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Achieving the Aichi 2030 Declaration Goal 5 Urban Access: Policy Action Recommendations

(Background Paper for Plenary Session 5 Review Goal 5: Urban Access)

Final Draft

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Executive Summary

This background paper examines the progress, challenges, and policy recommendations for achieving Goal 5 of the Aichi 2030 Declaration, which focuses on ensuring access to safe, affordable, and sustainable transport for all Asian urban residents.

Key Findings:

- **Limited public transport access:** A significant proportion of the urban population in Asia lacks convenient access to public transport, 1.4 billion urban population without convenient access to public transport in 2023
- **Rapid transit infrastructure growth concentrated in a few countries:** While there has been a rapid increase in rapid transit infrastructure in some East and Southeast Asian (EST) countries, this growth is uneven and slower than in developed countries.
- **Urban form and density impact access:** Denser urban areas have more potential for public transport usage. Still, many EST cities have not fully capitalized on this, with inadequate access despite high population densities.
- **Enhanced policy focus on urban access:** Since adopting the Aichi Declaration, more EST countries have included urban access targets and mode shifts in their national transport policies. Countries are adopting various policy measures to improve urban access.

The paper proposes ten key policy recommendations to achieve Goal 5, including:

1. **Establish a shared vision:** Prioritize public transport and active mobility through integrated land use and transport policies.
2. **Sound governance and planning:** Establish integrated transport authorities to plan, regulate, and monitor urban transport systems.
3. **Rethink urban spaces:** Encourage denser development around public transport, optimize road space, and implement sustainable parking policies.
4. **Stabilize long-term funding:** Secure stable funding for public transport through various sources, including land value capture and congestion charges.
5. **Enhance accessibility and inclusion:** Ensure public transport is accessible and affordable for all, including vulnerable groups.
6. **Provide high-quality public transport:** Invest in efficient and attractive public transport systems that are highly frequent, reliable, and comfortable.
7. **Develop multimodal alternatives:** Complement public transport with on-demand shared and micromobility services.
8. **Integrate freight into SUMPs:** Mandate the inclusion of sustainable urban logistics plans within sustainable urban mobility plans.
9. **Better understand transport needs:** Regularly engage stakeholders and monitor public transport access to target investments.
10. **Integrate urban access into climate and SDG policy:** Make urban access a key component of national climate strategies and SDG implementation.

By implementing these recommendations, Asian countries can make significant progress towards achieving Goal 5 of the Aichi 2030 Declaration, creating more sustainable, inclusive, and accessible urban transport systems for all.

Background

Asia is currently undergoing rapid urbanization. It's projected that between 2022 and 2030, half of the global increase in urban population will reside in Asia (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs Population Division, 2018). Urban transport is vital for the movement of people and goods, accounting for 55% of passenger and 15% of freight transport demand within the region (International Transport Forum, 2023). However, this growth significantly contributes to environmental challenges, with urban transport responsible for 45% of passenger transport emissions and 43% of freight transport emissions in Asia (International Transport Forum, 2023).

Efficient urban transport is necessary and catalyses a city's economic growth. With the demand for urban mobility set to more than double between 2019 and 2050 (International Transport Forum, 2023), the potential for sustainable urban transport to balance this growth with environmental and socio-economic sustainability is immense.

The Aichi 2030 Declaration, adopted by 21 Asian countries, recognizes this critical need for action. Its Goal 6 on Urban Access explicitly aims to ensure that all urban residents, particularly the most vulnerable, access safe, affordable, and sustainable transport options. This goal aligns with the broader Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Agreement, reflecting the global imperative to create more liveable and environmentally responsible cities. Drawing from SDG 11.2 and 11.7, it aims to ensure access to safe, affordable, accessible, inclusive, and sustainable transport facilities, systems, and services for all urban dwellers, including vulnerable groups, notably by expanding public transport by 2030.

This goal underscores the crucial link between sustainable urban transport and achieving broader sustainable development objectives, including social inclusion, economic growth, and environmental protection. The subsequent sections of this paper will delve deeper into the progress made towards this goal, the remaining challenges, and potential solutions to ensure sustainable urban access in Asia.

