

Urban transport

Transportation directly affects the economic efficiency of cities and the well-being of their inhabitants. It is a fundamental need, increasing access to housing, work, education, health care, and other amenities. Efficient and affordable transport benefits the poor and will contribute to economic growth, since it is a prerequisite for industry and business development.

Inefficient urban transport and lack of reliable public transport are major sources of problems for cities and their inhabitants. Traffic congestion reduces a city's productivity, increasing the cost of travelling and the time spent on it.

Providing sustainable urban transport in rapidly growing urban areas in developing countries is a major challenge with many dimensions.

Key issues

Health and Environment

Traffic accidents cause deaths and injuries that affect individuals and society as a whole. Air pollution from traffic is a major pollution source, causing premature deaths and ill health, the main problem being particulate matter. Lead exposure has been a problem, but is gradually being phased out in gasoline. Emissions contribute to regional pollution and are a source of greenhouse gases with global impact.

The existence of a large number of vehicles with poor emission control, lack of proper maintenance, poor quality fuel and the prevalence of inefficient two-stroke engines are the main reasons for high levels of pollution. Poor road infrastructure and traffic congestion aggravate this situation. Noise is also a significant stress factor, but little has been done in developing countries to reduce it.

Appropriate planning (resulting in

pedestrian streets, for example) can preserve urban centres and create liveable and sustainable urban environments for everyone.

Social aspects

Urban transport is one of the factors with the greatest impact on family economies in low-income groups, and the poor suffer most from costly, slow and lengthy trips.

New migrants from rural areas typically end up on the outskirts of urban areas. In order to become integrated into city life, they are dependent on affordable mass transport systems.

The urban transport sector provides income opportunities for the unskilled, predominantly men, but they can also be exploited by organised criminal groups. Strong resistance to change can arise if stakeholders perceive plans for more efficient transport as threats to their source of income.

Constructing urban highways may create barriers between different parts of the city and reduce access for those who don't use motorised vehicles. It may also involve resettlement of poor people. Integrated urban planning that includes

transport planning will facilitate a better use of land, normally a limited resource. Mass transportation systems occupy a fraction of the space required for transport based on private vehicles.

There are clear gender differences in the use of different means of transport, reflecting local cultures. Women and men have different productive and reproductive social roles and the multipurpose trips that women often make are seldom taken into account by planners. Women have limited access to motorised private vehicles and therefore tend to depend more on public transport than men.

Safety aspects of public transport are essential for men, women and children, but their respective risks are different regarding violence, theft and sexual assault.

Institutional aspects

The responsibility for urban transport systems is often fragmented among different authorities in the municipalities and central government authorities. The lack of appropriate legislation, lack of enforcement of existing regulation, lack of a participatory planning process involving all



PHOTO: KARL FELLSTROM

The Transmilenio Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system in Bogotá is a cost effective transport solution that serves as a model for other cities. The system features dedicated lanes, large doors to permit speedy passenger boarding and bus stops similar to subway stations.

stakeholders, together with the fragmented responsibilities, are obstacles that need to be addressed.

Corruption may occur on many levels, for example, regarding localisation of infrastructure, procurement of vehicles and granting of licenses. The promotion of public awareness and institutional capacity are key factors for urban transport projects to succeed.

Strategic areas for support

Attention should be given to the interests of vulnerable socio-economic groups (including women, disabled, children and the poor) in the following ways:

- Institutional capacity building, including reform of the transport sector, policy and legislation, economic incentives and other incentives and disincentives
- Comprehensive urban planning, including land use and transport planning with a particular emphasis on public transport
- Elaboration of an overarching transport and road safety policy for the city that involves all stakeholders
- Promotion of public awareness and participatory planning involving all stakeholders
- Public transport based on buses, organised to permit competition among private operators while retaining public control through regulations
- Non-motorised traffic, including improved conditions and infrastructure for pedestrians, bicycles and other non-motorised vehicles
- Traffic management to improve efficiency, reduce pollution and improve safety
- Regulation and monitoring of fuels, use of cleaner and more efficient

vehicles to reduce emissions, testing of vehicles and monitoring of air pollution

- Use of transport demand management, such as parking schemes and congestion charging, including fiscal instruments.

To be aware of

The primary focus should address the users' situation and needs; the transportation system itself is secondary.

A long-term vision is needed in order to manage traffic in an expanding urban environment. Transport planning should reflect social changes and involve a large number of stakeholders, including the poor and women. Statistics should be collected to represent different travellers such as poor groups, women, children and the disabled.

There is a severe shortage of expertise for planning and design of urban transport in developing countries. Available methodologies are often based on US or European conditions. Where resources are limited for transparent planning and project evaluation, the city becomes dependent on foreign experts, who sometimes have their own vested interests.

Rail-based systems, whether under or above the ground, are very expensive and inflexible when compared to modern buses on dedicated lanes. One example is the Transmilenio Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system in Bogotá, Colombia.

Promotion of non motorised transport, such as walking and bicycling, will improve safety and health and is not very costly. High quality pedestrian spaces and bike lanes and a high quality BRT system are within the reach of nearly every city.

Congestion charges and other methods can be used to reduce private transport and raise funds for improving public transport.

Demonstration projects can play a large role without transforming the whole system; Bogotá's BRT started with two lines.

Every investment project should establish sustainable operation and maintenance facilities, with a long-term financial plan as well as social, gender and environmental assessments.

Examples of Sida support

■ Sida supports the Centre for Science and Environment in Delhi, which has been successful in lobbying for cleaner buses operating on natural gas.

■ Sida has supported urban transport reform and development in St Petersburg, Dhaka and Buffalo City, among other cities. Sida finances an annual training programme on urban transport.

■ The Sustainable Urban Mobility in Asia programme (SUMA) focuses on improving urban air quality, improving road safety, promoting BRT and reducing transport's contribution to climate change.

Swedish resources

Sweden has internationally renowned competence in the public transport planning, traffic safety and environmental control, with urban public transport systems that have received international interest.

Sida references

Available at www.sida.se

Fighting Poverty in an Urban World, Sida Policy (2006)

Urban Transport in Swedish Development Cooperation (1999)

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Urban Issue Paper on Air Pollution

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Tannerfeldt, G and Ljung, P (2006) *More Urban – Less Poor, An introduction to urban development and management*, London, Earthscan

REMINDERS

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| ☐ Is there sufficient political will to carry out a long-term commitment? | ☐ Would study visits to other cities be beneficial and how should the group be composed to achieve a common vision? | ☐ Will the proposed solution be financially sustainable? |
| ☐ Is legislation or regulations in place for urban planning, traffic control, traffic safety and environmental control, and have they been implemented? | ☐ Have all relevant stakeholders been identified and involved, including the poor, women, children and disabled – and including transport providers in the informal sector? Is a top-down or bottom-up approach used? | ☐ Is information available and accessible regarding emissions and other negative effects from traffic? |
| ☐ Do the responsible authorities cooperate sufficiently and do they have the capacity to implement the proposed project? | | ☐ Are there mechanisms for civil society involvement and public participation? |