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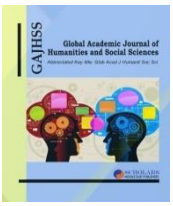

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Original Research Article

Urban Bus Terminal Operations in Sub-Saharan Africa: Challenges and Perspectives from Bamenda City- Cameroon

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Abstract: Sub-Saharan Africa is experiencing unprecedented urbanization and growth in its cities and this has caused spontaneous development of Urban Bus Terminals (UBTs) to meet the travel demands of urban residents. What is most striking is the current state of the bus stations plagued by poor organization, inadequate infrastructure and limited accessibility. These factors in Bamenda city contributes to mobility challenges and possess a real bottleneck for a sustainable planning and management of the city. This paper is built to reflect on (i) the current state of UBTs in Bamenda city, (ii) operational challenges faced (iii) and proposed sustainable pathways for effective bus terminal operation in Bamenda. A sample of 275 key participants (UBTs operators, urban planners, drivers, bike riders and commuters) were interviewed using questionnaires complemented by informant interviews with relevant transport authorities notably transport agencies operators and transport delegates in the city. Major findings indicate that the spatial organization of bus terminals in Bamenda are disorganized, with terminals located just 1-2 meters from roadways, and lacking designated spaces, which contributes to traffic congestion and inefficient travel experiences for residents. While they pose these challenges, they equally showcase specific strength in services offer to users such as higher quality mail services (73.8%) and security (65.4%) at the level of transport agency Bus Terminals likewise council Bus Terminals that excel in trading spaces (55.3%) and circulation areas (80.0%). By learning from the challenges, policymakers and urban planners can develop strategies to create efficient, accessible, and user-friendly bus terminals.

Keywords: Urban Bus Terminal, Mobility Challenges, Bamenda city.

1. INTRODUCTION

On the African continent, urban bus terminals form the backbone of public transit and is at the forefront of socio-economic development. Bus stations are among the most prominent sites of everyday social and economic activity in Africa (Michael S., & Sidy C., 2018). But the organization of mass transit into bus stations remains a major setback either as a result of planning negligence, insufficient spatial organization, unlicensed operators or privatization and limited spaces (Andrés *et al*., 2013). Other barriers have been largely attributed to issues related to institutional complexities and lack of technical capacity, lack of alignment among stakeholders, lack of strong promotion of competing modes, traditional bias towards vehicle capacity expansions, opposition from existing bus operators; and lack of community

participation (Antonio L.L., Dario H., Adriana de A. L., 2014). The outcome of this phenomenon are well known in many Sub-Saharan African cities. Congestion is endemic in the cities as urbanization proliferate, at the same time, vehicle ownership has been increasing at unprecedented rates, even faster than the population and income (Dargay J., Gately D., and Sommer M., 2007, Gwilliam, 2003). Although the congestion problems do not result solely from high motorization levels, mobility management has been notably unsuccessful due to institutional weakness, the absence of adequate planning, low-quality public transport, and the lack of technical capacity and funds for the preparation and implementation of measures oriented to improve the urban transport sector (Guzman L.A., Julian A., Vilma A., 2020)

In Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), the transport sector serves as the economic backbone of many cities, accounting for 80% of motorized trips (Agbiboa, 2019). Various transportation modes play a crucial role in urban mobility, providing profitable and accessible options for urban commuters (Nwaedozie *et al*., 2023). These modes utilize physical spaces that often extend beyond the reach of formal transport systems, adapting to local landscapes and city layouts (Evans *et al*., 2018). While this scenario is evident in some planned cities like Abuja and Johannesburg, it is clear that public transport sectors in the majority of African cities remain largely unaddressed by state governments (International Association of Public Transport, UITP, 2008). In April 2005, bus stations were officially recognized during the declaration of the African Ministers of Transport and Infrastructure in Addis Ababa as a previously overlooked area by most state governments (Trans-Africa Consortium, 2010). However, the history of public transport development varies significantly across countries in the sub-region, and the sector remains poorly organized in many urban areas. One consequence of Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) was the neglect of public infrastructure, including transportation systems, as most governments prioritized macroeconomic stability over social spending (Lall & Deichmann, 2010). This neglect has had a profound impact on urban transport systems, leading to a decline in public bus services and an increase in informal, often unsafe private transport options (Gitau & Augustin, 2013).

Research indicates that the rise of private transport companies is part of a broader trend toward privatization in the subcontinent, which has produced mixed outcomes for economic development and social inequality in urban areas (Mawhood, 2010). While these private companies have addressed some transport challenges faced by Sub-Saharan African cities, they have also exacerbated the divide between rich and poor, as lower-income residents frequently find themselves excluded from these services due to high costs (Devas, 2004). Globally, bus stops are recognized as essential components of urban transport systems, offering safe and accessible locations for passengers to board and disembark from buses. However, in Sub-Saharan Africa, these bus stops are often poorly maintained and lack basic amenities such as seating, shelter, and lighting.

During post-independence years, many newly established states in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) nationalized their transport companies (Ehebrecht *et al*., 2018). During the economic crises of the 1980s and 1990s, numerous countries implemented structural adjustment policies influenced by the World Bank, which promoted austerity, deregulation, and privatization (Abraham *et al*., 2021; Behrens *et al*., 2017; Cervero & Golub, 2007). In nations such as Nigeria and Tanzania, these policy shifts led to the dismantling of state-funded transport enterprises. In the absence of formal transportation systems or in response to inadequate services, informal alternatives emerged to meet public demand (Roychowdhury & Chandola, 2022; Woolf & Joubert, 2013). In Cameroon, the economic crisis of the 1980s, combined with the shortcomings of structural adjustment programs, resulted in the deregulation of the public transport sector. The privatization of many public transport services led to the rise of spontaneous and disorganized informal transport networks in various cities (Godard, X., 2002). Today, with rapid urbanization, automobile congestion has become unavoidable. The concentration of human activities in limited spaces, particularly in the Central Business Districts, has prompted city authorities in Cameroon to relocate bus stations and council motor parks to the city fringes to facilitate better circulation in central towns. This trend has been observed across Cameroonian cities since the early 2000s, with notable cases in Bamenda (2003), Bafoussam (2007), and Dschang (2008) (Chianebeng, 2019).

