TRANSKEI TRANSPORT: THE TWENTIETH CENTURY TRANSITION

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Transkeise vervoer: oorgang na die twintigste eeu

Vervoer in Transkei is met die instelling van spoordienste en gemotoriseerde vervoer die eerste helfte van die twintigste eeu geleidelik gemoderniseer. Die instelling van nuwe wyses van openbare vervoer is meestal deur die Suid-Afrikaanse Spoorweë as parastatale instelling onderneem, vir wie die tegnologie en ekonomie van kapitaal-intensiewe bedryfsaangeleenthede van deurslaggewende belang was. Beperkings van roetebepaling, stilhouplekke, roosterbeplanning en kapasiteit is moeilik begryp en was van die belangrikste probleme waarmee die Transkeise bevolking te doen gehad het. Swart figure wat tot die land se hooste adviesliggaam verkies is, het op gereelder en intensiewer spoor- en busdienste aangedring en bykomende en beter trein- en busstilhouplekke en beskutting bepleit. Die regstelling van diensgebreke wat sonder groot uitgawes kon geskied, is onderneem. Veranderinge aan die infrastruktuur is deur mededinging van padvervoer uit die privaatsektor, die swak toestand van paaie en die beperkte omvang van die passasiers- en vragvervoermarksegmente gekortwiek. Modernisering van vervoer het die vervanging van inheemse, individualistiese en buigsame pre-industriële bedryfsaksies deur uitheemse vervoer behels, waarvan die beperkte toeganklikheid tegnologies, geografies, finansieel en bestuurskundig was.

In the first half of the twentieth century, transportation in the Transkei was gradually modernised by the introduction of railway services and motorised road transport. The provision of new forms of public transport was undertaken chiefly by the parastatal South African Railways for which the technology and economics of capital intensive transport operations were overriding concerns. The restrictions of routeing, stopping, timetabling, and capacity, were poorly understood and were among the major difficulties that Transkeians experienced. Africans elected to the territory's highest advisory body pressed for more frequent and extensive railway and bus services, and pleaded for additional and better train and bus stopping places and shelters. Service deficiencies that could be remedied without great expense were addressed. Infrastructural changes were curtailed by private sector road competition, the abject state of the roads, and the limited size of the passenger and freight transport markets. Transport modernisation involved the replacement of indigenous, individualistic and flexible pre-industrial operations by exotic transport whose limited access was technological, geographical, financial and managerial.

Introduction

Before 1900, and for some years thereafter, transport in the Transkei was pre-industrial. For their personal mobility, people walked extensively or travelled on horseback. Freight transport was reliant on animal drawn sleds, carts and wagons. By the mid-twentieth century a great deal of transport was mechanised: steam trains, motor buses and motor lorries were familiar sights. The transformation involved capital intensification, as well as a change from individualistic to bureaucratic organisation. In the process, the responsiveness and malleability of transport altered, and tensions developed between providers and users.

Two major strains enveloped transportation in the Transkei before the territory became self-governing in 1963. The relatively wealthy and urbanised white traders and administrators deplored the inconvenient train services. As many whites could afford to own or hire private vehicles, they also condemned the execrable roads that

were typical of rural Africa. Correspondence and editorial material in the *Territorial News,* Umtata's 'white' weekly newspaper, reflects many of these concerns. Africans, especially those living outside the towns, confronted a range of quite different problems with modernised public transport. A lengthy record of their particular difficulties (including ones that illiterate people could not communicate in writing) is the printed verbal proceedings of the United Transkeian Territories General Council (1931-1963), and its immediate predecessor, the Transkeian Territories General Council (1903-1930).

The Council, or 'Bunga' was at the apex of Transkeian administration. It was an advisory body that comprised more than 100 elected African councillors, the 26 (white) Transkei district magistrates, and the Chief Magistrate who acted as Chairman. Most Councillors were fairly well-educated chiefs, headmen, or professionals such as clerks or teachers. Few were not salaried civil servants. The magistrates, who were senior staff of the South African Native Affairs Department, were to all intents and purposes 'Native Commissioners'. The membership gave the Bunga a conservative stamp, and left it somewhat detached from ordinary Transkeians. It developed a reputation as a 'talk shop' rather than an effective pressure group. The impression was reinforced by the arrangement whereby motions that were approved by the Bunga were screened by an executive committee of magistrates prior to being forwarded for the attention of South African government departments.[1]

