International Transport Forum

Policy Recommendation

Urban Transport Development

Urban areas generate around one-third of global passenger transport demand. As global urbanisation trends are set to continue, urban areas will face increasing pressure to provide functioning mobility and transport systems that can adequately accommodate increasing transport demand and respond to the increasing competition for limited space. To ensure such urban transport systems come to the benefit of all while limiting negative externalities—and while avoiding unnecessary administrative burdens—national or subnational governments can pursue policies in the following categories.

The potential of smart and digital systems

Digital systems are a key enabler of efficient, resilient and user-centred urban mobility. Digital tools can help optimise the use of existing infrastructure and manage demand dynamically to reduce congestion, improve travel-time reliability and support multimodal travel. At the same time, not all users have access to digital technologies or platforms. To leverage the opportunities that digitalisation can provide for urban transport systems, responsible authorities could:

- **Establish strategies, standards and guidance for smart traffic management,** promoting the use of digital twins, real-time data and advanced traffic-control systems to optimise network performance, air space, public transport prioritisation, demand-responsive traffic signals, and flexible use of road space.
- **Promote interoperable standards for real-time passenger information and integrated ticketing,** including for peri-urban areas, ensuring a consistent user experience and seamless multimodal travel across all modes and transport services in urban agglomerations and their rural surroundings. Such standards could also allow for the development of Mobility-as-a-Service (MaaS) frameworks that integrate public transport with shared and active mobility through common data standards. These frameworks should be designed for the benefit of and safeguards for all passengers.
- **Recognise and address security risks of digitalisation of urban transport systems.** The increasing reliance on smart and digital systems increases risks of disruption of critical urban infrastructure. Without strong safeguards, adversaries could leverage these ecosystems for surveillance, influence operations, targeting, or operational disruption, undermining both public safety and national resilience.

New mobility services

The rapid uptake of new and innovative mobility services—including ride-hailing, shared mobility, air taxis and other platform-based services—can deliver important benefits and can also raise concerns. To safeguard appropriate application of such mobility services, responsible authorities could:

- **Monitor the uptake and impacts of new mobility services** on congestion, emissions, public transport ridership, active mobility, affordability and overall system performance, using data-driven assessment frameworks.

- **Provide consistent guidance for new services while allowing, where appropriate, calibrated local implementation**, enabling authorities at the sub-national level to tailor measures to local market conditions within a coherent framework, including guidance for partnering with private sector actors to implement new approaches to MaaS.
- **Promote the safe uptake of micro-mobility** (such as e-scooters and e-bicycles) within an integrated people-centred mobility system, as a means to provide first and last mile connectivity mobility, while recognising the need to ensure these devices can be safely integrated into existing transport systems and communities.

Planning frameworks to facilitate effective policymaking

Delivering high-quality urban transport systems relies on frameworks that enable effective and coordinated planning across metropolitan areas and surrounding peri-urban areas. Governments could:

- **Explore effective funding options for public transport infrastructure and operations.** Authorities can also use these frameworks to link a range of revenue sources to public transport funding to increase public acceptance of pricing reforms.
- **Facilitate predictable long-term funding for infrastructure to enable people to travel in an independent, cost-effective, safe and healthy manner.**
- **Design targeted and transparent frameworks** that support service level reliability and affordability for all, while ensuring efficient use of public resources.
- **Establish policy coordination mechanisms** to prioritise the ease of access to goods, jobs, (virtual) services, etc.
- **Facilitate virtual access to work, education, healthcare and public services**, including through telemedicine, digital government services and online learning.
- **Provide an enabling framework** that allows local authorities to implement adaptive measures tailored to their context.
- **Enable effective metropolitan-level coordination mechanisms** for strategic planning across functional urban and peri-urban areas where travel patterns extend beyond administrative boundaries.
- **Promote planning processes that are informed by the needs of national, regional, and local stakeholders**.
- **Encourage urban areas to regularly prepare and periodically update comprehensive plans for urban mobility** in alignment with national and sub-national planning frameworks, ensuring cross-sectoral collaboration and alignment between transport and land-use. Encourage funding for the implementation and monitoring of comprehensive plans for urban mobility, as a cornerstone for an urban mobility transport system aiming to satisfy mobility needs of people and businesses in cities and their surroundings for a better quality of life.

For all the above policy proposals, the systematic collection and utilisation of data, the development and standardisation of appropriate metadata, as well as the promotion of common standards ensuring interoperability among interacting states, are considered of paramount importance. In addition, authorities should ensure that any new governance or planning obligations are designed so that their expected benefits clearly outweigh the associated administrative and resource costs.

The Council of Ministers of Transport of the International Transport Forum adopted this Policy Recommendation on *Urban Transport Development* at its meeting on 7 May 2026 in Leipzig during the ITF 2026 Summit on "Funding Resilient Transport".