

How to Improve the Management of Urban Public Transport in China: From the Perspective of Sustainable Development

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Abstract. In recent years, urban public transport has always developed greatly in China, but it has been confronted with many challenges. To overcome them, the government should improve the management of urban public transport facing some problems. They are discovered and analyzed in the paper. As a new philosophy or strategy, sustainable development of urban public transport can guide the solutions of them and the improvement of urban public transport management. From the perspective of sustainable development, the countermeasures by the government for dealing with such problems and improving urban public transport management are provided.

Introduction

In recent ten years, along with the continuous development of economy and the acceleration of urbanization, the demand for public transport has increased drastically, and public transport has entered the stage of rapid development in Chinese cities. Only as regards buses and trolleys, there were in total 458.955 thousand buses and trolleys in Chinese cities in 2014, with total length of their lines of 620.051 kilometers and total passenger capacity of 7.228457 billion, but those were only respectively 312.812 million, 125.236 thousand and 4.477648 billion in 2006. However, the development and operation of public transport are facing many challenges. Due to drastic growth of vehicles, especially motor vehicles, the environment of urban transport is becoming more complex, buses are looking at lower efficiency and their operation safety are affected seriously, and many public transport enterprises are facing more serious deficit and their services are often complained by passengers. Although the governments in all levels have always paid more attention to the management of urban public transport and the central government made the policy of “the Prioritization of Public Transport Development” more than ten years ago, how to improve the management of urban public transport is an urgent issue for the governments to resolve. As a new philosophy or strategy, sustainable development of urban public transport is attracting more and more attention and it can play an important role in improving the management of public transport in Chinese cities, which is still affected deeply by many old ideas concerning the development and operation of urban public transport. To overcome current challenges faced by urban public transport, it is necessary to study how to improve the management of public transport in Chinese cities from the perspective of sustainable development.

Sustainable Development of Urban Public Transport

Since 1960s, with rapid urbanization and motorization, traffic jams, environmental pollutions and energy shortage have become more serious in many big cities of the world, so sustainable development of urban transport has been highlighted gradually. Public transport can play a significant role in realizing sustainable development of urban transport and even that of cities. To develop public transport and limit private cars is a good way to promote sustainable development of urban transport. For urban public transport, sustainable development is also a critical issue. Its sustainable development is included in sustainable development of urban transport.

However, sustainable development of urban public transport is different from that of urban transport. In a lot of cities of developed countries, public transport is dominant in urban transport. This

mode has been proved efficient in promoting sustainable development of cities and their transport system. How to keep the role of public transport and lead sustainable development of urban transport is the primary task for sustainable development of urban public transport. To fulfill the task, urban public transport should provide enough, efficient and fair services and keep economic, orderly, safe and green operation. These are exact meaning of sustainable development of urban public transport.

In China, the government has gradually highlighted the sustainable development of urban transport and the significant role of public transport in realizing it, and made and implemented the policy of “the Prioritization of Public Transport Development”. However, it hasn’t made the sustainable development of urban public transport clear and initiated related policies.

Status quo of the Management of Urban Public Transport

After the reform and opening, the central government has issued a lot of laws, policies and technical standards concerning the management of urban public transport and strengthened the management of urban public transport greatly, with the continuous development of urban public transport. Among them, more important ones are The Circular of the State Council Concerning the Approval and Transmission of the Report on Urban Public Transport Reform by the Ministry of Urban and Rural Construction and Environmental Protection (1985), The Regulations Concerning Urban Road Management (1996), The Administrative Measures Concerning Taxi Management in Cities (1997), The Measures Concerning Franchise of Municipal Utilities (2004), The Administrative Measures Concerning Passenger Transport by Buses and Trolleys in Cities (2005), The Circular of the General Office of the State Council Concerning the Transmission of the Report on Priority Development of Urban Public Transport by the Ministry of Construction and so on (2005), The Provisions Concerning the Qualification of Taxi Drivers (2011), Guiding Opinions of the State Council on Priority Development of Urban Public Transport (2012), The Provisions Concerning Taxi Operation and Services (2014) and The Administrative Measures Concerning Franchise of Infrastructures and Public Utilities (2015). Both the ideas and the institution of urban public transport management and its contents and measures are involved in these laws and policies.

As regards management ideas, the feature of public welfare of urban public transport is emphasized, the dominant role of urban public transport in urban transport is determined, and that the government has the responsibility to provide the urban public transport service has been accepted widely. For example, Guiding Opinions of the State Council on Priority Development of Urban Public Transport pinpointed the public welfare of urban public transport should be emphasized, the development of urban public transport should be placed in the first position of the development of urban transport, the level guaranteeing urban public transport should be increased.....The government of cities should be responsible for the development of urban public transport.

