

Highway Infrastructure Development in Southwestern Bangladesh: A Comparative Analysis of Khulna and Jashore

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ABSTRACT

Highway infrastructure plays a critical role in economic development, regional connectivity, trade facilitation, and public service delivery in Bangladesh. Khulna and Jashore are particularly important components of the country's southwestern transport network, but their strategic functions differ. While Khulna serves as a major regional commercial center and an important gateway toward Mongla Port and the southwestern economic corridor, Jashore functions as a crucial land-based trade and transit hub connecting Bangladesh with India through the Benapole Land Port. This study comparatively examines the challenges, opportunities, governance conditions, road quality, safety, maintenance, and economic contributions of highway infrastructure in Khulna and Jashore. The analysis is based on two case-study research datasets: a primary survey of 85 respondents in Khulna, comprising 80 general road users and five institutional experts, and a Jashore study incorporating documentary analysis and a 50-respondent survey. The findings indicate that both areas benefit substantially from highway development but face persistent challenges related to maintenance, congestion, overloaded vehicles, road safety, institutional coordination, financing, and project implementation. Khulna respondents reported particularly high dissatisfaction with road quality, pedestrian facilities, transparency, and overall highway services. In Jashore, respondents strongly emphasized corruption, political influence, land-port-related freight pressure, and the importance of the Jashore–Benapole corridor for international trade. The comparative analysis suggests that Khulna requires stronger regional and port-oriented infrastructure management, whereas Jashore requires a stronger trade-corridor and cross-border logistics strategy. The study recommends integrated transport planning, preventive maintenance, digital governance, transparent procurement, stronger axle-load enforcement, climate-resilient infrastructure, and differentiated corridor-specific policies.

Keywords: Highway infrastructure, Khulna, Jashore, Benapole Land Port, Mongla Port, road safety, governance, regional connectivity, Bangladesh

INTRODUCTION

Infrastructure is a key driver of economic development, regional integration and social welfare. Among the different types of infrastructure, highways are especially important since they are the means of transportation for people, agricultural products, industrial goods and commercial commodities. The road network in Bangladesh carries a significant share of passenger and freight traffic and has played an important role in connecting major cities, growth centres, ports and border crossings. Highway infrastructure therefore has important implications for economic productivity, logistic efficiency and regional integration in terms of quality, capacity and safety (World Bank, 2012).

In the past two decades, Bangladesh has invested in highways, bridges, expressways and regional connectivity projects. The Padma Bridge has also improved connectivity between Dhaka and the south-western parts of Bangladesh and the transportation and economic geography of the region has been transformed. In this emerging transport system Khulna and Jashore are in complementary strategic locations. The western region has a huge potential to serve as a regional logistics and transit hub given its proximity to major land and sea ports like Benapole and Mongla (World Bank, 2020).

Jashore is an important gateway for international trade due to its strategic location with the Benapole Land Port, the main land trade gateway between Bangladesh and India. The Benapole corridor forms part of a broader regional transport network connecting Bangladesh with India and other South Asian countries. The World Bank has identified Benapole-Petrapole as the most important Bangladesh-India border crossing and has stressed the importance of upgrading road corridors and trade infrastructure to facilitate regional connectivity and reduce transportation and logistics costs (World Bank., 2021). The development of the Jashore-Jhenaidah highway is also part of the Western Economic Corridor and Regional Enhancement (WeCARE) Programme, which has a 48-kilometre section being upgraded from two-lane road to a four-lane highway to enhance connectivity, road safety, agricultural market access and regional trade (World Bank., 2021).

Khulna, in contrast, is a major commercial and administrative centre of southwestern Bangladesh with important highway links with regional economic centres and the Mongla Port corridor. The Khulna-Mongla highway is regarded as an important component of the regional transport network and the corridor is planned to be upgraded in an effort to improve the connectivity to Mongla Port and increase regional trade and transport links (Asian Development Bank, 2024). The strategic importance of the corridor is also reflected in national transport planning where the Khulna – Mongla and Jashore-Khulna corridors have been identified as important parts of Bangladesh's regional connectivity network (Government of Bangladesh. (n.d.). 2026).

