

Summary

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Transport and Public Works

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Key points

- Bahrain is implementing an ambitious agenda of infrastructure development.
- The country plans to use public-private partnerships (PPPs) that generally involve concessions.
- Officials intend to reduce the risk for private-sector investment.

Synopsis

Bahrain is implementing an ambitious agenda of infrastructure development. “We want economic growth, but that is not realistic without strong infrastructure,” said H.E. Essam Bin Abdullah Khalaf, Minister of Works, Municipalities Affairs and Urban Planning of Bahrain.

Different from the past, the government will not go it alone. It is inviting companies to share the work and the wealth through public-private partnerships (PPPs). These generally involve concessions. “We want the private sector to work with us on planning, policies and organisation,” said H.E. Eng. Kamal bin Ahmed Mohammed, Minister of Transport and Telecommunications of Bahrain.

“We are trying to reduce the risks for private-sector investment,” said Mariam Ahmed Jumaan, Undersecretary of Land Transport of Bahrain.

Transportation projects lead the way. They fall into three basic categories: logistic zones, to help boost the GCC as a cargo hub; integrated urban mobility for people; and long-distance travel and transportation, including airports, railways and ports.

Specific endeavours include an urban light rail system, expansion of the current airport, an entirely new airport, road building, and a second causeway with Saudi Arabia (with both road and rail). The rail element of the latter will be linked to the projected regional GCC railway network. They are at various stages of completion, from planning to construction.

The new wing of the Bahrain International Airport will open next year. It will increase passenger capacity by almost four times, but that will not be enough, according to Ahmed Mohammed. “Since we are an island, we cannot convince people to make investments unless we are connected,” he said. The projected new airport is expected to take 15 years to build, and “needs to start the day we inaugurate” the expansion of the current facility.

Transportation already makes a significant contribution to Bahrain’s GDP, said Ahmed Mohammed. “It creates jobs, has economic and social effects, and contributes to the quality of life and standard of living.”

Other insights

Bahrain’s infrastructure drive is taking place amidst a series of changes in demography and technology. Population growth and urbanisation are combining to put pressure on transportation infrastructure, especially in cities. At the same time, technological advances will allow planners to offer holistic solutions known as “mobility as a service”. Individuals will plan their trips using devices, which will in turn collect data that can be used to improve the system.

Emerging technologies can help solve the first mile/last mile problem, which has long hindered greater adoption of public transportation. Rarely does public transportation take people precisely from their doorsteps to their final destinations. If the final segment is complicated, people often jump into

their cars instead of taking the bus or train. Bicycle shares, taxis and buses on demand, as well as other solutions can help address this problem.

As public transportation improves and becomes more integrated, with unified payment systems, fewer people are expected to buy automobiles. Car sales should begin to decline by 2030.

Session panellists

H.E. Essam Bin Abdullah Khalaf, Minister of Works, Municipalities Affairs and Urban Planning, Bahrain

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Disclosures

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