

SECTOR ASSESSMENT (SUMMARY): TRANSPORT (ROAD TRANSPORT [NONURBAN])

A. Sector Road Map

1. Sector Performance, Problems, and Opportunities

1. **Development challenges.** Tajikistan is a landlocked and mountainous country in Central Asia bordered by Afghanistan, the People's Republic of China (PRC), the Kyrgyz Republic, and Uzbekistan. Despite its strategic location, in 2019 the country had a gross domestic product per capita of just \$871. The poverty rate in 2019 was about 27%, with most of the poor living in rural areas where transport networks are underdeveloped.¹ Most of Tajikistan's transport infrastructure was built during the Soviet era and designed to optimize the Soviet system of linking republics. After independence in 1991, the system no longer met the country's transport needs. Today the country requires international and domestic connectivity, complemented by cross-border trade with its neighbors. Tajikistan depends heavily on its road transport corridors to support and promote the country's economic activities. The country's ailing transport infrastructure and geographic isolation result in high transport costs and limit people's access to markets and services, posing significant barriers to the country's development.

2. The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) has presented Tajikistan with unique challenges. The pandemic has led to lockdowns, slowing the country's economic growth and severely impacting individual economic activities and incomes as well as both public and private service operations, including in the transport sector. Dushanbe International Airport was closed on 20 March 2020 as a response to COVID-19, and other transport subsectors have been similarly affected.² The country's economy will exhibit a steep decline in 2020 and residual impacts from the pandemic could be felt for years.

3. **Transport sector overview.** The Ministry of Transport (MOT) is responsible for roads, railways, and airports; transport sector policies; and related regulation, planning, operation, and investment. The MOT is headed by a minister and three deputy ministers, and is divided into six departments that include 111 staff at its headquarters (77 professional and 34 support staff). The MOT's subordinate organizations include six regional road administrations responsible for transport management and 64 Government Automobile Road Establishments (GUSADs). The country's transport network comprises about 26,600 kilometers (km) of roads, 978 km of railway tracks, and five airports.

4. Overall, road transport is by far the most dominant transport mode in the country for trade and movement of people, accounting for about 94% of freight transport (84.3 million tons out of 89.6 million tons in 2018) and nearly all passenger transport (613 million passengers out of 615 million passengers in 2018).³ Road freight tariffs are entirely deregulated and road haulage companies enter into agreements with customers at negotiated rates, making the road subsector highly competitive. Domestic freight favors roads over railways, partly because the average freight haul distance is relatively short at 22 km, but also because domestic rail connectivity is limited. By contrast, rail accounts for 77% of international freight transport, even though cross-border rail connectivity exists only with Uzbekistan, with onward connections mainly to Kazakhstan and

¹ World Bank. [Poverty in Tajikistan 2019](#) (accessed 5 October 2020).

² Asia-Plus. 2020. [Tajikistan closes all its airports due to coronavirus concerns](#). 20 March; Asia-Plus. 2020. [Tajikistan resumes regular flights with Istanbul](#). 2 October. As of 5 October 2020, the Dushanbe International Airport has partially opened and two internal flights are operational. Another international flight is expected to resume on 8 October 2020.

³ Tajikistan Statistics Agency. <https://www.stat.tj/tj/database-real-sector>. (accessed 5 October 2020).

Russia. Because of limitations in railway infrastructure and in the availability of services, the volume of rail freight dropped from 13.1 million tons in 2000 to only 5.3 million tons in 2018, while the volume of road freight increased from 14.6 million tons to 84.3 million tons over the same period. For domestic passenger transport, people rely heavily on road transport because of limited domestic passenger rail and air services.⁴ Meanwhile, about 70% of international passengers use rail or air services, and the rest use roads.

