



FEBRUARY 2016

# POLICY BRIEF

## UNLOCKING THE HEALTH BENEFITS OF MOBILITY <sup>1</sup>

### INTRODUCTION

*Governments at the local, regional and national levels around the globe are challenged by dramatic increases in health problems due to physical inactivity, poor air quality, road traffic injuries, noise, stress and isolation, which are all intimately linked to transport and street environments.*

### URBAN TRANSPORT MATTERS TO PUBLIC HEALTH

According to the World Health Organisation, insufficient physical activity has been identified as the fourth leading risk factor for global mortality and is on the rise in many countries, adding to the burden of NCDs (Non communicable diseases) and affecting general health worldwide.

*Active travel can help prevent many of the 3.2 million deaths from physical inactivity<sup>3</sup>*

Regional, national or international agencies and organizations<sup>4</sup> have conducted studies that provide evidence on the full range of health impacts of transport policies. Detailed studies have measured the health outcomes of walking and cycling for transport and showed the health benefits associated with active travel including on diabetes, mental well-being, obesity, bone strengths, the reduction of risks of cardiovascular disease (CVD) and different types of cancers.

*Good public transport is a key enabler for active travel modes and as such unlocks their health benefits. It also contributes to reduced emissions, improved accessibility and increased road safety.*

<sup>1</sup> This Policy Brief is part of a dossier available on Mobit+. The electronic dossier includes a full report and a bibliography.

<sup>2</sup> Global health risks, Geneva, World Health Organisation 2009 and Fact Sheet n° 385 updated January 2015.

<sup>3</sup> Health in the green economy, Transport Sector, WHO, 2011.

<sup>4</sup> Reference to the bibliography in annex.



## PUBLIC TRANSPORT UNLOCKS THE HEALTH BENEFITS OF ACTIVE TRAVEL

First active travel and public transport are complementary and mutually beneficial, support to one being likely to induce an increase of the modal share of the other in many cases<sup>5</sup>.

*Public Transport has a key role to play in encouraging more active travel, as most public transport journeys involve a walk to and from the public transport stop compared with the much more sedentary experience of travelling by car.*

Secondly promoting physical activity contributes to the wider (economic) benefits of active mobility on public health.

Thirdly public transport plays a key role in shifting towards more active travel. Promoting greater physical activity helps prevent diseases such as type 2 diabetes, obesity, heart disease and some cancers. This involves enabling sustainable transport policies and an adequate urban planning to deliver these benefits: investments need to be made to make the streets greener, safer and more inviting for pedestrians, cyclists and public users. This is the responsibility of the urban mobility actors, including local authorities, to provide mobility services in cities that contribute to improving the health and quality of life of their residents.

<sup>5</sup> PTEG-A Healthy Relationship: Public health and transport collaboration in local government, February 2015- PTEG former name for Urban Transport Group

## THE WIDER HEALTH BENEFITS OF PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Efficient and well organised public transport services in cities bring major benefits to the health of citizens by fighting against climate change and creating liveable cities.

Pleasant, green and clean urban environments are not a thing of the past. With more and better public transport cities can cut traffic congestion and both air and noise pollution can be reduced. Public transport also helps to tackle social exclusion and promote urban regeneration. Mobility patterns based around public transport encourage healthier lifestyles and improved levels of road safety. Cities that embrace public transport as the backbone of their transport system can free up vital urban space for recreation and business activities.

*The main benefits of public transport against other modes of transport are measured on air quality, road safety, greater accessibility based on urban regeneration, social inclusion and cohesion, and job's creation and green growth.*

As the local and urban transport system is critical in helping tackle the major public health challenges cities are facing, UITP calls the actors and stakeholders of the public transport sector to implement the following recommendations.



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## RECOMMENDATIONS

### 1. Develop national frameworks providing for integrated health, environment and transport policies to support sustainable and active modes.

The governance scheme should be strengthened to cover all institutional levels. National governments should provide an institutional and legislative framework in order to prompt regional and local authorities to support coordination between integrated health, environment and transport policies.

