

It is wrong to Ban Okada's Without First Providing Alternatives - Naija Pundit

Written by NaijaPundit Editorial

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Many states are banning the use of motorcycles popularly known as 'Okada' as a means of transport with Lagos state being the latest state to join the league of Okada banning states. Now the question is do these states provide an affordable and accessible means of public transportation before they ban motorcyclists as a means of public transport?

NaijaPundit has considered this and the answer is a definite no. These states have not even come close to providing an alternative to this form of transport yet they all expect this policy to work.

Before we go any further, we agree that motorcycles as a means of public transport pose a greater risk than buses, taxis and trains, but as they say, when the preferable is not available, the available becomes preferable!

Have these states considered the impact to the economy of literally millions of Okada riders being put out of a job? Nigerians may want to recall the high rate of increase in crime after the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) under the leadership of Malam Nasir Elrufai as minister demolished thousands of houses in the FCT without first providing alternatives.

Desperate people do desperate things and the economy is not in a position to absorb these Okada riders into other professions. Many of them have little or no skills beyond Okada riding. Where they do have skills, they need power to put those skills to work either as barbers, vulcanizers, or welders. If they choose to go into farming, they need capital to buy seeds and live stock. If they approach banks as they stand now, they would be told they are high risk borrowers and won't get credit.

All these point to the fact that Nigeria is set to see an increase in crime and insecurity as these Okada riders would have to keep body and soul together by whatever means.

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Moreover, there would be an adverse effect on the economy as many workers who were solely reliant on Okada's to get to and from their places of employment would have to spend more time getting to work as they will have to compete with others for public transport that is already overstressed and incapable of meeting the needs of the working class.

NaijaPundit suggests that these states should have and could still offer Okada riders via their associations, cars and buses on hire purchase basis. This would have had the dual effect of meeting the need for improved access to public transportation that is safe as well as contributing to the economy because the drivers would now be registered, would be able to pay tax and would earn enough to spend on other things thus growing the economy.

NaijaPundit thus urges a rethink of this policy before we reap an epidemic of crime.