

Summary of Conclusions and Recommendations

The *Expert Group Meeting on Sustainable Urban Transport: Modernizing and 'Greening' Taxi Fleets in Latin American Cities* was co-organized by the Transport Engineering Programme (TEP) of the COPPE Institute of the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ) and the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) and held at the Reginaldo Treiger Auditorium at the National Economic and Social Development Bank (BNDES) on 18-19 May 2011. The Meeting was attended by 63 participants from 14 countries.

Urban transport systems and the role of taxis

Taxis provide mobility in urban areas and can play an important role in public transport.

Taxis provide point-to-point, door-to-door or shared passenger transport services, with fares typically determined by taximeters measuring the distance and the time the car has traveled.

Taxi drivers provide transport services using company- or privately-owned or rented motor vehicles. In many cities taxi industries provide important employment opportunities.

In many developing countries taxi services are also frequently provided using small buses or vans, motorcycles, pedicabs or animal drawn carriages.

Taxis and other types of urban public transport services can be complementary and/or competing in servicing the urban mobility needs.

In order to function effectively taxi systems and their operational modalities need to be integrated in urban development and urban mobility planning.

Taxis can provide important mobility services for the elderly, for persons with disabilities and other social groups with special mobility needs.

Sustainable development issues and concerns

Economic, social and environmental considerations should always be considered in an integrated manner when reviewing public policies on taxi industry regulation.

Taxi systems can differ significantly from place to place. Hence, there is no standard one-size-fits-all solution to the prevailing local development concerns.

Taxis typically drive up to ten times or more the distance per day if compared with personal cars. Therefore, taxis also have much higher fuel consumption and disproportionately contribute to local air pollution.

Local authorities have an important role to play in regulating taxi companies, vehicles, operators and services.

In some developing countries there are large numbers of licensed and unlicensed taxis operating in the urban “cruising market”, often driving empty in search of passengers. Non-economic and inefficient use of motor fuels and driver time must be reduced and minimized to the extent possible.

Excessive supply of taxi services and inefficient regulation can lead to high competition among drivers, negatively affecting driver income, service quality and safety.

In many developing countries many old and obsolete motor vehicles are still used as taxis, driving many kilometers per day in urban areas, contributing to local air pollution.

Taxi industry regulation and related good practices

In most countries taxi industries are subject to regulatory regimes involving a combination of national, state and local level licensing, taxation and certification schemes.

The development and review of taxi industry regulations should be based on the active participation of concerned stakeholders, including taxi companies, taxi drivers and their associations and customer and consumer organization representatives. Taxi industry regulations, once agreed, should be appropriately enforced.

In many cities the taxi service industry makes a significant contribution to public sector revenues through local or state taxes and other fees. Established taxi fares should cover all direct operational costs of taxi operation and ensure adequate taxi driver income.

Safety and security concerns

Safety and security are important concerns for all: taxi drivers, taxi passengers and the general public.

Driver training and monitoring of driver behavior offers important opportunities for improving traffic safety.

Safety concerns of women and children need to be adequately addressed.

Vehicle technologies and fuel choices

In a growing number of Latin American cities taxi operators use compressed natural gas to fuel their vehicles. If compared with gasoline motor vehicles, efficient use of CNG can reduce fuel costs, as well as air pollution and GHG emissions per kilometer traveled.

In spite of higher initial purchasing costs many types of hybrid-electric vehicles have proven their reliability for use as taxis. Hybrid-electric vehicles require less fuel and can be more economical and more profitable in taxi operations.

Several cities have initiated innovative projects using plug-in hybrid electric vehicles (PHEVs) and fully battery-powered electric vehicles in taxi operations. Electric vehicle technology can contribute to the “greening” of taxi systems, provided that batteries are charged with electricity from renewable sources of energy, or with electricity saved from energy efficiency projects.

Access to affordable financing for the modernization and improvement of taxi vehicles is important, in particular in developing countries.

Development perspectives, innovations, trend projections and policy options

New information technologies and global positioning systems should be more widely disseminated and used by developing country taxi operators.

Licensing of taxi vehicles and fleets should include requirements of accident and personal injury insurance. Informal transport service providers should also be included in such schemes.

New information technologies can make important contributions to address taxi driver and taxi passenger security and safety concerns.

Perspectives for national and international cooperation

Taxi industry associations can play an important role in self-regulation of the taxi service industry.

Documentation of good practices and greater sharing and exchange of experiences at national, regional and international levels can facilitate the dissemination of innovative technologies and stimulate local consultations on options of regulatory reforms and improvements.

Expression of appreciation

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