5. **Cross-border transport.** The Ministry of Economic Development and Trade is the agency with overall responsibility for logistics and cross-border facilities in the country. The most important border crossings for road freight transport are Tursunzoda, Chanak, and Konibodom with Uzbekistan; Guliston with the Kyrgyz Republic; Kulma with the PRC; and Nizhny Panj with Afghanistan. These border crossings each serve 5,000–20,000 trucks per year. Other border crossings are more important for passenger cars and serve comparatively few trucks. Most of these border crossings are connected by the abovementioned international corridors, highlighting the importance of road network connectivity and regional integration. Despite recent transport infrastructure improvements, the World Bank’s 2018 Logistics Performance Index placed Tajikistan near the bottom of the global ranking (134th out of 160).⁵ Logistics costs are extremely high, accounting for about 20% of exported value and 17% of imported value.⁶

6. **Railways.** The railway subsector is operated by the state unitary enterprise Tajikistan Railways (Rohi Ohani Tojikiston), which was established under the MOT in 1994. The railway network consists of 958 km of broad gauge (1,520-millimeter) non-electrified single-track, including 682 km of main-line track. The network is divided into two separate subnetworks, in the north and in the center-south of the country; these subnetworks are linked through Uzbekistan, requiring additional travel cost and time. Closure of the Uzbekistan and Tajikistan border up to 2018 made it impossible to travel between Dushanbe and Khujand or travel internationally by rail. Restrictions on Tajik transporters transiting through Turkmenistan continue to complicate rail transport to Turkey and Europe. New railway connections are planned with Afghanistan (connecting to Iran and/or Pakistan) and the Kyrgyz Republic, but no firm action has been taken. The existing railway facilitates trade with Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, and Russia (mainly exporting bulk goods such as aluminum, textiles, and industrial products, and importing hydrocarbons). International passenger rail service from Dushanbe is extremely limited, and currently the lone international passenger train out of Dushanbe, serving Moscow, is limited to two or three trips per week. There is room for further institutional and physical development of the subsector.

7. **Civil aviation.** The civil aviation subsector is managed by the autonomous Civil Aviation Agency under the government, and air traffic control is carried out by the state unitary enterprise TajikAirNavigation. Although air transport and civil aviation services are relatively underdeveloped, the subsector has been expanding. Tajikistan has four international airports and one domestic airport.⁷ There are two national carriers: state-owned Tajik Air and privately owned Somon Air. About 15 international airlines offer services to/from several destinations, mostly low-cost Russian

⁴ Domestic trains operate along the Dushanbe–Kurgonteppa–Kulob line, Dushanbe–Kurgonteppa–Shahrtuz, Dushanbe–Pakhtabad, and Dushanbe–Khujand–Konibodom via Uzbekistan. International trains operate between Dushanbe and Moscow and Khujand and Moscow. The only domestic flights are between Dushanbe and Khujand and Dushanbe and Khorog.

⁵ World Bank. 2018. *International Logistics Performance Index Global Ranking*. Washington, DC. Tajikistan ranked 150th in efficiency of customs clearance processes, 127th in quality of transport infrastructure, and 104th in timeliness of shipments delivery.

⁶ World Bank. 2013. *Road Transport and Logistics Providers in Central Asia: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, and Tajikistan*. Washington, DC.

⁷ The four international airports are Dushanbe, Khujand, Bokhtar, and Kulob (Decree 707 of 2009), while Khorog only serves domestic flights

airlines connecting to locations in Russia and serving Tajik migrant workers. An International Civil Aviation Organization audit in 2015 identified significant shortcomings, particularly in aircraft airworthiness and air navigation services, potentially discouraging some carriers from entering the market or offering code-sharing flights.

8. **Roads.** Tajikistan has a large road network inherited from the former Soviet Union. Of about 26,600 km of roads, 14,339 km are under the MOT's jurisdiction. This comprises 3,348 km of international roads (23%), 2,127 km of republican roads (15%), and 8,864 km of local roads (62%).⁸ Paved roads account for 72% of the MOT's road network (by length), including 89% of international roads, 77% of republican roads, and 65% of local roads. Nearly half of the paved roads have an asphalt concrete surface, while the remainder are a mix of bitumen and aggregate. Unpaved roads comprise gravel (20% of all roads) and earthen roads (8%—almost exclusively local roads). The road density is 187 km per 1,000 square km, which is comparable to that of the Kyrgyz Republic (176 km per 1,000 square km). The backbone of Tajikistan's international road network, comprising four Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC) corridors (2, 3, 5, and 6) and three Asian Highways (7, 65, and 66), has been largely improved with assistance from international partners including the Asian Development Bank (ADB).