This background report synthesizes information from the Asian Transport Outlook (ATO), combining official national and regional statistics with data from reputable international sources. While this analysis provides a crucial baseline, it's important to note that no new data was generated, and challenges related to data consistency and comparability remain. We acknowledge the diverse national circumstances and aim to enhance data availability and quality in future monitoring reports.

I. Headline Indicator – SDG Indicator 11.2.1: Proportion of population that has convenient access to public transport, by sex, age and persons with disabilities

SDG indicator 11.2.1 assesses convenient access to public transport, defined as being within 500 meters of low-capacity options (bus, tram, etc.) or 1 kilometre of high-capacity options (metro, ferry). The 2024 UN Sustainable Development Goals Report reveals concerning gaps: only 53% of urban residents in Central/Southern Asia and 57% in Eastern/South-Eastern Asia have such access (United Nations, 2024), leaving 1.4 billion without convenient access to public transport in 2023¹.

A recent estimation further highlights this, showing nearly half of cities in EST participating countries have less than 20% of their population with convenient access. Only 8 EST participating countries have cities

¹ Estimated using regional urban access and urban population (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs Population Division, 2018)

where over 80% of residents benefit from convenient access to public transit (Socioeconomic Data and Applications Center, 2023).

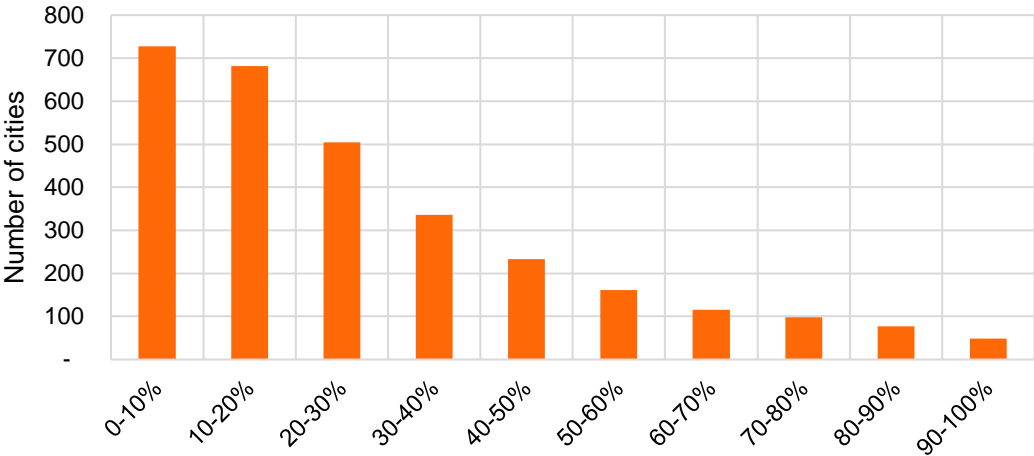


Figure 1. Number of cities within EST participating countries grouped by level of access to public transport

Source: (Socioeconomic Data and Applications Center, 2023)

II. Rapid Urban Transit Infrastructure Growth

EST countries are quickly catching up in rapid urban transit per capita, i.e., Bus Rapid Transit, Metro, and Light rail transit systems. However, this is concentrated only on few countries, and the overall magnitude of expansion is still slower than that of developed global countries. Since 2015, an increase of 84% in the global rapid transit infrastructure has occurred in the EST countries (ITDP, n.d.).

The per-capita rapid urban transit infrastructure (per million urban population) for low, lower-middle-income, and upper-middle and high-income countries in the EST region is 2, 10, and 17 in 2021. In 2015, it was 2, 5 and 16 respectively (ITDP, n.d.).

