



# Urban Pathways

## factsheet

### Public Participation in Urban Transport



**Wuppertal  
Institut**

**UN HABITAT**  
FOR A BETTER URBAN FUTURE

**UN**  
environment  
United Nations  
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***The Urban Pathways project helps delivering*** on the Paris Agreement and the NDCs in the context of the New Urban Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals. It has established a facility in close cooperation with other organisations and networks active in this area to support national and local governments to develop action plans and concrete implementation measures to boost low-carbon urban development. This builds on UN-Habitat's role as "a focal point on sustainable urbanisation and human settlements including in the implementation and follow-up and review of the New Urban Agenda". The project develops national action plans and local implementation concepts in key emerging economies with a high mitigation potential. The local implementation concepts are being developed into bankable projects, focusing on the access to urban basic services to create a direct link between climate change mitigation and sustainable development goals.

***The project follows a structured approach to boost*** Low Carbon Plans for urban mobility, energy and waste management services that deliver on the Paris Agreement and the New Urban Agenda. The project works on concrete steps towards a maximum impact with regards to the contribution of urban basic services (mobility, energy and waste management) in cities to global climate change mitigation efforts and sustainable and inclusive urban development. This project makes an active contribution to achieve global climate change targets to a 1.5°C stabilisation pathway by unlocking the global emission reduction potential of urban energy, transport and resource sectors. The project will contribute to a direct emission reduction in the pilot and outreach countries, which will trigger a longer term emission reduction with the aim to replicate this regionally and globally to make a substantial contribution to the overall emission reduction potential.

***This project implements integrated urban services*** solutions as proposed in the New Urban Agenda providing access to jobs and public services in urban areas, contributing to equality and social coherence and deliver on the Paris Agreement and the Sustainable Development Goals. This is the first dedicated implementation action oriented project, led by UN-Habitat to deliver on inclusive, low-carbon urban services. Securing sustainability and multiplier effect, the project aims to leverage domestic and international funding for the implementation projects that will follow from this initiative.

## Urban Pathways

## Project concept

## Project aims

In brief	5
Examples	5
Results	7
Financial considerations	8
Policy/legislation	8
Institutions	9
Transferability	10
Participatory-budget-funded bicycle infrastructure in Seville, Spain	11
Results	12
References	13

## Table of Content

## In brief

**Like any urban development practice, which heavily** relies on technical expertise and, at the same time, affects a wide range of stakeholders, the implementation of low-carbon mobility suffers from the biases of its planners. Such bias predominantly originates from the fact that the appointed experts may belong to a certain privileged class (based on gender, age or socio-economic class), while the users of public transport systems come from all walks of life. Such a division of perceptions coupled with a 'top-down' approach towards service-delivery tends to not only leave out low-income citizens, but also effects the efficiency of investment-heavy projects. To avoid this, local governments are increasingly adopting public participation processes for their transport-related policy, planning and project management.

Public engagement efforts aim at transcending the customary dissemination of information in favour of an active public participation process in decision-making. Such initiatives do not perceive users as abstract data to be inputted into transportation models, but rather value their opinions as rational members of a society, capable of independent choice. This is achieved by facilitating stakeholder interactions that are inclusive, focused and embedded into respective policy or project cycles. The factsheet herewith focuses on the multiple forms of public participation available for policymakers/planners and supports it with a case-study from Seville (Spain).

## Examples

**The basic steps towards facilitating public participation** is choosing a mode of communication between the transport authority and its stakeholders – an 'active' or a 'passive' approach (ITDP, n.d.; BMVI, n.d.). A passive campaign implies one-way communication, which only provides information to the citizens. This includes official announcements, websites, exhibitions, posters, promotional brochures, etc. A limited two-way communication not only allows for public response but also values the opinions of users. This consists of public reviews, online comments and feedback forms. The third type is an active campaign comprising of a complex multi-directional communication, also referred to as 'deliberation'. This method empowers stakeholders to influence the planning process up to a certain degree and its proceedings are aimed at reaching a consensual agreement.

