

Reimagining Public Transport

Terms of Reference (June 2022)

Working Group Leads: World Resource Institute (WRI) and World Bank

Context

Public transport is a low-carbon, safe, efficient way to move people in cities, and thriving cities must have public transport as a backbone of urban mobility. Cities need to address public transport at the system level: providing people access to opportunities (jobs, education, etc.), addressing pressing financial needs, and improving governance.

Strong public transport systems, particularly in developing countries, will be key to meeting global climate goals to limit temperature rise to 1.5 degrees, while also addressing inequities such as improving access to opportunities such as employment and education, air pollution, and road safety. As the IEA has noted, if changes in travel demand are unable to materialize, this would drastically increase the need for low-carbon technologies. The share of EVs in the global car fleet would need to increase from around 20 percent in 2030 to 45 percent to endure the same level of emissions reductions. In a similar manner, if goals on EVs fail to materialize, carbon reductions through shifting travel demand will have to fill the gap. TUMI has found that to meet 2030 targets for transport emissions reductions, public transport capacity may have to double globally.

Meeting global climate and health goals will require a strategy to ensure that public transport is at the heart of urban mobility. Many climate actions submitted by countries (i.e., NDCs) do not sufficiently include public transport. In addition, with the pandemic challenges, we are at risk of making it harder to meet goals if we do not take an ambitious global strategy to address public transport. This has been exacerbated by pre-existing issues of vehicle-oriented policies that were either reducing ridership or preventing cities to have high-quality systems, and we seek to address public transport not in a vacuum but in the wider scope of urban mobility policies.

The working group will conduct the following activities:

- An analysis of the current state of public transport globally, set within a context of wider urban mobility policies and financing.
- Identify the role of public transport in addressing 1.5-degree climate scenarios, particularly regarding urgent needs for transport emissions reduction by 2030 and whether current country action plans (i.e., NDCs) address this.
- Links to wider sustainable development agenda: equity and access to opportunities (jobs, education, etc.), health issues such as road safety, active lifestyles, air pollution, etc.
- Reach an understanding of key principles by which public transport cannot just revive but thrive to meet global climate and sustainable development goals.

Objectives

The working group has the following objectives:

- Drive action to ensure public transport not just survives but can thrive as the backbone of urban mobility.
- Increase the presence of public transport on the global climate agenda.
- Create a set of principles informed by evidence and examples that countries, cities, and public transport companies can pursue to ensure public transport is thriving, safe, and addressing climate, health, accessibility, and equity goals in cities.

Outcomes

The working group will develop the following:

- **Shared principles.** Develop a set of shared principles for reimagining public transport that SuM4All members may use to advance low carbon, healthy, financially sustainable, and equitable mobility. Guidance will be provided on actions needed to fulfill these principles.
- **The global agenda.** A call for public transport to be at the heart of the climate-transport agenda and why this is important, including its link to health and equity. We will explicitly seek to raise the profile of public transport as a key strategy in the global climate agenda, focusing on COP27 and engagement beyond the 2025 NDC updates.
- **Working group dialogue.** Synopsis of working group discussions that identify thematic areas and follow-up research surrounding issues of access, financing, governance, and other key areas to be covered in the above principles.
- **Final report.** A final working group report summarizing the above, with additional or modified items made according to the group's discussions. The final report will inform SuM4All members and others such as government policymakers engaged within the consortium and individually.

We are seeking an overall outcome of the group to raise the profile of public transport as a key strategy in the global climate agenda, focusing on COP27 and engagement beyond the 2025 NDC updates. Moreover, we will be discussing in the coming months how working group members can carry forward the principles identified through creating individual or joint actions and coalitions.

Impact

The working group will discuss the intended impact and areas where outcomes may be sought. The general intended impact is that policymakers and global stakeholders, such as countries, cities, international institutions, development organizations, and others will embrace the principles outlined in the proposal to increase ambition to address global climate and development goals through thriving public transport systems. The report is not meant to provide detailed technical knowledge on specific issues regarding public transport but to encourage renewed actions in the sector, particularly in the context of climate and green recovery. Impacts would be a greater role in the global climate agenda, links to reinvigorated national financing and city plans, and acceleration of key transformations needed in the sector.

Working Group Members

World Resources Institute, World Bank, Institute for Transportation and Development Policy (ITDP), C40, Partnership on Sustainable Low Carbon Transport, International Association of Public Transport (UITP), Transformative Urban Mobility Initiative (TUMI), Mobility Data, Walk21, International Federation of Pedestrians (IFP), GoAscendal, International Railways Union (UIC), International Transport Workers Federation.