2. URBAN BUS TERMINALS (UBTS)

Literature on UBTs on the African continent is limited. The concept is a recent one and no precise nomenclature has been given to it. In some African cities, the term parking lots, *gare routière*, garage, motor-park has been adopted in place of Bus Terminals to mean areas designated and fixed by the authority of city's management or its agents to ease inter and intra-transport systems for long or short journey passengers (Asiyanbola and Akinpelu, 2012). Urban bus terminals are structures where city or intercity buses stopped to pick- and- drop passengers. Bus Stops Stations are for embarkation and disembarkation of people and are identified as an infrastructure of urban mobility. The nature of the

service is public and collective, the objects are passengers and the urban modes of transport are motor vehicles Tavares *et al*., (2021). In Nairobi, the term "Bus Terminal" is used to mean a place that provide safe and convenient transfer of commuters from one transport mode to another, and can also be used to purposely integrate various modes in the transportation system (Mwaniki, 2011). The Central Bus Terminus scenario, Nairobi is characterized by congestion within and without especially during peak hours. Due to the nature of public transport in Nairobi most public service vehicles start and end their journey at the terminus.

In their role as spaces that organize mobility and exchange over distance, bus stations are integral to the workings of transport infrastructures at large (Larkin Brian, 2013). Terminals are generally made at the end or beginning of bus lines, the major transfer points are generally areas where buses stand for longer periods. These unlike the lay-bays, curbside stops require considerably large space to accommodate more vehicles and far more great numbers of passengers. They are simple, mostly in the open-air structures compromising, loading berths and sidewalks for pedestrians. The function of a Bus terminal primarily includes processing of vehicles, passengers, etc. with provision of necessary facilities for their smooth flow, the terminal serves as a point and unit where necessary information to user is made available for processing his journey. The study further indicates that a passenger bus terminal broadly needs to perform the functions to meet the requirements of the following: passenger and vehicle, passengers only, vehicles only, crew and management. This present study examine if bus station in Bonaberi has the same function.

According to Githaiga N.M. (2021), the functions related to both passengers and vehicles include: concentration, loading, dispersal and unloading. Passenger only oriented functions of the terminal include provision of: passenger platforms to board and alight, waiting lounges, baggage storage facilities, basic shopping and commercial facilities, utilities, services and amenities, information systems, ticketing facilities, shelter form weather, communication postal facilities and eating places. The terminal components to meet the needs of crew are: rest rooms, information system, communication facilities and eating places. The terminal facilities for the management in terms of: demand management on account of concentration, incurring minimum expenditure, development of centralized information, ensuring better control, operations management (planning, monitoring and control), and contracting of services / service providers.

The primary thing to consider when constructing a modern city, is the development of public facilities which align with the coordinated growth of the economy, society, environment, and culture (Jianhua *et al*.,2019). As an important component of urban public infrastructure, bus stations fulfill various social functions, such as conveying public awareness, showcasing economic culture, and embodying aesthetic consciousness. With the continuous development of society and the rapid growth of floating population, urban public transport has become a means of transportation for non-native population, and the bus station has become an important platform for publicizing the image of the city (Li, 2005). It has a direct impact on the psychology and behavior of the public. However, there are still many problems in the design of the bus station at this stage, which cannot meet the needs of people. Zhao, (2011), propose a sustainable Bus Station management based on the government's sustainable development strategy, it is an urgent problem for the bus station to grasp the humanization design concept, and constantly optimize its own value and meet the needs of the contemporary people. According to him, bus station is the product of urban development, therefore; it corresponding design should be drawn up-based on the status of the city frequently, and unified with urban planning. In addition, Jiang *et al*., (2014), admitted that when constructing Bus Station, urban residents should be involve because their participation in design opinions is will be highly counted to meet the wishes of the people.

In Cameroon, urban bus terminals are vital components of the transportation network, linking various cities and facilitating the movement of people and goods across the nation. Key cities such as Yaoundé, Douala, Bafoussam and Bamenda showcase the diversity and complexity of urban bus terminal operations in the country. Bamenda, the case study for this work serves as a critical hub for transportation activities in the country. Here, the urban bus terminal constitute of transport agencies and motor-parks playing vital role in facilitating inter-urban passenger movement and trade. However, the operations of these terminals face numerous challenges, including congestion, inadequate infrastructure, and safety concerns. The bus terminal are often described as chaotic scene, with limited space exacerbating traffic issues and causing delays. The lack of modern facilities and poor maintenance hinder efficient service delivery, affecting both passengers and operators. Issues such as informal transport systems and unregulated fare practices complicate the landscape, leading to fare inconsistencies and safety risks. The city faces very little scholarly works in this domain, the main reason why the research team want to exploit this domain by

examining the Urban Bus Terminal operations, their challenges and perspective in Bamenda. It is hoped that recommendations from this work would help city authorities on better manage bus stop operations in the city.

3. MATERIALS AND METHODS

Bamenda is well known for its transport service provision in the North West Region. As a major transport hub, the city is situated between Latitudes 5° 56' and 5° 58' north of the Equator and longitudes 10° 09' and 10°11' east of the Greenwich Meridian. Bamenda has a total surface area of 3125Km2 (Figure 1). The city is bounded to the West and South West by Momo Division and Bali Sub-Division respectively, to the North it is flanked by Bafut Sub-Division, North East by Tubah Sub-Division, and to the South by Santa Sub-Division. It is made up of three Sub-Divisions which the municipal councils (Bamenda I, II & III). Bamenda is a fast-growing urban center in the entire region. Its rapid growth and expansion is largely explained by its nodal location as a gateway to the rest of the country's regions. Bamenda maintains its dominant position with an urban population of 469,530 inhabitants in the region (BCC, 2020).