But both districts still have infrastructure and governance challenges despite these strategic advantages. They include road deterioration, poor maintenance, traffic congestion, over-loaded freight vehicles, road accidents, poor drainage, delay in implementation of projects, land acquisition difficulties, financial constraints and institutional weaknesses. Previous studies by the World Bank indicated that weak maintenance, congestion, overloading, road safety problems and institutional coordination are among the main constraints affecting the road sector in Bangladesh (World Bank, 2010) (World Bank, 2012). Recent assessments also indicate that congestion and insufficient road capacity are contributors to high logistics costs and many regional roads are narrow and run at or near capacity. Another significant concern is road safety. The World Bank (2020, 2022) has identified unsafe and under-invested road infrastructure as a major contributing factor to road crashes in Bangladesh, and has stressed the need for systematic investment in safer highway design, enforcement and institutional coordination.

The conditions show that the highway infrastructure of Khulna and Jashore cannot be looked at just from the perspective of the physical construction of roads. Instead, the effectiveness of highway infrastructure depends on maintenance, traffic management, road safety, institutional coordination, project governance, land acquisition, financing and the ability of infrastructure to support local economic activities and regional trade. Hence, it is essential to study the status of infrastructure and institutional issues of highways in Khulna and Jashore to understand the contribution of transport infrastructure in sustainable economic growth, enhanced regional connectivity, and increased public welfare in southwestern Bangladesh.

Objectives of the Study

General Objective

The general objective of this study is to comparatively assess highway infrastructure development in Khulna and Jashore and identify location-specific policy measures for improving infrastructure quality, governance, safety, and economic connectivity.

Specific Objectives

The study aims to:

1. Compare the strategic importance of highway infrastructure in Khulna and Jashore.
2. Examine differences in road quality and maintenance challenges.
3. Compare road safety and traffic-management conditions.
4. Assess institutional, financial, and governance challenges.
5. Compare the contribution of highways to regional economic development.

6. Examine the role of Mongla- and Benapole-related connectivity.
7. Identify common and location-specific opportunities for highway development.
8. Develop policy recommendations for sustainable highway infrastructure in southwestern Bangladesh.

Research Questions

1. What are the major similarities and differences in highway infrastructure challenges between Khulna and Jashore?
2. How does the strategic economic function of highways differ between the two districts?
3. How do road quality, maintenance, congestion, and safety conditions compare?
4. What institutional and governance challenges affect highway development in each district?
5. What opportunities exist for improving highway infrastructure in Khulna and Jashore?
6. What differentiated policy measures are required for the two districts?

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The conceptual framework of this study is developed to explain how the physical infrastructure, governance and administration, financial management, transport and safety management, and economic connectivity collectively influence the performance of highway infrastructure in Khulna and Jashore. The framework assumes that highway performance is not only determined by the physical condition of the road, but is the result of the interaction between infrastructure quality, institutional capacity, financial resources, operational management and the economic functions of the highway network (World Bank, 2012) (World Bank., 2019).

Physical Infrastructure

Physical infrastructure represents the technical and structural foundation of highway performance. It includes road surface quality, pavement durability, drainage systems, bridges and culverts, road markings, lighting, signage, pedestrian facilities, and related infrastructure.

The relationship can be expressed as:

Infrastructure Quality → Travel Efficiency + Safety + Durability → Highway Performance

Poor pavement conditions, poor drainage, damaged bridges, insufficient road markings and poor pedestrian facilities can increase travel time, vehicle operating costs, risks of accidents and maintenance requirements. In contrast, well-designed and well-maintained infrastructure improves the reliability, safety and efficiency of transportation.

