

Research Paper

Motorist Border Crossing and Road Tourism Development in ASEAN: Issues and Initiatives for Seamless Travel

Frederic Bouchon
Institut Paul Bocuse, France
Taylor's University, Malaysia

Victor Wee Eng Lye and Sonia Lim Ern Yi
Taylor's University, Malaysia

© The Author(s) 2021. This article is published with open access by Taylor's Press.

Abstract: The development of a road integration and land mobility within ASEAN (The Association of Southeast Asian Nations) member states can contribute towards a more competitive and resilient ASEAN. Better road connectivity would bring about greater efficiency and competitiveness of the production networks and trade flows as well as narrow the development gaps among ASEAN countries. However, the implementation amongst member states is not consistent. The purpose of this study is to investigate the extent to which the mutual recognition of domestic driving license issued by ASEAN countries has been adopted, to identify the obstacles to its full adoption, and to investigate the constraints to vehicles crossing national borders within ASEAN. The study proposes recommendations that could facilitate mobility and increase the potential of drive and overland tourism within the region. A qualitative approach was adopted using focus group interviews and secondary data to conduct analyses. Findings show that there are various constraining factors and it depends on the determination and commitment of each ASEAN member to ensure road connectivity achieves a deeper regional integration.

Keywords: ASEAN, regional integration, road mobility, cross-border regulations, motorist tourism, transport

Suggested citation: Bouchon, F., Wee, V. E. L., & Lim, S. E. Y. (2021). Motorist border crossing and road tourism development in ASEAN: Issues and initiatives for seamless travel. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Innovation in Hospitality and Tourism*, 10(1), 41-59.

Correspondence: Sonia Lim, Taylor's University, Malaysia. Email: Sonia.sley@hotmail.com

Introduction

The Agreement on the Recognition of Domestic Driving Licenses was signed on 9 July 1985 to promote cross-border driving within the ASEAN region (ASEAN, 2012). This agreement allows holders of ASEAN country licenses to drive into other ASEAN countries provided it is for a temporary stay and for the classes or types of vehicles that the licenses allow. Licenses that are not drawn up in English would need to be accompanied by a certified translation in English. If traffic offences were committed, the holder of the license issued by one ASEAN country would be liable for traffic offence penalties in accordance with the laws of the ASEAN country in which the offence took place.

The purpose of the study was to investigate the level of adoption and enforcement of the Mutual Recognition of domestic Driving License (MRDL) by ASEAN members. The scope included the identification of obstacles to full adoption. Subsequently, this paper proposes recommendations that could facilitate the full adoption of the Agreement. The study also reflects on the structure of enhanced international road mobility mechanisms within the region to support overland tourism. Findings from the study contribute towards recommendations for liberalisation and harmonisation of driving license as an important measure to expand connectivity and promote the drive tourism market among the ASEAN member states (AMS).

Literature Review

A Connected Road Infrastructure for an Integrated ASEAN Region

The development of highways within AMS constitutes one of the elements in the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity (MPAC) to contribute towards a more competitive and resilient ASEAN (ASEAN, 2016b). Better road connectivity would bring greater efficiency and competitiveness of the production networks and trade flows, and narrow the development gaps among the ASEAN countries (ASEAN, 2016b). Two flagship land transport infrastructure projects have been adopted within ASEAN, namely, the ASEAN Highway Network (AHN) and the Singapore Kunming Rail Link (SKRL) as the strategy to establish efficient, integrated, safe and environmentally sustainable land transport corridors within AMS (Pushpanathan, 2010).

The development of the road infrastructure in ASEAN, as highlighted in the General Goals of the 2016-2025 Master Plan, is intended to grow ASEAN as a single market by enhancing land transport between AMS (ASEAN, 2016b). AHN seeks to enhance regional connectivity by building land transport corridors linking all AMS and countries beyond (ASEAN, 2016b). This priority project aimed to complete the remaining missing links and upgrade roads within ASEAN's designated Transit Transport Routes (TTR). The AHN project encompasses 23 designated routes

covering 38,400 kilometres (Pushpanathan, 2010). AMS have developed or revised their respective national safety action plans to increase the level of road safety in the region (ASEAN, 2016a). Under the ASEAN Strategic Transport Plan/Brunei Action Plan (BAP) for 2011-2015, ASEAN is committed to formulating Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS) Master Plans for ASEAN and its respective member states (ASEAN, 2010a).

Road Developments in ASEAN Subregions

The Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS), which borders the Mekong River, seeks to develop transport corridors that connect the subregion (Asian Development Bank, 2016). Nine road corridors will form the subregion's network of transport links, which integrates infrastructure development with trade, investment and other economic opportunities. Roads will be the major focus on the development priority for transport development in the GMS to fill the remaining connectivity gaps as well as multimodal and intermodal transport projects, including logistics centres and cross-border facilities (Asian Development Bank, 2016). The development of tourism will be in accordance with the multisector approach in improving related infrastructure, emphasising support for sustainable tourism management and promoting the subregion as a single destination.