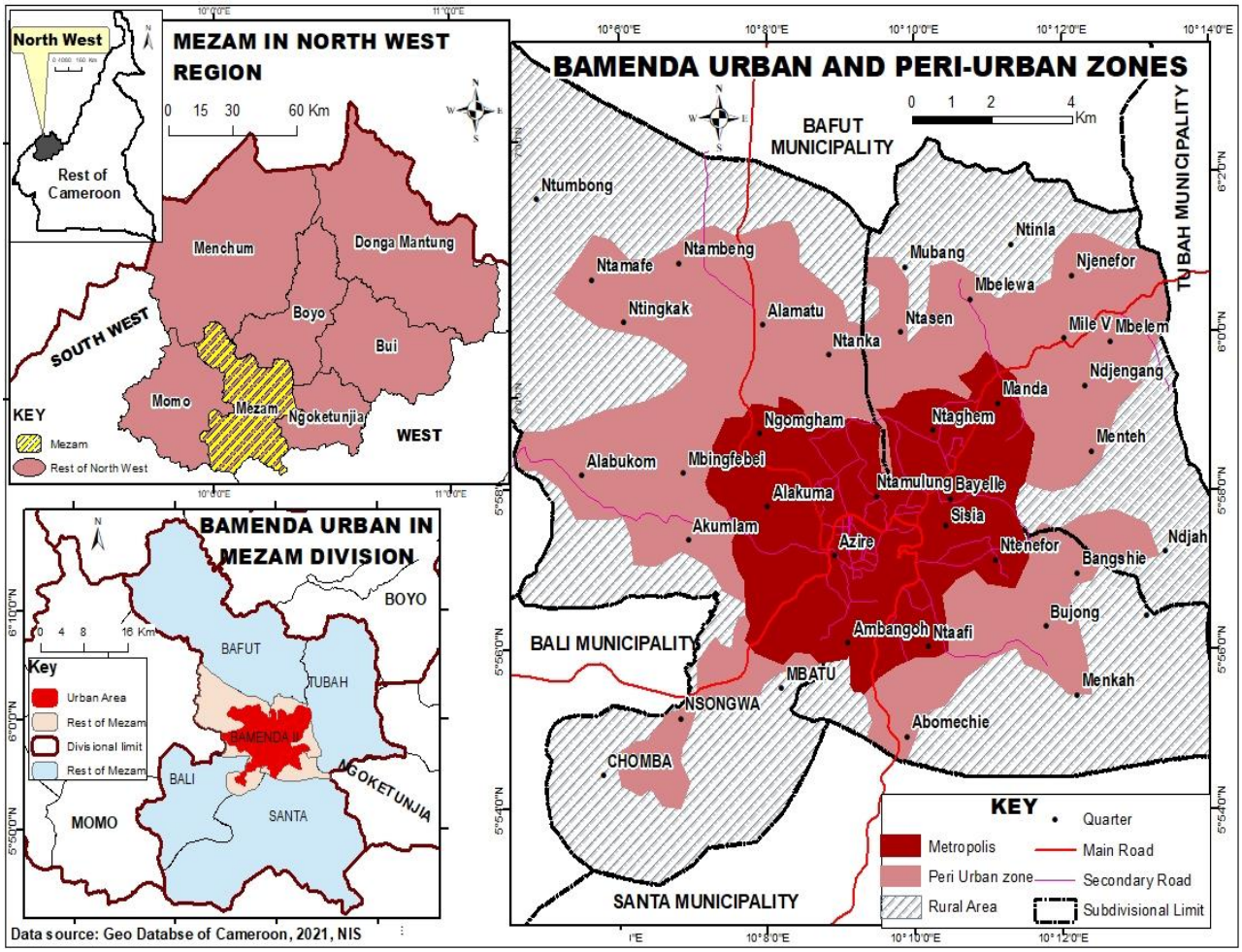

Figure 1: Location of Bamenda in Mezam Division, North West Region of Cameroon
Source: Geo-Database of Cameroon (NIS), (2022)

The study convers the city of Bamenda, focusing on the three municipalities: Bamenda I, II, and III. Both quantitative and qualitative research designs were utilized to gather information on the organizational structure of bus terminals and the mobility challenges arising from the spatial configuration of these terminals. Quantitatively, structured questionnaires were prepared and deployed to 275 respondents, notably inter-urban passengers (n=76), businessmen (n=45), urban commuters (n=47), taxi drivers (n=55), and bike riders (n=52). These participants were selected based on their proximity to bus stations across the municipalities. Informant interviews were also conducted with managers of transport agencies, the Regional Delegate of Urban Development Planning, and the mayors of the three municipalities. The distribution of the questionnaire instruments is illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1: Questionnaire distribution within the study area

Municipalities	Target cluster locations	Numb. of questionnaires distributed
Bamenda I	Bamenda I motor-park (BMM) (P = 5, Bm = 5, UCs = 5, Ds = 5, BRs = 5	25
Bamenda II	Moghamo Agency by Sonac Street (P = 14, Bm = 6, UCs = 8, BDs = 10, BRs = 7	45
	Vatican Agency by City Chemist (P = 15, Bm = 8, UCs = 8, Ds = 7, BRs = 7	45
	Nso Boys Agency by Foot Market (P = 5, Bm = 5, UCs = 5, Ds = 5, BRs = 5	25
Bamenda III	Mobil Nkwen motor-park (P = 3, Bm = 3, UCs = 4, Ds = 5, BRs = 5	20
	Amour Mezam Agency by Mile 2 Nkwen (P = 10, Bm = 8, UCs = 7, Ds = 10, BRs = 10	45
	Nso Boys Agency by Mile 4, Nkwen (P = 12, Bm = 4, UCs = 5, Ds = 7, BRs = 7	35
	Mile 4 park Nkwen (P = 12, Bm = 6, UCs = 5, Ds = 6, BRs = 6	35
Total		**275**

Source: Fieldwork, 2024

Note: P= Passengers, Bm= Businessmen, UCs= urban commuters, BDs= Bus Drivers, BRs= Bike Riders

The qualitatively, field observation guided to take photographs of the current state of the bus terminals which has been demonstrated at the result section. Focus Group Discussion with municipal mayors from the three municipal councils in Bamenda and managers of Bus Terminals of Amour Mezam, Vatican, Guarantee and Moghamo. Through these resource persons, we gather valuable information on the operation of both the council bus terminals and transport agencies terminals. Data collected from the field was treated descriptively and presented in the form of tables, charts and percentages to enhance clarity and understanding. The research participants were assured of the confidentiality of the information they provided, and that it was meant solely for research purposes. Any information provided was considered to be correct.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1. Current state of Urban Bus Terminals (BTs) in Bamenda city

In Bamenda City, Bus Terminals (BTs) are primarily controlled by private individuals who operate under the name "Transport Agencies," alongside municipal council parks known as "Motor Parks." These transport agencies are organized and managed by a society of inter-urban transporters, often structured as limited (Ltd) companies with multiple shareholders, and their operations are solely profit-driven. These BTs are located in confined spaces yet are frequently situated along busy roadsides, allowing them to capitalize on passenger demand for travel beyond the region. Each terminal's proprietor typically owns a substantial fleet of both gross and mini-buses that facilitate inter-urban travel. In addition to the transport agencies, there are municipal motor parks that serve as public transport terminals, accommodating various modes of transportation. These terminals are managed by municipal councils, and transport operators using the facilities are required to pay park fees into the council treasury. This section of the paper assesses the current state of bus terminals in Bamenda, focusing on the physical structures and layout of the bus stops, their accessibility for commuters, functionality, safety, and security. We will examine the design, size, and condition of the terminals, as well as the availability of amenities such as seating, shelters, and signage within the bus terminals.

