Case-Based Contribution
to Chapter 6: Connecting
GOLD VI Report on Pathways
to urban and territorial equality

Transport as a means of inclusion
"Providing access to safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems for all" is one of the main objectives of the 2030 Agenda. Adequate transport systems and safety roads are indispensable to connect inhabitants with social and economic opportunities. Precisely for that reason, access to public transportation is a key factor to reduce urban and territorial inequality. Equal opportunities in access to public transports to reach jobs and benefit social life are critical: limited access to residents from poor or peripheral areas, lack of security (especially for women and girls), accidents, congestion and pollution, high fares are some of the widespread complaints that undermine our rights to the city. Many local governments develop actions to enhance public transport systems to respond to the SDGs (e.g., SDG targets 11.2, 3.6 or 5.1). This paper provides a non exhaustive overview of selected LRGs’ initiatives to increase affordability, accessibility, safety, sustainability and acknowledge informal transport systems as integral part of the city.
“Providing access to safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems for all” is one of the main objectives of the 2030 Agenda. Adequate transport systems and safety roads are indispensable to connect inhabitants with social and economic opportunities. Precisely for that reason, access to public transportation is a key factor to reduce urban and territorial inequality. The responsibilities over public transport are shared among different levels of government, with a wide diversity between countries. Nevertheless, there is a general schema of transport responsibilities’ distribution among subnational governments. The national government is generally in charge of highways and main transport infrastructures (railways, main ports, and airports). The regional or intermediary levels are in charge of regional roads and intermediate infrastructures (regional railways, buses systems or airports), ensuring rural-urban linkages and integrated regional development. At the municipal level lies the responsibility of local roads, urban public transports and lighter infrastructures. Understandably, deviations from this classification might occur according to the specificities of each territory.

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Cities often have to make trade-offs to ensure public transport services that are accessible for all. To support low-income users of public transport, regulation on prices by local governments’ subsidies increases the affordability and makes public transport systems reachable to everyone. Many of the measures implemented by local authorities in this regard are targeted transport subsidies. For example, in Bogota (Colombia) poverty targeting systems and databases are implemented to design pro-poor targeted subsidies through the issue of smart transport cards to targeted beneficiaries, with the aim to maximize labour market outcomes. In many cities, such as in Perth (Australia), fares are kept low to maintain transport affordable to specific targeted groups, e.g. retired persons, scholars, unemployed. In France, front runner cities are moving toward public transport free of charges to enhance the use of public transport services and reduce the use of private cars.

To make transport accessible to all, especially to groups that suffer from different forms of exclusion, different initiatives are being implemented. Public transport services are increasingly adapting to people with special needs. For instance, in Shanghai (China) older persons and people with disabilities are engaged in auditing transport accessibility. In Moscow (Russia), the City Government’s Dobry Avtobus (Bus of kindness) is a social project that seeks to support senior citizens.

1. OECD, Making Decentralisation Work. See also UCLG, GOLD III: Basic services for all in an urbanizing world
2. Rodriguez et al., “Examining the implementation and labor market outcomes of targeted transit subsidies: SISBEN subsidy for Bogota’s urban poor”
3. Carruthers et al., “Affordability of Public Transport in Developing Countries”
4. In cities such as Aubagne, Calais, Dunkerque, Nort, Libourne, Castres, Gap, and Châteauroux. Le Monde, “Des élus de gauche appellent à la « révolution » de la gratuité des transports”
5. Frye, “Disability Inclusive Public Transport: Practical steps to making public transport disability inclusive”
to increase their mobility and social activity. The accessibility in public transportation is achieved when the competent government ensures the enabling conditions so everyone can use it. To this end, it is paramount to hear the opinions and recommendations from the groups that are usually left aside in the current system for the design of new strategies.

Conversely, accessibility deals as well with the access to transportation to peripheral and marginalized areas. The government of Medellín (Colombia) implemented the Metrocable to connect informal settlements located in the steep hillside of the city to address problems of accessibility, integration, and security. The connection with peripheral areas is upgraded by making the service more regular and accessible to inhabitants. The sharp decline in travel time has stimulated employment and social integration.

