OECD

Moving cities forward:

Access to opportunities for all

OECD CHAMPION MAYORS
for Inclusive Growth

Moving cities forward: access to opportunities for all

Key Issues Note

7th Meeting of the OECD Champion Mayors for Inclusive Growth

April 2025

How accessible are cities today?

Understanding the power of urban accessibility – more than just transport

Cities thrive by bringing people together – creating connections that spark new opportunities, ideas, and social networks. However, these benefits depend on accessibility – i.e. the ability of all residents to reach jobs, services, and public spaces efficiently. Accessibility in turn depends on how close people are to jobs, schools, shops and services, not just how fast or efficient the transport system is. Large cities, with their higher density, can provide more immediate access to jobs, services, and amenities, reducing travel times and making urban environments more attractive by ensuring that accessibility is not confined to specific areas but is broadly distributed across the city (OECD, 2020[1]).

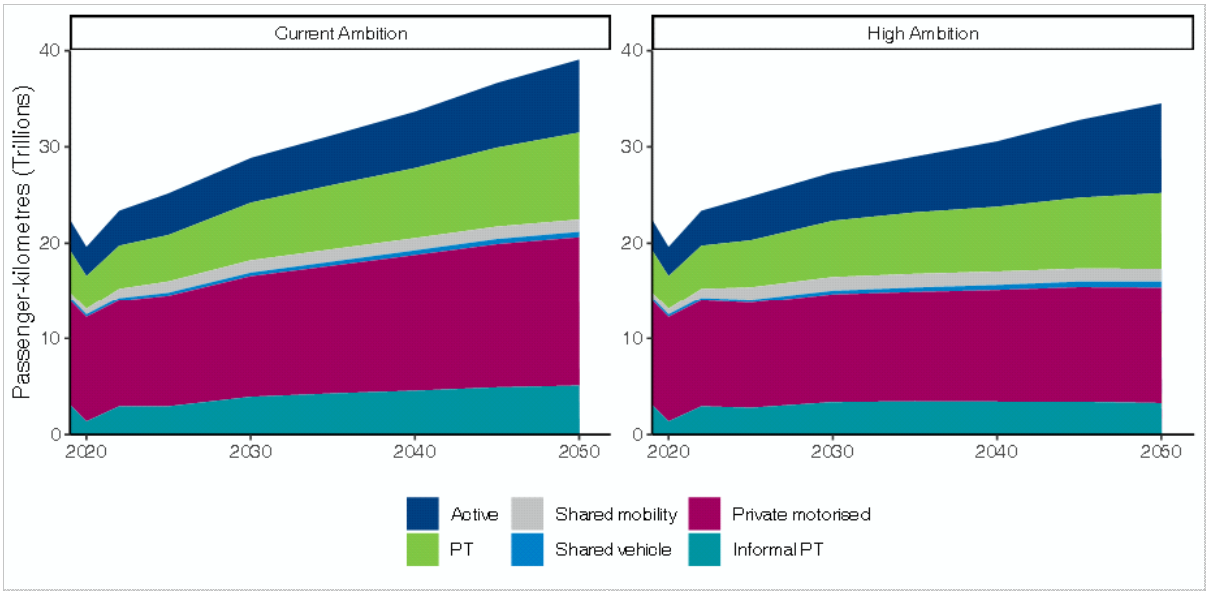
Good accessibility can drive growth and competitiveness in cities. Improved accessibility fosters agglomeration economies by connecting people and firms. For example, in London (United Kingdom), early evaluations of the cross-London underground railway, the Elizabeth Line, find job accessibility increased by up to 11% in some areas following its introduction in 2022, while employment numbers in areas within one kilometre of Elizabeth line stations increased at a faster rate than the London average (an increase of 15% and increase of 13% respectively) (TfL, 2024[2]).

But accessibility is about more than the availability of public transport. It's about how cities are designed and function to ensure that all residents can reach the full range of opportunities on offer. It means recognising the power of good urban planning to bring amenities closer to people, as well as the importance of transport systems that connect people to those amenities. It also advances social priorities in cities, by providing fair access to the city across different population groups and neighbourhoods, based on their specific travel needs and limitations. It also means understanding that prioritising one mode of transport – such as private cars – can unintentionally limit access to other essential opportunities.

Ensuring accessibility is not only an economic and social priority but is also key for sustainability. Transport networks designed to maximise accessibility can encourage shifts to lower-carbon, public mobility, reducing congestion and greenhouse gas emissions while promoting healthier active travel choices such as walking and cycling. Without targeted policy action, private motorised vehicles (cars and motorbikes) are projected to remain a dominant mode of urban transport in the years to come – accounting for nearly half of global passenger demand (Figure 1). Even as zero-emission vehicles become more widespread, estimates suggest by 2050 50% of private vehicles will still use combustion engines under the current ambition scenario, compared to 20% under a high ambition scenario (ITF, 2023[3]). Research also shows that cities with well-integrated, multimodal transport systems achieve significantly lower transport-related greenhouse gas emissions per capita (ITF, 2023[3]). For example, in Paris (France), the expansion of cycling infrastructure and public transport has been instrumental in reducing private car use across its wider Functional Urban Area, improving accessibility for residents while advancing its climate ambition (Ville de Paris, 2025[4]).