From 1920, whenever public transport was discussed in the Bunga, one or more representatives of the South African Railways (SAR) were in attendance. Their task was to become acquainted with transport problems first hand, and to react to these at once, or refer them to the SAR, the organisation responsible for all railway affairs in the Transkei, and for a great many motor bus operations. As the Bunga Chairman noted in 1920, the SAR representative would have learned more about the African point of view from one morning's discussion than he could have gleaned from masses of correspondence.[2] Yet the presence of an SAR representative at the meetings was a double-edged sword. On the one hand it suggested that the organisation was not faceless and remote, and that it took its task seriously. On the other hand, the technically and commercially knowledgeable representatives could intimidate Councillors and magistrates. Between 1932 and 1959 the SAR sent 41 representatives to the Bunga, 12 of whom went more than once and maintained some continuity in the monitoring of SAR performance.

Transport (excluding road construction) was the subject of approximately 250 motions or questions (less than 5 per cent of the total) in the Bunga between 1912 and 1954. Motions that addressed train lines and stations, and bus routes and stops, are discussed below. Others that addressed the conditions of train and bus travel (e.g. scheduling, congestion, fares, staff service and passenger treatment), and that were also raised by writers of letters to the African press, will be scrutinised elsewhere.

Rail transportation

Schemes for a Transkei railway were first hatched in the 1890s, and after considerable debate a branch route was taken off the East London trunk line at Amabele Junction, reaching Butterworth in 1906 (Figure 1). The extension to Idutywa was completed in 1913, and three years later the line was opened to Umtata where it terminated.[3] In the 1920s, long after the celebratory luncheon (Umtata's African residents were given two oxen to slaughter), orchestral concert, children's picnic, and gymkhana,[4] Bunga Councillors made a string of requests for additional railways.

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1. W.D. Hammond-Tooke, *Command or consensus* (Cape Town, 1975).
2. Proceedings of the Transkeian Territories General Council (hereafter TTGC), 1920, p. 132.
3. H.H. Smith, *The transport system of the Border* (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Rhodes University, Grahamstown, 1958), pp. 113-119.
4. *Territorial News,* 13-7-1916, 21-9-1916.

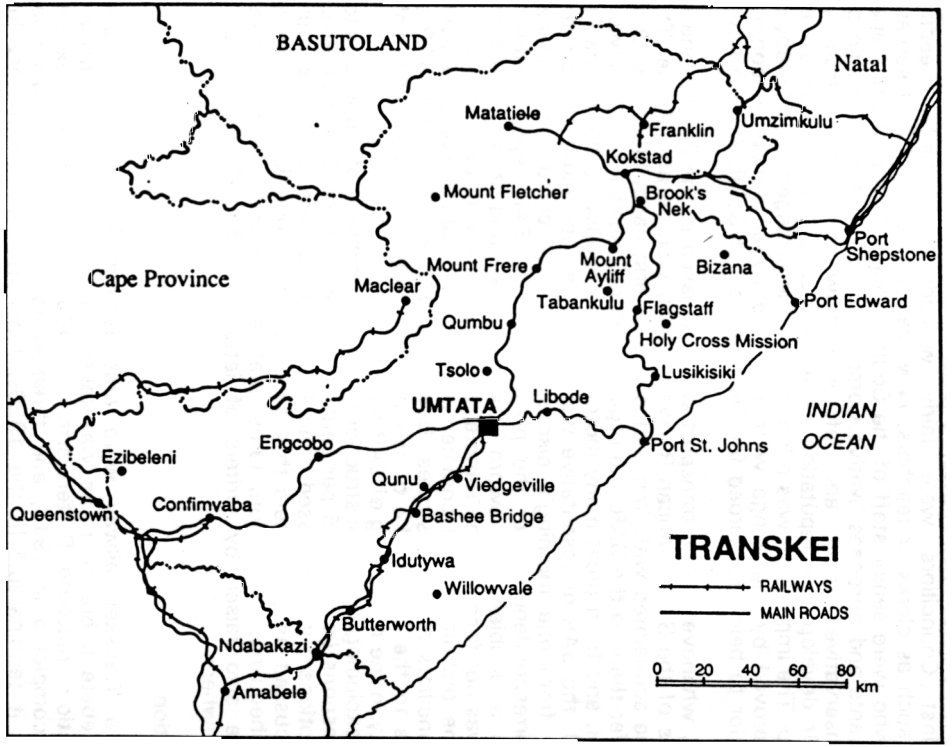

Figure 1: Railway and main roads in the Transkei before 1963

The initial enthusiasm for railways was grounded in astonishing nineteenth century hopes about their power to enrich people and places.[5] Whereas in most colonial African settings hopes were pinned on major (often international) trunk routes (the Cape-to-Cairo, Uganda, and Benguella railways are examples[6]), in 1897 the Acting Resident Magistrate of Libode stressed local considerations. Referring to almost one million Transkeians, he argued that the railway project would alone be