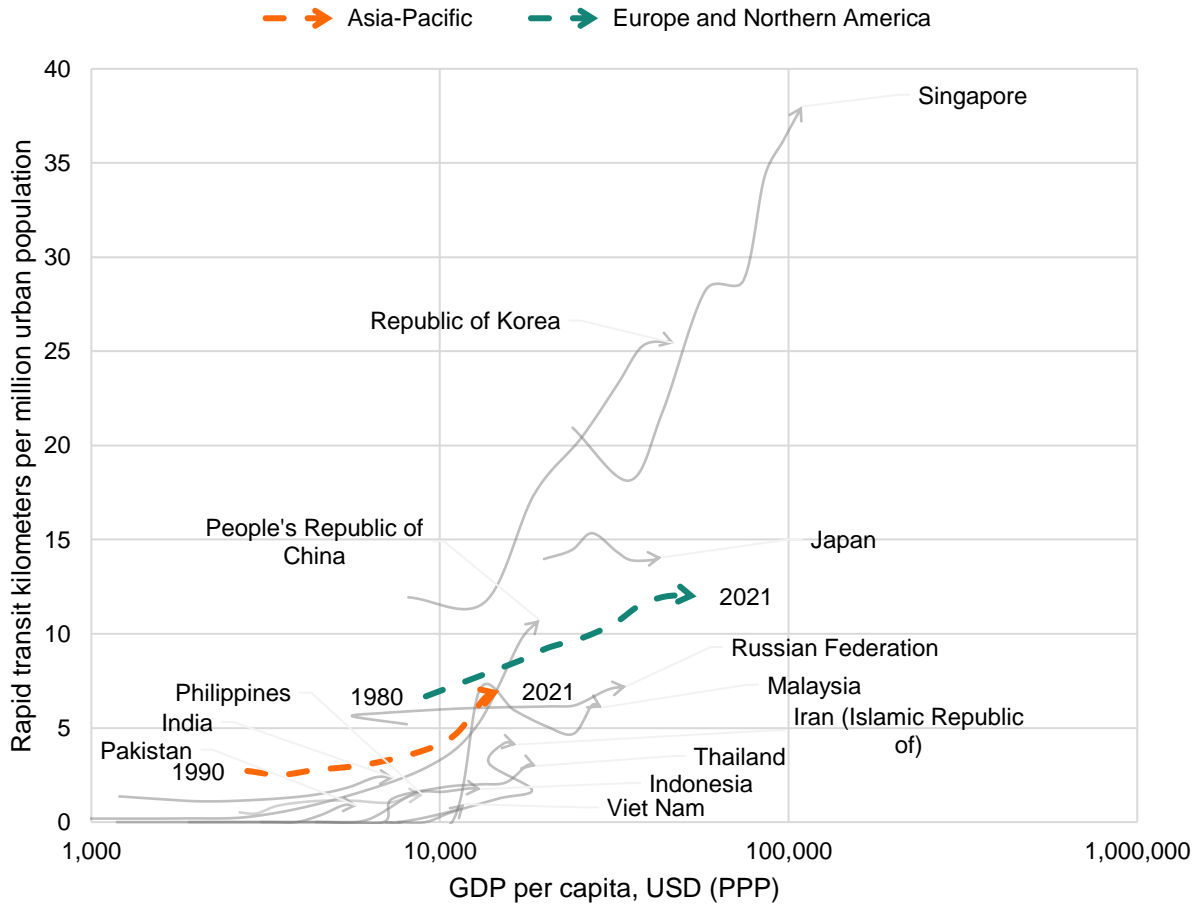


Figure 2. GDP per capita vs. rapid transit urban ratio (kilometres per million urban population) in EST participating countries, 1990-2021

Source: (ITDP, n.d.)

III. Urban Form and Structure

Denser urban areas inherently possess a more extensive collection of potential transit users. Conversely, establishing a robust public transport system can spur denser development. A clear correlation exists between population density and transit usage in cities across the developing world. However, many EST cities, even with higher densities, have not fully leveraged this potential. Access to public transport in these areas often remains inadequate, failing to capitalize on the inherent density advantage.

