansion/improvement and development of the aforesaid airports and air transport services.
2. Construction of all the helipads (7 nos.) except Shillong may be completed on top priority by the end of the 4th year of the 11th Plan. Construction of the helipad at Shillong may be completed by 2009-2010.

B. Railway Connectivity

1. The newly constructed railway track from Guwahati to Bongaigaon via Goalpara is in operation. Some superfast long distance trains (Purvachal Sampark Kranti Express, Saraighat Express, Garibrath Express) to New Delhi and Kolkata are now travelling via this route. It is the demand of the students studying outside the State/region, business community, CRPF/BSF personnel and the general people of the three districts of the Garo hills that these trains are given stoppage at Krishnai (gateway of the Garo hill districts) for at least two minutes.
2. Since the detail survey by the Northern Frontier Railway has already been completed for the following projects: Dudhnoi to Mendipathar and Azara to Byrnihat, it is suggested that the works are commenced without delay. It is also

suggested that the construction of the railway line from Jogigopa to Dalu via Tikrikilla and the Lumding to Jaiñtia hills via Silchar be initiated by the State government.

C. Transport Services

1. It is recommended that the number of motor training schools are increased and arrangement be made to impart training to more number of students/trainees.
2. It is recommended that the annual allocation of fund is increased against 'Mass Transport System.'

The WG Meeting ended with a vote-of-thanks from the Chair.

Shri Kajol Kumar Das Roy

Chairman, Working Group No. 3

Meghalaya State Planning Board