

Executive summary

Developing accessible cities – where people can connect easily with jobs, services, goods and other people – is essential to economic prosperity, social development and environmental sustainability. Policy-makers increasingly acknowledge that a first key step in this direction is to move from a planning model that focuses on mobility to one that connects people to local amenities. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the need for this change by reasserting the importance of proximity to the means by which people access social, economic and cultural opportunities. The current context presents a window of opportunity to adopt policies for a compact and connected urban growth, but also a challenge as governments may adopt economic recovery measures that may derail progress already made, for example, relaxing environmental standards to allow energy providers to operate and granting subsidies for buying cars.

A return to business-as-usual would run the risk of deepening pre-existing inequalities in cities as low-income-households have less access to opportunities than more affluent ones. In metropolitan areas where access is the least inclusive, residents of high-income neighbourhoods live surrounded on average by almost twice as many opportunities than residents of low-income neighbourhoods. Moreover, promoting accessibility is a way of contributing to environmental goals as it can reduce the need for mobility or make travel more efficient, thus resulting in lower emissions. While improving accessibility, cities can make low-carbon travel the default option.

To build accessible cities policy-makers need to act in four interlinked areas: public transport performance, urban form, cross-sectoral planning, and governance.

First, urban accessibility requires improving the performance of the public transport network -greater capacity, increased speed and/or higher frequency - accompanied by efforts to increase proximity between people and opportunities. This could be achieved by adopting a series of policies that favour a liveable level of density (which emphasises quality of life) and mixed land-use. Another option is by building an intermodal and integrated transport system. While an *intermodal* transport system ensures that all means of transport complement each other, such as Madrid's intermodal interchanges, an *integrated* transport system, like in Prague and Warsaw, makes travel easier and more affordable for commuters by encouraging the use of public transport. A highly performing public transport system requires active mobility initiatives (walking and cycling), which are the fastest, least expensive, and space-efficient mode of door-to-door travel for short distances. In Copenhagen, for example, taking a bicycle results in a net profit for society of DKK 3.65 (USD 0.58), while taking a car results in a net loss for society of DKK 6.59 (USD 1.04). Cities need to re-allocate space for walking and cycling and build the necessary infrastructure using the momentum created by the COVID-19 pandemic and creating linkages to long-term accessibility objectives. Moreover, smart city projects can potentially improve the performance of the transport network and enhance accessibility, such as Finland's Mobility as a Service (MaaS) projects that seek to take advantage of (digital) technologies to boost well-being and provide more efficient transport services.

Second, enhancing accessibility requires improving urban form (i.e. size, shape, and configuration) that increases social cohesion and promotes well-being in urban areas. It requires ensuring a sufficient level of density to make the most of the agglomeration benefits; integrating land-use and transport policies through

transit-oriented development strategies; building pedestrian-friendly cities to improve connectivity, i.e. building infrastructure; and offering different transport options, i.e. public transport, walking and cycling to reach a destination, such as in London, Milan and Stuttgart.

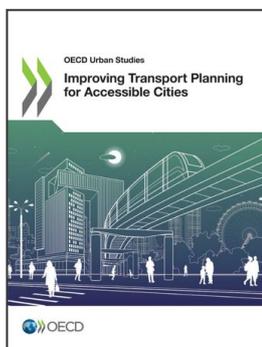
Third, fostering accessibility needs promoting synergies across social, economic and environmental aspects for urban development. The aim is to ensure that planning the city's movement and transport contributes to building accessible and attractive cities, as in Gothenburg's transport strategy, for example. This requires both the national planning framework to set goals and outline a general vision for spatial development, and subnational governments to operationalise national transport priorities through a transport strategy that seeks to improve transport services, redesign existing neighbourhoods, and build transit-oriented communities (TOCs). By design, TOCs allow people to drive less and walk, cycle and take public transport more often, as in the Metro Vancouver Regional District. However, TOCs may create equity challenges by favouring individuals and families who are able to pay the extra premium to live in valuable real estate close to rapid transit. A transport policy that seeks to improve accessibility requires strong linkages to housing policy under a transit-oriented affordable housing approach. One of the risks of densification is that the price of housing close to public transport stations tends to rise to the point that the only people who can afford to live near those stations are the least likely to depend on it. Thus, expanding the offer of affordable housing that benefit different socio-economic groups in areas close to public transport hubs may be necessary.

And fourth, accessible cities require more ambitious and coherent transport and urban policy actions based on a sound governance framework. It ensures a stable institutional framework, reliable sources of funding, governmental capacity and community engagement. It enables coordination across ministries, city departments and levels of government. Transport can greatly contribute to regional integration by connecting different cities through a regional transport network. In metropolitan areas, urban accessibility requires the joint action of the different municipalities. To facilitate the planning and implementation of the transport strategy in metropolitan areas, a metropolitan transport authority is often given the mandate of organising and/or providing transport services, for example: Île-de-France Mobilités, the Regional Organiser of Prague Integrated Transport, and Transport for London.

Cities need a sustainable financial framework to promote urban accessibility projects. Funding transport projects accounts for almost 40% of subnational investment across OECD countries in 2016. Many cities apply a combination of fares, dedicated taxes, and subsidies by municipal or higher levels of government. Local authorities need to explore different potential sources of funding for transport infrastructure and services. Some options include granting more financial powers to cities to diversify their revenue generation activities such as London's proposal to seek additional taxes and financial powers; land-value capture mechanism like the betterment tax in Hong Kong, China, the accessibility increment contribution such as the one implemented in Belo Horizonte, Brazil; the creation of public partnerships for transport investment such as those adopted in Vancouver, Canada; and mobilising private sector funding as in Chile.

Cities require greater capacity and capability to implement their public transport plans and achieve their accessibility objectives. Investing in a talented workforce in the administration and in the transport authority, which could take the form of a specific recruitment initiative, such as the New York City (NYC) Department of Transportation's Next Generation Programme, is key to plan accessible cities. Developing the ability to exploit the power of data is another key factor in improving capacity for developing long-term transport plans, such as smart traffic management in Stockholm, and conducting ex-post assessments of urban plans and transport strategies as in Malmö, through its Accessibility Index criteria.

Promoting dialogue with and engagement of a wider set of stakeholders helps identify preferences and build support for transport strategies and investment decisions. This is the aim of initiatives such as the NYC Department of Transportation's Vision Zero Outreach, Sydney's Future Transport Campaign, and Vancouver's community engagement practices.



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