4.1.1. Layout of the BTs in Bamenda

We evaluate the bus terminals in Bamenda in terms of structure, size and capacity, shelter and seating, accessibility, signage and information, as well as lighting and security. There are a significant number of bus terminals in Bamenda, with a total of nine (09) bus terminals of substantial size owned and managed by private transport operators. Some of these terminals such as Amour Mezam, Vatican, and Guaranti Express, are fenced and well-secured. The transport agencies themselves are cosmopolitan in nature, functioning as mini-markets that include well-furnished cosmetic shops, restaurants, cafés, and barbershops, drinking spots, and lodging rooms for inter-urban passengers. In terms of security, many of the terminals have ticket staff and security guards.

Table 2: Structure of Bus Stations in Bamenda

Name of bus stop or agency	Size of in metres square (sq.m)	Estimated distance from the road	Number of vehicles per agency	Types of vehicles in terms of seats
Amour Mezam Express	5000sq m	2m	38 buses	70 and 30 seaters
Vatican Express	6000sq.m	2m	34 buses	70seaters,30 seaters
Guaranti Express	4500sq.m	2m	39buses	70 and 30 seaters
Mondial Express	2600sq.m	2m	8 buses	70 and 30 seaters
Nso Boyz Express	800sq.m	1m	35 buses	70 seaters
The Oasis Express	800sq.m	1m	07 buses	70 seaters
The People Express	400sq.m	1m	16 buses	70 and 19 seaters
Moghamo Express	2100sq.m	1m	23 buses	70 and 30 seaters
Jean Jeannot Express	700sq.m	1m	5 buses	70 seaters
Musango Express	350sq.m	1m	4 buses	30 seaters

Source: Fieldwork, 2024

Table 2 presents the structure of the agencies regarding nomenclature, size, estimated distance from the roadside, types of vehicles, and carrying capacities. Gross agencies like Moghamo Express, Amour Mezam, and Vatican Express are situated in areas ranging from 20,002 m^2 to 60,002 m^2. Nearly all the agencies are located just 1 m to 2 m away from the main roads or streets in Bamenda. These agencies operate a considerable number of buses with varying capacities that facilitate inter-urban travel. Principal agencies such as Amour Mezam, Vatican, Moghamo, and Nso Boyz dominate inter-urban mobility and own the majority of the buses.

Field observations show that all the BTs in Bamenda under transport agencies are situated between 1-2meters from the main road. This is against the town planning policies of the city which obliges such operation at 15 meters away from road site and 1km away from each other as prescribe in the Master Plan of Bamenda, but this has not been the case. While efforts in the past have been made to decongest these BTs from central town to the cardinal entrances of the city, administrative bottleneck have kept them in their present location with the proprietors claiming administrative documents permitting them to operate in their present location. Figure 2 shows photos of the BTs within the Bamenda city.

