



— GLOBAL SUSTAINABLE —
TRANSPORT CONFERENCE
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Thematic discussion 5: Public transport in the 21st century: moving passengers and freight in a sustainable manner

Sunday, 27 November, 11:30 A.M. – 1:00 P.M.

Lead entity: Asian Development Bank

Public transport services and infrastructure are critical to enable the mobility of people and goods needed for inclusive economic and social development and improved quality of life. This is particularly important for cities, where by 2050 the share of world population living in cities is expected to rise to about 67 per cent; in many regions it is already higher. How to expand the role of public transport and minimize private vehicle use by scaling-up high quality mass transit systems, providing cycling and walking facilities, making more use of travel demand management tools, working with the private sector to develop green freight management systems, and encouraging ICT-related innovations such as vehicle sharing, intelligent transport systems, and integrated charging systems is essential question. Communities in rural areas of developing countries need also to be taken into account as they are often completely disconnected from the public transport options that enable access to the economic and social activities and opportunities in cities.

The Sustainable Development Goals contain a number of targets that are relevant to transport, and in particular public transport and freight.

The target under Goal 9 *Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation* states the following: “9.1 Develop quality, reliable, sustainable and resilient infrastructure, including regional and transborder infrastructure, to support economic development and human well-being, with a focus on affordable and equitable access for all”. The target under Goal 11 *Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe and resilient and sustainable* states the following: “11.2 By 2030, provide access to safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems for all, improving road safety, notably by expanding public transport, with special attention to the needs of those in vulnerable situations, women, children, persons with disabilities and older persons”. Adequate economic infrastructure improves productivity and reduces the costs of existing and new productive activity.

In many countries affordable public transit systems do not exist, forcing people to pay a relatively large share of their income on transport, or restricting their access to workplaces, school and friends and family.

Properly planned, public transport provides enormous benefits for cities, reducing air pollutants and GHG emissions, while contributing to the economic vitality of cities. Mass transit can provide mobility for many, reducing the need to build additional roads.

Public transport systems should be affordable so that they provide maximum access – especially to the poor and other groups like children and persons with a disability, in keeping with the Agenda 2030 commitment of ensuring that no one is left behind.

The mode of transport used for freight has a number of implications. For instance, transport of freight by motor vehicles (trucks) is a critical part of transportation networks, but also results in GHG emissions, as well as particulate pollution from diesel combustion. Heavy and overloaded vehicles also damage roadways. Efforts can be made to upgrade and switch to cleaner engines, as well as ensuring – through tolls or licensing fees – that the impact of trucks is accounted. Shifting freight to rail wherever possible, and strengthening rail networks, is also a policy option. Phasing out inefficient fossil fuel subsidies, in particular diesel, can also promote the uptake of more efficient technology options.

The digital revolution transforming all aspects of life will have a major impact on mobility and transport. ICT innovations have also given rise to the sharing economy, making bike sharing, car sharing and transport on demand systems more viable and attractive. ICT improves the efficiency of transport networks through passenger information systems, real-time traffic management centres, integrated electronic ticketing systems, automated control systems allowing vehicles and track side or roadside equipment to communicate, and others. Many of these developments enhance the performance and attractiveness of public transport for consumers.

In the next decade, major investments will be taking place in transport - building roads, rail networks, and buying vehicles as well as improving public transport. Public transport is central to reducing road congestion and the associated costs in cities. It also creates value for individuals, businesses and public authorities by increasing the competitiveness of cities in terms of: economic strength, by allowing higher job density and productivity; human capital, by providing opportunities to build competences and skills more quickly; physical capital, by supporting urban regeneration efforts; global appeal, by increasing the attractiveness of the city for business and tourism; and quality of life by addressing congestion and improving public health. Therefore, developing efficient, secure and safe public transport accessible to all, including the vulnerable groups, is the only smart way to invest in the future primarily of cities, but also rural areas both in freight and passenger traffic.

Possible questions for discussion:

1. How can cities expand public transport, work towards clean and efficient logistics chains, and moderate the use of private vehicles, often facing chronic congestion as well as lack of financial, technical and operational capacity and what kind of challenges do they face trying to implement it?

2. How can ICT and other new technologies contribute to more sustainable transport in cities, and what should cities do to realize this potential? What metrics are available to benchmark and measure progress in improving sustainability of passenger and freight transport?
3. What types of external technical and financial support do cities need in order to prepare and implement public transport improvements?