

## **C-12: Bad state of our roads - who is responsible?**

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Present state of our road network cannot be considered as satisfactory even though a couple of hundred km of roads are in good condition. Pot holes & cracks, eroded shoulders, damaged side walks, trenches across roads, are evidence of the unsatisfactory condition of the road network. One of the reasons for this is that with the age of our road network it has not been systematically upgraded to withstand increasing traffic loads. However, this cannot be considered as the only reason for the bad state of our roads. This paper investigates the possible contributing factors for having bad roads and their inter-dependability.

In order to identify the possible factors, road failure discussions were held with individuals belonging to different groups interested in the road network: road users, policy makers, authorities looking after roads, technical personnel involved in road construction and maintenance, persons involved in road management and enforcement of law.

For further study 6 different areas were identified: technical, environmental, legal, social, political and financial. Present status prevailing with respect to above areas were investigated and the factors contributing towards having bad roads were classified into those 6 groups.

Information relevant to this study was collected from personal interviews, literature available and from field surveys. More attention was given to the following areas when collecting information: road classification and authorities involved, highway maintenance, highway design practice, laws and by-laws, causes for road failure and public awareness.

From the field surveys it was found that the surface run-off is the main reason for road failure. Inappropriate geometric design practice is one of the reasons for unnecessary water flow over road surfaces. Not having a proper road classification system and related geometric design standards are the main reasons for the above

However, water flow over the road surface is not entirely due to bad geometric design. Insufficient or non existence of drains, illegal or improper land use development along side roads, misunderstandings due to lack of co-ordination among different organizations, negligence of road users also have contributed towards unnecessary water flow over the road surface.

Illegal or improper road side land use developments are mainly due to the lack of public awareness regarding relevant legislation. No attempts have been made to prevent people making mistakes. Because of that, enforcement of law has become difficult. Further, public support is lost due to the fact that road user interests are not being looked after by the ordinances and by-laws related to roads.

It is important to have a rational road classification system and responsibility should be handed over to different organizations based on the classification and the technical capabilities of the organization. Present design practices, specially with respect to minor roads, should be carried out based on a simpler and practical pavement management system. By-laws related to roads should be amended so that road user interests are looked after and political will for law enforcement should be encouraged. Public awareness should be increased with respect to rights and responsibilities.

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