The Master Plan for ASEAN Connectivity considered the ongoing sectoral strategies and plans of subregional programmes, including Brunei-Indonesia-Malaysia-Philippines East ASEAN Growth Area (BIMP-EAGA), the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS), and the Indonesia-Malaysia-Thailand Growth Triangle (IMT-GT) (ASEAN, 2010b). Projects for improved road connectivity within EAGA will form part of AHN, which include the Pontianak-Entikong Transport Link (Indonesia), and the Rehabilitation of Davao-General Santos Road (Philippines). The improvement of connectivity in EAGA also focuses on the facilitation of cross-border movement of goods and services to support the objectives of increased trade, investment and tourism (ASEAN, 2010b). The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) under BIMP-EAGA on land transport extends the direct transport links from Pontianak to Kota Kinabalu. This will be an extension of the fairly established transport infrastructure and linkages from Pontianak in West Kalimantan to Kuching in Malaysia and Brunei Darussalam.

With regard to the IMT-GT, priority is given to road improvements in Malaysia and Thailand to cope with the increased traffic volume and economic activity from industrial development in the border areas of Thailand and Malaysia (Asian Development Bank, 2012). The road development for Sumatra Economic Corridor 3 will be accelerated, while RoRo (roll on/roll off) services will be developed, especially across the Straits of Melaka and ports in Sumatra and southern Thailand (Asian Development Bank, 2012). However, recent studies showed that the potential

for passenger RoRo services across the Straits is limited unless the arrangements for passenger car accessibility between Malaysia and Sumatra are improved (Asian Development Bank, 2012).

Road Travel in Tourism

In 2018, slightly over half of all global tourists travelled to their destination by air (57%), while the rest travelled by surface transport, i.e., by road (37%), rail (2%) and water (4%) (World Tourism Organization). The geography of ASEAN countries with long coastlines, islands and archipelagos require excellent air connectivity and international maritime connections. Nevertheless, there is continuing efforts by ASEAN to expand road and highway networks as well as improve the quality of roads. The progress that had been made in improving AHN would open up the potential to grow overland and drive tourism within the ASEAN region and member states, which are endowed with natural and cultural attractions. A tourism experience that is offering a greater autonomy and a wider set of options contributes to a diversified field of possibilities (Wearing & Foley, 2017). The motivation for self-drive tourism is an important factor for developing tourism across countries (Pearce, 2014). Further, road connectivity for the transportation of goods and improved mobility play a vital role in enhancing the integration, cooperation and development of AMS.

Road connectivity is a crucial segment for tourism and travel within a country as well as destinations that require the crossing of national borders for several reasons. Although low-cost carriers are serving an increasing number of intermediate cities, there are many more destinations that are only accessible by road compared to air travel. Travelling by road is usually the last mile/part of a holiday, either from the airport or port to the last destination. Moreover, road transport is the main transport for sightseeing, where tourists might use car rental, private car or public buses. The ASEAN Tourism Strategic Plan 2016-2025 (ATSP) emphasises on the need to connect the road infrastructure development to accompanying measures (ASEAN, 2010a). Thus, the Mutual Recognition of Domestic Driving Licenses issued by ASEAN countries and the promotion of major road corridors as destinations to explore would be key to promoting overland/drive tourism across ASEAN.

The scope for overland/drive tourism has now become greater because AHN has been improved with no more missing link and connects the capital cities of mainland ASEAN by roads (ASEAN, 2010b). Passenger vehicles can use the routes under AHN to travel from one AMS to another AMS as a transit to the third AMS (ASEAN, 2010b). The list of Designated Cross-Border Transport Routes and Points of Entry/Exit under ASEAN CBTP can be used as a reference. For on-road signage, seven AMS have completed the installation of common route signage in the Designated Cross-Border Transport Routes/Transit Transport Routes (TTRs). These include the

standardisation of tourist signs. All the institutional efforts carried out may not have necessarily translated into road tourism growth, and this study aims to have a better understanding of the current situation.

Methodology

To undertake this study, a focus group survey was developed with questions related to issues pertaining to crossing borders of ASEAN countries and the ease of driving into another ASEAN country for drivers holding domestic driving licenses and cars registered in member states. Focus groups were organised in each of the 10 ASEAN countries. Each group consisted of participants such as officials from government agencies (tourism, transport, immigration and police), administrators in transport and immigration, representatives from the private sector (tourism operators and retailers, automobile associations and insurance companies), representatives of leisure tourist associations, travel consultants and branding agents. The selection of the participants for the focus groups was undertaken in collaboration with ASEAN National Tourism Organisations (NTOs). Focus group sessions were held in each of the capital cities, usually hosted by its respective Ministry of Tourism or equivalent, and comprised between 12 and 20 participants. All participants were asked to describe their opinions and thoughts based on their experience on overland motor travel in ASEAN countries. Each focus group session was divided into two different parts lasting between three and four hours each. The first part with the government officials, discussed the details of the MRDL implementation in the country. The second part was with private stakeholders and usually representatives from tourism agencies. In addition, the study used secondary data compiled from government official documents, rules and regulations related to road transport and crossing of ASEAN borders.