9. **Road subsector challenges.** Although a large portion of the international road network has been improved in the last decades with development partner support, the national road network remains largely in poor condition. The growing portfolio of rehabilitated roads in Tajikistan requires more attention and action on road safety and road asset management to account for increased traffic volumes and loads and higher vehicle speeds, which have been particularly acute post-rehabilitation. Improvements in road planning, design, and operation and maintenance are slowly being introduced but remain constrained by weak institutional capacity and inadequate funding, data availability, and evidence-based planning.

10. **Institutional arrangements in the road subsector.** Ministries involved in the subsector include the Ministry of Interior for road safety, the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade for cross-border facilities, the Ministry of Finance (MOF) for road maintenance funding, and the MOT for road maintenance and network improvement. However, no umbrella platform exists to facilitate consultations and coordination of road policies and programs among ministries and stakeholders, including private sector and civil society stakeholders. Regionally, CAREC offers possibilities in this area while also offering a platform for member countries to share experiences.

11. **Road maintenance.** The MOT's 2019 road condition surveys revealed that about 43% of international roads, 59% of republican roads, and 66% of local roads were in poor condition. From 2010 to 2019, the MOT's annual budget for road maintenance doubled from TJS34 million to TJS68 million. However, because of the 120% compounded devaluation of the somoni during that period, the budget allocation in United States dollar terms actually declined slightly, and has not been able to keep up with inflation. The budget for maintenance is chronically constrained, causing difficulties in properly planning and executing maintenance.

12. The budgetary process for road funding is centralized at the MOF, which allocates funds to the MOT for both road maintenance and construction based on the availability of national budget funds rather than the MOT's estimated maintenance needs. Recognizing the immediate need to further expand its revenue base, the government has sought assistance from development partners to (i) establish a dedicated road maintenance fund, (ii) identify funding requirements and possible sources such as road user charges, and (iii) introduce tolling on

⁸ Ministry of Transport, July 2020.

selected highways. Budget allocations are primarily allocated to routine and winter maintenance carried out through GUSADs, while periodic maintenance funding remains limited, leading to most roads failing to receive timely treatments.

13. The MOT lacks data on the inventory and condition of its road network and related structures (e.g., bridges and tunnels). Such data would allow the MOT to improve its planning and budget allocation and to properly justify its budget requests to MOF, showing the implications of different budget scenarios on future road conditions. The government is finalizing and plans to issue its 5-year road asset management system (RAMS) Action Program for 2020–2024 in 2020. The RAMS Action Program foresees the development of a RAMS database at MOT to manage and analyze data as the basis for improving road maintenance and asset management and planning. To implement the RAMS Action Program, the MOT will establish a RAMS Unit in 2020. The unit will require dedicated staff, equipment, and software, and extensive training and capacity building will be required for the unit and for additional MOT staff in the use of the equipment and software and in integrating evidence-based data analysis into the MOT’s road subsector planning.

14. **Road safety.** Vehicle ownership is relatively low at 43 vehicles per 1,000 people in 2018 (footnote 3), which is similar to Uzbekistan and Afghanistan but much lower than other countries in Central Asia. Despite this, Tajikistan has a poor road safety record. According to official figures, 391 road traffic fatalities were reported in 2019.⁹ However, the World Health Organization estimates that the figure is nearly four times higher, corresponding to about 18.1 fatalities per 100,000 people in 2016—among the highest in the region (comparable with Russia and PRC).¹⁰ Vehicle drivers comprised 22% of the fatalities, while pedestrians comprised 40% and vehicle passengers comprised 36%. With assistance from ADB under the CAREC framework, the MOT has been developing a road safety strategy (National Road Safety Strategy for Highways in the Republic of Tajikistan up to 2030).

2. Government’s Sector Strategy

15. The development of the transport sector in Tajikistan is guided by the National Development Strategy¹¹ and implemented through the State Program on Transport Sector Development, 2010–2025.¹² The State Program on Transport Sector Development is based on the Transport Sector Master Plan.¹³ The program forms the basis for the government’s strategic planning in the transport sector and a framework for coordination among government bodies and development partners. The program includes a list of short-, medium-, and long-term investments that is regularly reviewed and updated, and aims to (i) minimize total transport costs, (ii) develop specific transport modes and enhance their efficiency, (iii) maximize the country’s transit potential and develop tourism, and (iv) increase the competitiveness of transport services.