Strategies to enhance accessibility must anticipate future trends and potential shocks. Cities need transport networks that can adapt, recover and function under stress, whether from climate events, economic shocks or pandemics. Resilient transport systems combine robustness, the ability to withstand disruptions, with rapid recovery to sustain urban functionality (ITF, 2024[5]). For example, Tokyo's (Japan) Gate Bridge is equipped with 50 fibre optic sensors for real-time monitoring and early failure detection to enhance resilience and reduce maintenance costs. Similarly, Rotterdam's (Netherlands) flood-adaptive "Floating Pavilion" is designed to rise with water levels, ensuring continued operation during extreme weather events (OECD, 2024[6]).

Figure 1. Based on current policy ambitions, cars and motorcycles (private motorised vehicles) will continue to play a significant role in urban mobility worldwide in the years to come



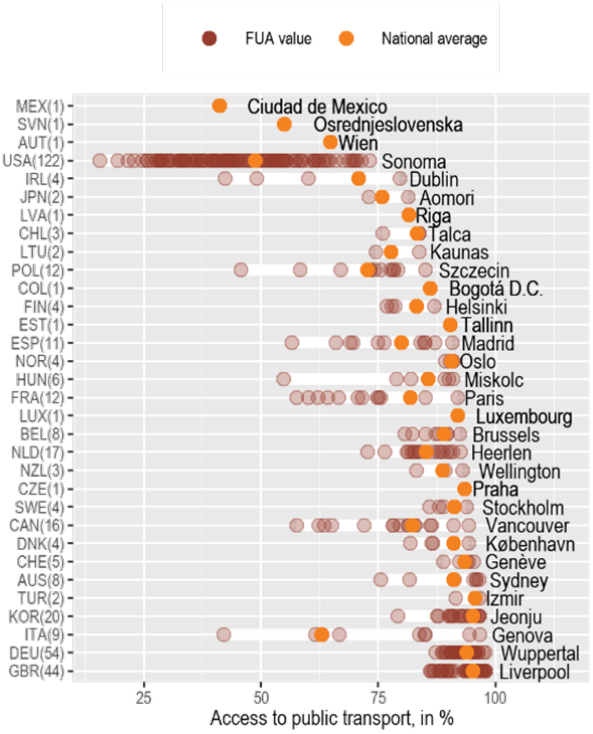
Note: Figure depicts ITF modelled estimates. Current Ambition (CA) and High Ambition (HA) refer to the two main policy scenarios modelled, which represent two levels of ambition for decarbonising transport. Active mobility and micromobility include walking, biking, scooter sharing, and bike sharing. Public transport (PT) includes rail, metro, bus, light rail transit, and bus rapid transit. Informal PT includes informal buses and public transport using three-wheelers. Shared vehicle includes motorcycle and carsharing. Private vehicles include motorcycles and cars. Shared mobility includes taxis, ridesharing and taxi buses.
Source: ITF Transport Outlook 2023 (ITF, 2023[3])

How does urban accessibility vary within and between cities?

Urban accessibility varies widely both between and within cities. While 70% of residents in midsize and large OECD Functional Urban Areas (FUAs) live within a 10-minute walk of public transport, access differs by size of cities and across countries (Figure 2). This access to public transport drops in smaller FUAs, like Tours (France), population 138 000, where only 58% of residents live within a 10-minute walk of public transport (Moreno Monroy and Diaz Ramirez, 2025[7]). Divides also emerge between continents: in Mexico and the United States, fewer than half of urban residents in midsize and large FUAs live within a 10-minute walk of public transport, a stark contrast to the nearly universal access (90%) in cities in Korea, Germany or the United Kingdom (OECD, 2024[8]).

Figure 2. About 70% of people in midsize and large FUAs can walk to a public transport stop in 2023

Walking access to a public transport stop in cities (Functional Urban Areas), 2023



Source: OECD Regions and Cities at a Glance. (OECD, 2024[8]).

Within cities, accessibility is uneven. Across 32 large metropolitan areas of the UK, France, Italy and Spain, low-income households can reach around half as many opportunities as high-income ones (ITF, 2019[9])**.** House prices, which have increased 64% in large cities over the past decade, make high-access areas increasingly unaffordable for lower-income households, pushing them to areas with the greatest accessibility challenges (Moreno Monroy and Diaz Ramirez, 2025[7]). In the peripheral and suburban areas of OECD cities, public transport users can only access 13% of the destinations potentially reachable by car, such as jobs, supermarkets, parks, hospitals, and libraries. While this limits access for all income groups living in suburbs, it creates challenges for those with limited access to private transport. Compounding these disparities, transport assessments to improve accessibility often prioritise commuters and paid work, sidelining the mobility needs of lower-income groups and those traveling for caregiving, education, or other essential activities. As a result, transport investments risk reinforcing existing inequalities rather than addressing them (ITF, 2022[10]).