## In brief

## Examples

The more active the selected approach is, the better the results of public participation (ITDP, n.d.; TRB, 2011). An authority can organise a productive consultation using a set of participatory methods that are applicable for a wide range of contexts. These engagement tools consist of –

- **Public forum:** Also known as a townhall, open-house or public hearing, it introduces a new transport project or policy and elicits public responses or criticism towards it.
- **Committee:** A group with generally representation from all three sectors – public, private and civil society; Meets periodically to advise the authority regarding solutions.
- **Focus group discussions (FGD):** Discussion systematically guided by an interviewer who collects responses about specific topics from a sample of participants.
- **Workshops:** Similar to FGDs, but with a more open-ended format and less moderation; May consist of hands-on exercises and activities; Aimed at capacity-building and co-creating a vision.
- **Surveys:** Collection of quantitative and qualitative data through questionnaires filled by respondents; an ideal sample aims at reflecting the preferences of a specific community.
- **Online engagement:** Provides access to information about fare structures, route maps and operational details; With the advent of smart-phones, mobile apps and social media, widely being used to pay fares, assess quality and track services in real-time.
- **Referendum:** An institutionalised procedure whereby citizens can directly take strategic decisions by voting on issues themselves, instead of authorising elected representatives or public officials.
- **Participatory budgeting:** Direct inclusion of non-elected citizens in the financial decision-making by voting for the allocation of resources and formulating a public budget.





## Results

**There are multiple advantages of actively involving** relevant communities in the planning of an urban transport initiative. Firstly, deliberate public participation compels experts to simplify highly technical information and/or complex data for mass consumption. This may help dissipate prejudices against a new project (such as, a new Bus Rapid Transit line) or technology (such as, electric buses), and over time result in increased acceptance for it.

Secondly, the area of influence for some transit systems may comprise stakeholders with diverse backgrounds and competing interests. In such situations, public participation could potentially be used as a consensus-building tool. This is especially critical for projects, which require relocation of residents and acquisition of land. Moreover, the resolution of such issues via constructive dialogue could remove hurdles that might delay the execution.

Thirdly, an authority's continuous efforts to engage citizens builds long-term credibility for the organisation. The trust earned or working relationships built therein could serve both present and future initiatives. Additionally, when combined with effective communication and well-directed messaging, such interaction could result in better public ownership of the project. Finally, by being aware of the users' preferences, planners are enabled to take informed technical decisions, thereby enhancing the project's long-term feasibility.

- Promotes transparency
- Provides direct responsibility
- Promotes well cooperative community

Some negatives:

- participation does require some knowledge and expertise on the project
- could create a process where people are un-involved or un-educated on the project – authorities would also need to factor in resources and funds to allocate to the process
- creates room for manipulation and corruption
- poses difficulties in decision making
- could slow down process of a project
- fear or instability of the process can be created.

## Results

## Financial considerations

**Inadequate or lack of earmarked funding are often** the reason which prevent authorities from undertaking public participation. Assigning a lesser priority to it over 'urgent' planning and implementation tasks also leads to this. As a remedy, public engagement activities must be assigned sufficient resources and this must be prescribed as official procedure. These resources do not necessary have to be only financial but could also be in terms of organisations in-charge, full-time staff or volunteers, venue or communications/ outreach support. Additionally, if public consultation is embedded within all the stages of planning and execution, rather as a stand-alone activity with a separate budget, it could yield better results even with modest funding (ITDP, n.d.).

## Policy/legislation

**For public participation to achieve its intended** objectives beyond the scale of a single city, it is essential that the engagement techniques be built into relevant national or state-level policies. For instance, in Germany, planning and implementation of infrastructure projects is undertaken as per the directives of the Federal Transport Infrastructure Plan (TFIP) drafted every 10 to 15 years. For the current FTIP 2015, involvement of the public is a key component (BMVI, n.d.). Accordingly, the Plan suggests three mandatory procedural levels – Requirement Planning, Spatial Planning, and Approval. Statutory public engagement is prescribed for each of these stages. A specific public authority is also assigned responsibility for each phase's public engagement.

Similarly, in the US, several national policies been legislated to influence public involvement by state-level Departments of Transport (DOTs). Many of these are especially directed at the disabled users and also aimed at avoiding discrimination in grounds of race, colour and national origin (TRB, 2011). Prominent among these legislations are – The American with Disabilities Act (ADA) 1990 and the Transport Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21) 1998.

# Financial considerations

# Policy/legislation



## Institutions

**There exist a wide range of institutions who could** offer highly specific information critical for a given project or policy based on their experience. For instance, bus drivers' associations may contribute towards route optimisation or fuel efficiency, operators could provide insights regarding demand management and traffic police could inform about enforcement. Moreover, civil society organisations could share knowledge about the trip preferences of citizens.

To tap into such resources, it is essential that the transport authority develop a clear participation strategy. This strategy should clearly define pertinent issues such as – (a) Purpose for the engagement process and its influence on the project, (b) Stakeholders' involvement in decision-making and the method of their identification, (c) Tools and techniques used for engagement, and (d) Appropriate timeline to engage with stakeholders in phases (European Commission, 2014).