16. The government participates actively in the CAREC Program and its new CAREC Transport Strategy 2030 includes two key objectives: (i) improving connectivity along CAREC corridors, and (ii) converting transport infrastructure investments into sustainable economic and social development.¹⁴

⁹ Ministry of Transport, July 2020.

¹⁰ World Health Organization. 2018. [Global Status Report on Road Safety 2018](#). France.

¹¹ Government of Tajikistan. 2017. *National Development Strategy of the Republic of Tajikistan for the Period up to 2030*. Dushanbe.

¹² Government of Tajikistan. 2010. *State Program on Transport Sector Development, 2010–2025*. Dushanbe.

¹³ ADB. 2011. [Developing Tajikistan’s Transport Sector: Transport Sector Master Plan](#). Manila.

¹⁴ ADB. 2020. [CAREC Transport Strategy 2030](#). Manila.

B. Major Development Partners: Strategic Foci and Key Activities

17. Development partner funding has been essential in supporting transport sector development in Tajikistan. During 1998–2019, ADB financed a large number of transport projects through loans, grants, and technical assistance totaling nearly \$710 million. During the same period, other development partners provided nearly \$1.7 billion to finance additional projects. The activities of development partners since 2016 are summarized in the table below.

Major Development Partners in Transport (2016–2019)

Development Partner	Project Name	Duration	Amount (\$ million)
Road subsector			
ADB	CAREC Corridors 2, 3 and 5 (Obigarm–Nurobod) Road Project	2019–2024	110.0
	CAREC Corridors 2, 5, and 6 Road Project – Additional Financing	2018–2023	90.0
	CAREC Corridors 2, 5, and 6 (Dushanbe–Kurgonteppa) Road Project	2017–2021	67.2
	CAREC Corridors 3 and 5 Enhancement Project	2013–2020	70.0
	CAREC Corridor 6 (Ayni–Uzbekistan Border Road) Improvement Project	2012–2017	100.0
	CAREC Corridor 3 (Dushanbe–Uzbekistan Border) Improvement Project	2011–2016	120.0
AIIB	Dushanbe–Uzbekistan Border Road Improvement Project	2016–2021	27.5
Islamic Development Bank	Construction of Kulob–Kalaikhumb Highway	2018–2023	20.0
	Rehabilitation of Kulyab–Kalaikhumb Road (Shurobod–Shagon)	2012–2017	20.0
EBRD	CAREC Corridors 2, 3 and 5 Road Project	2019–2024	150.0
	Dushanbe–Uzbekistan Border Road Improvement Project	2016–2021	62.5
	Equipment for Road Maintenance	2015–2017	5.0
OPEC Fund for International Development	CAREC Corridors 2, 3 and 5 Road Project	2019–2024	40.0
	Construction of Kulob–Kalaikhumb Highway	2018–2023	10.0
	CAREC Corridors 2, 5, and 6 (Dushanbe–Kurgonteppa) Road Project	2016–2021	12.0
	Rehabilitation of Kulyab–Kalaikhumb Road (Shurobod–Shagon)	2012–2017	13.0
Kuwait Fund	Construction of Kulob–Kalaikhumb Highway	2018–2023	25.5
	Rehabilitation of Kulyab–Kalaikhumb Road (Shurobod–Shagon)	2012–2017	17.0
Saudi Development Fund	Construction of Kulob–Kalaikhumb Highway	2018–2023	30.0
	Rehabilitation of Kulyab–Kalaikhumb Road (Shurobod–Shagon)	2012–2017	20.0
Government of Japan	Project for Capacity Development for Road Disaster Management	2017–2020	3.2
	Project for Improvement of Equipment for Road Maintenance in Khatlon Region (Kulyab area) and Sughd Region	2016–2017	17.9
Abu Dhabi Fund	Construction of Kulob–Kalaikhumb Highway	2018–2023	20.0
	Rehabilitation of Kulyab–Kalaikhumb Road (Shurobod–Shagon)	2012–2017	15.0
World Bank	Strengthening Critical Infrastructure against Natural Hazards Project	2017–2023	19.0
	Central Asia Road Links Program Phase 2	2015–2020	45.0
Civil aviation subsector			
EBRD	Reconstruction and Technical Re-equipment of Khujand Airport	2013–2017	3.9
Government of Japan	Project for Capacity Development in Air Traffic Services	2016–2018	3.2
	Project for Improvement of Dushanbe International Airport	2015–2018	20.4
Cross-border subsector			
ADB	CAREC Regional Improvement of Border Services Project	2013–2020	9.2

ADB = Asian Development Bank, AIIB = Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, CAREC = Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation, EBRD = European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, OPEC = Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries, PRC = People's Republic of China.