Poorer residents also tend to suffer more from broader economic and social challenges related to transport. Lower-income travellers often face greater exposure to health and safety risks from road traffic when accessing amenities in cities as they rely more on walking or public transport and often live in areas with higher traffic and pollution levels such as near motorways or airports (ITF, 2025[11]). They are also more vulnerable to rising costs in both public and private transport, a situation exacerbated in the post-pandemic period (Christidis, 2023[12]). Additionally, women often have distinct mobility patterns which are not fully accounted for in traditional transport assessments, for instance making more frequent, shorter trips. In addition, they face greater safety concerns, reflecting the need for gender-responsive transport planning (ITF, 2021[13]).

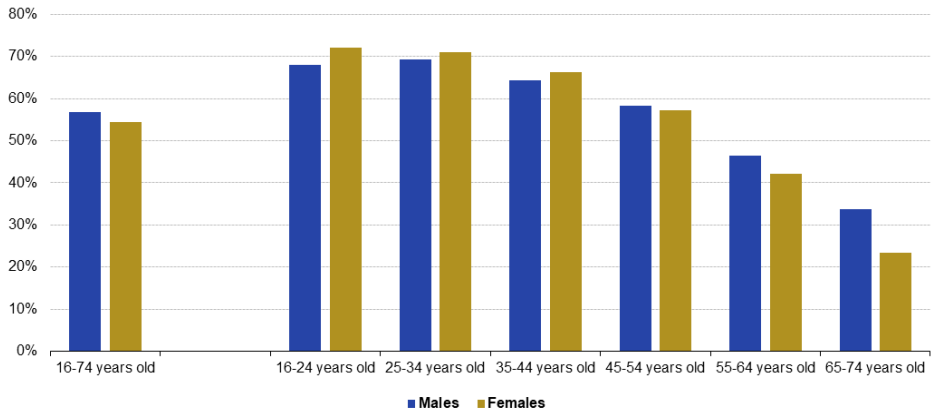
Demographic factors further shape accessibility disparities. Older adults, parents with young children, and individuals with disabilities often struggle to access transport and infrastructure, limiting their ability to participate fully in economic and social life (OECD, 2024[8]) (OECD, forthcoming[14]). Addressing these needs can benefit both the targeted groups and the broader urban population.

Emerging "green divides" exacerbate inequalities in urban accessibility. In some cities, lower-income households may rely more heavily on carbon-intensive travel modes due to limited alternatives, making them more vulnerable to policies like low-emission zones or rising fuel costs. Financial constraints may prevent low-income households from easily transitioning to more sustainable modes of transport, or may force longer commutes, reducing their quality of life. Meanwhile, subsidies for private electric vehicles (EVs) primarily benefit higher-income consumers due to the high cost of such vehicles.

Digital divides risk emerging, without inclusive design to prevent leaving people behind. While digital tools, like mobile ticketing and real-time apps, are making transport more efficient, specific groups, in particular older adults, often lack the digital skills needed to access some of these services. In the EU, only 34% of men aged 65-74 possess basic digital skills – compared with 69% of men aged 25-34, and the gap is even wider for women – 25% of 65–74-year-olds, versus 71% for 25–34-year-olds.

Figure 3. Older adults, especially women, face digital barriers that can limit access to public transport

Individuals with at least basic digital skills, by sex and age, EU (% of individuals, 2023)



Source: Eurostat (Eurostat, 2024[15])

What new and emerging trends and challenges are affecting urban accessibility?

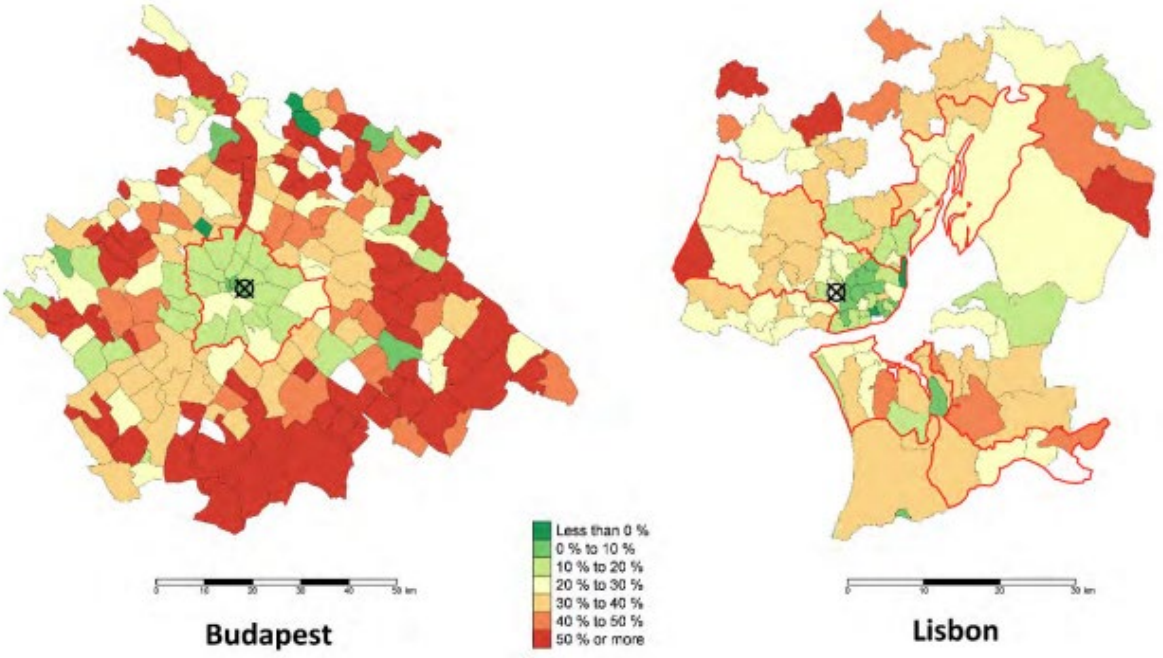
A range of structural shifts are reshaping urban mobility and accessibility, creating new opportunities and challenges for cities. The combined effects of demographic change, digital transformation, the COVID-19 pandemic and increasing exposure to both natural and human-made disruptions are altering mobility patterns, infrastructure needs and policy priorities. These trends have significant implications for how cities design and deliver accessibility improvements.

