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Babatunde Fashola(SAN) to include in a supplementary budget that would come up in the first quarter of 2016, is the Makurdi-Adoka-Ankpa Road.

The House, in line with the extant provision of its Standing Orders on "infrastructure items", had summarily passed a motion on the Benue-Kogi Road without debate by lawmakers.

The motion calling on President Muhammadu Buhari to attend to that major federal road was sponsored by the Deputy Chairman of the House Committee on Petroleum Resources (Upstream), Hon Mark Terseer Gbillah.

Mr. Gbillah, a telecommunications expert, also represents Gwer East/Gwer West Federal Constituency of Benue State in the House of Representatives.

Federal Roads Begging For Urgent Attention

BY TORDUE SALEM (<http://leadership.ng/reporter/by-tordue-salem/>)

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In this report, TORDUE SALEM takes account of the appalling state of the Makurdi-Adoka-Ankpa and several other federal roads in the South-east and other parts of the country, the lip service successive governments have paid to servicing these roads, and the urgent need of the Works Minister, Babatunde Raji Fashola(SAN), and the federal government to declare a state of emergency to fix these death traps littering the states of the federation.

Miffed by the continuing neglect of federal roads in the Country, the House of Representatives yesterday urged President Muhammadu Buhari to include them in the 2016 Supplementary Budget and expedite action on fixing them.

Top on the list of the roads the House wants the Minister of Works

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In adopting the motion titled "Need for Reconstruction of the

Makurdi-Naka-Adoka-Ankpa Road", the House regretted that the dilapidated road linking the North to the South, has been abandoned since 1990.

The House in its resolution, said it was "aware that the Makurdi-Naka-Adoka-Ankpa road is a major link between the Northern and Southern parts of Nigeria and traverses 4 Federal Constituencies in Benue and Kogi States and also a major arterial route in the national network of roads as it services one of the largest industrial layouts in Nigeria.

"Also aware that the road, which was completed in a single course surface dressing treatment in 1990, became the preferred route to the Southern part of the country, thereby creating an opportunity for increased economic activities and development in the host communities."

"The House in passing the motion, raised the alarm that "for a merely surface dressed road that requires an asphaltic overlay after its 7-year lifespan, no maintenance has been carried out since its construction 25 years ago and the high volume of traffic on the road has caused its Though Benue State is conveniently the nearest Northern state to the South, the poor state of that road, makes road traveller to Kogi, Anambra and deep down into the South a gruelling experience.

These terrible roads are legion across the country, the Northern part of the country to its southern part, especially the South-east.

Earlier this year, the Senate Committee on Works, set up an enquiry to examine the status of Federal roads in South East. The Senate Adhoc Committee decided to visit Anambra State in the South East to inspect the federal highway and erosion devastated sites.

The visit came on the heels of an intense and persistent cry by people of Anambra State.

A motion to that effect, was moved by the Senator representing Anambra Central Senatorial Zone of Anambra State, Uche Ekwunife, calling for immediate intervention of the federal government on the Enugu-Onitsha Expressway.

The Governor of Anambra State, Willie Obiano had earlier, also urged the federal government to save the Onitsha-Enugu Expressway from collapsing into a gully. Gullies are common place in most parts of the South-east. In Anambra the affected parts of the newly constructed flyover along New Parts Market, Nkpor, Idemili North council area.

He raised the alarm for urgent attention to prevent continued fatalities in the affected areas.

The minister said as part of measures to pay its debts and raise revenue, highway tolling will be re-introduced.

According to him, "The federal government budgeted N18.132 billion in 2015 and the Ministry of Works got N13 billion for all roads and highways in 2015, although it has contracts for 206 roads, covering over 6,000km worth over N2 trillion."

He added that for the current administration to deliver on its promises to Nigerians, the government has to increase its capital budget to enable it significantly meet infrastructural needs of the nation.

"The records that have been made available from previous budgets show that the last time Nigeria budgeted over N200 billion in a year's budget for roads was in 2002. It seems that as our income from oil prices increased over the last decade, our spending on roads decreased.

"We are at a point where the 2015 Budget made only a provision of about 16 per cent amounting to approximately N557 billion for capital spending out of a total budget of over N5 trillion. "We are at a period when oil prices have dropped from where they were a year ago. We spent less on capital when we earned more from oil, today we must spend more on capital even as we earn less.

"The first thing that must change is the Capital to Recurrent ratio of the budget, and our colleagues in the Ministries of Finance and Budget and Planning are working on this and they will address you at their own time on the changes they have made and what citizens must do to enable them achieve that plan."

He added "The budget is the article of faith of every serious nation and our resolve to do more capital spending with less resources must be indicative of our seriousness to reflate this economy."

Focus On States Link Roads

Though Fashola also assured that the Ministry will have to focus on states link roads and roads with the heaviest traffic flow, before it will continue with some other ongoing projects.

He said, "Our ability to achieve connectivity of roads depends on capital spending in 2016 to pay contractors and get them back to work."