Source: ADB and Government of Tajikistan's Ministry of Transport.

C. Institutional Arrangements and Processes for Development Coordination

18. The government regularly organizes a development forum attended by different development partners. The 2016 National Development Council meeting marked the end of the implementation of the National Development Strategy 2015 and the Living Standards

Improvement Strategy, 2013–2015¹⁵ and the start of the new National Development Strategy, 2016–2030 (footnote 11) and the Medium-Term Development Strategy, 2016–2020.¹⁶

19. Coordination with development partners is principally based on the government's Joint Country Partnership Strategy, which has continuously evolved.¹⁷ As the largest development partner in the transport sector, ADB serves as the lead coordinating agency. The Transport Sector Master Plan (footnote 13), prepared with ADB assistance, is the basis for the government's strategic planning in the transport sector, and provides a framework for coordination among Joint Country Partnership Strategy partners. Furthermore, the CAREC Program has a Transport Sector Coordination Committee that coordinates regional donor activities among the member countries.

D. ADB Experience and Assistance Program

20. ADB assistance has rehabilitated and improved about 950 km of CAREC regional corridors and about 350 km of rural roads. Several knowledge products were developed through technical assistance, including the Road Sector Governance Assessment (2009) and the Transport Sector Master Plan (footnote 13). This laid the groundwork for the development of the State Program on Transport Sector Development, 2010–2025 (footnote 12).

21. The size of ADB's program in the transport sector, coupled with its leading role in CAREC's transport program, has positioned ADB to successfully support the government's sector development. ADB assistance has contributed to roads subsector development in many ways: piloting performance-based maintenance; facilitating the development of a comprehensive RAMS; raising road safety awareness and assisting the development of road safety guidelines; rehabilitating border crossing points; and developing national single windows systems. This multidimensional approach has helped strengthen the country's international connectivity.

22. Three ADB-financed projects are ongoing and provide comprehensive assistance to MOT in developing the RAMS: formalizing and institutionalizing the RAMS Action Program and establishing a RAMS Unit within 2020;¹⁸ developing a framework for a RAMS database;¹⁹ and developing tolling options and preparing priority and viable tolling projects and establishing a dedicated road maintenance fund by June 2024.²⁰ After approval by the government in 2020, the RAMS Action Program will become a policy instrument that development partners will refer to in planning their assistance for strengthening the RAMS in a concerted manner.

23. Policy dialogue will run in parallel with the implementation of the abovementioned projects and will be closely coordinated with other development partners. ADB is the lead development partner, and its transport sector assistance has contributed significantly toward the government achieving its development objectives. ADB will continue to assist the government in infrastructure financing, policy planning, capacity development, and institutional reforms.

¹⁵ Government of Tajikistan. 2013. [Living Standards Improvement Strategy of Tajikistan for 2013–2015](#). Dushanbe.

¹⁶ Government of Tajikistan. 2016. [Medium-term Development Strategy of the Republic of Tajikistan for 2016–2020](#). Dushanbe.