But the relative importance of specific physical infrastructure components may differ between Khulna and Jashore. For example, the Benapole corridor in Jashore has a huge amount of freight movement, which puts additional pressure on the durability of the pavement and the capacity of the road. The Jashore study, in particular, finds overloaded freight vehicles as an important factor to speed up pavement deterioration (World Bank, 2022).

Governance and Administrative Capacity

Physical infrastructure cannot perform effectively without appropriate institutional governance.

Governance and administrative capacity therefore constitute a second major explanatory dimension.

This dimension includes:

- quality of planning;
- procurement transparency;
- accountability;
- project monitoring;

- institutional coordination;
- regulatory enforcement;
- contractor supervision; and
- public participation.

The analytical relationship is:

Governance Capacity → Quality of Implementation and Maintenance → Highway Performance

Good governance is expected to improve the implementation of projects, reduce delays and cost overruns, improve construction quality, and ensure proper maintenance. Weak governance, in contrast, could lead to delays, inefficient use of resources, poor quality of construction, weak enforcement and inadequate maintenance.

This specific aspect is very important because the Khulna study showed that 84.7% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that highway construction and repair projects are often delayed and 81.2% agreed or strongly agreed that accountability and monitoring are weak (Author's Field Survey (2026)).

Similarly, the study of Jashore also points out corruption, political influence and weak inter-institutional coordination as major governance issues.

Thus, governance is a key institutional mechanism linking public investment to real highway outcomes.

Financial Management

Financial management represents the resource capacity required to construct, operate, and maintain highway infrastructure over its lifecycle. It includes budget allocation, maintenance financing, expenditure control, cost management, auditing, and efficient utilization of allocated resources.

The relationship can be conceptualized as:

Financial Resources + Financial Governance → Construction/Maintenance Capacity → Infrastructure Performance

Adequate financial resources are necessary but not sufficient. The effectiveness of financial management also depends on whether resources are allocated according to actual infrastructure needs, released on time, used efficiently, and subjected to appropriate auditing (World Bank, 2012).

Inadequate maintenance financing can create a cycle of deterioration:

Insufficient Maintenance Funding → Deferred Maintenance → Infrastructure Deterioration → Higher Rehabilitation Costs → Lower Highway Performance

Therefore, the framework treats financial management as both a resource variable and a governance variable.

Transport and Safety Management

Highway performance is the operational aspect of transport and safety management. Covers traffic congestion, vehicle overloading, enforcement of traffic laws, speed management, accident prevention, pedestrian safety, traffic signals and segregation of different types of traffic.

The relation can be written as

Traffic Management + Safety Enforcement → Reduced Congestion and Accident Risk → Improved Highway Performance

A well-built highway may not perform well if traffic is not well managed or safety regulations are not well enforced.

This dimension is very important in the comparison between Khulna and Jashore. Jashore highway network is under heavy freight pressure connected with Benapole while Khulna network carries a mix of regional passenger, commercial and freight traffic. So, very different performance outputs can be obtained from the same infrastructure, depending on the composition and traffic management capacity.

Economic Connectivity

Economic Connectivity: The Developmental Role of Highway Infrastructure It provides connectivity with ports, markets, industrial zones, agricultural production points, employment centers and national and international trade routes.

The framework distinguishes the two study areas according to their strategic connectivity:

Khulna → Regional Connectivity → Commercial Activity → Employment/Investment

Jashore → Benapole Connectivity → Cross-Border Trade → Logistics/Investment

The Jashore study suggests that the connectivity of Benapole Land Port is a key strategic aspect of the district's highway system, while the Khulna study identifies employment and business/trade as the major uses of the highway.

So the economic connectivity is two ways then . First, it increases passenger and freight traffic to create a need for highway infrastructure. Second, efficient highway infrastructure stimulates economic development by decreasing travel time, transportation costs, and barriers to market access. (World Bank., 2021).