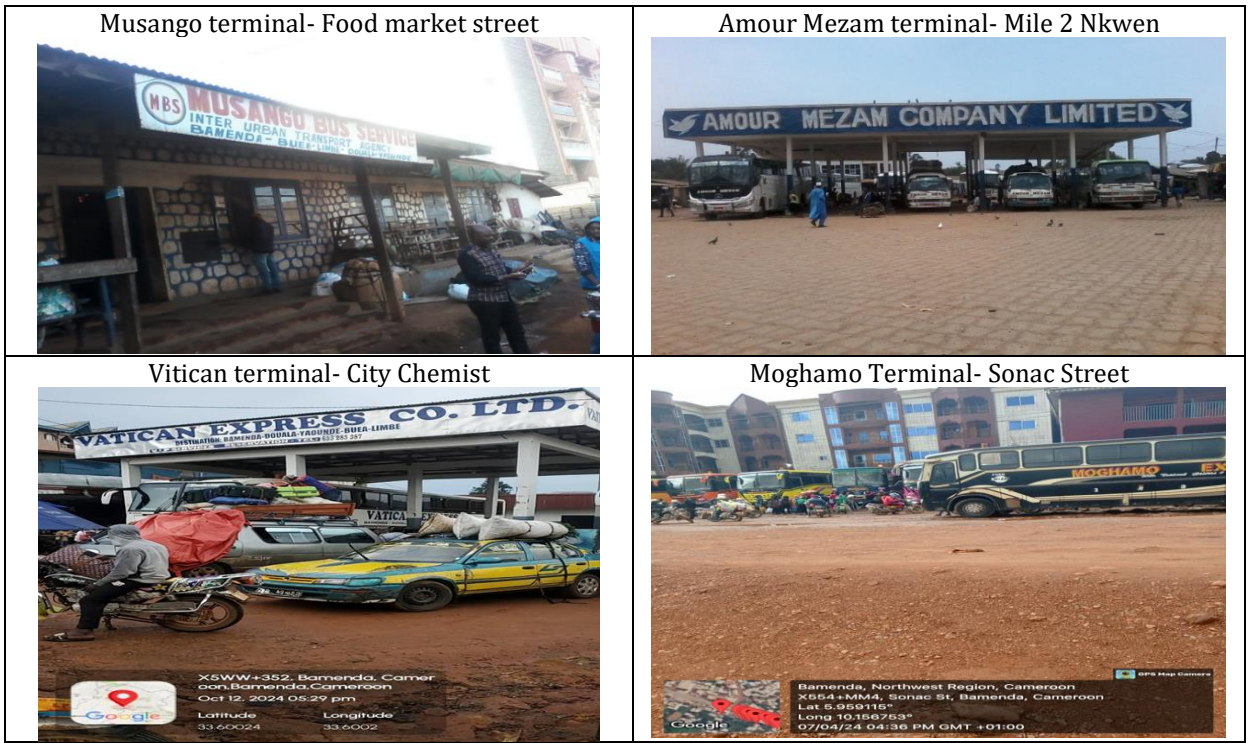

Figure 2: Bus terminals in Bamenda city
Source: Fieldwork, 2024

Another category of terminals are owned and controlled by the municipal councils in Bamenda city. The city possesses actually five of such terminals officially known as Mile 4 motor-park, Bamenda I Municipal Motor-park (BMM), Ntahturu motor-park, Mbengwi motor-park, and Mile 8 motor-park terminals. Within these terminals, the Mile 4 and BMM are the most accessible given its inter-urban transport activities. The terminals also function as periodic markets with traders bringing their goods from outside to sell within the parks. Temporal traders into the terminals pay the sum of 250fcfa per day to occupy an open space for their market product. The sheds inside are occupied for stalls filled with cosmetics and electronic appliances, there exist restaurants, saloons bars and call boxes inside the terminals. Market sheds in the terminals range from 3000-15,000fcfa per month. Table 3 gives descriptive information on the terminals activities, facilities and date of creation.

Table 3: Descriptive information on Council terminals in Bamenda City

Name of terminal	Key information
BMM PARK Date of creation: 2008	Manage by Bamenda I counccil, on the old site of the municipal forest reserve Up-Station, a market at the site, 90 sheds in total with 50 sheds unoccupied, 50000fcfa advance a shed, two market days (Wednesdays and Saturdays), park operate 6am-6pm, Electricity, water, restroom: partial, Entrance: untarred road
MILE 4 Motor Park Date of creation: 2008	Managed by Bamenda III council. Electricity, water, public toilet: NO, Entrance: tarred, park operate 6am-6pm, Drivers syndicate, park boys, security in the market, spontaneous market, normal activities. 96 sheds all occupied for business activities, 46 open spaces for market products
BALI Motor Park or Ntahturu Park Date of creation: 1996	Managed by Bamenda II council. Electricity, Entrance: untarred road, local security, drivers' union, park boys, park operate 6am-6pm, 27 occupied sheds for business activities and 3 offices, 3000fcfa a shed per month, spontaneous market.
Mbengwi Park Date of creation: 2003	Manage by Bamenda II council. Electricity, water, public toilet:NO, Entrance: un tarred, partial barrier, security intervention, park boys, drivers' union, operate 6am-6pm, 42 sheds and two offices, 5000fcfa a shed per month, spontaneous market
Mile 8 Motor Park or Muwatsu Park Date of creation:2003	Manage by Bamenda II council. Electricity, water, public toilets: Partial, partial barrier, 60 sheds, 10000fcfa a shed per month, 1 office, drivers' union, park boys, operate 6am-6pm, no security, spontaneous market activities.

Source: Fieldwork, 2024

4.1.2. Spatial location of BTs in Bamenda

The city's transportation landscape is predominantly centered on a network of bus terminals (BTs) that facilitate inter-urban mobility. These terminals streamline operations, making it easy for passengers to access services heading to various regions. Nearly all the terminals are concentrated within an estimated area of 3 km^2 in the heart of the city, with majority located at Sonac Street and City Chemist, except for Amour Mezam, which is situated at Mile 2 Nkwen. This concentration underlines the pressing need to decongest the Bamenda urban center. Currently, in response to the scramble for passengers, transport agencies have naturally dispersed by establishing sub-branches at key entrances in to the city. Notably, Nso Boyz has set up sub-terminals at Mile 4 Nkwen and Bambui, while Moghamo has established points at Small Mankon and Bambui. Vatican and Amour Mezam also have operations at Mile 4 Nkwen and Bambui.

However, significant challenges persist, particularly congestion during peak hours around major terminals such as the Vatican entrance at City Chemist, Moghamo at Sonac Street, Amour Mezam at Mile 2 Nkwen, and Nso Boyz at Mile 4 Nkwen. This usually occurs as the buses leave or at point of entering their terminals, in their struggle to cross the road, they obstruct mobility leading to traffic congestion. Also, the quality of infrastructure within the bus terminals varies, with some lacking adequate facilities, which negatively impacts the overall passenger experience. Figure 3 shows the spatial location of the BTs within the city, it also indicate point of clandestine parks which usually developed near the BTs to take advantage of transit passengers who drop at the terminals to continue journey to other small towns within the region such as passengers traveling to Banso, Kom, Nkambe and Wum.