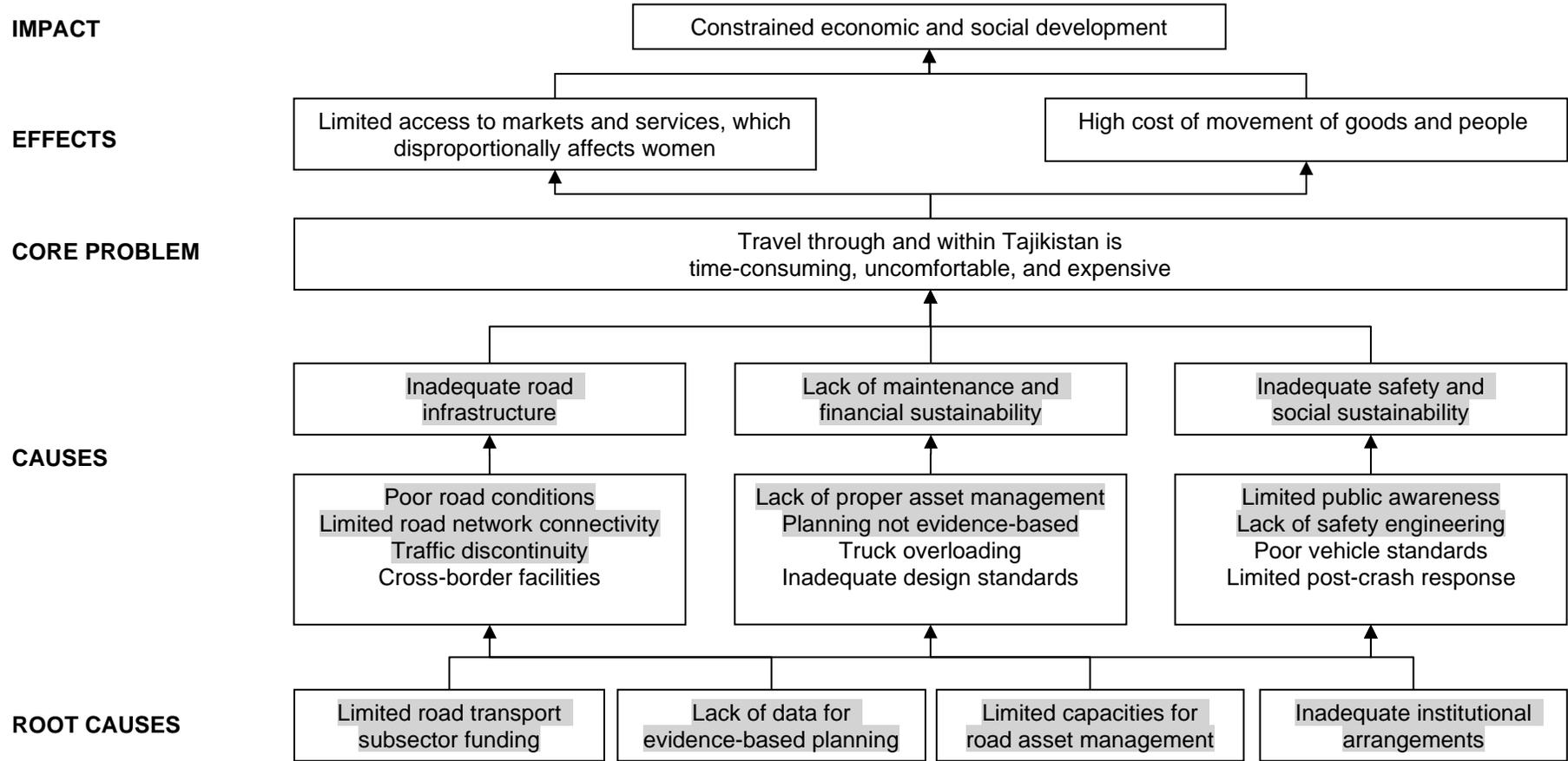
¹⁷ Government of Tajikistan. 2009. [Tajikistan: Joint Country Partnership Strategy, 2010–2012](#). Dushanbe.

¹⁸ ADB. 2018. [Technical Assistance to the Republic of Tajikistan for Preparing the Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation Corridors 2, 3, and 5 \(Obigarm–Nurobod\) Road Project](#). Manila.

¹⁹ ADB. 2016. [Report and Recommendation of the President to the Board of Directors: Proposed Loan, Grant, and Administration of Grant to the Republic of Tajikistan for the Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation Corridors 2, 5, and 6 \(Dushanbe–Kurgonteppa\) Road Project](#). Manila.

²⁰ ADB. 2019. [Report and Recommendations of the President to the Board of Directors for Proposed Grant to the Republic of Tajikistan: Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation Corridors 2, 3, and 5 \(Obigarm–Nurobod\) Road Project](#). Manila.

PROBLEM TREE FOR TRANSPORT (ROAD TRANSPORT [NONURBAN])



Tackled through the proposed project



Supported by ADB (ongoing operations) or other development partners including the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the Japanese International Cooperation Agency, and the World Bank.