

Urban Transport and COVID-19: Key Messages

- Public transport remains an essential service during the pandemic. Even as most people stay at home, cities must provide priority access to people who most need affordable and safe transport including those with disabilities, frontline health care and other essential workers. Informal settlement dwellers far from city centres need public transport to access the labour market and earn daily wages. And many have no other means of reaching medical facilities and other services.
- Overcrowded public transport can spread COVID-19 due to the high number of people in a confined space with limited ventilation and the prevalence of commonly touched surfaces like ticket machines and handrails.
- Cycling and walking should be promoted as an alternative to public transport, where possible to reduce the risk of spreading the virus and improving overall health. Cities can prioritize pedestrians and cyclists on certain roads making them safer to use.
- Governments need to coordinate with public transport operators (both formal and informal) to monitor and regulate public transport to ensure high standards of cleanliness and good hygiene. Operators must make sure that all interior surfaces including poles, handrails, seats, steering and all parts that people touch are thoroughly cleaned after each trip.
- Vehicles need to carry adequate quantities of disinfectant/hand sanitizers for use by passengers and crew who are also required to wear masks in many countries. There must be physical distance between users, which can be achieved by enforcing limitations on the number of travelers, or by staggering the working hours of different businesses to avoid the surge in passenger traffic usually seen in the morning and evening hours. Operators should promote cashless payments for tickets or temporarily suspend fares. On buses, prohibiting front-door boarding can reduce contact with drivers who can be protected with plexiglass shields.

- Public transport drivers, conductors and cleaners should practice good hand hygiene and coughing and sneezing etiquette. All drivers and crew members should be checked in depots before they start work for any visible signs of illness, especially fever, and ensure that they wash hands before starting work.
- Innovative contact tracing of passengers on public transport through technology, such as apps like *TraceTogether* in Singapore that keep a repository of all records of journeys undertaken by passengers, should be encouraged.
- Public transport can be an effective means of communicating health and hygiene messages to the wider public through posters and other publicity materials.
- In the developing world, public transport often consists of an informal sector of self-employed drivers of share-cars, motorbikes and mini-buses which are now suffering from a lack of business and require income support, health insurance and safety equipment. Governments should consider financial support or a stimulus for the formal and informal public transport sectors to offset the lost revenue.
- With public transport vehicles underused, new ideas can be tried such as on-demand transit service to take essential staff to work or using vehicles as a means to distribute essential supplies in cities
- There is a need to provide safe mobility today and to start planning the sustainable mobility of tomorrow, learning from the experience gained from the pandemic, including on how remote working can replace daily commutes and how the distribution of essential services across the city can make access easier.