One of the most significant changes since the COVID-19 pandemic has been to travel demand and user preferences (ITF, 2023[16]). With more people working remotely and hybrid, fewer journeys are being made to city centres, while time spent in local neighbourhoods and the value of proximity has increased. Many cities used the crisis as a catalyst to promote active mobility, expand pedestrian and cycling infrastructure, and advance the concept of the "15-minute city" (OECD, 2024[17]). This model aims

to ensure that essential services – jobs, schools, shops and healthcare – are within a 15-minute walk or bike ride, reducing dependence on long commutes. While these initiatives have improved accessibility for some, their long-term impact and sustainability remain uncertain as travel patterns in cities continue to evolve, including a return to more typical patterns of economic activity, albeit often below pre-pandemic levels (Centre for Cities, 2025[18]).

The widespread adoption of remote and hybrid work has also reduced peak-hour travel, with the loss of passengers putting pressure on public transport revenues. While remote and hybrid working brings benefits to workers from reduced commuting time and cost, these are not evenly distributed, accruing disproportionally to higher-income, highly educated individuals (ITF, 2023[16]). This shift in travel patterns poses a significant challenge for transport authorities. Local trips tend to be less efficient to serve than traditional commuting flows, as they are more dispersed and characterised by lower demand. In addition, the unexpected decline in fare revenues can undermine existing business models and jeopardise investment planning and long-term financial sustainability (ITF, 2023[16]). At the same time, increased remote work has triggered a change in the geography of housing demand in urban areas, increasing demand in suburban areas with weaker transport links (Figure 4), deepening car dependency and driving urban sprawl – making access to jobs and services more difficult for many (Ahrend et al., 2023[19]).

Figure 4. Suburban house prices increase in Budapest and Lisbon, 2019 to 2021 highlighting shifting travel patterns and pressure on accessibility



Source: Changes in the geography housing demand after the onset of COVID-19: First results from large metropolitan areas in 13 OECD countries, based on data from the "Hungarian Central Statistics Office" (Budapest) and "Confidencial Imobiliário" (Lisbon). (Ahrend et al., 2022[20]).

External shocks and human-made disruptions, including conflicts, cyber threats and infrastructure failures present risks to urban accessibility. Extreme weather events, such as floods, heatwaves and storms are placing greater strain on urban infrastructure (OECD, 2024[17]), disrupting transport networks and affecting populations relying on public transport. Transport networks are also vulnerable to geopolitical instability and technological disruption, which can undermine the reliability of

mobility services or conflict, in extreme cases, can lead to the destruction of infrastructure and significantly impact accessibility (ITF, 2024[5]). Ensuring continuous access to jobs, education and essential services requires strengthening system resilience and developing active mobility strategies in addition to sustainable financial strategies that allow cities to invest in long-term accessibility improvements.

What policy tools can help make cities more accessible, sustainable and resilient?

Integrated urban development

Integrated urban development leads to enhanced accessibility of cities and can benefit a wide range of households. To enhance accessibility to affordable housing, jobs, green spaces, commercial activity, and leisure areas, cities need to focus on urban development approaches that ensure citizens have close access to key amenities, including through focusing on public transport connectivity. Locating developments near public transport hubs fosters high-density, mixed-use environments and can shorten distances for all households to access essential amenities, especially work areas. Higher urban density typically offers closer proximity to amenities, limited space – particularly for private vehicles – and greater exposure to the negative externalities associated with car use, such as congestion and pollution, which draw residents to rely more on active and sustainable modes of transport (OECD, 2020[1]). Lille (France), has successfully applied transit-oriented development in its city centre and surrounding suburbs, enacting a policy known as “DIVATs” (*Disque de Valorisation des Axes de Transports* – Transport Axis Valorisation Disc). These 500-metre zones around a tram stop include special planning measures that specify minimum density, emphasising mixed-use development and active transport.

