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Improving Road Safety in Nigeria Through Standardised and Functional Road Signage Infrastructure

Authors:
Dr Etimbuk Obot, Naphtali Amana, Prof. Ephraim Essien
Institute for Legislative and Democratic Studies (NILDS)

Executive Summary

Road transportation remains the dominant mode of movement in Nigeria, supporting the daily mobility of millions of people and the circulation of goods and services across the country. However, despite its centrality to economic activity and national integration, Nigeria continues to record high levels of road traffic accidents, many of which are linked not only to poor road conditions but also to inadequate, inconsistent, and poorly maintained road signage and traffic guidance systems.

Across federal and state highways, road users frequently encounter missing, faded, vandalised, or poorly illuminated traffic signs, including lane markings, speed limit indicators, directional boards, pedestrian crossings, hazard warnings, and construction zone alerts. In many cases, signage is either absent or not maintained in line with international standards, creating confusion for motorists and pedestrians and weakening overall traffic management. These deficiencies contribute to avoidable crashes, wrong-way driving, congestion, delayed emergency response, and increased risks for vulnerable road users.

Comparative international experience demonstrates that effective road safety systems rely heavily on standardised and well-maintained signage infrastructure. Countries such as the United Kingdom, Germany, South Africa, Kenya, and Rwanda have significantly improved road safety outcomes through sustained investment in reflective signage, intelligent traffic systems, and integrated road-user guidance frameworks. These approaches highlight the importance of signage not only for safety, but also for efficient transportation, economic productivity, and urban development.

In Nigeria, however, road signage continues to receive limited policy attention within road construction, rehabilitation, and maintenance frameworks. Weak coordination among responsible agencies, lack of uniform national standards, inadequate funding for maintenance, and poor integration of signage requirements into road contracts further compound the challenge. Additionally, limited public awareness of road signs contributes to unsafe driving behaviour and weak compliance with traffic rules.

These systemic gaps highlight the urgent need for structured policy and legislative intervention to improve road signage infrastructure across the country. Without corrective action, Nigeria risks continued growth in preventable road accidents, transportation inefficiencies, and reduced public confidence in the safety of its road network.

Given its constitutional oversight responsibilities, the National Assembly has a critical role in ensuring that road infrastructure investments incorporate comprehensive and standardised traffic signage systems that meet safety requirements and international best practices.

Accordingly, the National Assembly, through its Committees on Works, Federal Roads Maintenance Agency (FERMA), Land Transport, and Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC), may consider the following actions:

- Undertake a comprehensive assessment of road signage infrastructure across federal highways and major transportation corridors to determine the adequacy, visibility, standardisation, and maintenance status of existing signs and road markings.
- Invite the Federal Ministry of Works, Federal Roads Maintenance Agency (FERMA), Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC), and relevant transport authorities to provide detailed briefings on existing road signage policies, deployment standards, maintenance mechanisms, funding provisions and accident prevention strategies linked to road signage infrastructure.
- Promote the development and enforcement of a uniform national road signage and traffic guidance framework aligned with international road safety standards and best practices.
- Require that all federal road construction, rehabilitation, and concession agreements include mandatory provisions for standard road signs, reflective lane markings. directional boards, pedestrian safety signs, emergency indicators, solar-powered or illuminated signage where necessary and strengthened maintenance and monitoring frameworks.
- Support the establishment of a dedicated monitoring and maintenance system for damaged, faded, vandalised, or missing road signs across highways and urban corridors.
- Encourage gradual deployment of intelligent transportation systems, including digital signage, traffic information displays, and smart navigation support infrastructure in major cities and highways.
- Urge the FRSC, National Orientation Agency (NOA) and transport stakeholders to intensify nationwide public awareness campaigns on road signs, traffic guidance systems, and responsible road usage.

Background:

Road transportation remains the dominant mode of mobility in Nigeria, facilitating the daily movement of millions of people, goods, and services across urban and rural communities. Despite its critical role in national economic and social activities, Nigeria continues to experience high rates of road traffic accidents, many of which are associated not only with poor road conditions but also

with inadequate road signage, weak traffic guidance systems, and deficient directional infrastructure[1][2].

Across several federal and state highways, road users frequently encounter missing, damaged, poorly illuminated, faded, or completely absent traffic signs and road safety indicators. These include lane markings, warning signs, directional boards, pedestrian crossing indicators, speed limit signs, reflective markers, and hazard notifications. In many locations, motorists and pedestrians are left without adequate guidance regarding road direction, dangerous bends, accident-prone areas, construction zones, school crossings, or emergency routes.

The absence of functional and standardised road signage contributes significantly to unsafe driving practices and avoidable traffic incidents[3]. These include wrong-way driving, dangerous overtaking, sudden lane switching, confusion at intersections, increased collisions on highways and junctions, traffic congestion, delays in emergency response, and heightened risks for pedestrians and cyclists. Poor directional systems also create navigation difficulties for visitors, interstate travelers, and commercial transport operators.

Globally, road signage is recognised as a critical component of modern road safety management and intelligent transportation systems. Countries with strong road safety records have consistently invested in standardised signage systems, reflective road markings, digital traffic guidance infrastructure, and continuous road-user education as part of broader strategies to reduce accidents and improve transportation efficiency.

For instance:

- **United Kingdom** maintains highly standardised directional and warning signage regulated under the Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions (TSRGD), contributing to improved navigation and lower road confusion.
- **Germany** deploys advanced motorway signage and lane guidance systems on the Autobahn network, supporting efficient and safe high-speed transportation.
- **South Africa** has invested significantly in reflective highway markings, urban directional signs, and road safety indicators through the South African National Roads Agency (SANRAL).
- **Kenya** has expanded road signage and intelligent traffic systems in Nairobi and major highways as part of broader road safety reforms.
- **Rwanda** has integrated organised road signage, lane markings, and urban directional systems into its city planning and transportation management initiatives.