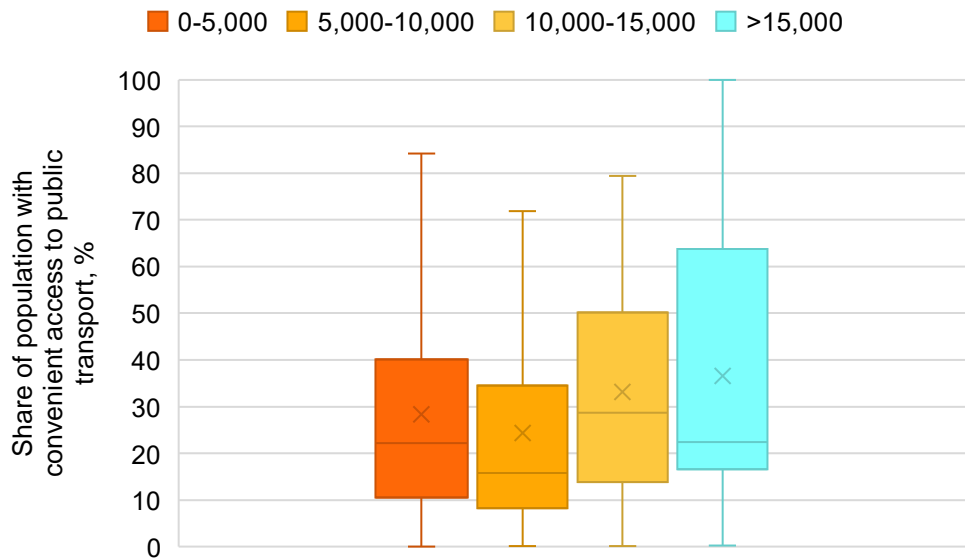


Figure 3. Share of population in EST participating country cities with convenient access to public transport, grouped by city population density

Source: (Socioeconomic Data and Applications Center, 2023)

Urban form is closely linked to the level of access within cities. Evidence suggests that higher block density is correlated with a higher proportion of the population having access to essential services such as healthcare and education. However, based on data available in 1,034 cities in 2024, nearly half of the 532 cities in EST participating countries only have 20% of the urban population near education and healthcare services within 1-kilometer walking distance (ITDP, 2024).

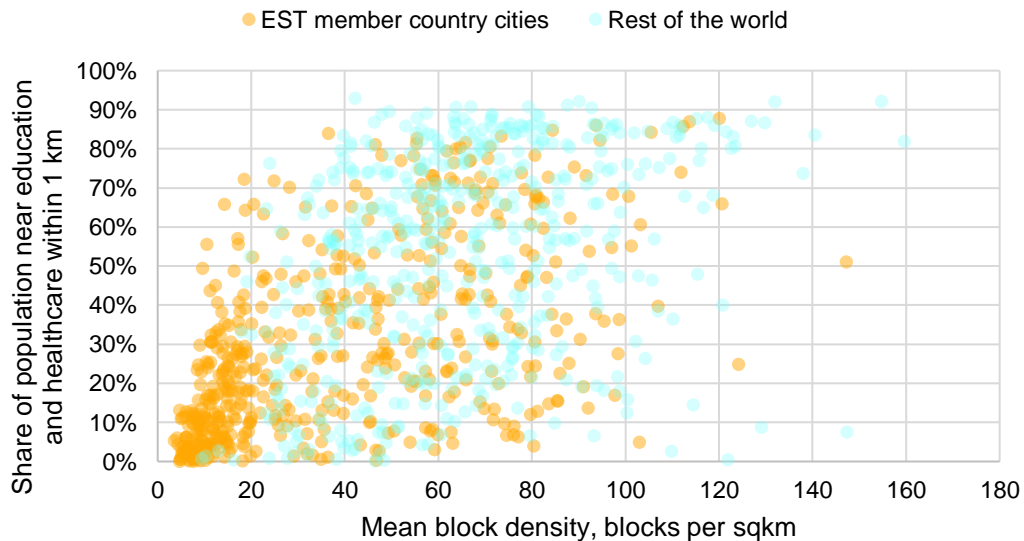


Figure 4. Mean block density vs. share of population near services (education and healthcare) within 1 kilometre

Source: (ITDP, 2024)

IV. Urban Transport Related Targets

Before the Aichi Declaration, a mere five participating countries of the Environmentally Sustainable Transport (EST) initiative had included targets related to enhancing urban access and promoting mode shift within their national transport sector policies or strategies. However, since adopting the Aichi 2030 Declaration, this number has risen to nine. Several countries have set ambitious targets in this regard².