Findings

ASEAN is envisioned as a quality tourism destination by 2025, offering a unique and diverse ASEAN experience (ASEAN, 2016b). The implementation of ATSP is built upon two strategic directions: enhancing the competitiveness of ASEAN as a single tourism destination and ensuring that ASEAN tourism is sustainable and inclusive. Among the recommendations of ATSP to expand connectivity and destination infrastructure is the implementation of the Agreement on the Recognition of Domestic Driving Licenses issued by ASEAN countries. The multilateral recognition of an ASEAN driver's license, especially with accompanying policies for vehicle clearance, would be required to facilitate a regular flow of vehicles crossing national borders. For instance, the European Union (EU) started the harmonisation of drivers' licenses in the 1980s and complemented with enabling policies in vehicle clearance,

insurance and assistance coverage for cases of accident or breakdown (Council of the European Union, 1980). These measures gave a tremendous boost to cross-border tourism. The whole process of integration spanned over two and a half decades.

Common Characteristics in ASEAN Driving Licenses

ASEAN was formally established as an ASEAN economic community (AEC) on 31 December 2015 to bring about greater economic integration with more open markets, reduced trade costs, more attractive investment regime, and better connectivity in transportation and other infrastructure networks. Over the past 15 years, member states have ratified various agreements that include road-based mobility such as the ASEAN Framework Agreement on the Facilitation of Goods in Transit (AFAFGIT), the ASEAN Framework Agreement on the Facilitation of Inter-State Transport (AFAFIST), and the ASEAN Framework Agreement on Multimodal Transport (AFAMT) to reduce the costs of moving goods across borders. The AFAMT is not a road-based agreement and involves the carriage of goods by at least two different modes of transport. Facilitating the movement of people and private vehicles is expected to be the next step of ratification that will help overland tourism development. However, the progress towards preparing a common license or the cross-authorisation of licenses among ASEAN members remains slow. There is some hesitancy among governments to adopt an ASEAN license with common characteristics and pursue transport deregulation more actively in order to protect their domestic companies in transport, logistic, and passenger transportation.

Whether the ASEAN driver’s license becomes a reality depends on how committed each member state is about regional economic cooperation (Lee, Han, & Kim, 2010). The inter-authorisation of driver's licenses among ASEAN members remains a goal for the future, because in many cases, ASEAN drivers are limited to the border regions and not throughout the AMS, as specified in the agreement. The existing regulations limit the travel generally to the border areas and do not provide countrywide clearance. This rule varies from country to country since some countries already have bilateral agreements, but without a recognition implemented throughout ASEAN.

Table 1. Recognition of ASEAN driver’s license at international crossing

Legal border land crossings	ASEAN driver’s license implemented¹	ASEAN driver’s license recognition²	Additional requirements
Brunei	Yes	Yes	
Cambodia	Yes	Partial	IDL ³
Indonesia	Yes	Partial	IDL
Laos	Yes	Partial	IDL

Table 1 (con't)

Legal border land crossings	ASEAN driver's license implemented¹	ASEAN driver's license recognition²	Additional requirements
Malaysia	Yes	Yes	IDL/TL ⁴
Myanmar	Yes	Partial	
Philippines	Yes	Yes	
Singapore	Yes	Yes	
Thailand	Yes	Yes	
Vietnam	Yes	Partial	
			TL

NOTE:

¹Valid format (Bilingual, class of vehicle, photo, issuing authority, validity)

²Full recognition of all ASEAN driver's licenses. Countries with partial recognition require an international driving license or a temporary license to drive in that country

³IDL is international driving license

⁴TL is temporary license

In the case of Myanmar, the ASEAN driver's license is accepted upon entry into Myanmar at official entry points as well as in the airport for car rental. There is also the possibility that the driver may be asked a local driver's license, which needs to be issued by the Road Transportation Department with one-year validity. The temporary license costs USD 280. In reality, rental car companies request for international driver's license upon enquiry at the Yangon International Airport. The Land Transport Department officially recognises the ASEAN driving license format, which requires an English translation. If not, authorities such as traffic police may not accept the license. This rather prosaic example illustrates the importance of monitoring compliance with ASEAN measures beyond the border, as well as the complexity of local security concerns and the readiness of each country to comply fully with the agreement.

Another factor that complicates international crossing is the road transportation regulations that differ among countries, for instance, left-hand and right-hand driving. The Philippines drive on the right side of the road while some other member states drive on the left side. It would take training and adjustment for a driver to drive safely on the opposite side of the one that is custom in his/her own country. EU has already done a lot of work on the standardisation of its regulations while there are marked disparities in ASEAN. Without the converging implementation of regulations, it is hard for road transport to flow freely. Singapore, Malaysia, and Brunei are the closest to an integrated system of road mobility that extends to data, immigration and insurance. On the other hand, the roads and bilateral agreements in CMLV countries are limited and the regulations show discrepancies.