This creates a feedback relationship:

Economic Growth → Greater Transport Demand → Pressure on Highway Infrastructure

and, when infrastructure is effective:

Improved Highway Connectivity → Lower Transport Costs → Greater Trade and Investment → Economic Growth

Highway Performance as the Dependent Variable

The five dimensions above ultimately influence **highway performance**, which is treated as the principal dependent variable of the study.

Highway performance is operationalized through four major outcomes:

Efficiency

- reduced travel time;
- reduced congestion;
- reliable transportation;
- improved freight movement.

Safety

- reduced accident risk;
- effective traffic enforcement;
- adequate pedestrian facilities;
- safer vehicle movement.

Sustainability

- durable road infrastructure;
- effective maintenance;
- climate resilience;
- efficient use of public resources.

User Satisfaction

- perceived road quality;
- satisfaction with transportation services;
- perceptions of government performance;
- confidence in highway management.

Thus:

- Physical Infrastructure
- Governance & Administration
- Financial Management
- Transport & Safety Management
- Economic Connectivity

Highway Performance

Efficiency + Safety + Sustainability + User Satisfaction



Regional Economic Development

Comparative Dimension: Khulna versus Jashore

The distinctive contribution of this framework is that it does not assume that the five dimensions have identical effects in both locations.

Instead, the study treats location as a contextual/comparative factor.

Khulna

The framework emphasizes:

Regional connectivity → commercial activity → employment → investment

Therefore, the analysis focuses particularly on:

- regional mobility;
- road quality;
- urban-regional congestion;
- maintenance;
- pedestrian safety;
- institutional accountability; and
- connectivity with wider southwestern economic networks.

Jashore

The framework emphasizes:

Benapole connectivity → freight movement → international trade → logistics → investment

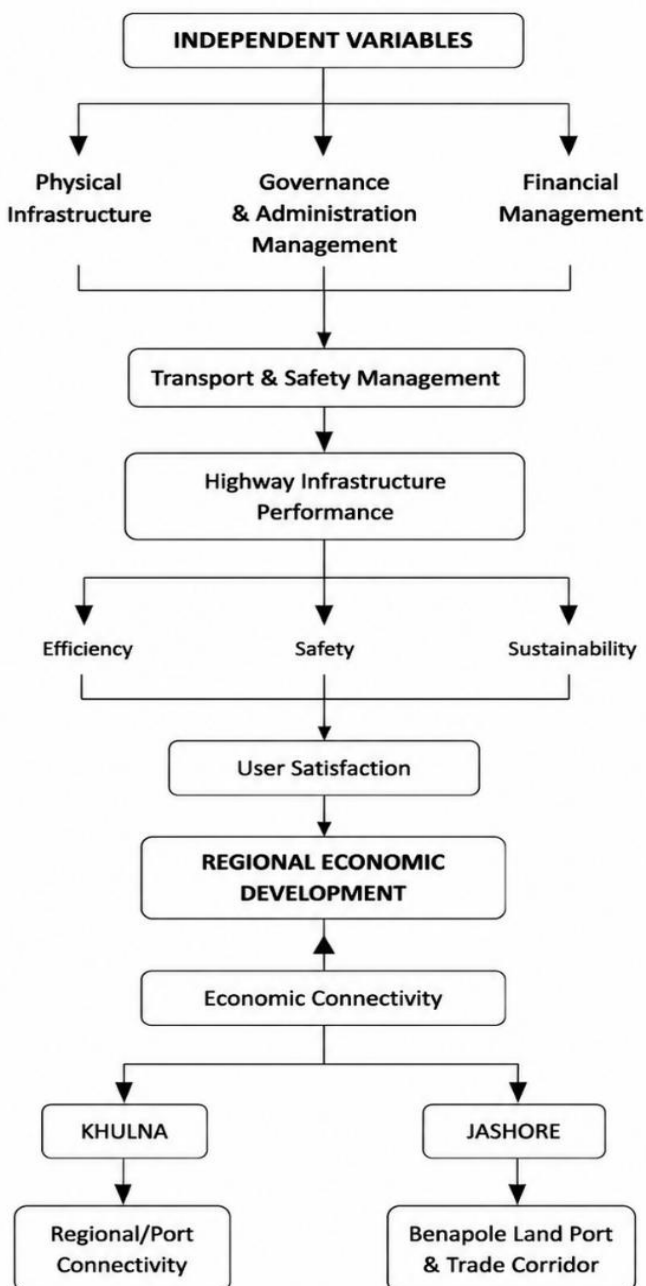
Therefore, the analysis gives greater attention to:

- freight traffic;
- overloaded vehicles;
- border congestion;
- pavement deterioration;
- cross-border logistics;
- land-port connectivity;
- institutional coordination; and
- trade facilitation.

The Jashore study identifies Benapole connectivity, trade-corridor development, highway modernization, and cross-border transport facilities as key regional development priorities.

Integrated Analytical Model

The framework can therefore be represented as follows



More analytically, the framework proposes:

$$HP=f(PI, GA, FM, TSM, EC)$$

Where:

- **HP** = Highway Performance
- **PI** = Physical Infrastructure
- **GA** = Governance and Administrative Capacity
- **FM** = Financial Management
- **TSM** = Transport and Safety Management
- **EC** = Economic Connectivity

And:

$$RED=f(HP)$$

Where:

- **RED** = Regional Economic Development.

However, economic connectivity also influences highway demand, meaning that the relationship is not strictly linear. Higher trade and economic activity increase traffic demand, which can place additional pressure on highway infrastructure:

Economic Activity → Transport Demand → Infrastructure Pressure

Therefore, the framework recognizes a feedback relationship between infrastructure and development rather than assuming a simple one-way causal relationship.

Analytical Propositions

Above framework can be converted into the following propositions:

P1: Better physical infrastructure is positively associated with highway efficiency, safety, sustainability, and user satisfaction.

P2: Stronger governance and administrative capacity are positively associated with highway infrastructure performance.

P3: More effective financial management is positively associated with the quality and sustainability of highway infrastructure.

P4: Effective transport and safety management improves highway performance by reducing congestion and accident risks.

P5: Stronger economic connectivity increases the developmental benefits of highway infrastructure.

P6: The relative importance of these factors differs between Khulna and Jashore because of their different economic and transportation functions.

P7: Improved highway performance contributes positively to regional economic development through reduced transportation costs, improved market access, increased trade, and enhanced mobility.

Key analytical contribution

The framework therefore goes beyond the naïve proposition that “better roads lead to development.” It states that:

The quality of infrastructure, institutional governance, financial management, operational safety and economic function of the transport corridor co-produce the results of highway development.

This makes the framework ideal for a comparative public administration study of Khulna and Jashore as it helps the research not only to determine whether highway infrastructure performs differently but also why the performance may be different between the two districts.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This research uses a comparative case-study design, with quantitative and qualitative evidence from two existing studies.

The Khulna study applied mixed-method approach with 85 respondents, namely 80 general road users selected by random sampling and five institutional officials/technical experts selected purposively.

The Jashore study used secondary data as the primary source of information supplemented by a questionnaire survey of 50 respondents. The secondary sources included reports of the Roads and Highways Department, publications of the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, government policy documents, academic literature and reports of international organizations.

Study Areas

Khulna

Khulna represents a major southwestern economic and transportation centre. Its highway network is important for passenger mobility, employment, business, and regional trade.

Jashore

Jashore has a particularly important cross-border trade function. Its major highways include:

- Jashore–Benapole Highway
- Jashore–Khulna Highway
- Jashore–Jhenaidah Highway
- Jashore–Narail Highway.

Data Analysis

The study uses comparative descriptive analysis. Frequencies, percentages, thematic findings, and policy evidence from the two studies are compared.