> ... the means of lifting the natives out of their present lethargy, affording them ... easy means of transport and fresh fields of well paid labour ... a railway is the primary step towards civilisation; give natives a railway and barbarism must speedily vanish ... a railway in short may be said to be the key to 'the native problem'.[7]

White settlers regarded a railway similarly, and also as a panacea for strengthening their presence:

> It would provide employment for Africans during the drought and thus reduce stock theft; it would help in the maintenance of order by allowing more rapid movement of troops; it would be 'a very great aid to the successful carrying out of the Glen Grey Act ... and would tend more than all preaching, and all acts of Parliament to help the spread of civilisation among the vast hordes of Natives'.[8]

As was the case across Africa where indigenous and expatriate people urged the building of railways (and roads),[9] Transkeians' partly self-interested, partly paternal Victorian belief in railway magic died hard. In 1910, whites who met the visiting Railway Board at Umtata stressed the commercial and strategic value of a railway: it would "ensure that there would be no native rising in future", said one. In 1920 the South African Native Affairs Department went on record as saying that a railway was "one of the most potent of civilising influences". The notion was adopted and sustained by Transkei Africans themselves. As late as 1948 a Bunga Councillor intoned that there were "three things that develop a country: a church, a post office and a railway".[10] Yet there were some suspicions about the railway, particularly in places where it traversed unfenced rural commonage, and roaming cattle were killed by trains or impounded by railway personnel. Railway euphoria was always knocked by train accidents and, in 1929, after three freight train derailments in one week, travellers became uneasy and afraid.[11]

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5. For contemporary views see, for example, O.H.T. Rishbeth, 'Railway development as symbolising ideas of social construction', *Scottish Geographical Magazine* 40, 1924, pp. 88-97; M. Jefferson, 'The civilising rails', *Economic Geography* 4, 1928, pp. 217-231. For retrospective views see, for instance, N. Faith, *The world the railways made* (London, 1990); C.B. Davis and K.E. Wilburn, (eds.), *Railway imperialism* (Westport, 1991).
6. See R. Richardson, 'British trans-African railways', *Scottish Geographical Magazine* 26, 1910, pp. 633-638.
7. Cape (Colony), *Blue Book on Native Affairs.* G19-'07, p. 115.
8. W. Beinart, 'The anatomy of a rural scare' *in* W. Beinart and C. Bundy, *Hidden struggles in rural South Africa* (Johannesburg, 1987), pp. 53-54.
9. W. Ormsby-Gore, 'The economic development of tropical Africa and its effect on the native population', *Scottish Geographical Magazine* 42, 1926, p. 271: "everywhere I have been in Africa I have met the same demand by European and native alike for the provision of more roads and more railways".
10. *Territorial News,* 13-8-1910; TTGC, 1920, p. xvi; Proceedings of the United Transkeian Territories General Council (hereafter UTTGC), 1948, p. 63.
11. *Territorial News,* 7-3-1929; TTGC, 1927, p. 93; 1929, pp. 180-181; UTTGC, 1934, pp. 114-115; 1935, p. xi; 1939, p. 101.

After completion of the Umtata line, the promise which Africans foresaw in railways was articulated most poignantly in the 1920s when drought caused widespread hunger, and when East Coast Fever restrictions curtailed the use of ox wagon transport.[12] One Councillor phrased the urgent need for food circulation and alternative transport quaintly in noting that "all the women had the hair rubbed off their heads on account of having to carry grain from Imvani Station because their cattle were not allowed to go there".[13] Other material considerations also motivated requests for railways. One was that trains would speed and cheapen the journeys made by migrant labourers.[14] Another was the prospect that railway construction work would alleviate unemployment among men older than 30 years who were not recruited as migrant labourers, and among those who preferred to work near their homes.[15] Yet 250 white men had been hired for the earthworks at Bashee Bridge, and despite representations by the Bunga chairman in the 1920s, Africans were not hired preferentially on track construction from Franklin to Matatiele and Kokstad.[16]