ASEAN Vehicle Mobility Issues

The flow of intra-ASEAN travelers and vehicles shows wide differences between various countries. Border crossing into Myanmar might show the most dramatic figures. According to the data provided by the Ministry of Tourism and the Road Transport Department in 2017, only 381 foreign cars and 233 foreign motorcycles entered Myanmar for tourism, which is a small number. The process of gaining entry for foreign vehicles into Myanmar is a lengthy one with many conditions, making it expensive for travellers to drive around the country for tourism. Foreign motorists are required to have an accompanying guide and an escort car during the whole duration of the road trip. On the opposite end of the spectrum, more than 1.8 million cars cross the border between Malaysia and Singapore annually for tourism.

One of the biggest constraints in undertaking analysis of the flow of cross-border tourists is the dearth of good data. In most CLMV countries, Customs Immigration and Quarantine (CIQ) data are collected manually at the entry point and are not shared with other agencies in the country, and even less so with foreign agencies. Thailand and Laos have a bilateral road transport agreement in 1999 that allows vehicles from Thailand to enter Laos and vice versa. Domestic laws such as traffic law and 3rd party insurance law still apply and no quotas are set on the number of vehicles and transport operators. There is also mutual recognition on transport licensing, vehicle registration and vehicle inspection. The GMS-Cross Border Transport Agreement (GMS-CBTA) started out as an agreement between and among Laos, Thailand and Vietnam on the Facilitation of Goods and People, originally signed at Vientiane in 1999 and was amended at Yangon in 2001. It was acceded to by Cambodia in 2001, China in 2002, and Myanmar in 2003 and amended in 2004, hereinafter referred to as “GMS-CBTA”.

Table 2. Legal border land crossings: Car ID and integrated insurance

From \ To	Brunei	Cambodia	Indonesia	Laos	Malaysia	Myanmar	Philippines	Singapore	Thailand	Vietnam
Brunei		X	X	X	✓	X	X	✓	X	X
Cambodia	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Indonesia	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Laos	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	✓	X
Malaysia	✓	X	X	X		X	X	✓	X	X
Myanmar	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X
Philippines	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X

Table 2 (con't)

To From	Brunei	Cambodia	Indonesia	Laos	Malaysia	Myanmar	Philippines	Singapore	Thailand	Vietnam
Singapore	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗		✗	✗
Thailand	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗		✗
Vietnam	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	

The cross-border transport agreement between Thailand and Cambodia, which comes under the umbrella of the GMS-CBTA, pertains to the transportation of goods and passenger between Thailand-Cambodia on the Southern Economic Corridor border-crossing point at Aranyaprathet-Poipet and the transportation route according to Protocol 1. This collaboration between the two countries fixes the route for passenger transport service and acceptance of each country’s vehicle registration certificate, license plate, vehicle inspection certificate and driving license. The GMS-CBTA provides for a common subregional system based on reciprocity, to make it faster, easier, and cheaper to move goods and people throughout the GMS. Presently, Thailand, Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia, which are a part of GMS, allow each country to issue up to 500 GMS Road Transport Permits to its transport operators for border crossing, comprising mainly trucks and buses.

Authorised Laotian vehicles, for instance, can travel in Vietnam and Cambodia just as they can at home without the need to change their number plate. Each vehicle will be issued with (and required to carry) a Temporary Admission Document with 1-month validity to be stamped and dated by customs officials at the border when entering and exiting another GMS country. This serves as the vehicle’s “passport”. However, there is a need to renew the car permit every month. There is no limit on the number of journeys, but no single journey can last more than 30 days in any other GMS country. Vehicles are required to stick to the route network described in Protocol 1 of the CBTA. Laos will initially open routes 3 and 0 from Houayxay to Boten and Savannakhet to Dansavanh. Based on feedback that there were inconsistencies in the interpretation of policies among authorities, clear and common understanding and interpretation among these authorities would be highly desirable.

Thailand and China signed the Early Harvest MOU at the Second Joint Committee Retreat held in Hanoi in May 2017, followed by Cambodia and Myanmar by ad-referendum, as well as Vietnam and Laos to enable the ‘Early Harvest’ transport operators to begin in August 2017. By June 2018, the five GMS countries and China (specifically Yunnan Province and Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region) also implemented 500 quotas for each member country although it was not easy to obtain

the passes. Vietnam has seen an increasing number of motor caravans/convoys from China seeking to travel through the country en route to some seaside destination. All foreign caravans are required to obtain the services of a local Vietnamese travel agency to make arrangement for the required passes and approvals from the authorities, including changing to a temporary number plate at the immigration entry point. Foreign private cars are limited to the border provinces and they would have to report their activities to the police department. The Vietnamese Ministry of Transport is currently running a pilot programme to allow private cars from China to travel within the Quang Ninh Province and Lang Son Province.