To enhance accessibility, policymakers can seek to make better use of space dedicated to parking cars in cities. Streets can be reclaimed by prioritising off-street parking facilities, bike lanes, and public spaces. The expansion of park-and-ride systems, fully integrated with metro and bus networks should be pursued to facilitate multimodal access to cities. The deployment of real-time parking information systems can also help reduce traffic congestion, improve visitor navigation, and minimise unnecessary vehicle circulation in cities.

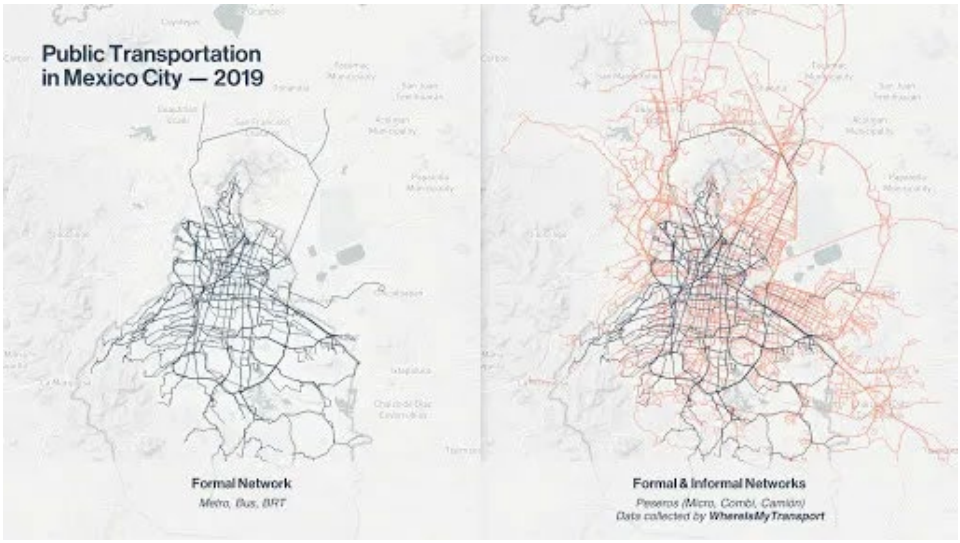
Did you know?

In Paris, France, 50% of public space is occupied by cars, even though they only account for 10% of journeys and generate significant pollution. The city set a goal to transform half of the on-street parking spaces – approximately 60 hectares – for other uses: widening and improving pavements, creating bike lanes, increasing urban greenery, etc.

Finally, including informal transport systems in urban mobility plans can help align them with broader strategic goals. Local and national governments should include informal transport (i.e. a spectrum of privately organised and operated public transport services that can take various forms e.g. motorcycle-taxis, shared ride services, minibuses, buses) into their plans, ensuring they align with broader equity, sustainability, and resilience goals. Informal transport plays a key role in improving accessibility, particularly in areas with limited public transport and can expand the broader transport network (Figure 5). Mexico City (Mexico), has incorporated ride sharing services (*peseros*) into transport

planning, recognising the complimentary role of the informal networks alongside the formal metro system, particularly in areas underserved by public transport.

Figure 5. Spatial coverage of Mexico City's formal and informal public transport networks in 2019



Source: Data collected and maps produced by WhereIsMyTransport (Lane, 2019[21]).

Making mobility more affordable and accessible for all

Providing public transport that is accessible for all households, particularly the most economically vulnerable, can require targeted financial incentives. Active and public transport options can sometimes entail higher costs and longer journeys compared to private cars. Ensuring affordability is therefore essential to promote equitable access and encourage widespread use. National and local governments can implement income-based pricing schemes to benefit vulnerable groups such as older adults, students, unemployed individuals, and asylum seekers who might otherwise struggle to afford public transport at standard fares.

Did you know?

In Slovenia, Ljubljana's public transport system uses a smart transport card ("Urbana") to offer targeted fare discounts. Students can get subsidised monthly passes and travel free of charge in July and August, while seniors aged 65+, children under six, and persons with disabilities also benefit from free or reduced fares. These measures aim to ensure inclusive, affordable mobility for all residents.

To address rising car use and severe traffic congestion, the City of Belgrade in Serbia is one of the latest European cities to implement – since 2025 – fare-free public transport, following the examples of cities such as Luxembourg (Luxembourg), Tallinn (Estonia), and Montpellier (France). These efforts aim to improve accessibility, reduce reliance on private vehicles in a rapidly growing city lacking underground mass transit infrastructure.

Cities can enhance accessibility and inclusion by adapting urban mobility systems to better meet the needs of vulnerable groups, such as older people, children, and individuals with disabilities. Ensuring equitable access to public transport and active mobility options requires not only their physical availability but also their universal accessibility. For instance, Vienna (Austria) has made all subway stations and 95% of bus and tram stops barrier-free, improving mobility for those with reduced access while enhancing convenience for all residents (European Commission, 2024[22]). By prioritising inclusive design – such as low-floor buses, step-free underground stations, clearly marked and well-connected transit routes – cities enable residents of all ages and abilities to travel beyond their immediate neighbourhoods, participate more fully in urban life, and overcome barriers such as spatial segregation and social isolation. Improving walking and cycling infrastructure – by adding protective features, clear signage, and safe crossings – can significantly enhance independent mobility, particularly for people with low vision, cognitive impairments, or reduced physical capacity (ITF, 2023[23]). Such investments help prevent vulnerable populations, including children and older adults, from being disproportionately exposed to traffic-related dangers and restricted autonomy.