Requests for new railway projects continued to appear on the Bunga agenda in the 1930s and 1940s despite the SAR's unwillingness to build more branch line railways. This was especially so once motor competition on improved roads became a factor in the 1930s. With this additional opportunity for transport, sentimental arguments about people's reluctance to use horses because of ruthless animal inspectors[17] were unlikely to create a flurry of railway building. Indeed, after the Second World War, the Bunga failed to campaign successfully even for the long-awaited and logical extension of the railway from Umtata to Kokstad.[18]

In addition to railway provision, a second major theme in the Bunga debates about railways concerned railway stations, halts and sidings. Whereas trackside facilities have rarely attracted attention in secondary literature about railway provision in African history, in the Transkei at least, the Bunga Councillors knew better than to neglect this facet of transport: more stops meant more railway traffic and revenue (even though the essence of a railway is limited-access transport), and they asked earnestly for additional train stopping places. In the case of tiny Qweqwe, the SAR agreed to establish a temporary halt for a six month trial period after which a traffic survey would establish its long term viability.[19]

Appeals for new railway halts and sidings were less common than requests for improved railway station facilities. A frequent complaint was that siding platforms were non-existent, or too short, or too low. Little was done about these deficiencies simply because it was SAR policy not to provide high level platforms at sidings; at best, the ground would be levelled.[20] Once when the SAR declined to make any changes, it gave the rather arch explanation that construction materials were being used to build houses for its staff. On another occasion, work on straightening the railway line was good enough reason not to upgrade the platform. Finances were always a crucial consideration, but never more so than when passenger surveys revealed limited usage of train stops. One traffic count over a two week period at the two small halts at Bentsa and Qunu showed that on average only 17 and 7 passengers used them daily. In 1945 there was still no waiting room at Franklin, a cold spot where passengers suffered acutely as they waited overnight to change trains. In time, one shed was built for whites and one for Africans.[21]

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12. TTGC, 1919, p. 148; 1921, p. 96; 1922, pp. 86-87, 150; 1924, p. 103; 1925, p. 124; 1927, p. 190.
13. TTGC, 1921, p. 100.
14. TTGC, 1928, pp. 93-94; UTTGC, 1931, p. 173; 1938, p. 93.
15. TTGC, 1923, pp. 142-143; 1934, p. 113.
16. *Territorial News,* 21-9-1916; TTGC, 1923, p. 74; 1924, p. xxvii.
17. UTTGC, 1938, p. 93.
18. UTTGC, 1945, pp. 73-74; 1946, p. xiv; 1947, pp. 65-66; 1949, p. 58.
19. TTGC, 1925, pp. 124-125; 1926, p. x; UTTGC, 1931, p. vx; 1942, p. 69; 1938, p. 94; 1952, p. 71; 1937, p. 113-114; 1950, p. 65.
20. UTTGC, 1936, p. 110, 1938, p. 94; 1939, p. ix; 1940, p 94; 1945, pp. 74-75; 1947, pp. 64-65; 1948, p. 63; 1951, p. 65; 1952, p. 66; 1955, p. 64; 1960, p. 53; 1961, p. viii.
21. UTTGC, 1946, pp. 62-64; 1950, p. 69.

Shelter was an issue at all train stops, large and small. After a lean period to begin with, by 1918 only 15 stations and sidings in the Transkei were without waiting rooms for Africans. The statistic was more pleasing than the accommodation. At small stations the waiting room was simply a small, doorless shack with a gravel floor.[22] The sole decoration was a 'third-class' or 'non-European' sign. Regardless of their social status, all African passengers were expected to use these draughty and soulless sheds. For many years the only first- and second-class waiting rooms for Africans were at Umtata. Speaking in 1931, the Councillor who pressed for segregated waiting rooms at Idutywa spelled out his reasons explicitly:

> ... many of the third class passengers are people who wear blankets or are insufficiently clad, and in other ways do not behave properly. When they mix together with people who are civilised ... they don't pay us any respect ... they carry on unpleasant conversation in the presence of small children ... and ... ministers of religion ... Sometimes thieves are included among these people.[23]