The feedback from the focus group in Vietnam raised the need for clarity with regard to the Chinese driver's license because the enforcement and implementation do not seem to coincide with the declared policy. Although the Ministry of Transportation had issued permits for Chinese tourists to drive in Vietnam, in practice, tourists are required to be physically present in Vietnam for five days before they are allowed to apply for a temporary Vietnam driver's license. For foreign drivers, spending five days just to be eligible to apply for the temporary driver's license is an unnecessary expense in terms of time and money. Even with an international driving license, there is no authority in Vietnam who can confirm the driving license, thereby making it necessary for the drivers to still apply for the temporary driver's license. Although there is good potential for overland/drive tourism for Vietnam, the procedures and requirements pertaining to driver's license pose a serious impediment.

Behind the progress for commercial vehicles, there is concern among governments that their domestic industries may be hurt if foreign trucks, tour buses and the like can freely enter their countries. For instance, Vietnam would like the four countries with a bilateral agreement under GMS to be quota-free from 2020 onwards but Cambodia, being a much smaller country, is reluctant to agree. This is applicable for non-scheduled buses but not private cars, which are not limited by quotas. One feedback from the focus group is that obtaining a license to travel between Cambodia and Thailand was not easy. For instance, a transport company passing the Thai-Cambodian border would be required to change trucks and unload and reload the cargo.

To promote greater people mobility within the region, as mandated by the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity, the ASEAN Framework Agreement on the Cross-Border Transport of Passengers by Road Vehicles (ASEAN CBTP) was signed in 2017. The next step is for the agreement to be ratified by AMS. The ASEAN CBTP is expected to bring about a greater flow of people as a result of seamless passenger traffic and reduction of transport costs within ASEAN, which would further promote, develop and enhance tourism, investment, trade and cultural exchange among AMS.

Most of the international crossing points allow an easy connection for private cars and motorcycles. However, the length of clearing CIQ differs greatly with

inconsistencies even within a country as reported by participants. Furthermore, there is no crossing point between Laos and Myanmar and opening an international checkpoint would allow the growth of regional circuit by tour operators and convoy organisers for Myanmar-Laos-Thailand Golden Triangle road tours.

Table 3. International crossing checkpoints in ASEAN member states

Countries	International Border Crossings	Remarks/ Requirements
Singapore ↔ Malaysia	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Causeway: Woodlands / Johor Bahru (M) 2. The Second Link: Tuas / Tanjong Kupang 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A minimum three-quarter tank of petrol when departing Singapore. 2. Entry fee. 3. Toll charges. 4. Buses and heavy vehicles (bearing G and Y license plates) allowed but must be licensed as a commercial vehicle in Malaysia. 5. Reciprocal insurance coverage in policy.
Thailand ↔ Malaysia	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ban Ta Ba / Pengkalan Kulor 2. Buketa / Bukit Bunga, Kelantan 3. Sungai Kolok / Rantau Panjang, Kelantan 4. Betong / Keroh, Perak 5. Sadao / Bukit Kayu Hitam 6. Padang Besar 7. Khuan Don / Wang Kelian, Perlis 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Malaysian cars entering Thailand are permitted up to Hatyai. Permission needs to be obtained for journeys beyond Hatyai at the Immigration Bureau. 2. Buses and heavy vehicles (bearing G and Y license plates) allowed but must be licensed as a commercial vehicle in Malaysia. 3. Insurance policy sold at the border.
Thailand ↔ Laos	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Chiang Khong (Chiang Rai) / Houei Xai- FB4 Friendship Bridge 4 (Bo Keo) 2. Huay Kon / Nam Ngeun (Xayaboury) 3. Phu Du / Phu Dou (Xayaboury) 4. Thai Li – Nakraseng (Loei) / Nam Hueang – Kenthao (Xayaboury) 5. Nong Khai (Nong Khai) / Tha Dua Friendship Bridge 1, Vientiane 6. Bun Kan / Pakxan (Bolikhamsai) 7. Nakhon Phanom / Tha Khek (Khammouane). Friendship Bridge 8. Mukdahan / Savannakhet 9. Chong Mek (Ubon Ratchathani) / Vang Tao, Pakse (Champasak) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Motorbikes less than 250 cc cannot cross the border. 2. Drivers must switch to the other side of the road. 3. Thai-Lao Friendship Bridge 1 which is at Nong Khai / Vientiane border. 4. Will issue temporary permit for 300 baht. 5. Required permission letter from the Thai Embassy in Laos. 6. Huak (Thailand) crossing in planning.

Table 3 (con't)

