

Envisioning the Transport We Need

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Connections Transport & ICT

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The world faces two urgent challenges: eradicating poverty through economic development, and tackling climate change. Sustainable transport is crucial to both. In August 2014, the UN Secretary-General established a High-Level Advisory Group on Sustainable Transport to make [policy recommendations that “promote accelerated implementation of sustainable transport.”](#)

The World Bank is a member of the technical working group supporting the advisory group, which sees sustainable transport as a prerequisite for all countries to attain competitiveness, inclusive and equitable growth, balanced social and spatial development, and energy and food security. And it is essential to reducing greenhouse gas emissions in support of the 2°C Scenario. Progress can be accelerated if all heed the calls for action on sustainable transport and development that exist today in a wide range of international agreements, conventions, and declarations.



The urgency of transformation

The more than one billion people who lack access to roads and transport services face a major barrier to social and economic advancement. Meanwhile, more than half of the world’s population is concentrated in urban areas; the share is rising but often through widening urban sprawl, at unnecessary transport costs. By 2030, world population is expected to grow by about 1.1 billion people. And already, transport accounts for about 64 percent of global oil consumption, 27 percent of all energy use and 23 percent of world CO2 emissions.

Our collective global efforts have so far been insufficient. The business-as-usual approach of much action to date has generated huge social, environmental and economic losses — an estimated average reduction of two percent to 10 percent in country-level GDP associated with traffic congestion, pollution, noise, and road accidents. These losses arise largely from the costly, high-carbon transport systems based on private motor vehicles. Developing countries can choose a very different development paradigm and avoid the long-term lock-in of unsustainable systems. Attaining sustainable transport in the coming decades thus requires us to act on our vision today.

A 15-year vision

The development agenda for 2015–2030 has advanced a large set of goals to put rural, urban, and regional transport on a sustainable path. The 15-year vision of the high-level advisory group sees people and businesses throughout the world enjoying sustainable transport — universal, efficient, safe, and environmentally friendly — connecting them to jobs, markets and social services:

- In cities — ample walking and cycling options as well as inclusive, safe and resilient public transit, all resulting in efficient, low-carbon mobility, vastly reduced use of private vehicles and fossil fuels, and more balanced spatial development
- In rural areas — accessible all-weather roads and affordable transportation options that connect men and women to economic and social opportunities
- In landlocked developing countries — efficient cross-border logistics and transport systems providing swift access to neighboring and overseas markets through the most efficient modes
- And throughout the world — new routes and development corridors along with investments in infrastructure, seamless intermodality, and digital and low-carbon technologies that support greater and more sustainable regional and global trade.

To attain sustainable transport solutions, countries throughout the world must transform the way they conceive of, plan, invest in, and use transport services.

Proven solutions need financing

Solutions to rapidly advance sustainable transport already exist for both advanced and developing economies. In the developing world, quick action will avoid locking-in an unsustainable development path.

The July 2015 Third International Conference on Financing for Development, held in Addis Ababa, called for bridging the investment gap for sustainable infrastructure, including transport, in developing countries. Investments there on all transport account for less than 40 percent of global transport investment.

Domestic public funding must be enhanced with other sources, including the “user pays” principle, fuel taxes, innovative approaches such as land value capture, and those that reduce demand for conventional transport.

Investments improving the energy efficiency of urban transportation could ultimately lead to a savings of up to US\$70 trillion. The financial capacity of cities must be enhanced, with a key role for national policies to provide enabling frameworks and technical assistance for sustainable transport. Public sector action can also lead by example, creating incentives for private investment.

The high-level advisory group is encouraging new multilateral development banks (MDBs) and bilateral donors to follow the example of the eight largest MDBs, which have pledged \$175 billion over the 2012–22 period toward sustainable transport. It encourages all financiers to focus on regional efforts and public-private partnerships.

Less than 13 percent of all environmental funding has gone toward transport, but the Green Climate Fund has now identified low-emission transport as one of four strategic funding targets.

Initiatives everywhere, will require greater international effort on multiple fronts — international trade, technology, planning, and monitoring.

The way forward

International trade. Optimizing the global network for transport calls for international solutions. The needed investments in multimodal infrastructure and logistic services also require coordinated international reforms of institutional, fiscal and regulatory arrangements.

Technological solutions. Technological innovation must be combined with the right policies and behavioral changes aimed at reducing the demand for travel.

Strong planning. Planning for sustainability must be based on evidence, strong public involvement, and a long-term view not subject to short-term politics. It will require greater funding for capacity building.

Better monitoring. Commitments in the post-2015 agenda must be subjected to rigorous global tracking, including a structured effort in data collection and analysis. Given the scale of the projects, investment in those processes will be highly cost effective.

For more information on this topic:

<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/topics/sustainabletransport/highleveladvisorygroup>

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