Did you know?

In London (UK), public transport can be accessed step-free at 92 Tube stations (more than a third), 60 London Overground stations and all 41 Elizabeth line stations, as well as DLR stations and tram stops, greatly reducing mobility challenges often faced by older adults or parents with pushchairs. Since 2016, the city's transport authority has reduced additional journey times for those who need accessible routes by 40%, with an ultimate accessibility target of 50% by 2041 (Transport for London[24]).

Mobility solutions tailored to women can enhance accessibility for this population group through the implementation of anti-violence policies. Variants such as women-only carriages on metro lines, buses and trains, as well as dedicated taxis and ridesharing services, have been implemented in a number of cities, including OECD cities such as Mexico City (Mexico), Tokyo and Osaka (Japan). While such initiatives are frequently well-received by women and considered effective short-term measures, they have also drawn criticism. Some view them as superficial fixes that fail to address the root causes of gender-based violence in public space. These interventions reflect the complexity of tackling violence in transport systems and the need for a multi-faceted policy approach, implementing both short-term measures and long-term strategies that address structural violence.

Connected transport systems to improve accessibility

A key challenge cities face is integrating different modes of transport within a city's network – to enhance choice, reach more destinations, and ensure wider health and environmental benefits. Car-centric cities limit residents' ability to choose lower-emission transport options. If cities use public space wisely, they can create a better balance between active mobility, public transport, and private vehicles. Moreover, the growing diversity of transport modes should be accompanied by improvements to how the different transport options work together to improve overall efficiency. A single ticketing system is key to simplifying transfers across different modes. Additionally, transit hubs that connect transport modes help to smooth the transition between transport options, improving user convenience. Further strategies to enhance intermodal travel include ensuring that public transport vehicles are equipped to accommodate passengers travelling with bicycles or scooters. For example, in addition to providing facilities to cyclists to park their bike at almost all rapid transit and regional rail stations across the public transport network as well as at the ferry terminal, the City of Hamburg (Germany), allows bikes

to be taken on board free of charge on trains, buses and harbour ferries, making it easier to switch between transport modes in the city.

Rethinking urban logistics and last-metre delivery can significantly improve product accessibility for all households, particularly those with limited mobility. Well-integrated urban logistics hubs play a vital role in enhancing the efficiency and sustainability of goods transported within cities, making it easier for families, older adults, and other people with mobility constraints to access essential products. Policymakers can improve this last-metre logistics through technological innovation, further expanding access to goods. For instance, Tsukuba (Japan) has emerged as a leading testbed for smart mobility solutions, including the deployment of autonomous delivery robots to support last-metre logistics in residential neighbourhoods. These innovations primarily serve older adults and less mobile populations with limited access to nearby retail services.

Harnessing digital tools

Digital technologies offer significant opportunities to enhance the efficiency, reliability and user experience of public transport systems, through real-time information, automated ticketing, and data-driven planning, thereby improving accessibility in cities. When developing urban plans and mobility strategies, cities should consider future requirements for digital connectivity in order to enable continued progress on smart cities and transport and prevent infrastructural obsolescence. For example, fitting public electric vehicle (EV) chargers with vehicle to grid (V2G) capability, to enable smart grid development and mitigate potential grid pressures. Bratislava (Slovak Republic) has embraced digital innovation to enhance the efficiency and user experience of its public transport system, through its IDS BK mobile application, which allows users to purchase tickets and travel cards, access real-time information on routes and schedules, receive updates on service disruptions, and plan multi-modal journeys. However, the widespread adoption of digital tools risks deepening existing inequalities if not all users are able to access or navigate these technologies. Digitally excluded populations – including older adults, low-income groups, and some people with disabilities – may face increased barriers to mobility. Therefore, while advancing digital services, it's essential to retain non-digital alternatives. Ensuring that services like ticket purchasing and information dissemination are available through traditional means prevents the exclusion of individuals without digital access or proficiency.

Behavioural insights and digital tools can encourage more sustainable travel choices. For instance, in Melbourne (Australia), simplified pricing systems, such as intuitive zone-based charges, improved decision-making and helped ensure that pricing signals (e.g., peak-hour surcharges) achieve their intended policy outcomes (Byfuglien, 2020[25]). Real-time data and behavioural nudges also play a role in promoting sustainable transport choices. Real-time information tools, such as platform information boards and bike-share availability and quality maps, reduce uncertainty and improve user experience (BIT, 2022[26]). Travel apps can also encourage active transport by displaying cycle-friendly routes or calorie burn equivalents, making sustainable choices more appealing and accessible.

Enhancing resilience in urban accessibility to maintain access at all times

A core component of a resilient transport policy is the early identification and assessment of vulnerabilities across networks. For instance, ensuring new development occurs away from high-risk zones – such as flood-prone coastal areas or river deltas – can help prevent future exposure to climate-related hazards. Land-use planning and strategic relocation policies can also be integrated into broader resilience frameworks to reduce long-term risks, protect critical infrastructure, and support more adaptive, future-proof urban development.