Countries	International Border Crossings	Remarks/ Requirements
Malaysia ↔ Indonesia	1. Tebedu–Sarawak–Entikong	
Brunei ↔ Malaysia	1. Merapok–Sindumin Sabah 2. Sungai Tujuh (Miri) 3. Tedungan (Limbang) 4. Pandaruan (Limbang) 5. Mengkalap (Lawas)	Reciprocal insurance coverage in policy.
Laos ↔ Vietnam	1. Tay Trang–Sobboun (Laichau, Vietnam to Pongsaly Province) 2. Nameo–Banteui (Thanh Hua to Huaphanh province) 3. Namkan–NamCan (Nge An to Xiengkhuang province) 4. Keoneua–Namphao (Hatinh to Bolikhambai province) 5. Chalo–Napao (Guangbinh to Khammoun province), No VA 6. Lao Bao–Dansavanh (Quang Tri to Savannakhet province) 7. Bo Y–Phukeua (Kon Tum to Attapu province)	
Cambodia / Vietnam	1. Bavet / Moc Bai 2. Phnom Den / Tinh Bien 3. Prek Chak / Xa Xia 4. Le Thanh / O Yadao crossing	
Laos / Cambodia	1. Dong Kralor–Veun Kham	No insurance policy sold for incoming vehicles to Cambodia.
Myanmar / Laos	No international entry point at the time being	Nearest checkpoint in Myanmar Mae / Myawaddy border.
Myanmar / Thailand / China / India	1. Kawthaung (Th)* 2. Myawaddy (Th) 3. Tachileik (Th) 4. Hteekhee (Th) 5. Temu (In)* 6. Ruili (CN)** *only with permission **vehicles cannot enter China /Myanmar beyond the border area	1. Drivers must switch to the other side of the road. 2. The Three Pagodas Pass is not open for international crossing. 3. Need to hire travel guide, have escort vehicle and have a permit.

Table 3 (con't)

Countries	International Border Crossings	Remarks/ Requirements
Cambodia / Thailand	1. Aranyaprathet / Poipet 2. Hat Lek / Ko Kong 3. Chong Jom / O Smach 4. Chong Sa Ngam / Anlong Veng 5. Ban Pakard / Phsa Prum 6. Ban Laem / Daun Lem	1. Drivers must switch to the other side of the road. 2. No insurance policy sold for incoming Thai vehicles to Cambodia.

BIMP-EAGA member countries signed the BIMP-EAGA MOU on Cross-border Movement of Commercial Buses and Coaches in 2007 and BIMP-EAGA MOU on Transit and Inter-State Transport of Goods in 2009 to facilitate the movement of people and goods within the EAGA region. Member countries agreed to harmonise and simplify rules, regulations and administrative procedures relating to cross-border bus and truck operations and to provide the supporting physical transport infrastructure and facilities. Individual member countries put in significant effort to simplify the effort to streamline and simplify their respective domestic policies, regulations and procedures to facilitate the implementation of the MOUs to achieve a more coordinated approach towards land transport infrastructure development in BIMP-EAGA. The review of the BIMP-EAGA Land Transport MOUs (ADB, 2015) identified a few challenges faced by BIMP-EAGA in the implementation of the MOUs, namely,

- (i) absence of an EAGA-wide vehicle permit scheme
- (ii) absence of an EAGA-wide third-party vehicle insurance coverage
- (iii) weak implementation of guidelines/standard operating procedures
- (iv) low cargo and passenger volume
- (v) inadequate infrastructure

Participants in the focus group discussions expressed some frustration in the difficulty of obtaining data since there is no systematic collection, collation and dissemination of cross-border data for the purpose of travel among CIQ agencies, Transport Department/Ministry and Tourism Ministry in several countries.

Limitations Due to Information System Management

There is a lack of coordinated data collection and sharing of information on vehicles and drivers at the national and regional level in several countries. This creates implementation roadblocks in identifying, monitoring, and enforcing the ASEAN common framework of road mobility. This might explain the difficulties for road-related authorities in applying the adopted regulations facilitating international motorists driving in ASEAN. For instance, traffic police and customs officers are not equipped with systematic access to data from a centralised information system. Vehicles might enter from one entry point and exit at another entry point and yet

authorities have no digital records of vehicle itineraries. This is a major constraint on the pace of implementing the seamless movement of vehicles across countries by road. Participants highlighted this as a major challenge for the development of road mobility within ASEAN.

Many ASEAN countries operate on a manual system of paperwork, without the technology to link the data that were collected at the entry and exit point among departments within the country and across countries. The immigration, customs, transport, and police departments would require the sharing of information for law enforcement. For instance, to prevent smuggling, crime, the flow of drugs, weapons, human trafficking, and stolen vehicles across international borders. The absence of an automated system of data collection on motorists, vehicles or the absence of systematic sharing of data between agencies leaves room for interpretation by enforcement authorities as well as loopholes for abuse and frauds.

At the regional level, the lack of information linkage and sharing among ASEAN countries places a big constraint on the readiness of countries to reduce regulatory procedures, which contribute to a freer movement of land transportation across the ASEAN countries. The absence of a database and details on foreign vehicles entering and exiting the country makes tracking these vehicles within the country a difficult, if not an impossible task. Thus, the establishment of an information management system for data sharing and vehicle tracking to regulate international movements within ASEAN becomes a very important prerequisite before countries become willing to allow the free movement of vehicles.

Further, there should be an integration of service among government authorities as well as other important services, such as insurance companies, hospitals, banks, and police. For instance, there are many complaints from claimants who did not receive their rebates or compensation because an insurance company is unable to make a fund transfer in time before the tourist returns to his/her home country.

