

## **#Okadaban – A Blessing in Disguise?**

The news about the ban of Motorcycles and Tricycles, popularly known as Okada and Keke Maruwa respectively, in some Local Government Areas and Local Council Development Areas across Lagos State, was received with mixed feelings among commuters, riders and all residents at large.

The Lagos State government, on January 27th, announced plans to commence total enforcement of Reform Traffic Law of 2018 on activities of the operators on restricted routes and bridges across 6 LGAs and 7 LCDAs in the state with effect from 1st of February.

While many have condemned the actions of the Lagos State government because of the perceived effect on commuters and riders who might experience untold hardship because it affects their source of livelihood, several others have lauded the initiative as it would pave way for greater development that would be for the benefits of all and sundry.

Social media users have had to joke about the impact of the #Okadaban, saying it's an avenue to make 'Lagosians keep fit', it might sound funny but it is one of the many positive viewpoints of the #Okadaban. Far beyond the physical fitness, the impact of the ban would have environmental and health benefits as it would help to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases which cause climate change by trapping heat, and they also contribute to respiratory diseases from smog and air pollution.

Now that Okada and Keke Maruwa has been banned, how does the Lagos State Government want us to commute? That has been the reoccurring question among those that have been displeased with the ban. Certainly, most of them are still enquiring about the solution and an alternative option; Voila, here's an alternative, Cycling, and Walking.

Yes! Cycling and Walking, sounds ridiculous? No; it is rather safe and healthy. Cycling and walking help to reduce air pollutants, they emit no greenhouse gases, noise pollution, and congestion. Also, it reduces the need for new parking lots and roadways and saves valuable green space from development.



Bike riding uses minimal fossil fuels and it is a pollution-free mode of transport. Also, bicycles reduce the need to build, service and dispose of cars. Research has shown that cycling 10 km each way to work would save 1500kg of greenhouse gas emissions each year.

Beyond the environmental impacts which Lagosians would be the recipient, it is important to note that the health benefits of cycling cannot be overemphasized. As a mode of transport, cycling replaces sedentary (sitting) time spent driving motor vehicles or using trains or buses with healthy exercise. It is the most time-efficient way to combine regular exercise with one's daily routine and it does not require any high level of physical skill.

Governor Babjide Sanwoolu has asserted that the #Okadaban has come to stay and his administration is working tirelessly towards the provision of alternative measures to the benefit of all. As this administration provides the buses and ferries to plug the gaps as it looks to diversify transport options in the state, it is imperative that Cycling and Walking be considered as relevant and significant options.

Therefore, it is vital that all the ongoing road constructions and rehabilitation across the state, take into cognizance the creation of Bicycle signage, Traffic light to include pedestrians and cyclers, bikeway marking, bicycle parking and repair, zebra crossing and walkways to make walking and cycling safe for people in the state.

Once this is designed and achieved, Lagosians can conveniently walk or ride their bicycles to workplaces, places of worship, malls – for shopping and visit to friends and families.

Residents and workers with proximity to Ikeja City Mall can utilize the options of walking or cycling to the mall, to make their purchases or access various services available at the mall.

Other malls across the state should also consider and explore the option of creating walkways and parking spaces for bicycles within their premises to encourage cycling and walking.

*It might seem tough at the moment but it is for the better good, let's all embrace the 'policy' while we cycle and walk. It is truly a 'blessing in disguise'.*

*Thank you!*