1. Singapore, for instance, aims to develop 45-minute cities and 20-minute towns by 2040, prioritizing walk-cycle-ride mobility. To achieve this, Singapore has set corresponding targets for improving urban rail access, bus coverage and frequency, and walking and cycling infrastructure. (Land Transport Master Plan 2040)
2. Sri Lanka is another example. The country focuses on active mobility and aims to increase the share of non-motorized transportation to 20% by 2030 and 30% by 2035. (Climate Prosperity Plan)
3. Viet Nam has adopted a comprehensive approach to improving public transport mode share. It aims to increase this share to 40% in special urban centres, 10% in grade I cities, and has set suitable targets for Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh, and Da Nang by 2050. These targets, including a corresponding target for 2030, are integrated across three different policy documents. (National Green Growth for 2021-2030 period, with a vision by 2050, Action Program on green energy transformation, reducing carbon and methane emissions of the transport sector)
4. Malaysia initially set a target of increasing the modal share of public transport in urban areas to 40% by 2030. In 2022, the country further raised its ambition by targeting a 50% public transport mode share by 2040. (Green Technology Master Plan 2017-2030, National Energy Policy 2022-2040)

These examples demonstrate the growing momentum towards improving urban access and promoting mode shift targets in the transport sector following adopting the Aichi 2030 Declaration.

V. Urban Public Transport Policy Measures

A comprehensive analysis of transport policies across EST participating countries reveals a diverse range of approaches and levels of ambition on public transit improvement. Beyond infrastructure and services, specific measures aimed at improving urban access and public transport usage include dedicated express lanes for para transit, integration with other modes, and fleet renewal programs. Some country examples are further detailed in below Table.

² Refer to Asian Transport Outlook Policy Tracker (Asian Transport Outlook, n.d.)

Table 1. Examples on Policy Recommendations for urban transport adopted by EST participating countries since the adoption of the Aichi 2030 Declaration

Source: (Asian Transport Outlook, n.d.)

COUNTRY	POLICY MEASURE	POLICY DOCUMENT	YEAR PUBLISHED
BHUTAN	Establish and enforce carpool lanes along major highways and main city streets Work with the taxi industry, mobility groups and other stakeholders to review the locations and availability of taxi parking zones and to understand better the role that taxis play in major cities of Bhutan.	Low Emission Development Strategy (LEDS) - Surface Transport	2021
MALAYSIA	Embark on a study to identify and develop new park-and-ride facilities near city boundaries to encourage car users to use public transit especially for new rail line (MRT2 and LRT3). Improve existing and new P&R to a smart parking system with features such as real-time rail or bus departures, number of parking space availability, and estimated travel time to destinations. Improve security, lighting, and access to feeder bus service and pedestrian walkways.	Low Carbon Mobility Blueprint 2021-2030	2021
MALAYSIA	Establishing a platform to coordinate and optimise schedules, whereby minimising the waiting time between different modes. An integrated and reliable journey planner will be developed through this platform. Rail and road networks will also be integrated to provide better connectivity between airports, ports, industrial areas and cities.	Twelfth Malaysia Plan 2021-2025	2021
THAILAND	Increasing the proportion of bus lanes and granting special privileges for public buses in the city	Thailand Greenhouse Gas Reduction Action Plan for Transport Sector	2021
VIET NAM	Percentage of buses using clean energy in special urban centres is at least 15% of the total number of buses in operation and 10% of new buses in grade I cities	Decision No. 1658/QD-TTg (National Green Growth for 2021-2030 period, with a vision by 2050)	2021

VI. Urban Freight Policy Measures

Urban freight measures have largely been overlooked in national policy documents, even after adopting the Sustainable Development Goals and the Aichi Declaration. Few countries have explicitly addressed urban freight in their national policies. Some examples are highlighted below.