### 2. Rely upon integrated mobility plans to enable an integrated policy approach between health, transport and environment at the local level.

Decision-making for sustainable, healthy urban transport policy depends on the competences of the various authorities acting in the fields of transport, health and environment policies. This implies to adopting integrated and synergic strategies and policies and implementing better coordination between the different stakeholders. This should be done among other things through the integration of health objectives and indicators in integrated mobility plans.

### 3. Involving national, regional and local stakeholders: vertical and horizontal integration are necessary to tackle air pollution and its impacts.

Decision-making for sustainable urban transport policy happens at national, regional and local levels. Each country has its own institutional system. However, the efficiency of air quality policies also have to be approached at the International level. Involving all stakeholders implies all actors working together in a collaborative and constructive manner. This involves national authorities, local governments, the transport and health sectors, town planners, the business community and civil society. This requires both vertical integration (from the ministerial level down to the grass roots and community, civil society) and horizontal integration: a coordinated policy approach among the three sectors – transport, health and environment – ideally, through joint meetings.



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### 4. Long term planning for active mobility and sustainable land-use to develop a sustainable city and region.

National policies for sustainable urban transport should influence and support the objectives set for land use, health and environment in order to develop sustainable regions and cities. These policies should be defined in coherence with a long term plan in order to be efficient. Such policies should be consistent as a whole (investments, traffic and mobility management) and consistent with other public policies, such as environment, health, land use and finance.

### 5. Assessing progress: benchmarks and indicators.

Effective implementation of urban mobility policies requires an integration with environmental and health objectives. Assessments are important because they underscore policy objectives that have been set, such as reducing air pollution and noise levels, and improving safety and quality of life.

Reliable and robust data form an empirical basis for urban mobility policies. Data are not easily accessible and, as such, make benchmarking difficult. Measuring properly means identifying the main transport-related factors that define quality of life in urban areas. These could include employment availability, safety, accessibility and urban amenities and services.

## 6. Financing sustainable, health and green urban transport systems: investment and incentives.

Financing sustainable, healthy and green urban transport policies requires awareness of all beneficial effects – including financial – of investment in these policies.

For this purpose, it is important to further work on methods to assess the economic impact on health of investing in public transport.

Proper tuning of investment requires taking into account health and environmental objectives and land-use priorities in case funds are allocated by the State to local governments.

Pricing and fiscal policies should, in all areas, aim to promote sustainable urban transport. In particular, housing and real estate development policies should not induce congestion and urban sprawl. Resources generated by such policies should be allocated to strengthen environment and health promoting policies.

Employers should be incentivized towards sustainable urban mobility policies, in particular the setting-up of company mobility plans. Employers, whether private or public, should be made aware of the relevance of financing bike-commuting through economic incentives and infrastructure, such as bicycle-parking lots and showers.

## 7. Jobs in green and healthy transport.

It is necessary to bring environmental and health considerations into the existing discussion on green jobs creation. This requires to analyse the potential of greening “old jobs” and creating “new green jobs” in transport and mobility and assessing the qualitative and quantitative impact of these approaches on the environment, health, transport and the economy. It also requires to share good practice and disseminate experiences, policies and approaches on this matter.

## CONCLUSION

*The challenge to unlock the health benefits of mobility can only be met successfully through the elaboration of a comprehensive and long term strategy resulting from the horizontal (environment, health, transport) and vertical (national, regional, local) integration. The range of recommendations are interrelated and therefore effective efforts to implement one must necessarily include the other.*

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**This is an official Policy Brief of UITP, the International Association of Public Transport. UITP has over 1,400 members in 96 countries throughout the world and represents the interests of key players in this sector. Its membership includes transport authorities, operators, both private and public, in all modes of collective passenger transport, and the industry. UITP addresses the economic, technical, organisation and management aspects of passenger transport, as well as the development of policy for mobility and public transport world-wide.**

This Policy Brief was prepared by a Steering Committee composed of members representing the Committee of Organising Authorities, Commission on Transport and Urban Life and Commission on Sustainable Development. Please visit our website: [www.uitp.org](http://www.uitp.org).

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