Similar argument was heard nine years later in connection with a request for a second-class waiting room at Viedgesville: "in the third class you find the backward Native who knows nothing about hygiene. The floor of the third class waiting room is of mud, and it is often full of dust and dirt, and passengers get their feet muddy and wet".[24] Some Africans escaped these conditions by using the accommodation intended for whites. At Idutywa, for instance, students and their parents once occupied the 'European' shelter, and whites had to "sit on tin boxes or wander about the platform".[25]

In several instances, the SAR responded positively to requests for improved railway station accommodation and undertook to build shelters where there were none, to cement floors, close in open frontages, and segregate existing waiting rooms.[26] Superior-class facilities were signed '1st and 2nd Class Non-European Waiting Room' in both English and Xhosa to prevent "unauthorised Natives" using them. But segregation did not occur at all SAR shelters. In some places the volume of passenger traffic did not justify the expense. In 1927 at Matatiele, for example, only three second-class tickets were issued on average each day to African passengers; at Franklin the daily average was four.[27]

Shelter was only one facet of railway station service that drew adverse comment in the Bunga. Another was the absence of lighting. In the dark, luggage was mislaid or pinched, and passengers were prone to assault. Lighting the darkness was a relatively simple and inexpensive matter for the SAR, but could be discouraging. At Ndabakazi station the new waiting room oil lamps were stolen on the first night. If lamps themselves were not removed, the paraffin and the chimney glasses could disappear.[28]

Inadequate provision of refreshment facilities at railway stations was another contentious point. Said one Councillor, the Government had taught Africans to eat three times daily and should not neglect its duty in that respect.[29] The problem confronted by many African passengers was the dilatory and unpleasant service that they received at platform stalls from white licencees. Echoing a complaint made publicly ten years previously, in 1920 D.D.T. Jabavu, then Professor of Bantu Languages at the South African Native College at Fort Hare, noted that certain re-

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22. TTGC, 1920, pp. 130-131.
23. UTTGC, 1931, p. 174.
24. UTTGC, 1940, p. 95.
25. TTGC, 1925, pp. 125-126.
26. TTGC, 1918, p. xv; UTTGC, 1934, p. xxiv; 1941, p. x.
27. TTGC, 1921, p. xxxvi; 1927, p. 96, vi; 1928, p. viii; UTTGC, 1940, p. ix.
28. UTTGC, 1940, p. 94; 1941, p. ix; 1960, p. 52.
29. TTGC, 1920, p. 131.

freshment stalls were doing "incalculable harm in converting otherwise peaceful Natives into bitter malcontents by their disgusting contempt for Native passengers". Jabavu was joined by the Chairman of the Umtata Native Association in saying that if African train passengers were served at all, they were served last.[30] It is a moot point whether this neglect was a matter of racialism, or due to the numbers, dirtiness and senselessness of migrant labourers, as one Councillor mockingly suggested.[31] Certainly, many African travellers preferred to buy refreshments at township eating houses, or from women who hawked bread and meat outside the railway platform perimeter fence. This was inconvenient, however, and there were times when passengers missed their trains as a result.

The second-rate treatment meted out to African train passengers at refreshment stalls also occurred at ticketing booths. Once, in the early 1940s, concern was expressed at the way in which Africans buying second-class tickets at Ndabakazi station had been shunted from inside the station building to a "small hole" outside. The SAR did not deny instigating racial segregation, and offered merely to roof the booking office window as soon as possible, as it had done at Maclear.[32] Complaints about ticket office service were more usual. Allegations were made that some SAR staff opened the offices only moments before train departure, were discourteous, claimed to have no small change, and were reluctant to accept concession forms. Other than the defence that some African passengers treated its ticket booths as a bank and tendered high denominations of currency, the SAR could do little more than remind its staff to treat all passengers respectfully.[33]

To the extent that passenger liaison foundered on misunderstood language, the use of African interpreters was also a solution. Africans were employed in this capacity as early as 1921, and were still working as intermediaries at several stations twenty years later. By the 1950s the need was not only for interpreters, but also for protection from loiterers who occupied the waiting rooms more or less permanently, annoying passengers and stealing their luggage. The SAR regretted that it could not afford to employ policemen at every Transkei train stop, but let slip that it did not approve of employing black constables without white supervision.[34]

Bus transportation

In the 1930s the dominance of the railway in mechanised public transport in the Transkei began to decline. Simultaneously, Councillor's anxieties about public transport swung to the new road motor service (RMS) that the SAR launched in 1929. Already there were a few private bus and lorry services in operation, but they fell outside the purview of the Bunga. So too did the handful of car hire and private taxi and limousine services that garage and hotel owners operated mostly for white residents and visitors.[35]

In keeping with earlier events in Nigeria, for example, and also in rural 'white' South Africa,[36] the first motor bus services were inaugurated by the railway operators as way of drawing traffic from the countryside and feeding it to the trains.