Important methodological limitation: the two datasets were not collected using identical sampling designs or identical questionnaires. Therefore, the comparison should be interpreted as a comparative case analysis rather than a statistically controlled district-to-district causal comparison. In particular, the Khulna dataset contains 85 respondents, whereas the Jashore survey contains 50 respondents.

Comparative Analysis of Khulna and Jashore

Strategic Importance

The most fundamental difference between the two districts is their strategic transportation function.

Dimension	Khulna	Jashore
Primary strategic function	Regional commercial and transport hub	International land-trade and transit hub
Major economic linkage	Southwestern regional economy and port connectivity	Benapole Land Port and India-Bangladesh trade
Major transport role	Passenger, employment, business and regional movement	Freight, cross-border trade and regional transit
Major development opportunity	Regional logistics and port connectivity	Trade corridor and cross-border logistics

(Author's field survey, 2026)

The Jashore study says the district is a major gateway to India through Benapole and thousands of trucks carrying import and export commodities use its highways.

Meanwhile employment and business activity in the Khulna highway network get support. The study of Khulna shows that 42.5% of the 80 general respondents used highways for employment and 30% for business/trade.

Thus, Jashore has a stronger international trade orientation, while Khulna has a stronger regional commercial and employment orientation.

Road Quality and Maintenance

Road maintenance is a huge issue in both districts.

- In Khulna, the survey indicates significant dissatisfaction with the physical condition of highway infrastructure. The larger study identifies poor road quality, lack of maintenance, drainage problems and recurring infrastructure deterioration as major issues.
- Heavy cargo traffic associated with Benapole Land Port aggravates the problem in Jashore. Heavy goods traffic, in particular, is identified in the Jashore study as exerting significant pressure on highways and requiring ongoing maintenance and rehabilitation.

In the Jashore survey, 56 percent of respondents rated the present state of highways as average and 10 percent rated it as poor. Only 34% rated it as good or very good This shows that one uniform maintenance policy may not be sufficient.

Comparative interpretation

“Both districts need more aggressive preventive maintenance. But the problem is of a different kind:

- Khulna: maintenance issues are strongly linked to overall highway utilisation, regional mobility, drainage, road quality and governance.
- Jashore: the pressure for maintenance is particularly linked to heavy goods and international trade.

Traffic Congestion

Traffic congestion represents another common challenge.

The Jashore study identifies congestion around:

- Benapole Land Port
- major intersections
- commercial centres
- bus terminals
- urban markets.

It notes that peak-season congestion around Benapole can extend for kilometres and increase logistics costs for traders.

Khulna also faces congestion resulting from increasing vehicle movement and regional commercial activity. The problem is particularly important where highways intersect with urban areas and commercial centers.

Comparative assessment

The congestion in Jashore is more freight- and border-trade driven, while the congestion in Khulna has a higher association with urban-regional mobility and mixed traffic.

So:

- Jashore needs freight corridor management, truck terminals, border logistics reform and bypass development.
- Khulna needs urban traffic management, intersection improvements, public transport management and regional corridor planning.

Road Safety

Road safety remains a major challenge in both locations.

In Jashore, 42% of the respondents rated the accident risk as high or very high and 56% rated it as moderate.

The study attributes road accidents to speeding, reckless driving, poor enforcement of traffic laws, bad road conditions, lack of pedestrian crossings and poor lighting.

Similarly, the Khulna study highlighted road safety as a key concern, particularly in relation to inadequate pedestrian facilities, overloaded vehicles, road conditions and traffic enforcement.

Comparative finding

Road safety is therefore a shared structural problem, rather than a problem unique to either district.

However, Jashore requires particular attention to high-speed freight movement, while Khulna requires greater emphasis on mixed urban-regional traffic and pedestrian safety.

Governance and Institutional Challenges

The governance dimension reveals important differences.

Jashore

The Jashore survey found that:

- 84% perceived corruption affecting highway development at a high or very high level.
- 92% perceived political influence affecting project implementation at a high or very high level.
- Only 32% rated inter-institutional coordination as effective or very effective.