Table 2. Examples on Policy Recommendations for urban freight in EST participating countries

Source: (Asian Transport Outlook, n.d.)

COUNTRY	POLICY MEASURE	POLICY DOCUMENT	YEAR PUBLISHED
BHUTAN	Develop a city level freight delivery strategy including an analysis of freight movements and options for consolidation and low impact distribution	Low Emission Development Strategy (LEDS) - Surface Transport	2021
NEPAL	Minimize empty running of trucks; Improve operational efficiency of truck transport; Provision of container port (dry port) Urban freight: Provision of appropriately located freight station; Design of efficient distribution logistics; Clean vehicles	National Sustainable Transport Strategy (NSTS) for Nepal (2015-2040)	2015
PAKISTAN	For large urban cities, final mile distribution centres will be established where appropriate.	National Transport Policy of Pakistan 2018	2018

VII. Urban Land Use Policy Measures

While many countries acknowledge the value of transit-oriented development, implementing denser development patterns to improve urban access is still lagging. This indicates a need for further policy focus and action to utilize land use to enhance urban accessibility fully.

Table 3. Urban land use-related policy measures adopted by EST participating countries since the adoption of the Aichi 2030 Declaration

Source: (Asian Transport Outlook, n.d.)

COUNTRY	POLICY MEASURE	POLICY DOCUMENT	YEAR PUBLISHED
PHILIPPINES	Regulate where to situate high-density establishments and integrate transit-oriented development (TOD) in the local development plans	Philippine Road Safety Action Plan 2023-2028	2023
MALAYSIA	Encourage Local Authorities to consider sustainable intensification of land-use development or redevelopment to limit urban sprawl and move towards car-lite planning	Low Carbon Mobility Blueprint 2021-2030	2021

COUNTRY	POLICY MEASURE	POLICY DOCUMENT	YEAR PUBLISHED
BHUTAN	Support development of neighbourhoods with basic amenities and facilities to discourage habitants to avoid unnecessary trips.	Low Emission Development Strategy (LEDS) - Surface Transport	2021

VIII. Transport Demand Management Policy Measures

In addition to policies that directly enhance urban transport access and promote mode shift, it's equally crucial to implement transport demand management measures. Several countries in the EST region have proposed such strategies.

Table 4. Transport demand management policy measures for urban transport adopted by EST participating countries since the adoption of the Aichi 2030 Declaration

Source: (Asian Transport Outlook, n.d.)

COUNTRY	POLICY MEASURE	POLICY DOCUMENT	YEAR PUBLISHED
BHUTAN	Develop and implement parking 'de-growth' plan in consonance with target of no more than 5,500 new vehicles per year, post 2030, permitted to register Achieve 50% of parking 'de-growth' in preparation for gradual phasing out ICE passenger vehicles 100% parking slots with parking turnover more than 5 in major urban areas should be digitised by 2030	Low Emission Development Strategy (LEDS) - Surface Transport	2021
SRI LANKA	Restrict the entry of individual modes of transport to sensitive areas and congested areas of major cities during peak hours through a levy	Updated Nationally Determined Contributions	2021
MALAYSIA	Identify and implement congestion charging in CBD/city centres. Incorporate congestion charge in large cities such as KL, Johor Bahru and Penang.	Low Carbon Mobility Blueprint 2021-2030	2021
PAKISTAN	Strengthen regulatory control for traffic management (focusing on big cities), through measures like strengthening of parking facilities, introduction of mechanism for imposing taxation to discourage motorized transport	National Clean Air Plan	2022

IX. Active Mobility-Related Policy Measures

Though car ownership is increasing in EST cities, many still have low motorization levels, reflecting a continued preference for walking, cycling, and public transport. Few countries have explicitly addressed active mobility in their national policies. Some examples are highlighted below.