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30. *Imvo Zabantsundu,* 25-1-1910; D.D.T. Jabavu, *The black problem* (Lovedale, 1920), p. 5; *Territorial News,* 25-3-1920.
31. TTGC, 1928, p. 82.
32. UTTGC, 1943, p. 56; 1944, p. iii.
33. Cape Archives Depot, Cape Town: CMT 3/904 (734), Chief Magistrate - Secretary for Native Affairs, 8-11-1919; TTGC, 1919, p. 148; 1920, p. 129; UTTGC, 1947, p. 65; 1948, p. xiii; 1950, pp. 66-67.
34. TTGC, 1920, p. 129; 1921, p. xxxvi; UTTGC, 1941, pp. 69-70; 1954, p. 75; 1955, p. 64; 1957, p. ii.
35. *Territorial News,* 21-10-1926, 28-10-1926.
36. O. Oshin, 'Road transport and the declining fortunes of the Nigerian railway', *Journal of Transport History* 12, 1991, pp. 11-36; G.H. Pirie, 'Railway operated road transport and the South African space economy', *South African Geographer* 13, 1985, pp. 39-50.

In the Transkei, the single branch line only had a slender catchment area, and in that sense it served the sizeable and widely distributed population badly. A crude measure of this underprovision was given to the Administrator of the Cape in 1926 by the President of the Transkeian Territories European Civic Association: whereas there was one mile of railway per 500 people in South Africa, in the Transkei the ratio was one mile per 3 000 people. Yet, however desirable it was to have a more comprehensive, modern and integrated transport service, some people doubted the wisdom of introducing buses. Their worry was that the heavy vehicles would damage the Transkei's fragile roads, and that bus operators would not pay compensation. In addition, they feared that bus transport would undermine the indigenous wagoning that employed many Africans, and that transport revenues would be lost to the Transkei.[37]

Enlightened concerns such as these did not stem progress. And, after the introduction of the motor bus service, these matters were not the most prominent when the RMS was discussed in the Bunga. From 1930 to 1959, motions concerning the SAR buses counted for half of all those having to do with public transport. The majority involved opening new bus routes (67 motions), building shelters, sheds and toilets (26 motions), and creating new bus stops (14 motions).

A range of reasons were given for needing more extensive bus services in the Transkei. Coucillors suggested that the enhanced mobility would assist migrant labourers, would promote the sale and purchase of farm produce and supplies, would facilitate the delivery of mail, and would boost school attendance. A councillor from Flagstaff claimed that the absence of a bus service undermined health care. Another pointed to the new pace of life: "the times are progressive and time is very valuable ... people in these days do not like to walk".[38] Still others noted that in various ways horse transport was becoming problematic: often "we are stopped by the police who want to see whether our horses have got sore backs. People are always chased for cruelty to animals". Some people had begun saying it was "a disgrace ... to put a bag of mealies on a horse". From Tabankulu came the plea that buses were needed because "the horses are thin and lean, some are sick, and some are dead".[39]

Animal transport was not the only kind that presented difficulties and spurred people to ask for an alternative. Private lorries, post cars and taxis also performed poorly. Trucks were not always serviceable, and when they were, the journeys could be expensive. Bus owners were alleged to vary fares at whim. As was the case elsewhere in rural Africa, travel by privately operated truck (e.g. Nigeria's 'mammy wagons') was also notoriously crude and uncomfortable, if not hazardous. In the Transkei, migrant labourers were stowed on top of freight and fastened down with ropes so tightly that their arms bled. Even ministers of religion, Councillors, and sick people, were perched on top of loads and covered with canvas. In the 1940s the Farmers' Association of Willowvale petitioned for an RMS service to replace the dilapidated and dirty private buses; the local Branch of the Transkeian Territories European Civic Association followed suit.[40]

Requests for more bus services were considered cautiously. Magistrates warned that RMS competition might force private buses and lorries off the roads and create unemployment.[41] The SAR's own reservations about providing alternative bus services were guided less by moralistic than by practical concerns. Among these was the bother of applying to the Road Transportation Board for a licence that invariably would be turned down if another bus service was already plying the route.[42] It would have been preferable to avoid sharing traffic, and wait for an open