These findings indicate strong perceptions of political and institutional influence.

Khulna

The Khulna study similarly points to weaknesses in accountability, monitoring, maintenance-fund management, project implementation, transparency and institutional coordination. According to its survey, 84.7% agreed/strongly agreed that highway construction and repair projects are often delayed and 81.2% agreed/strongly agreed that accountability and monitoring is inadequate.

Comparative interpretation

Both districts face governance problems, but the Jashore evidence highlights corruption and political influence relatively more, whereas the Khulna evidence emphasises implementation delays, accountability, monitoring, and maintenance management more.

Economic Impact

- Highway infrastructure has yielded significant economic benefits in both districts.
- 72% respondents in Jashore said highway development had made business and trade easier and 24% said it had made trade a little easier.
- 74% of respondents also rated the Jashore – Benapole Highway as very important or important for international trade.
- The main reasons for highway use in Khulna were business/trade and employment, indicating the significance of the road network to daily economic activity.
- The Jashore study also observes that highway improvements have assisted agricultural development, industrial growth, tourism and employment.

Comparative finding

The two districts have complementary economic roles:

- Jashore → International trade and logistics
- Khulna → Regional commerce, employment, industry and port-oriented connectivity

This complementarity suggests that the two districts should be considered part of a single southwestern economic corridor, rather than treated as isolated transport systems.

Public Perception of Technology

Technology emerges as an important opportunity in both studies.

In Jashore, 96% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that modern technology would improve project implementation efficiency. Furthermore, 90% agreed or strongly agreed that strict monitoring would improve project quality.

The Jashore study recommends:

- Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS)
- electronic toll collection
- GPS-based monitoring
- smart traffic signals
- digital project management
- drone-based highway inspection
- GIS.

The Khulna study also demonstrates strong support for digital monitoring and technology-based highway management.

This represents a major convergence between the two cases.

Environmental and Climate Challenges

Both Khulna and Jashore require climate-resilient infrastructure.

Jashore's study identifies:

- flooding,
- drainage problems,
- water pollution,
- air pollution,
- soil erosion,
- loss of agricultural land,
- wetland degradation

as important environmental concerns.

Khulna faces similar environmental pressures, particularly drainage and water-related problems.

The policy implication is that future highway projects should incorporate:

- improved drainage;
- climate-resilient pavement;
- elevated road sections where appropriate;
- better culverts;
- environmental impact assessments;
- sustainable construction materials.

The Jashore study specifically recommends climate-resilient designs, improved drainage, durable materials, and elevated roads in flood-prone areas.

Comparative Summary

Indicator	Khulna	Jashore	Comparative Assessment
Strategic role	Regional economic hub	International trade gateway	Complementary
Major economic function	Employment, business, regional trade	Cross-border trade and logistics	Different but interconnected
Road maintenance	Major concern	Major concern, intensified by freight	Common problem
Freight pressure	High	Very high due to Benapole	Jashore more freight-intensive
Congestion	Urban/regional	Border, freight and urban	Different causes
Road safety	Major concern	Major concern	Common
Institutional weakness	Delays, monitoring, accountability	Corruption, political influence, coordination	Different emphasis
Technology	Strong opportunity	Strong opportunity	Common opportunity
Climate resilience	Important	Important	Common priority
Economic potential	Regional and port-oriented	International trade-oriented	High in both
Priority intervention	Integrated regional transport management	Trade-corridor/logistics management	Location-specific

(Author's field survey, 2026)

Major Findings

The analysis compares and yields seven main findings.

Finding 1: Both districts are strategically important, but have different economic roles.

Jashore is important because of Benapole and international trade and Khulna is important because of regional commerce, employment and connectivity to the southwest.

Finding 2: Infrastructure quality is still below its economic potential.