Beyond safety, proper road signage contributes to urban aesthetics, tourism, economic efficiency, logistics coordination, and national infrastructure modernisation. Despite ongoing road

[1] Punch (2016, August 17). Use standard road signs, FRSC tells construction firms. https://punchng.com/use-standard-road-signs-frsc-tells-construction-firms/

[2] Enimola, O. (2024, November 25). Insufficient Number Of Road Signs, Abuse Contributes To Alarming Data Of Crashes – Safety Experts. Independent. https://independent.ng/insufficient-number-of-road-signs-abuse-contributes-to-alarming-data-of-crashes-safety-experts/

[3] ibid

construction and rehabilitation projects in Nigeria, road signage and directional infrastructure often receive inadequate policy attention, weak maintenance oversight, or inconsistent implementation standards.

This situation highlights the need for proactive legislative oversight to assess the adequacy, standardisation, deployment, maintenance, and enforcement of road signage infrastructure across federal highways and major transportation corridors in Nigeria.

Issue:

Nigeria's road transportation system continues to suffer from inadequate and poorly maintained road signage infrastructure, contributing to preventable traffic accidents, poor navigation, traffic disorder, and increased road safety risks.

Many highways and urban roads lack functional warning signs, directional signs, speed limit indicators, reflective lane markings, pedestrian crossing signs, construction hazard indicators and night visibility safety systems.

In several instances, existing signs are faded, vandalised, obstructed, inconsistent with international standards, or completely absent.

This creates confusion for motorists, increases the likelihood of road crashes, and weakens overall traffic management efficiency.

There are also concerns regarding:

- Lack of uniform national standards for signage implementation and maintenance
- Weak inter-agency coordination between federal, state, and local road authorities
- Limited monitoring and maintenance frameworks
- Poor integration of signage into road construction and rehabilitation contracts
- Inadequate public awareness and road safety education

Without systematic intervention, Nigeria risks continued growth in preventable road accidents, transportation inefficiencies, and reduced public confidence in road safety systems.

Rationale for Legislative Actions:

Road signage and traffic guidance infrastructure are essential components of public safety, transportation efficiency, and national infrastructure development.

Legislative oversight is necessary to ensure that:

- Federal highways and major roads comply with minimum road safety signage standards.
- Road construction projects include mandatory signage and traffic guidance infrastructure.

- Appropriate funding and maintenance mechanisms are established for road signage systems.
- Relevant agencies are held accountable for road safety compliance.
- Nigeria aligns with international best practices in transportation safety management.
- Road users receive adequate directional and hazard information for safe movement.

Proactive legislative intervention can significantly reduce avoidable accidents, improve navigation efficiency, strengthen emergency response coordination, and support broader national road safety objectives.

Recommendations to the National Assembly:

The National Assembly, through its Senate and House Committees on Works, Federal Roads Maintenance Agency (FERMA), Land Transport, and Federal Road Safety, is respectfully urged to do the following:

1. Undertake a comprehensive assessment of road signage infrastructure across federal highways and major transportation corridors to determine the adequacy, visibility, standardisation, and maintenance status of existing signs and road markings.

2. Invite the Federal Ministry of Works, Federal Roads Maintenance Agency (FERMA), Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC), and relevant transport authorities to provide detailed briefings on existing road signage policies, deployment standards, maintenance mechanisms, funding provisions and accident prevention strategies linked to road signage infrastructure.

3. Promote the development and enforcement of a uniform national road signage and traffic guidance framework aligned with international road safety standards and best practices.

4. Require that all federal road construction, rehabilitation, and concession agreements include mandatory provisions for standard road signs, reflective lane markings. directional boards, pedestrian safety signs, emergency indicators, solar-powered or illuminated signage where necessary and strengthened maintenance and monitoring frameworks.

5. Support the establishment of a dedicated monitoring and maintenance system for damaged, faded, vandalised, or missing road signs across highways and urban corridors.

6. Encourage gradual deployment of intelligent transportation systems, including digital signage, traffic information displays, and smart navigation support infrastructure in major cities and highways.

7. Urge the FRSC, National Orientation Agency (NOA) and transport stakeholders to intensify nationwide public awareness campaigns on road signs, traffic guidance systems, and responsible road usage.

Conclusion

The absence of adequate and functional road signage infrastructure poses a significant but preventable threat to road safety, transportation efficiency, and public order in Nigeria.

Proper signage systems are not merely aesthetic additions to roads; they are critical safety and navigation tools that save lives, reduce accidents, support economic activities, and improve transportation coordination.

Experiences from countries such as the United Kingdom, Germany, South Africa, Kenya, and Rwanda demonstrate that structured investment in road signage and traffic guidance systems contributes significantly to safer and more efficient transportation networks.

Proactive legislative oversight is therefore necessary to ensure accountability, standardisation, proper funding, and sustainable implementation of road signage infrastructure across Nigeria.

Contact
National Institute for Legislative and Democratic Studies
National Assembly
Plot 307 Cadastral Zone
Umaru Musa Yar'adua Expressway, Airport Road

Abuja Nigeria
E-mail: info@nils.gov.ng
Website: http://nils.gov.ng

NILDS Liaison Office
Suite 214 Senate Wing
National Assembly Complex
Mobile: +234 806 694 5075