Abstract

This article inquires on the political process leading to the approval and implementation of the urban transport reform plan of the capital city of Chile, popularly known as Transantiago. The analysis is based on information from 30 interviews to key actors of this reform plan, official reports and documents, press clipping from the period 2000-2007, and academic literature. The article finds that despite there was no citizen’s demand for such reform, the plan enter the government agenda due to aspiration of President Lagos to bequeath a work implying the modernization of the urban transport system of Santiago. The justification of the plan lied on the negative externalities of the transport system existing by the decade of 2000 and on the desire of authorities to transform Santiago in a world-class city. Those who impelled the plan moved forward using the presidential administrative capacity. The article also finds that the institutional weakness of the plan fostered conflicts within the impelling group, and that the lack of supervision, the subscription of contracts with no clear incentives to transport passengers as well as the lack of visible products in key stages of the plan generated a situation that suggested to postpone the beginning of the implementation. In addition, there was a change of priority with the installation of the new administration. While for President Lagos Transantiago was a high priority and he involved himself in its formulation, for President Bachelet the plan did not have the same priority and, as a consequence, the sectorial Ministry took the leadership of the implementation. Thus, the confluence of these factors determines the failure of the implementation of Transantiago.

Keywords

Urban transport, Chile, policy politics, transport policy, Transantiago.