Once the engagement strategy is defined, the next issue is the identifying relevant institutions to partner with. This should be undertaken based on a balanced representation of three categories of institutions (CIVITAS, n.d.). These are described as follows –

(a) Primary stakeholders: Those either positively or negatively impacted by measures proposed by the authority (citizens, communities, civil society groups, professional or commercial associations, municipal agencies etc.).

(b) Key actors: Those with political or territorial authority (public administrations, mayors, councillors etc.), with technical expertise (universities, consultants, think-tanks etc.), and with financial resources (development banks, public or private finance agencies).

(c) Intermediaries: Those responsible for policy formulation, reporting or implementation (public administration, media, operators, etc.), and concerned interest groups (NGOs, cooperatives, associations etc.).

# Institutions

## Transferability

**Public participation as an institutionalised and structured process** has universal transferability for any public policy or project. However, it must also be ensured that the tools and techniques explained herewith be thoroughly contextualised based on the proposal and the parties sought to be involved. Public participation is especially relevant for dense cities with high population and, therefore, with competing claims over scarce resources (land, funding, technical expertise etc.). Moreover, deliberate consultation is essential for cities with a complex political landscape with conflicting ideologies, as well as those with a hostile relationship between the local government and its citizens. Furthermore, public participation is vital for cities with a sizeable population of stakeholders typically harder to reach and get on board – ethnic minorities, urban poor, informal workers, disadvantaged migrants etc. what about the costs and resources that administrations need to consider? Would this work in poor income societies? Also, could the process be manipulated with those with more interests than others? How would states take into consideration all these aspects?

Stakeholder engagement methods must also be made the norm for cities with less manpower or inadequate technical capacity within municipal departments. Within such organisations, a significant portion of project/policy formulation and its implementation is outsourced to consultants and sub-contractors who are unfamiliar with the local context. In such conditions, the decision-makers may lack necessary information regarding on-the-ground realities, cultural or historical nuances or demographic complexities. Such a gap could be overcome through active consultation. Finally, for cities currently with high dependence on the private modes and where a 'transit culture' has not yet evolved, engagement can make citizens aware of the advantages of shifting to low-carbon mobility.

## Transferability

## Context

**The city of Seville, with a population of over 700,000**, initiated participatory budgeting in 2004 and continued it as an annual process until 2016. It was launched by the city's social-democrat and leftist political parties' coalition. The aim was to democratise public administration and to involve citizens in the city's fiscal decision-making. An average of 15.2% of the city's total annual budget was dedicated to be spent as per citizens' votes, over the duration of 12 years of the programme. This amounted to an expenditure of 1200 USD per year per inhabitant for the projects selected by the people (Cabannes, 2014). When this programme began, Seville was an automobile-oriented city. It was estimated that the resultant congestion and pollution prevented a total of 80,000 inhabitants from adopting bicycle as their primary transport mode, accounting for only 0.2% of the total trips in 2000 (Metropolis, n.d.).

## In action

**In the initial phase, every resident was given the** opportunity to deliberate over public spending. Later on, for the ease implementation, special 'Districts Councils' were created for people to elect their representatives, who then participated in consultations with the City Council. Through interactive events termed as 'Assemblies', proposals were successively put forth, shortlisted, finalised, and adequate resources were allocated to selected projects (Participedia, n.d.). One of the key infrastructure projects funded through this programme was a 160 km-long network of well-designed bicycle-tracks. The project received popular support over the entire course of participatory budgeting and was granted a total of over 2 million Euros (Cabannes, 2014). The project was designed and implemented by the Urban Planning Office of the City Council and based on Seville's Bicycle Master Plan of 2007. Subsequently, a public bicycle sharing system named 'Sevici' was also successfully launched by the Council.

# Participatory- budget-funded bicycle infrastructure in Seville, Spain

## In action

## Results

**The bicycle infrastructure developed through** participatory budgeting have had multiple benefits for Seville. Firstly, the city now has more than 70,000 bikes and an audit in 2014 indicated that bicycles accounted for 6% of the total trips and 9% of non-commuter journeys (Walker, 2015). This demonstrates a remarkable increase in non-motorised traffic in a short duration. At the same time, car-trips to the city-centre have reduced from 25,000 per day to 10,000 per day. This is the equivalent of a reduction of 1,000 tonnes of CO2 emissions (Metropolis. n.d.). Moreover, 35% of all bicycle trips are undertaken by women. Lastly, the initiative has made Seville, one of the most bicycle-friendly cities in southern Europe and the city now aims to double its rate of cycling by 2022 (Streetfilms, 2018).

## Results



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