Moves To Recover Federal Roads

Fashola also promised that the ministry will recover the full widths of federal government right of way from those who have encroached on it whether by building structures or any other way they may have trespassed on the roads.

Charges Security Agencies In Kwara

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"In order to make the roads safer, we intend to re-claim the full width and set back of all federal roads, representing 16 percent and about 36,000km of Nigeria's road network by immediately now asking all those who are infringing on our highways, whether by parking, trading, or erection of any inappropriate structure to immediately remove, relocate or dismantle such things voluntarily. This will be the biggest contribution that citizens can offer our country as proof that we all want things to change for the better." Nigerians will hold the Minister very soon to his words.

The poor state of federal roads has adversely impacted on the country's economy and raised its mortality rate, as many die on these terrible federal roads daily.

Abuja-Lokoja –Okene Road

Senator Nurudeen Abatemi-Usman, who Represented Kogi Central Senatorial District, while calling for the quick completion of the dualisation of the road to ease transportation, said "It was unimaginable the kind of pains the good people of Nigeria are subjected to on this road at every festive period because of traffic congestion. This is why I think the federal government has to see to it that this road is completed in due course. It will equally go a long way in reducing the rate of accidents along the route which has claimed many lives because of its deplorable condition."

Despite huge earnings from oil sells under the Yar'Adua/Jonathan administration, didn't budget for the Abuja-Lokoja-Okene Road in 2009. In 2009 and 2010, there was a near-zero allocation to the road.

Lagos-Ibadan Expressway

The Federal Road Safety Commission (FRSC) recently revealed that over 775 persons died in 2,075 accidents on this road. The 120-kilometre highway, which was built in 1974, is the only major road that links Lagos, the commercial nerve centre of Nigeria, with other parts of the country, making it the busiest.

Meanwhile, the federal government had earlier signed a concession deal with BHSL, under the Design, Build, Operate and Transfer scheme in 2009 at the cost of N89.53bn for a period of 25 years.

"The problem of bad roads on Lagos/Abeokuta Express Road seem to be unending, because as one problem is highlighted and solution found to it, another problem resurfaces, piling whatever gains might have been gotten from the first solution into oblivion. Before now, the focus was on the Sango Bridge, which seemed to have defied all logical reasoning, but now that the bridge has been inaugurated and opened for use, several problem spots are competing for attention on the same stretch of road." An analyst had affirmed.

Okigwe-Umuahia Road

The ever-busy Enugu Port Harcourt expressway has always been a death trap for commuters.

It was gathered that the main contract to rehabilitate the road from Enugu end, given to the CCC, has since been abandoned, with no sign of the company in the area though it is working very slowly in Enugu from Onitsha end.

The lack of maintenance of roads in Nigeria has become a public issue as Nigerians are daily lamenting this failure of leadership. Good roads are a basic component of good governance. Nigerians are routinely being put at risk everyday as a result of the failure of the State to provide adequate amenities for its citizens. All the authorities involved in road construction and maintenance should buckle down and do something to remove this blot on Nigeria's image.

Kaduna-Abuja Road

Kaduna-Abuja the highways that link most states in the north boasts of over 400 pot holes. In fact, the state of the road bears no image of a channel that links the Federal Capital Territory.

It would be recalled that recently, near Alheri camp of Living Faith Foundation, 37 kilometres from Kaduna 14 persons were burnt to death beyond recognition in a road accident that occurred along the Kaduna-Abuja express.

The 18-seater Hummer bus with registration number XA 545 TMA was coming from Kano state on its way to Abuja, with the passengers comprising 10 men, five women and three girls, aside the driver.

Enugu-Awka-Onitsha Road

Going to Enugu through Onitsha an average traveler would tell you is another hell on earth.

The Enugu and Onitsha axis was the economic stronghold of the old Eastern Region. The road is now a shadow of its old self -no thanks to the deplorable state of the highway linking Enugu, Awka and Onitsha.

Travelling on the Enugu-Onitsha Expressway built in the 70s by the Gen. Olusegun Obasanjo has become a nightmare, with motorists often abandoning the highway to reroute their trips through the old road from Udi to Awka.

The contractors hired to fix the road abandoned it. They have since withdrawn their equipment and barricaded some sections of the road.

Nobody can say exactly the content of the memorandum of the contract.

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The contractors – Messrs CCC Construction Company, ascribe their non performance to the non release of funds by the government. They said the project was abandoned out of frustration. The road is not indeed a glory to the land of the rising sun.

Kaduna-Kano Road

Several calls made by motorists and other road users to the Federal Roads Maintenance Agency (FERMA) to rehabilitate the Kaduna-Kano Road to fix this road, have gone unheeded. The number of lives lost in road accidents on the Kaduna-Kano highway is too numerous to mention. It would be recalled that over 7 people once lost their lives in a ghastly auto crash that occurred on the road.

But with Buhari's Budget of Change which was presented on Tuesday before the Joint Session of the National Assembly, we can see a humongous change of priorities. The budget comes with a huge allocation to the works ministry, so it is hoped that the federal roads in Benue and cross the country,, would wear new and quality looks to boost trade and the economy of the country.



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