Although both districts have benefited from major highway investments, maintenance and operational weaknesses continue to reduce the benefits of infrastructure development.

Finding 3: The issue of goods traffic is of particular importance in Jashore.

The Benapole trade corridor is under high stress from trucks and goods vehicles.

Finding 4: Governance is a key infrastructure issue.

The evidence from both districts indicates that problems of highway development cannot be solved by engineering alone. Equally important are procurement, accountability, monitoring, coordination, financing and administrative capacity.

Finding 5: Road safety is still a shared problem.

Both districts need more enforcement, pedestrian facilities, traffic management, lighting, road signs, and speed control.

Finding 6: Digital governance represents a major opportunity.

Both cases support the introduction of digital project monitoring, GIS, GPS, intelligent transport systems, and transparent online procurement.

Finding 7: Khulna and Jashore should be planned as an integrated economic corridor.

The Jashore study itself recommends integrated planning connecting highways with railways, inland waterways, ports, airports, and economic zones, specifically identifying Khulna and Jashore as important areas for regional connectivity.

Policy Recommendations

Develop a Khulna–Jashore Integrated Transport Corridor

Rather than planning the two districts separately, the government should develop an integrated corridor strategy connecting:

Benapole → Jashore → Khulna → Mongla Port

This could create a stronger logistics and trade network for southwestern Bangladesh.

Adopt Corridor-Specific Maintenance

Maintenance strategies should reflect traffic characteristics.

- **Jashore:** prioritize freight-corridor pavement strength and axle-load enforcement.

- **Khulna:** prioritize drainage, urban interfaces, regional traffic management, and pavement maintenance.

Strengthen Digital Governance

A unified digital highway management platform should provide:

- project progress;
- expenditure;
- contractor performance;
- road-condition information;
- maintenance schedules;
- accident data;
- citizen complaints.

Strengthen Transparency and Procurement

Independent audits, electronic procurement, public disclosure of project information, and third-party quality inspections should be strengthened.

Introduce Intelligent Freight Management in Jashore

The Benapole corridor should have:

- dedicated truck terminals;
- digital vehicle tracking;
- automated weigh stations;
- freight scheduling;
- logistics information systems;
- improved border coordination.

Improve Urban Traffic Management in Khulna

Khulna requires:

- improved intersections;
- bypass development where appropriate;
- pedestrian crossings;
- service lanes;
- public transport management;
- traffic signal modernization.

Establish Climate-Resilient Highway Standards

Both districts should adopt drainage-sensitive and climate-resilient engineering standards.

Strengthen Inter-Agency Coordination

RHD, BRTA, local government authorities, police, port authorities, customs, and other relevant institutions should work through formal corridor-management mechanisms.

CONCLUSION

Comparative evidence suggests that Khulna and Jashore are not rival highway systems but rather complementary segments of an emerging economic and transportation corridor of southwestern Bangladesh.

Jashore's biggest strategic advantage is that it is the gateway to India through Benapole Land Port. Therefore, its highway policy should focus on international trade, freight efficiency, border logistics, pavement durability and cross border connectivity.

Khulna's strategic role is broader and more regional in nature. Its highway infrastructure supports employment, business, passenger movement, regional commerce and connectivity to important economic and port related destinations. Its priorities should be therefore regional logistics, urban traffic management, drainage, maintenance and multimodal connectivity.

But the evidence from both studies shows a common governance problem. Investment in infrastructure alone cannot ensure the effective delivery of public services. Maintenance, accountability, transparency, coordination between institutions, safety enforcement, financial management, and digital governance are also important.

Therefore, the best policy option would be a Southwestern Integrated Highway Corridor Strategy, linking Benapole-Jashore-Khulna-Mongla with coordinated infrastructure planning, digital monitoring, sustainable maintenance and multi-modal transport development.

Such an approach would not only improve the road condition but also strengthen the international trade competitiveness of Bangladesh, regional economic integration, employment opportunities and sustainable development.

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