Limitations Due to Lack of Integrated Insurance

Insurance coverage is a major point in the facilitation of road mobility, as the risks taken by tourists increase while driving in a foreign land. Foreign-registered road vehicles may take the compulsory motor vehicle insurance to be adequately insured against death or bodily injuries and/or property damages arising from road traffic accidents. The level of coverage might differ in terms of the assistance provided in case of emergency, while the safety and fairness in case of accident are all important elements to determine whether or not to drive a personal car in a neighbouring country within ASEAN. The insurance coverage must take into account personal insurance, medical coverage, assistance and support from government authorities as well as transport professionals, infrastructure operators, automobile associations and insurance companies.

All countries require vehicles to have a Compulsory Motor Insurance or Third Party Liability Insurance of the transit country/destination country before crossing the border. Protocol 5 of the ASEAN Framework Agreement on the Facilitation of Goods in Transit mandates that vehicles involved in the transit movement are required to purchase the required insurance policies. This scheme aims to create a pan-ASEAN insurance validity. The certificates of insurance will comprise a blue card that enables ASEAN registered vehicles to travel to AMS with integrated insurance coverage.

Table 4. Purchase of temporary insurance at the border

To From	Brunei	Cambodia	Indonesia	Laos	Malaysia	Myanmar	Philippines	Singapore	Thailand	Vietnam
Brunei		X	X	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓
Cambodia	✓		X	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓
Indonesia	✓	X		✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓
Laos	✓	X	X		✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓
Malaysia	✓	X	X	✓		✓	X	✓	✓	✓
Myanmar	✓	X	X	✓	✓		X	✓	✓	✓
Philippines	✓	X	X	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Singapore	✓	X	X	✓	✓	✓	X		✓	✓
Thailand	✓	X	X	✓	✓	✓	X	✓		✓
Vietnam	✓	X	X	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	

The ASEAN CBTP indicates in Article 13 the provision for the ASEAN Scheme of Compulsory Motor Vehicle Insurance (ACMI) to cover Third Party Liability Insurance. ACMI was launched in 2018 to simplify most of the current procedures related to the border crossing of vehicles. It is currently possible to purchase online compulsory motor insurances for cross-border vehicle movement. Some countries offer the option of a temporary insurance policy purchased at the country’s entry point for foreign vehicles. In Myanmar, insurance can be purchased at the entry point (Insurance Act 2003). For Indonesia and the Philippines, if the vehicle is imported by boat, the clearance process will require an existing insurance policy bought in the home country.

Motor vehicle insurance is compulsory for entry into Thailand. Drivers of vehicles from Laos, Malaysia and Singapore could buy the compulsory insurance policy at the Thai border, while for the other countries, an application would have

to be made in advance of travel. The services of a travel agency would have to be obtained to arrange for motor vehicle insurance and third party insurance issued by Thailand. Thailand has about 60 insurance companies where foreign motorists can make an application for insurance. With this system, the motorist has to submit details, budget, itinerary, and the system will recommend the company that can issue the insurance. The premium rates follow the national rate. The standard insurance is valid for 1 year and covers a minimum of 30 days. Vehicle insurance covers bodily injury, death, but not theft. This system is in operation for Thailand and Laos.

Recommendations

The main recommendations to expand and promote overland/drive tourism among ASEAN countries include the following:

- Implementation and enforcement of the agreement. Existing regulations should be amended to implement the 1985 Agreement of the Mutual Recognition of Domestic Driving Licenses. They should publicise the existing 1985 ASEAN agreement, monitor compliance beyond border areas and ensure that enforcement agencies properly understand and implement the agreement, especially at the provincial and local levels.
- ASEAN driver's license, licensing process and regulations. ASEAN driver's license should follow a common format for the categories and conditions of driving licenses among the member states. They need to adopt a common standard in traffic laws and driving regulations and implement a standardised mode of communication in road signage and announcements.
- Liberalisation of vehicular movements. Member states should work towards a more integrated network within ASEAN where private vehicles have more freedom to travel and explore various parts of neighbouring countries. Rules, regulations, and administrative procedures on the movement of foreign vehicles should be simplified and streamlined to promote flexibility and road mobility of drive tourism.
- Strengthen the gathering and sharing of information. Member states should upgrade and strengthen the hardware and software of information gathering and sharing among the agencies involved in regulating the international movement of vehicles within ASEAN.
- Security and safety concerns. A balance would need to be struck between the flow of tourists and road safety concerns, including more cooperation on security and road safety matters for private cars and other vehicles.
- Insurance and vehicle inspection. The common ASEAN Scheme of Compulsory Motor Vehicle Insurance that could be purchased online will simplify the border crossing of vehicles. In the interest of safety and roadworthiness of vehicles, member states should subject them to stringent

periodic inspections and for which an inspection certificate would be issued and mutually recognised.

- Phased adoption of agreements. The various road-based agreement covering commercial vehicles adopted by AMS should be extended to encompass the movement of people and private vehicles.
- Develop a plan for overland/drive tourism. The overland/drive tourism plan should contain strategies and programmes to support overland motor tourists, such as providing accurate travel information, creating itineraries for areas of scenic beauty, developing the support infrastructure and related services for motor tourists, and creating events that entice tourists to drive to the destination.