Additionally, policymakers should consider the structural design of transport networks. While centralised transport systems may offer efficiency, they are often vulnerable to cascading failures during disruption. Building in network redundancy – such as secondary hubs or alternative routes – can reduce this risk. By expanding the number of links and nodes in a network, cities can ensure alternative options are available during disruption. These resilience factors should be embedded into infrastructure appraisal and investment planning.

Improving the ability of transport systems to withstand and recover from disruptions requires urban infrastructure upgrades tailored to specific risks. Flood resilience, for instance, can be enhanced in cities through better drainage, permeable surfaces, and robust tunnel pumping systems. Many cities are also prioritising "soft" infrastructure approaches, such as preserving natural water bodies, wetlands, mangroves, and integrating green urban spaces to manage stormwater and mitigate flash flooding. For instance, Seoul, Kore, has removed an elevated highway to restore the Cheonggyecheon stream, improving the city's capacity to manage stormwater and heat (ITF, 2024[5]). Hard infrastructure solutions also play a role. In coastal cities such as New York (US), authorities have invested more than USD 2.6 billion to prevent water getting into the subway system including with reinforced tunnels, elevated power systems and installed deployable flood barriers (Bauck, 2022[27]).

Make active and sustainable transport accessible for all

The transition to greener, low-emission transport is a cornerstone of climate policy, yet it presents significant equity challenges. Shifting towards sustainable mobility – such as public transport, cycling, and walking – often requires upfront investment in infrastructure, fleet decarbonisation, and behavioural incentives. However, there is a risk that these changes disproportionately affect lower-income households, who face longer commutes, reduced service coverage, or increased transport costs if pricing mechanisms are not carefully designed. For instance, low-emission zones (LEZ) can be an efficient policy to regulate car use and make drivers internalise climate-related externalities, but policymakers also need to address their potential socio-economic impacts, especially for lower-income households (Kamal-Chaoui, 2025[28]). Thus, the promotion of sustainable transport within cities should be accompanied by targeted support measures for the most vulnerable populations – such as subsidies for the purchase of clean vehicles or bicycles for low-income residents living in low-emission zones (LEZs).

Did you know?

The Brussels-Capital Region (Belgium) has implemented several complementary measures alongside its low-emission zone (LEZ), such as financial support for citizens (the Bruxell'Air bonus), including higher levels of support for lower-income households.

Promoting sustainable and active mobility can deliver more efficient transport and wider benefits such as improved health outcomes and reduced pollution. To promote active mobility, many cities can invest in improved pedestrian infrastructure, including safer street crossings, wider pavements and enhanced access to public transport. These efforts can remove barriers to walking and create more efficient and inclusive street use, particularly for short trips. Shared mobility, such as bike or e-scooter-sharing services can also effectively complement public transport, offering flexible and sustainable travel choices. For instance, the Montréal BIXI bike sharing scheme (Canada), launched in 2009 and now operates over 900 stations and offering more than 11 000 bicycles, making it the second most-used bike sharing network in North America. As well as making the city more accessible, it has provided residents with flexible, low-emission alternatives to private car use.

Creating the conditions for more accessible and inclusive cities

To improve accessibility, cities need data on mobility patterns and residents' needs. Instead of only assessing traditional metrics such as road capacity or average commute times, cities should also focus on whether people, including specific groups such as students, people with disabilities or low-income workers, can reach the places that matter to them. New tools such as the EC-ITF-OECD Urban Access Framework (2019[29]) alongside the ITF's Urban Planning and Travel Behaviour (2022[30]) and the OECD's Spatial Accessibility manual (forthcoming[31]), help cities look at how transport, land use, and urban design work together to connect people to jobs, schools, services, and green spaces. Technology makes it easier to monitor, manage and evaluate accessibility in cities, using tools like digital twins, AI-based mobility systems and data from mobile phones or GPS services. For instance, in Seoul, Korea, night-time public transport accessibility was assessed using mobile phone data which provided more accurate insights than traditional data sources (Lee, Sohn and Heo, 2018[32]). The performance of accessibility-improving interventions can be evaluated using disaggregated people-centred data sources. Another example, in 11 major cities in Canada, accessibility indicators were refined to show how well low-income residents – not just the average resident – could access jobs (Deboosere and El-Geneidy, 2018[33]). Meanwhile, when developing their local transport plan, Manchester (UK), assessed indicators including the impact on accessibility to healthcare facilities, particularly for those who need them most, such as people with disabilities or older adults (Boisjoly and El-Geneidy, 2017[34]). This approach can help city policymakers improve targeted interventions to support those at risk of poverty or social exclusion helping to drive inclusive growth and reduce economic inequality.