Accessibility is closely related to the concept of safety. Women and girls around the world particularly regard public transportation as spaces where they often feel insecure and are prone to suffer harassment. Diverse examples of gender-responsive transport initiatives have been put in place in different geographies. Metropolitan governments like those of Hanoi (Vietnam) and Marrakech (Morocco) provide training to professionals. In Kathmandu (Nepal), a “Public Transport Code of Conduct” has been developed to fight against harassment suffered by women, the elderly, and persons with disabilities. Quito’s (Ecuador) “down with harassment project” uses technological advances to improve women’s security in public transport. Toronto’s (Canada) buses stop at the request of women who travel alone late at night to shorten their walking distance.

Similar initiatives are developed in Istanbul (Turkey), Montreal (Canada), Brasilia (Brasil), and Grenoble (France) among others. The participation of women in decision-making and in the design and management of transportation contributes to develop more gender-responsive policies. In Liaoning Province (China), women participation allows for improving secondary roads, traffic management, pedestrian crossings, public lighting, and frequency of bus services.

To reduce the use of motorized vehicles and greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, green and active mobility initiatives in cities are diversifying sustainable and inclusive transport options to facilitate access for all. Urban public bicycle sharing programs are gaining momentum in Southeast Asia, being the Hangzhou Public Bicycle System the largest in the world, initiated by a state-owned corporation and backed by the local government. The Bandung city government (Indonesia) has also promoted a bike-sharing program to reduce traffic problems and restore cycling culture. The ‘Bicycle Master Plan’ of the Konya Metropolitan Municipality (Turkey) consists of a bicycle path of 550 kilometers. The presence of cargo bike systems is also increasing in Europe as an alternative to cars for the delivery of goods and transport of people. European cities like Berlin and Munich (Germany), Paris (France), Vienna and Graz (Austria), Brussels and Uccle...
(Belgium), Barcelona (Spain), London (United Kingdom), or Oslo (Norway)\(^\text{18}\) offer financial incentives and/or subsidies to purchase (e-) cargo bikes.

However, in middle- and low-income economy cities, informal transport systems are in many cases the only viable way to connect peripheral or remote areas with central business districts and with basic services and professional opportunities. Even in cities that have recently invested heavily in government-funded mass transit like Addis Ababa (Ethiopia),\(^\text{20}\) these systems often perpetuate problems of accessibility and affordability for the poorest residents. Informal transport services, despite addressing the needs of low-income urban dwellers, are characterized by several negative externalities as diverse as congestion, pollution, and reduction of road and personal safety. These negative externalities are not to suggest that informal services should be disposed of by the city government. Instead, informal services should be acknowledged as an integral part of a city’s transportation system. Public sector strategies have been implemented to transform the informal sector and provide better quality service to users through technological innovations, such as the institutional reforms in Mexico City (Mexico),\(^\text{21}\) and the restructuring of the transport system in Freetown (Sierra Leone)\(^\text{22}\) and in cities across Turkey.\(^\text{23}\)
**References**


This paper has been produced as a Case-Based Contribution to the sixth Global Report on Local Democracy and Decentralization (GOLD VI): the flagship publication of the organized constituency of local and regional governments represented in United Cities and Local Governments. The GOLD VI report has been produced in partnership with the Development Planning Unit (University College London), through the programme Knowledge in Action for Urban Equality (KNOW). GOLD VI focuses on how local and regional governments can address the local manifestations of growing inequalities and contribute to create “Pathways to urban and territorial equality”. The GOLD VI report has been produced through a large-scale international co-production process, bringing together over a hundred representatives of local and regional governments, academics and civil society organizations. This paper is an outcome of this process and is part of the Pathways to Equality Cases Repository, which collects the over 60 Case-Based Contributions produced as part of the GOLD VI report.

In particular, the present paper has contributed to Chapter 6 on “Connecting”, which focuses on the role of local and regional governments in increasing urban and territorial equality through improving connectivity between and within cities and citizens through more equitable transport, infrastructure and digital connectivity planning and interventions.