

# The Economists goof on Ambodes' Traffic Policy By Seun Bisuga

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Lagos State Governor, Mr. Akinwunmi Ambode (middle); with C.E.O , Lagos State Traffic Management Authority (LASTMA), Mr. Christian Olakpe; Commissioner for Transportation, Dr. Dayo Mobereola; General Manager, LASTMA, Mr. Bashir Braimah and Sector Commander, Federal Road Safety Corps, Lagos, Mr. Hyginus Omeje, during the Governor's inspection of the LASTMA yard, Oshodi, on Tuesday, November 10, 2015

The Economist may have done well to speak the minds of millions of Lagosians but it goofed on the transport control policy of the present Lagos Governor Akinwunmi Ambode.

I remember pretty vividly what the reaction of Lagosians was to Ambode's policy on LASTMA not having the powers to impound vehicles anymore. They lauded it in commercial buses, praised him in bars and of course rushed onto social media to commend him.

They used the opportunity to lash out at LASTMA and former governor of Lagos, Babatunde Fashola for using LASTMA as a money generating agency.

Owing to this new position commercial and private drivers alike, threw caution to the wind. The ever-reckless commercial drivers especially now believed they were above the law and therefore could do whatsoever they wanted. Other motorists knowing that LASTMA could only fine them but without real power to stop them from reaching their destination all culminated in making most busy roads in Lagos become hellish.

To curb the craziness, Ambode appointed a new CEO for LASTMA, a former Assistant Inspector General of Police to drive home his traffic control policy. But why did Ambode reverse LASTMA's powers? He stopped LASTMA from impounding cars because it was not why they were set up and of course not their most important duty, their job was to ensure free flow of traffic but they chose impounding cars over traffic control.

In other civilized climes, including where The Economists HQ is domiciled, they don't impound vehicles for traffic offences, its just does not happen. LASTMA obviously was not happy with Ambode's decision to cut their powers and reduce their chances of making money on the side therefore went lax in carrying out their duty so that Ambode can take the blame.

A case similar to Jose Mourinho's torrid time at Chelsea presently. The players and back room staff can make the dressing room tense and they can frustrate the manager. They will always make you look bad once the results are not coming.

Ambode's intention was good but it was a little, too early. With no CCTVs, no proper monitoring units and no data base to ensure that vehicles fined pay what's due, he was bringing Apple iPhone 6 to medieval times.

Come to think of it, it is the unruly, undisciplined, reckless and lawless behavior of motorists that actually causes the traffic gridlock. If people can respect the traffic lights, follow orders of traffic controllers and manage to respect other

traffic laws then Lagos roads will be less hellish.

It should be agreed that the Lagos road network needs to be fixed but more intelligent driving can reduce the traffic and also help LASTMA to do its job better.

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