

RETHINKING URBAN MOBILITY: SUSTAINABLE POLICIES FOR THE CENTURY OF THE CITY

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Each week, more than 1 million people move from rural areas to cities around the world, placing huge demands on existing infrastructure—and especially on existing transport systems. Booming cities need contemporary mobility systems capable of transporting increasing numbers of people while doing the least possible harm to the natural environment. Multiple actors, including national and local governments, must work together to create environmentally and financially sustainable urban transport systems.

The Makings of a Mobility Crisis in the New Urban Age

- Cities consume 60–70 percent of the world’s energy supply and emit 70–80 percent of total global carbon emissions.
- More than 50 percent of the world’s population lives in cities. Urban transport defines the access of these city dwellers to wealth and well-being.
- Countries with the highest rates of urbanization also have high rates of personal motorization, which in turn leads to more carbon emissions. This will continue to contribute to catastrophic climate change if cities do not develop more sustainable transportation options.
- Some countries have difficulty executing their national urban transport policies due to fragmented local authority, weak financial regulation, poor project decisions, and inadequate performance-evaluation criteria.

How Governments Can Develop Sustainable Transport Solutions

Set and enforce an expansive, long-term vision for sustainable urban mobility at the national level. The national government should coordinate authority, organize power, and promote cooperation across the various tiers of government to achieve this vision.

Augment local governments’ capacity to implement projects that further the overarching sustainable transport vision. At the national level, local mobility plans should be mandated to align with national transport goals, affirm local ownership of projects, and implement practices to improve the knowledge and motivation of staff on the ground.

Establish clear funding and financing channels for transport systems. Governments should coordinate regional, local, and private contributions as well as federal financial-assistance programs.

Improve project development and selection. The government should set concrete national standards around data collection and provide localities with methodology to evaluate project outcomes according to various performance indicators, including equity, safety, and environmental impacts.

Generate comprehensive cost-benefit analyses at the local level for proposed projects. These analyses should address social, environmental, and economic issues relevant to the local context and include specific, confirmed funding sources for all projects and initiatives.

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