Table 5: Active Mobility-Related Policy Measures adopted by EST participating countries

Source: (Asian Transport Outlook, n.d.)

COUNTRY	POLICY MEASURE	POLICY DOCUMENT	YEAR PUBLISHED
BRUNEI DARUSSALAM	<p>Programmes for walking and cycling infrastructure and facilities on a strategic and local basis.</p> <p>Launch of social marketing and public campaigns</p> <p>Promote walking and cycling as efficient, safe and healthy modes of travel for short distance trips through infrastructure networks and other supporting facilities.</p> <p>Such networks will be progressed according to design standards for their construction, operation and maintenance with support by appropriate social marketing and promotional activity, as well as multi-agency action towards improved public health through encouragement of active lifestyles.</p>	<p>Review to Formulate a Roadmap and Draft National Masterplan for a Sustainable Land Transportation System for Brunei Darussalam</p>	2014
CAMBODIA	Mass transit and cycle systems in cities	Cambodia Biennial Update Report	2020
MALDIVES	Designate Lanes for Bicycles and Push bikes	Low Carbon Strategy for Transport Sector	2014
MONGOLIA	Reduce the dust by 50% by building sidewalk, bicycle paths, children’s playground and green areas in accordance with international standards.	Action Plan of the Government of Mongolia 2020-2024	2020
SINGAPORE	Bicycle-sharing will be piloted in various districts,	Climate Action Plan	2016
TIMOR-LESTE	providing pedestrian and bicycle lanes to encourage people for walking or using bicycle	Second National Communication - TLS	2020

X. Policy Recommendations

1. Establish a shared vision for sustainable urban transport that prioritises public transport and active mobility

National urban transport policies or strategies provide a clear vision for cities and metropolitan areas. They should aim to advance an Avoid-Shift-Improve (ASI) framework by prioritising public transport and active mobility to improve urban access, supported by integrated land use and transport policies and modal shift targets and objectives. To achieve this, cities and national governments need to work together to implement a common vision and ensure that urban and mobility planning work hand in hand to control urban sprawl, regulate the mobility market and stabilise long-term stable funding for public transport infrastructures and services to ensure that targets are met. National policymakers can also create supportive regulatory mechanisms and policy -frameworks (e.g., vehicle access restrictions, vehicle standards and taxes, urban planning guidelines, etc.) that can help cities lay the foundations for better urban infrastructure that can promote efficient use of public transport systems, make it safe and easy to walk and cycle, and discourage the use of private cars in cities. Through some thoughtful policies and regulatory amendments, governments can create the conditions crucial for cities to develop cleaner, sustainable, and inclusive urban mobility systems. It is critical to ensure the participation of civil society, businesses, transport operators, and all stakeholders, including groups in vulnerable situations, including women, children, the elderly, people with disabilities, and the urban poor, in the preparation of mobility plans.

2. Establish sound and supportive governance and planning

The establishment of transport institutions, such as an integrated city and public transport authority, or, even better, mobility agencies, can help to ensure a well-functioning and integrated transport system within its territory. Today, many cities still lack a central transport planning authority to establish, coordinate and implement their Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans (SUMP), aligned to the ASI framework. This is crucial to enable the planning, regulation and monitoring of the urban transport system, including the development, maintenance and operation of public transport, alongside active and shared mobility, and transport demand management policy measures, which are all critical elements to improving urban access. Ideally, central authorities should also integrate the freight transport dimension within their SUMP through dedicated sustainable urban logistics plans (SULPs) developed in collaboration with private stakeholders.

3. Rethink urban spaces, densify around public transport, optimise road and street management

Reforming land use policies that encourage urban sprawl can counteract this growing trend, which has a negative impact on urban access. This requires the adoption of policies that influence the location of development around well-connected public transport, promoting transit-oriented development, applying land value capture around transport facilities, and discouraging development where it is difficult to provide public transport. A sustainable parking policy and management can also be an integral part of sustainable urban mobility planning, which requires good regulation and management of road and street space (e.g. setting a maximum ceiling for parking) as well as the creation of mixed-use areas that prioritise and reallocate space to active mobility and public transport, which provide access to the greatest number of people.

