

**Workshop on Low-Volume Sealed Roads in Bamako, Mali January 17-19, 2006.**

**Opening statement by Mr. Olav Ellevset, the SSATP Program and the World Bank.**

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*Honorable Makan Fily DABO, the General SECRETARY to the Minister of Equipment and Transport in Mali,*

*Directors,*

*Coordinators of the PCDA and the PACT programs,*

*Representatives of the Governments of Burkina Faso and Senegal*

*Ladies and Gentlemen*

It is my pleasure to express the gratitude of the SSATP Program and the World Bank to the Government of Mali for hosting this workshop on Low Volume sealed roads here in the City of Bamako. We still remember the hospitality of the Malian people we experienced during the 2005 Annual Meeting of the SSATP Program just a few weeks back in November 2005.

Let me also express my gratitude to all of you for showing interest for the theme of this workshop, and in particular the special effort the participants from Burkina Faso and Senegal have made to join us here in Bamako.

The Sub-Saharan Transport Policy Program (SSATP) is a partnership presently between 32 Sub-Saharan Africa member countries, the European Union, several bilateral donors, regional associations and institutions, and the World Bank for promoting sustainable transport policies that will help reducing the poverty and supporting economic growth in the member countries.

As we know, good roads are important for the development of any country. But too often the standard and the condition of the roads are not able to provide the people with basic access to education, to health services, to

markets for selling their produce, for getting supplies, etc. Unfortunately, this is a common situation in many countries.

Also in Mali, you might have seen gravel or earth roads that have been repaired and improved with a lot of effort and money, and which have served their purpose well for some time. But too often harsh weather conditions, sometimes combined with poor materials, have made these efforts and investments last for a short period only. Traditional black surfaces may not be a justifiable option due to lack of good quality materials within reasonable distance, and high costs compared with the number of vehicles using the road.

This workshop will deal with optional technologies using locally available materials, usually becoming economically interesting for lower traffic volumes than traditional designs. These roads will also have a black surface like any road using asphalt or bitumen in its top surfacing, but will have a more customized and tailored design corresponding to the local climate, the natural materials available in the area, and the volume and load of the traffic. Typically, construction cost savings would be 10-20% compared with traditional surface treatments, and 30-50% over 20 years in life-cycle costs. These designs will utilize more common materials, and as such represent a much smaller threat to the environment. For quite a number of years we have seen that scarce resources of high quality construction materials are getting exhausted in many places in Africa.

Appropriate designs are therefore given more attention in many countries today, and the SSATP Program has included this as an important activity in its work program.

This is the first workshop in its kind arranged by the SSATP, and we have engaged two of the most experienced and known consultants within this field. Mr. Mike Pinard and Mr. Charles Overby are also two of the authors of the SADC Guideline on Low Volume sealed roads.

During the last three days we have undertaken field visits to roads in various environments in Mali, and we must commend the Government of Mali for several examples of customized pavement designs using commonly available local materials. Even the potential for improvements may be less in Mali than in many other countries we have seen, we are still looking forward to the workshop today and tomorrow to exchange experiences on

applications that over a number of years have shown interesting performances in different environments.

But one threat remains the same. Firm control systems for axle load control are of paramount importance in order to avoid that excessive load will damage the road structure and reduce the lifespan of the investments.

An overarching goal for the whole partnership of SSATP is poverty alleviation. When sufficient manpower is available, it is also possible to customize some of the work operations and technologies in a way that will bring employment to a substantial number of people, with all the positive impacts connected to that.

This workshop will use roads within Mali's Agricultural Competitiveness and Diversification Project as example roads, and we hope that this program and future investments in all three countries will benefit from the issues raised. The potential benefits of reducing frequent and costly maintenance interventions as well as dust pollution on particular gravel roads should also not be underestimated.

This workshop is meant as a forum for sensitization and exchange of experiences based on practical applications in several countries. We do hope that you as participants will find the outcome interesting enough to engage in further steps for identifying the viability of customized applications within the framework of ongoing and future projects in your respective countries.

I am confident that such next steps will recognize the importance of involving consultants and contractors, ensuring that the knowledge about optional and appropriate designs also becomes available in the construction industry.

With these few words,

*Honorable General Secretary,  
Ladies and gentlemen,*

let me express our hope that these ideas will contribute to more roads with permanent surfaces in your countries.

Thank you for listening, and for your participation!