Improving accessibility in cities requires strong coordination – between municipalities, levels of government and across city departments. Cities should plan at the scale people actually move, often across city boundaries, by prioritising metropolitan-wide public transport and financing models to address the negative effects of car-centric urban sprawl. For instance, Gaziantep's (Türkiye) metropolitan transport authority, *Gaziulaş*, serves multiple districts of the wider province beyond the core city. National and regional governments can help by supporting local planning through providing transport grants or devolving additional revenue-raising powers to cities, alongside having a defined role and responsibility for transport planning (OECD, 2020[35]). In Prague (Czechia), the city's long-term development priorities align with national and EU-level objectives, ensuring transport and accessibility policies support wider urban and economic goals (Prague, 2016[36]). Such coordination can be facilitated through joint planning mechanisms such as joint task forces or working groups, composed of representatives from local, national and EU levels. Furthermore, accessibility is shaped not just by transport, but also by housing, land use, economic development and social policy, requiring coordination between these sectors (OECD, 2020[35]). Cities like Gothenburg (Sweden) show how integrated planning – combining transport strategies with green development and land-use goals – can deliver more liveable, sustainable and inclusive cities (Gothenburg, 2014[37]).

Investing in public transport is investing in public goods, bringing positive impacts for the economy, environment and equity. However, building and maintaining accessible transport systems takes long-term investment at a time when many cities face tight budgets and competing priorities. Public transport and active mobility require sustained political commitment and long-term investment. Making walking and cycling central to urban accessibility strategies demands not only clear political vision but also co-ordination across multiple policy domains. Dedicated transport taxes such as France's *versement mobility transport* tax, levied by local authorities (typically at the level of metropolitan area or public transport authority) on employer payrolls can create more stable revenue streams for cities than relying on fare revenue alone. Cities can also tap into private finance through public-private partnerships (PPPs). In Hamburg (Germany), public-private partnerships helped expand the city's bike-sharing system *StadtRAD* (WBCSD, 2016[38]), while Metro Vancouver's (Canada) co-funding model brings together

municipal, provincial and national contributions (OECD, 2020[35]). Land value capture tools allow for reinvestment of rising property values into new or expanded transport links (OECD, 2020[35]). Price-based tools like congestion charges or carbon taxes can reduce greenhouse gas emissions and raise funds. To identify and mitigate negative effects from these interventions on low-income or vulnerable groups, impact assessments can be used alongside ensuring viable public transport alternatives (OECD, 2020[1]).

Public engagement is essential for successful accessibility improvements in cities. Public engagement can reduce opposition, improve design and build trust – especially for projects that may disrupt existing routines or neighbourhoods, or be seen as unfair or unjust. The OECD's Principles on Urban Policy emphasise the importance of engaging all segments of society, especially vulnerable groups such as older adults, women, youth, people with disabilities and migrants (OECD, 2019[39]). Clearly communicating benefits of mobility plans, can help secure public buy-in and build support for any changes. Political leaders can also mitigate public concerns and reinforce public trust by proactively communicating the rationale for new mobility initiatives through the organisation of public debates and citizen consultations.

Did you know?

In Dublin (Ireland) the bus network redesign process attracted 78 000 submissions to the public consultation – more than one for every 20 residents. To address the community's concerns, authorities emphasised the scheme's accessibility benefits, including a 23% increase in services, a 16% rise in the number of residents living within 400m of a frequent city-centre bus service, expanded weekend and evening services, and improved access to jobs and education for nearly one million people (Bus Connects, 2020[40]).

Key questions for discussion

- How can cities rethink urban mobility to ensure that transport options ensure equitable access to jobs, services, and opportunities for all residents – including low-income communities and people with disabilities – while also strengthening cities' resilience to future disruptions?
- What are the most effective strategies to transition away from car-centric to walkable, bike-friendly, and transit-oriented urban environments, which provide credible, affordable alternatives to private vehicles?
- How can mayors mobilise sources of funding, foster stronger collaboration between the public and private sectors, and engage citizens, to transition towards more accessible, sustainable, and resilient mobility solutions in cities?

Other questions for discussion

1. Public transport's resilience to current trends and future shocks

- How are remote and hybrid work reshaping commuting patterns in your city? How can public transport planning and funding align with these evolving trends?
- How can digital tools be leveraged to improve the accessibility, affordability, and efficiency of public transport for all users, including vulnerable populations?
- How can urban transport systems be made more resilient to shocks (e.g., pandemics, energy disruptions)?
- What are the most promising strategies to foster multimodality in cities?

2. Social equity and inclusive mobility

- How can cities make transport more affordable for residents when public funding is constrained?
- How can cities ensure the transition to sustainable transport benefits all residents, rather than reinforcing existing inequalities?
- How can policy makers enhance the accessibility of low-income neighbourhoods?
- How can policy makers ensure low-income residents are not displaced from high-accessibility zones?
- What design features or policies can enhance safety and reduce violence in public transport?
- How can the trade-offs of fare-free public transport be balanced?

3. Governance, data and funding

- What governance and funding mechanisms have proven effective in coordinating transport policy and investment across multiple municipalities or metropolitan regions?
- What revenue-raising tools have you used to fund accessibility improvements in your city, and did they result in any unintended consequences?
- What role can international organisations like the OECD play in supporting cities to measure and improve accessibility?

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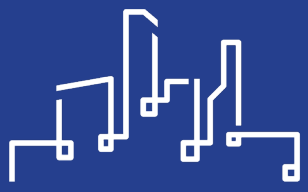

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