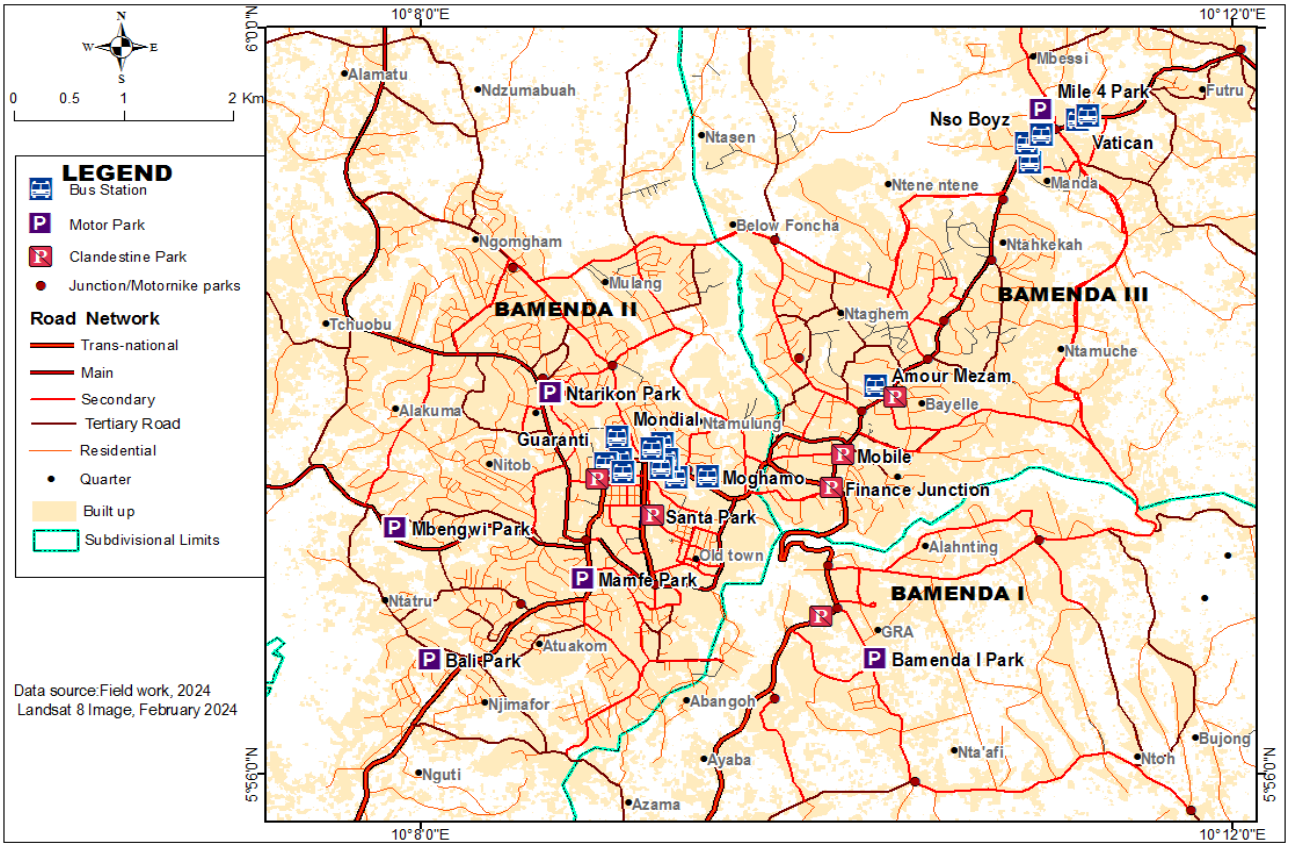

Figure 3: Spatial location of BTs in Bamenda

4.1.3. Evaluation of quality of facilities within the BTs

As illustrated in Figure 4, a comprehensive analysis was conducted on the availability and quality of facilities in different Bus Terminals (BTs). Field results indicate that the majority of facilities in transport agency BTs are of higher quality compared to those in council BTs. For instance, facilities such as mail services (73.8%), restrooms (63.6%), security (65.4%), and electricity supply (72.0%) are significantly better in transport agency BTs than in council BTs. Conversely, some facilities, including trading spaces (55.3%), circulation areas within terminals (80.0%), and parking spaces (64.3%), were found to be superior in council BTs.

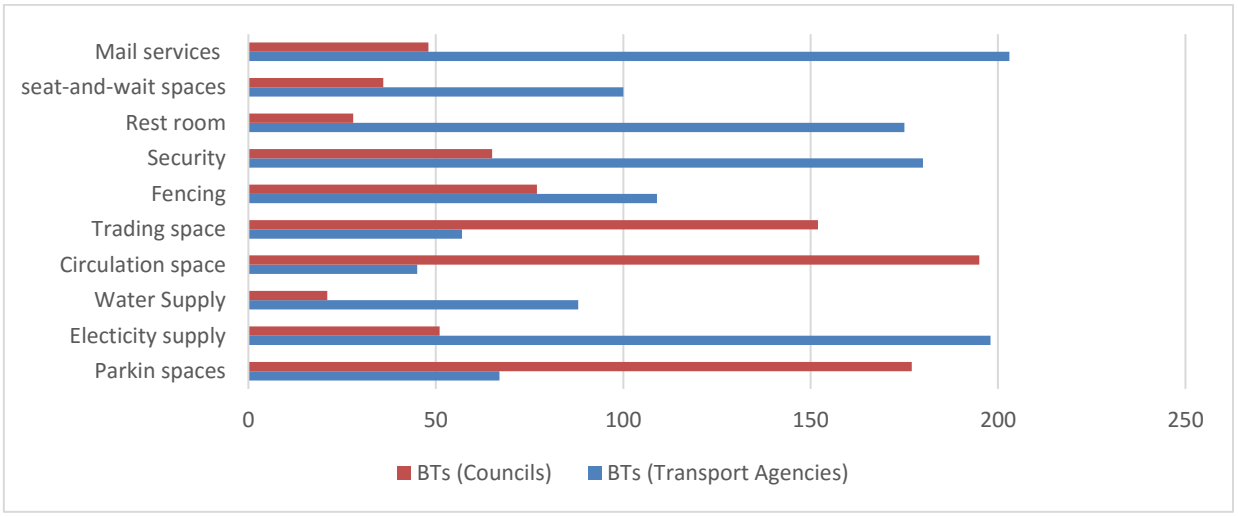

Figure 4: Availability and quality of facilities within Agencies and Council BTs in Bamenda

Additionally, water supply (32.0%) and fencing (39.6%) were observed to be of moderate quality in transport agency BTs, while rests paces (63,6%) to provide a more convenience service to passengers during seat and wait period at BTs were confortable at transport agencies. These findings

suggest that while transport agency BTs excel in critical areas like security and electricity supply, improvements are needed in water supply and fencing. Conversely, council BTs should focus on enhancing the quality of mail services.

4.2. Operational challenges of BTs in Bamenda

A good number of challenges plagues the operations of bus terminals in Bamenda ranging from unplanned, haphazard development of BTs without adequate infrastructure, insecurity, and inadequate roadway accommodations for buses, no clear and comprehensive policy on public transport; limited regulatory/institutional effectiveness and many others. It should be noted that the BTs operation in Bamenda is dominated by informal service operators who are out for profit maximization. Because of this, stiff competition is unregulated. Most of the terminals in located along major road axis, and this adjoining roads have been experiencing a lot of traffic congestion which has continued to worsen recently due to precarious nature of the road condition.