37. *Territorial News,* 29-4-1926; 8-8-1929, 29-8-1929, 5-10-1929.
38. UTTGC, 1935, p. 105; 1946, p. 64.
39. UTTGC, 1936, p. 113; 1938, p. 93; 1945, p. 65.
40. O.N. Njoku, 'Development of roads and road transport in southeastern Nigeria, 1903-1939', *Journal of African Studies* 5, 1978, pp. 471-497; G.H. Pirie, 'Race, class and comfort on rural buses, 1925-1955', *Contree* 27, 1990, pp. 5-11; UTTGC, 1934, p. 115; 1938, p. 96; 1939, p. 96; 1945, p. 72; 1946, p. 65; 1947, pp. 66-67.
41. UTTGC, 1934, p. 116; 1937, pp. 114-115.
42. E.G. UTTGC, 1947, p. x; 1952, p. 68.

market. In most cases, the financial viability of bus services was only marginal, and there were times when the RMS did withdraw through lack of support. Vehicle shortages during the Second World War put a further damper on service extension.[43] Indications of passenger support were sought in advance wherever possible: for example, when a service was requested for a route that was reputed to include the worst road in the Transkei, the SAR representative asked for assurances that "traders and other Europeans" would use it.[44] On numerous occasions, the establishment of new RMS services was declined because of the abysmal conditions of roads that were not gravelled, were slippery in wet weather, were too narrow or steep or winding, and crossed drifts without bridges. Commonly, the SAR representative stipulated that roads would have to be improved before a bus service could be considered.[45]

Requests for improved bus services were coupled with appeals for more bus stops, and for better services at halts. Bunga members who represented rural districts remote from the railway took the view that just as there were railway halts and stations, there should be bus halts and stations. Initially the SAR seemed reluctant to multiply stops, noting that each one added some twenty minutes to travel time; if an efficient pattern of connecting services was to be maintained, rescheduling would have to be done frequently. In time, however, the SAR encouraged recommendations for new stopping places, and even asked for suggestions about names that had geographical or historical significance.[46]

Motions for creating new bus stops, or resiting them, were added to by appeals for shelter at halts: passengers needed protection while they waited in the open veld in the sun, wind and rain.[47] The lack of toilet facilities at most stops was another health hazard: excreta washed into dongas and rivers, polluting ground water and infecting livestock. Establishing toilets at each bus stop would have been costly, of course, and the RMS was unwilling to maintain and clean them if they also became public conveniences for all and sundry, including private bus operators. There was also some doubt about the legality of erecting buildings on privately owned or leased land, and the RMS contented itself with arguing that sanitation was a matter for local authorities.[48]

The fate of passengers at open air bus halts was not the only concern of Councillors. They also implored the SAR to build sheds that would protect freight intended for farmers, villagers, government officials and traders. At isolated bus stops shipments were dumped on the ground and left to the mercy of the weather. Invoices blew away, and mealies began sprouting.[49] Material and produce that survived the elements was damaged and even eaten by livestock. At one stop, so it was said, even the pigs knew when to expect the bus, and waited to devour the maize that was off-loaded. So reliable were the animals in this Orwellian scene that people timed the arrival of the bus "by the visit of the pigs".[50]

Ravenous animals were a hazard not unlike light-fingered people. Bus halts were not attended by personnel, and items like seed, fertiliser, and consumables (some sent home by migrant workers) could and did vanish. Unlocked sheds would not have helped, and locked sheds would have prevented the rightful recipients of consignments from recovering their goods. The absence of a freight agent, or an SAR official (including, eventually, African 'caretakers'), created another problem: unless shipments were sent to an official depot (or to a trading store whose owner

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43. UTTGC, 1942, p. 69; 1950, p. 66.
44. UTTGC, 1937, p. 117.
45. TTGC, 1929, p. v; UTTGC, 1931, p. xvi; 1933, p. 108: 1934, p. xxiii; 1936, p. 105, pp. 113-114; 1937, p. v; 1938, p. 95; 1940, pp. 97, viii-ix; 1947, p. x; 1952, p. 69; 1954, p. 76.
46. UTTGC, 1933, p. 108; 1938, p. 98; 1939, p. 100; 1944, p. 52; 1953, p. 66.
47. UTTGC, 1931, pp. 174-175; 1934, pp. 116-117; 1941, p. x.
48. UTTGC, 1943, p. 56; 1944, pp. iii, 53; 1945, p. xxiii; 1952, pp. 71-72.
49. UTTGC, 1933, p. 127; 1934, p. 117; 1935, p. 106; 1942, p. 69; 1952, p. 64.
50. UTTGC, 1942, p. 68; 1952, p. 68.