As regards management institution, at the level of central government, after the super ministry reform of 2008, the functions of urban public transport administration by the original Ministry of Construction has been transferred to the Ministry of Transport (actually just the functions of urban passenger transport administration), while for numerous local governments there some difference in different cities. They mainly adopt three types of management institution. For the first type, the management of urban public transport is shared mainly by the departments of transport, urban construction, municipal administration and public security. For the second type, the management of urban and rural road transport including urban public transport is conducted by the transport department. For the third type, the unified management of all transportation fields including urban public transport is conducted by a comprehensive transport agency. The type is also referred to as “One City One Transport Agency”. Among them, the second type is dominant.

As regards management content, the management of urban public transport vehicles and operation facilities and lines, and that of urban public transport enterprises and their employees are included. It also can be divided into the management of planning and construction of urban public transport, that of operational services and that of safety management. For example, The Administrative Measures

Concerning Passenger Transport by Buses and Trolleys in Cities provides the compilation of the planning special for urban buses and trolleys, the construction of passenger transport service facilities of urban buses and trolleys, and the operation service and safety of urban buses and trolleys.

As regards management measures, institutional measures and temporary measures are involved. The former includes the issuance and implementation of laws, technical standards and long-term policies, while the latter includes the issuance and implementation of interim policies. Guiding Opinions of the State Council on Priority Development of Urban Public Transport proposes seven types of policies for promoting the development of urban public transport, including strengthening the adjustment and control of planning, accelerating infrastructure construction, enhancing the comprehensive development of the land for public transport, increasing government investment, broadening the investment channels, ensuring traffic priority of public transport vehicles and encouraging the development of intelligent transport.

Major Problems in Current Management of Urban Public Transport

China is in the period of the mode transition of economy and society. Due to various factors, the management mode of urban public transport by the government hasn't been fixed, in which explorations and trials are being made in some aspects. Therefore, some problems in the management of urban public transport are hard to avoid.

As regards management ideas, although the feature of public welfare of urban public transport is emphasized, the government hasn't made its responsibility in the development and operation of urban public transport and the appropriate extent of its intervention of urban public transport clear and set the definite objectives for regulating urban public transport, because there are some problems in understanding urban public transport. There are some misunderstandings about urban public transport by the government. For example, the construction of bridges and roads has been often regarded as the development of urban public transport. The central government has paid less attention to the development and operation of urban public transport. The governments have also paid less attention to the management of urban public transport.

As regards management institution, the power division between the central government and local governments in the management of urban public transport is indefinite, and in the level of local governments too many departments are involved in the management of urban public transport. For the former, the power of the central government in the management of urban public transport is too strong. For the latter, the pattern of multiple management results in non-uniform management and lower efficiency. In some cities, although the transport department is responsible for the unified management of public road transport, its function is limited to the management of passenger transport in fact, the management of planning, land and traffic safety is respectively provided by other departments, not to mention the management of urban road and rail transit and others. Multiple management, unclear responsibilities and divided policies from various sources are main problems faced by the management of urban public transport in the country.

As regards management content, macroeconomic management and microeconomic management of urban public transport aren't distinguished clearly, the management of urban roads and their facilities is excluded outside the management scope of urban public transport, which is conducted by provincial construction departments and municipal engineering administration department of cities, and the management of the external environment for the operation and development of urban public transport is lacked

As regards management measures, the interim measures are too much, and the institutional measures are few. In the aspect of the legal system construction on urban public transport management, the legislations on urban public transport management aren't sound. There isn't a complete basic law. For existing related legislations, the effectiveness levels are lower, and their content isn't complete.

The above-mentioned problems have more negative impact on the management of urban public transport. They have directly reduced its quality and efficiency. Finally, they have affected the operation and development of urban public transport in the country.

Countermeasures for Improving Urban Public Transport Management

Sustainable development of urban public transport is a critical issue. To realize great development and efficient and economic operation of urban public transport, the government should highlight the issue in the management of the field. It provides new guidelines for the management of urban public transport in China, and a good opportunity for improving it. From the perspective of sustainable development, for those problems in current management of urban public transport, it is necessary to make great efforts to improve it according to the following.

First, the government should establish the ideas of sustainable development, be fully aware of the significance of sustainable development for urban public transport and cities, have definite objectives in the sustainable development of urban public transport, and make related policies.

Second, the government should make its responsibilities in the development and operation of urban public transport clear, which are to ensure the feature of public welfare of urban public transport and to regulate it well, rather than to provide the services of urban public transport directly, and highlight the role of market in the development and operation of urban public transport and reduce related interventions as possible.

Third, for the power division between the central government and local governments, main power in the management of urban public transport should be given to local governments, because the development and operation of urban public transport should be carried out according to local conditions and for local governments, the centralized mode of the management of urban public transport should be adopted.

Finally, the government should list the management of roads and their facilities in the scope of the management of urban public transport, distinguish the regulation of the field and related macroeconomic policies, take strong measures for the limitation of private cars and the improvement of the environment of the development and operation of urban public transport, and establish a whole set of management system mainly by enacting the law on urban public transport and others.

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