Table 4: Bus Terminal challenges in Bamenda city

Operational challenges of BTs	Frequency of respondents	Percentage (%)
Unplanned, haphazard development of BTs	255	92,7*
Insecurity at terminals	153	55,6
Congestion	215	78,2*
Inadequate accommodations spaces for buses	245	89,1*
Limited regulatory or institutional ineffectiveness	184	66,9
Administrative bottleneck	191	69,4
Poor maintenance of vehicles	210	76,4*
Vehicle overload and inconvenience to passengers	225	81,8*
Delays on kick-off schedule for buses affect passengers	203	73,8
Lack of communication systems for arrival and departure of buses	209	76,0*
Uncomfortable and poorly maintained waiting areas	220	80,0*

Source: Fieldwork, 2024

Table 4 present the challenges face by the BTs in Bamenda. As observed, 92, 7% of terminals in Bamenda are unplanned and haphazard development is taken place. They are spontaneously located along major streets to grasp advantage of passengers. This poses a serious problem to town planning of the city. Another pressing challenge observed is that 89, 1% of the terminals in Bamenda has insufficient accommodation spaces for buses. The terminals are overcrowded, or have small surface area to accommodate buses that enter the stations. Thus, upon dropping of passengers, the buses leave immediately and occupy road sides. This situation account for 78, 2% of road traffic congestion in the city and 55,6% of insecurity within the BTs.

While all these discrepancies are taken place, regulatory measures to control the terminal operations are limited accounting for 66, 9% of institutional infectiveness. Field findings further note that efforts have been made in the past to decongest the terminals with 69,4% ending up in administrative bottleneck. An Urban Decongestion Committee that was formed to look into the terminal challenges released its report in 2002. One of the obligations of the committee was to explore the existing terminals and realign them by designating or re-designating them to the right place at the entrances of the city. These initiative ended in fiasco because of administrate tussles, given some of the terminal proprietors the administrative right to operate in their present location gaining monopoly of passengers who due to their central location. Because of this, all the terminals that had moved to the periphery return back to central causing more disorder than ever.

Other operational challenges included poor maintenance of vehicles at 76,4%, the resulting effect are frequent breakdowns during journey, leading to service interruptions and late arrivals of passengers at destination. This not only frustrates passengers but also puts them at risk of being stranded. Vehicle overload is a recurrent challenge and inconvenience to 81, 8%, passengers. As a result, inter-urban passagers complaint of cramped and uncomfortable travel experience. Delays on kick-off schedule for buses affect and estimated 73, 8% passengers who missed their appointments and had to rush through other modes to catch up. The challenges are further compounded by lack of communication systems for arrival and departure of buses which affect 76, 0% of commuters and uncomfortable and poorly maintained waiting areas at 80, 0%. Most of the waiting areas in the terminals lack comfortable seating, and adequate shelters which generally affect vulnerable groups, such as the elderly or disabled, who may struggle to find suitable seating or access to amenities.

4.2.1 Administrative bottleneck on the BTs operation

Between 2003 and 2007, members of the Bamenda Urban Council, under the leadership of the Urban Delegate, established a decongestion committee to redesign bus terminal operational spaces in the city. Their goal was to liberate central areas from the unchecked exploitation caused by bus terminal activities that caused congestion, eliminate informal structures that obstructed streets and central business zones. Unfortunately, this commendable initiative was short-lived due to administrative oversights. It's important to note that the redesign of bus terminals was part of a national program developed in 2007, aimed at alleviating congestion in urban centers across Cameroon. This management strategy was incorporated into the structural post-adjustment reconstruction processes initiated by the government. In this framework, residents observed significant urban development driven more by the private sector than the public sector, often justified by privatization efforts.

In a context where the disordered establishment of bus terminals by private individuals in central cities was tolerated by public authorities during the economic crisis of 1980s, in a process to redesign the bus terminals decades later became a challenging task for the city authorities. These authorities faced the formidable terminal operators, who are well-organized and prepared to defend their position. Many of these terminal operators had received building permits from the same authorities, allowing them to develop complex commercial structures in prime locations within the central city. Amidst concerns of corruption, there are suspicions that administrators who governed Bamenda and were directly involved in the bus terminal decongestion efforts played a significant role in the problematic administration of the decongestion initiative of the bus terminals throughout their administrative careers.

4.3 Discussion

The findings of this study showcase the structural and operational challenges faced by Urban Bus Terminals (UBTs) in Bamenda City. The bus terminals in the city are dominated by informal control by private transport agencies. This mirrors the findings of Gitau & Augustin (2013), who noted that the privatization of transport services often leads to informal and unregulated operations. The results show that terminals are often located along busy roadsides and within confined spaces, leading to congestion, particularly during peak hours. This observation is consistent with Michael S. & Sidy C. (2018), who discusses how poorly organized mass transit systems contribute to urban congestion. Additionally, Guzman *et al*. (2020) emphasized that the lack of adequate planning and institutional capacity in urban transport management leads to ineffective mobility solutions, a sentiment echoed by the operational challenges faced in Bamenda. The historical context provided in the introduction, particularly regarding the effects of Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs), finds resonance in the current operational state of UBTs in Bamenda. The findings suggest a decline in organized public transport, aligning with Lall & Deichmann (2010), who argued that such programs led to the neglect of public infrastructure. The reliance on transport agencies reflects a shift away from state-supported public transport systems, which has been a common theme across Sub-Saharan Africa (Ehebrecht *et al*., 2018). The results indicate minimal community involvement in the management and organization of bus terminals. This lack of stakeholder engagement relates closely to the barriers identified by Antonio L.L. *et al*. (2014), who cited the absence of community participation as a significant hurdle in improving urban transport systems. The findings suggest that addressing these participatory gaps could enhance the effectiveness and acceptance of transport services in Bamenda. While the findings from Bamenda highlight a highly privatized bus terminal environment, they also hint at a potential need for better integration of transport modes, as discussed by Mwaniki (2011) regarding Nairobi. This suggests an area for development where organized connectivity between different transport types could alleviate congestion and improve overall urban mobility.

4.3.1 Strategies for sustainable Bus Terminal operation in Bamenda

Given the current unprecedented urbanization rates of Bamenda, many bus terminals or either sub-sections of existing ones are multiplying at different core locations in the inner city. Bamenda is becoming “city of haphazard bus terminals” if measures are not taken to control this wanton exploitation. We therefore propose the following strategies for sustainable bus terminal operation in the city.