would charge for storage), the SAR would not accept responsibility for loss of damage, and it was fruitless claiming compensation. The problem of lost freight was resolved to some extent in the 1950s when the RMS agreed to make deliveries direct to African trading stores off the main roads, provided the tracks were passable and the traders paid a supplementary charge.[51]

The SAR was reluctant to construct and staff passenger shelters and freight sheds at each bus stop in the Transkei because of the expense. Maintenance and repair charges would have inflated the cost. In 1933 it was suggested that the Bunga pay for structures at the 62 RMS halts: at an estimated price of £25 each, the total bill would have been £1 550. The proposal was defeated overwhelmingly, and traders and consumers were left to foot any bill through increased bus tariffs.[52] Even the option of providing tarpaulins to shield freight at bus stops was objected to on financial grounds. The SAR argued that in poor rural areas the covers would be stolen. In any event, it did not wish to set a precedent for providing tarpaulins at every one of the 5 000 unattended halts in the rest of South Africa.[53]

A similar argument about precedent arose in connection with permanent buildings. Unwittingly demonstrating the low priority that the Transkei bus services enjoyed, the SAR 'explained' that it would not even build sheds at minor stops in 'white' areas.[54] Construction of shelters and sheds was indeed confined to major junctions despite the argument by the Bunga Chairman in 1944 that the peculiar conditions in the Transkei necessitated sheds at 'reasonable intervals'. His point was that consignees were not, and could not be notified about when to expect their goods; at train stations the problem was worse in that items might be off-loaded from passing trains in the dead of night.[55]

A further consideration that had a bearing on erecting shelters and sheds at bus stops was the extent to which they would be used. Records showed that in many instances the expense would not be justified. For instance, the SAR noted that over a six month period a mere 60 passengers per month used the Brook's Nek halt for journeys in both directions. For three months there was no traffic at all to and from Tabankulu. At Holy Cross Mission halt only 47 packages were handled in one three month interval.[56]

Conclusion

The transportation issues raised in the Transkeian Bunga in the first half of the twentieth century reveal disappointment and frustration among users and providers. The logistics and cost of modern transport were a clear limitation on expanded and improved train and bus operations and facilities. The public was largely insensitive to these constraints, and had unrealistic expectations about the perfectibility of mechanised transport, especially about its potential to accommodate an infinity of personal needs. The misunderstandings and dilemmas that evolved became apparent in the proceedings of the Bunga. Generally, only the complaints and requests that did not entail large expenditure by the SAR were negotiable and were dealt with effectively.

The advent of institutionalised public transport in the Transkei took planning and operating decisions out of the hands of private individuals, and the amorphous mass passenger and freight market became most influential. Modern transport was characterised by limited access not only in a technological sense, but also financially,

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51. UTTGC, 1932, pp. 67-68; 1935, p. 106; 1939, pp. 98-100; 1948, p. 63; 1953, pp. 63-64
52. UTTGC, 1933, pp. 111, 127, 134-135; 1936, p. 109.
53. UTTGC, 1945, p. 74; 1946, p. xiv.
54. UTTGC, 1935, p. xii; 1936, p. xvi; 1939, p. 100.
55. TTGC, 1929, p. 201; UTTGC, 1936, p. 109; 1944, p. 52.
56. UTTGC, 1935, pp. ii, x-xiii.

geographically and managerially. Nevertheless, in a situation of publicly provided rail and bus transport there was some opportunity to engage the parastatal transport organisation in a public forum. The Bunga was able to exert a modest influence over transport in an advisory capacity, though even it was not fully representative of African peasant farmers and the highly educated elite, neither of which group felt much affinity with the Council. This warp was possibly least important in respect of transport. Whereas the structure and workings of the Bunga may have made its proceedings irrelevant and its interventions superficial in the spheres of labour, health, education, and agriculture, economic and technological considerations were probably more of an obstacle to popular control of transport than were the social class of Councillors and the procedures of the Bunga.