4. Stabilise long-term funding

Public transport requires stable funding and financing for capital investment and operations in line with expected quality standards, coverage and frequency levels. It is important to ensure both the legal framework and national and local authorities have the capacity to earmark revenue for public transport from existing or new sources, such as developer contributions, land value capture, parking charges, congestion charges or vehicle taxes. National budget allocations are also critical, but this does not necessarily require an increase in overall spending, but rather a shift in investment away from road building, which exacerbates urban sprawl and congestion, towards public transport and infrastructure for walking and cycling.

5. Enhance accessibility and inclusion

Accessible and inclusive transport is a crucial element in enabling all citizens, including those physically disabled and vulnerable groups, to access to economic and social opportunities. This requires good geographical coverage and long-term availability of public transport services so that all citizens have access to a mobility solution in their immediate neighbourhood. Politically determined fares and social tariffs should also ensure affordability for all sections of society. Physical accessibility of public transport for people with reduced mobility through ramps, lifts, low floor vehicles, seats, clear signage that can be understood by people with visibility and literacy problems and visitors is also essential. Ensuring first and last mile connectivity will promote more accessibility of public transport and seamlessly connect local transit services can fill the transit gaps. Active support from all levels of government and access to the necessary resources is a critical factor in the successful implementation of this type of long-term infrastructure work and fleet renewal by the sector.

6. Provide high-quality and attractive public transport systems

For public transport to attract people, it is necessary to invest in high-quality and efficient operations, focusing on availability, frequency, reliability, punctuality, safety, comfort, and cleanliness. High-quality, walkable catchment areas can also help increase public transport ridership. It also means having vehicles that are not stuck in traffic but have reserved lanes and priority at traffic lights, which will help ensure the punctuality and reliability of the system. Investing in low- and zero-emission vehicles and smart technologies, using data to improve planning and operations, and providing accurate information to passengers are also crucial.

7. Develop strong multimodal sustainable transport alternatives to enhance resilience

Complementing active and public transport with on-demand shared and micromobility services offers a unique opportunity to meet different mobility needs and serve more people from the first mile to the last and throughout the day. Establishing a clear vision and policy through strategic plans such as SUMP's can help create the necessary complementarity between public transport and multi-modal alternatives. Designing infrastructure to enable complementary, such as mobility hubs, as well as technologies (e.g. smart ticketing solutions, intermodal journey planners, MaaS apps and data sharing), can all contribute to building a sustainable transport system, but this will need to be well managed and regulated according to strategic policy objectives for the benefit of the city.

8. Integrate Freight into SUMP's

Mandate the inclusion of Sustainable Urban Logistics Plans (SULPs) within SUMP's to address freight movement, induce modal shift and optimize urban logistics.

9. Better understand transport needs to target investments

Regularly engaging city stakeholders and monitoring the proportion of the population with convenient access to public transport (as defined in SDG 11.2) will help to clearly identify needs, infrastructure and service gaps. This will help target investments in cities and neighbourhoods where it will add the most value, with the aim of improving urban accessibility. Feedback of this information to the national level and the better use of data can strengthen vertical coherence and multi-level cooperation. It can also help cities benchmark themselves against similar cities, supporting the identification of good practices and city-to-city learning. While conducting the technical studies, it is critical to ensure that public transport decision-making is guided by cost-benefit analyses and impact assessments, which incorporate sustainable, environmental, and equity impact considerations.

10. Make urban access a key component of national climate and SDG policy

By focusing on a shift to public transport, walking and cycling in urban areas, emissions from transport could be halved by 2030, while improving urban access more effectively and at a lower cost than a technological approach. As countries look to update their National Climate Strategies (NDC 3.0) in 2025, which will set out their ambitions and targets for emissions reductions up to 2035, making urban access a central component of their strategic approach to transport in NDCs 3.0 would allow countries to simultaneously deliver against climate targets, while also delivering on SDG 11.2 as well as Goal 5 of the Aichi Declaration.

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