- Development of Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan (SUMP). A SUMP should be developed and incorporated into the Master Plan of Bamenda city. A Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan (SUMP) is a strategic framework aimed at promoting sustainable transportation solutions within urban areas. In the context of Bamenda, a SUMP would focus on developing a cohesive approach to bus terminal operations that prioritizes public transport efficiency, accessibility, and environmental sustainability. By integrating various modes of transport, including buses, taxis, motor-bikes, and pedestrian pathways, a SUMP can enhance connectivity and reduce

reliance on private vehicles. This strategy would also involve stakeholder engagement, ensuring that the needs and concerns of the community are addressed in the planning process, thus fostering public support and participation in bus terminal operations. Implementing a SUMP in Bamenda would also lead to the establishment of clear guidelines for bus terminal design, operation, and maintenance, ensuring that they align with sustainability goals. This could include features like redesign of bus terminals, dedicated bus lanes, real-time passenger information systems, and facilities that promote efficient operations.

Figure 5 is a framework for effective Bus Terminals operation in Bamenda that may guide stakeholders of the city in their policy toward the transport sector in the city.

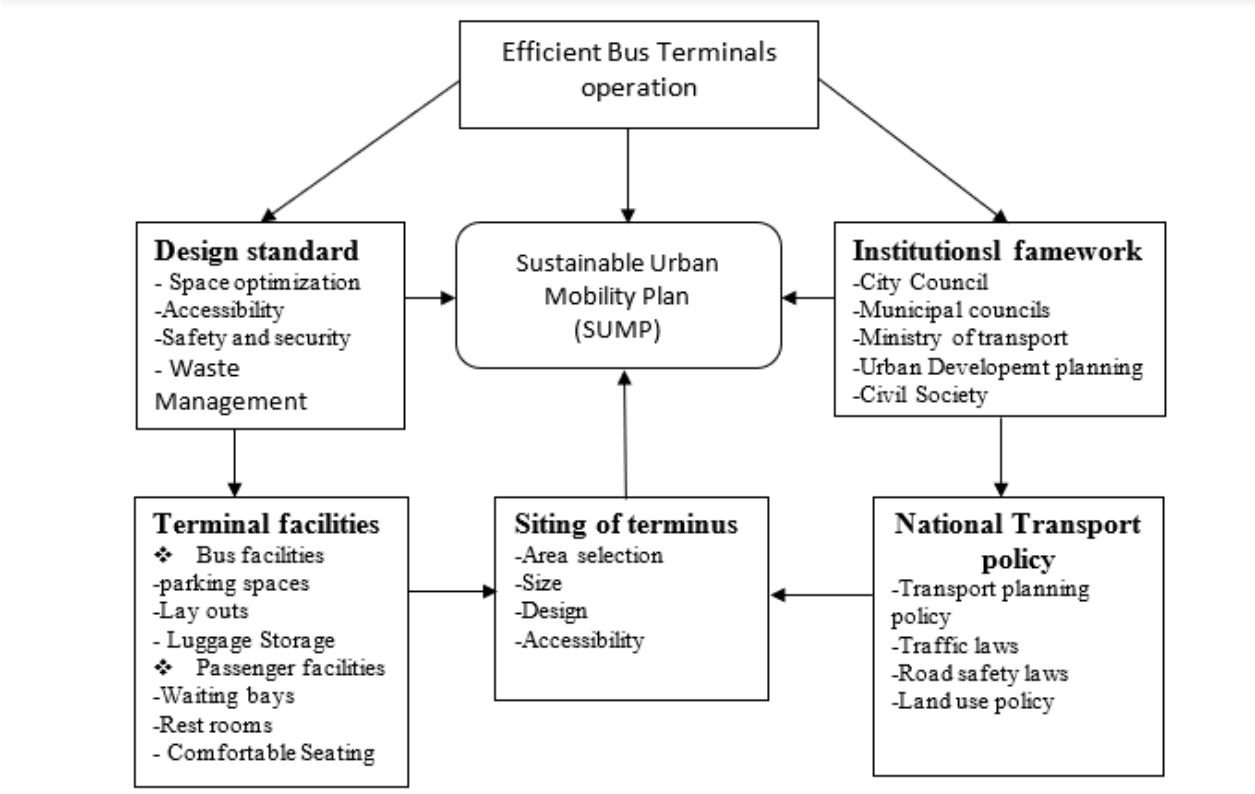

Figure 5: Framework for sustainable Bus Terminal operation in Bamenda
Source: Author, 2024

- Redesign of Bus Terminals (BTs). A complete redesign of BTs in Bamenda is essential. None of the existing terminals in the central city adhere to town planning standards. According to the Urban Planning document, bus terminals should be located at least 15 meters from the main road and 3 kilometers apart from each other. However, this guideline has not been followed; currently, all bus terminal operations are situated merely 1-2 meters from the road, with the majority clustered within a 3-kilometer radius. Therefore, redesigning the terminals at the main entrances to the city will enhance organizational layouts, reduce congestion, and streamline passenger flow, ultimately improving the overall travel experience.
- Terminal design standards. The current state of the terminals is of low standard, and uncomfortable to many users. Terminal design standards are crucial for promoting sustainable bus terminal operations in Bamenda, helping to enhance efficiency, safety, and environmental responsibility. Key elements, such as adequate waiting areas, proper signage, and lightening, and waste disposal points should be constructed because they contribute to a more user-friendly bus terminal operation, ultimately promoting sustainable urban mobility and improving the quality of life of the urban residents in Bamenda.

CONCLUSION

The analysis of the current state of Urban Bus Terminals (BTs) in Bamenda city reveals a complex interplay between private bus terminals and municipal facilities, shaped by economic motivations

and regulatory challenges. The dominance of privately-owned terminals, characterized by their strategic roadside locations and diverse amenities, illustrates a vibrant yet congested transport landscape that caters to a growing demand for inter-urban travel. However, this proliferation has occurred in violation of town planning regulations, with many terminals situated unacceptably close to main roads, exacerbating urban congestion. While municipal motor parks provide essential public transport services and serve as commercial hubs for local vendors, they often lack the necessary amenities and infrastructure to support the volume of passengers and activities they accommodate. The accessibility and functionality of these terminals are critical, yet many still face significant operational inefficiencies. The spatial clustering of BTs further underscores a pressing need for strategic urban planning interventions to alleviate congestion and enhance transportation efficiency in Bamenda. A comprehensive approach that includes relocating terminals, improving facility standards, and enforcing existing regulations is essential to create a sustainable transport environment that benefits both commuters and the broader community. Overall, addressing these challenges will not only improve the quality of transport services but also contribute to the overall urban development goals of Bamenda city.

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