Conclusion

There is great potential for overland/drive tourism given the tremendous work in developing the road infrastructure and highways in the region, linking big cities to the different tourist destinations in AMS. For instance, the GMS countries share borders with many countries. The harmonisation of regulations and easing the entry requirements/formalities would enable more vehicles from neighbouring countries to travel within the subregion. For instance, Vietnam has seen an increase in numbers of overland motor travel from Laos, Thailand, Myanmar and China. In 2017, it received over 200 private motor vehicles and 400 motorbikes, involving more than 1000 persons. In the first quarter of 2018, 70 private motor vehicles and 100 motorbikes had entered Vietnam, which is now working on packages to attract more overland/drive tourists from these countries. But this is only the tip of the iceberg because there are still many regulatory impediments to private vehicle motorists to travel to neighbouring countries that constrain overland/drive tourism.

The web of regulations is complex because of the rules and regulations adopted by each country and the bilateral, trilateral and subregional agreements that they are party to. There are variability and inconsistencies in the recognition of driving licenses, while the limits of insurance coverage complicates the ease of driving as an international motor tourist within the ASEAN region. Whether the ASEAN driving license becomes a reality depends on the determination and commitment of each member with regard to regional economic cooperation. In some instances, governments hesitate to proceed too fast with transport deregulation since this would engender more competition among their companies engaged in transport, logistics and distribution, and passenger transportation. One of the biggest constraining factors is the weak virtual/information infrastructure within ASEAN to verify and keep track of driving licenses and share information, particularly electronically. Full connectivity within ASEAN will require improvements of both the physical and virtual infrastructure within ASEAN.

An evaluation of the key themes expressed during the focus group discussions and data collection shows that the issues pertaining to immigration, coordination of public agencies, and lack of access to data for effective monitoring and enforcement are the prime concerns of public stakeholders. As users, tourism and transport private agents and tourism public agencies expressed the lack of seamlessness in crossing international borders and the uncertainty in the actual rules adopted by enforcement officials in countries within the region.

As ASEAN moves towards a more integrated Economic Community, the free entry of foreign trucks, tour buses and other forms of transportation will create more competition for the domestic industries that provide these services. This would not be welcomed by the local industries, which would lobby the government for protection. At the same time, it should be noted that a more efficient and cost-effective transportation and distribution system would also create the conditions for greater competitiveness within the economy and contribute to more vibrant, sustainable and highly integrated economies as envisioned by the ASEAN community's Vision 2025.

Open Access: This article is distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (CC-BY 4.0) which permits any use, distribution and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author(s) and the source are credited.

References

- ASEAN. (2010a). *Brunei action plan 2011-2015 (ASEAN strategic transport plan)*. Jakarta: ASEAN Secretariat.
- ASEAN. (2010b). *Master plan on ASEAN connectivity*. Jakarta: ASEAN Secretariat.
- ASEAN. (2012). Agreement on the recognition of domestic driving licences issued by ASEAN countries Kuala Lumpur, 9 July 1985. Retrieved from https://asean.org/?static_post=agreement-on-the-recognition-of-domestic-driving-licences-issued-by-asean-countries-kuala-lumpur-9-july-1985
- ASEAN. (2016a). *ASEAN Regional road safety strategy*. Jakarta: ASEAN Secretariat.
- ASEAN. (2016b). *Master plan on ASEAN connectivity 2025*. Jakarta: ASEAN Secretariat.
- Asian Development Bank. (2012). *Indonesia-Malaysia-Thailand growth triangle implementation blueprint 2012-2016*. Mandaluyong, the Philippines: ADB.
- Asian Development Bank. (2016, November). *Review of configuration of the Greater Mekong subregion economic corridors*. Paper presented at the 21st GMS Ministerial Conference, Manila. Retrieved from <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/institutional-document/214361/configuration-gms-corridors.pdf>
- Council of the European Union. (1980, December 4). *First Council Directive 80/1263/EEC of 4 December 1980 on the introduction of a community driving licence*. Retrieved from <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/777b5328-cdc8-466d-ae16-7a3361450b5a/language-en>

- Lee, D., Han, S., & Kim, D. (2010). Evaluating prioritization of ASEAN highway network development using a fuzzy multiple attribute decision making method. *Journal of Advanced Transportation*, 45(2), 129–142.
- Pearce, P. L. (2014). Tourism motivations and decision making. In A. A. Lew, M. C. Hall, & A. M. Williams (Eds.), *The Wiley Blackwell companion to tourism* (pp. 45–54). Sussex: John Wiley & Sons.
- Pushpanathan, S. (2010, June). *ASEAN connectivity and the ASEAN economic community*. Paper presented at the 24th Asia-Pacific Roundtable, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Retrieved from https://asean.org/?static_post=asean-connectivity-and-the-asean-economic-community-by-s-pushpanathan-deputy-secretary-general-of-asean-for-asean-economic-community-2
- Wearing, S. L., & Foley, C. (2017). Understanding the tourist experience of cities. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 65, 97–107.
- World Tourism Organization. (2018). *UNWTO tourism highlights*. Madrid: UNWTO.