



Conference Conclusions

Things to take home



UITP Sector Strategy

UITP Secretary General, Hans Rat, highlighted the UITP Sector Strategy (PTx2) and asked the participants to be proactive, in showing that public transport is the most potential instrument in solving the “urban mobility riddle”: urban transport systems face daunting challenges including predicting demand, optimising capacity, improving the traveller’s experience, and maximising efficiency – all while reducing environmental impact and continuing to assure safety and security.

His main arguments: we (= the public transport sector) empower the economy; we help the planet breath; we bring everyone everywhere; we alleviate congestion.

The UITP Sector Strategy identifies five key actions for successful public transport. Three of them are significantly linked to Light Rail in which the sector has a more crucial role to play: “Develop visionary integrated urban policies” to promote a healthy and liveable city development, “life style services” to become the mode of first choice and “change in business culture” to set up new business models for generating additional revenues.

DEVELOP VISIONARY INTEGRATED URBAN POLICIES

CHALLENGE

Light Rail systems in the planning phase are confronted with high resistance from inhabitants (“Not in my backyard!”) due to fear of deterioration of their surroundings (broken-window theory).

REALITY

Experiences from cities world-wide deliver positive examples stating that the installation of Light Rail lines raise considerably the liveability of close-by areas.

OBJECTIVE

A new Light Rail system brings with it unquantifiable benefit that in real terms brings social cohesion to run-down communities. To the visitor, a well-maintained Light Rail system adds an extra dimension to a city, indicating a place which cares about the quality of life, attractiveness of its surroundings, and determination to tackle and solve urban problems. LRT represent a long-term investment in the essential transport infrastructure of a city – an expression of enthusiasm, confidence and hope in its future.

LRT stations will act as a hub for future development, supporting the city’s plans for managing future residential growth. This will help the city to achieve its ridership, re-urbanisation and intensification targets, as well as protecting social and environmental sensitive areas. For a proper and sound implementation of LRT it is imperative to work hand-in-hand with grass-root inhabitant organisations from the very beginning.

LRT is THE tool to enhance the urban space; it gives cities the means to restore, at least locally, the urban landscape, which has often been disfigured by the car: removal of the truncating effects, traffic redirection, architectural station design and greater consideration given to pedestrians and cyclists.

CHALLENGE

Fixed rail transit is too inflexible, because it cannot accommodate changes in urban geography and shifting travel patterns.

REALITY

The term "fixed rail" is commonly used by opponents of LRT to imply that there is something inflexible about it. In reality, Light Rail lines are no less flexible than what could be termed "fixed roads." In fact, it is generally far less expensive and disruptive to relocate a Light Rail line than a main inner-city road, in large part because of the much smaller space consumption of a Light Rail line with the same carrying capacity. When population growth occurs in some area of a city, it is typically both much cheaper and much less disruptive to the environment to extend a Light Rail line to that area rather than extend a multi-lane road to it.

OBJECTIVE

Light Rail is often perceived as giving structure to a city; creating a sense of "place" and foster a permanent framework to support development and investment decisions. Light Rail infrastructure enables easier orientation within the city: the tracks and stops are permanent features of the city's streets – predictable and stable – informing and helping people to formulate a clearer image of the structure of their city. It is a feature of their communal public space. As a "rolling sidewalk" Light Rail frames the orientation for growth along its service catchment areas and creates clear functionally important nodes of a city. With its dedicated platform and its priority at crossroads, it can reassert itself with greater credibility against the private car and re-conquer part of the public space that cars have monopolised in cities.

DELIVER LIFE STYLE SERVICES

CHALLENGE

With the advent of the metropolis we are heading towards more transport-oriented cities that aim to meet the individuation of lifestyles – namely greater autonomy and independence. As an increasingly nomadic culture we are spending more time travelling than in the past: working from 9 to 5 is no longer the norm and night time is no longer downtime in the city, but rather time to be gained for work, rest or play. The shake-up of such urban rhythms will continue as long as the expectations and needs of inhabitants shift and change.

REALITY

A growing amount of people – among them a very high share of young adults – are no longer unconditionally obsessed with the subjective feeling of freedom associated to car ownership, but rather rely on sustainable transport modes. They find that unconstrained mobility can also be provided by other transport means.

OBJECTIVE

With careful planning of routes and track paths and its priority at crossroads Light Rail can significantly cut point-to-point journey times, offer mass movement into the heart of the city and reduce the stress of do-it-yourself driving. Its local-zero-emission propulsion system serves the increasing number of persons aware of their daily carbon footprint and supports the enhancing variability of life styles (commuting, leisure, shopping, night-life) by raising the attractiveness of a city. Light Rail helps reducing congestion the scourge of modern urban life and the source of noise, dirt, vibration and pollution.

LRT offers social benefits of greater mobility for all, especially non-car drivers/owners and it can reduce a family's perceived need to purchase a car, thus further suppressing growth in car ownership and use.

Light Rail – in form of tram-train operation – enables seamless journeys for commuters by serving suburban settlements and penetrating city centres while better utilising often under-used rail infrastructure.

The often observed preference towards Light Rail is probably the cumulative effect of many small advantages: better waiting conditions, a smoother faster and quieter ride, reliability and the confidence derived from a fixed installation. LRT can and should provide customer-friendly service to become the mode of first choice.

CREATE A NEW BUSINESS CULTURE

CHALLENGE

Besides residents fearing the deterioration of every-day life when LRT systems are installed shop-keepers show sometimes also strong resistance against new Light Rail lines due to fear of unforeseeable downtimes.

REALITY

Many examples from all over the world show that Light Rail lines raise substantially customer flow into local businesses as well as land value in adjacent neighbourhoods.

OBJECTIVE

Faster and more reliable access to downtown and other employment centres will encourage existing businesses in the core to expand and further encourage development of new businesses and attractions in both downtown and other places along the lines. This transport-oriented development boom leads to higher property values and a broader tax base, easing the burden for home and shop owners.

The increased property value and the flow of increased tax revenues to local governments allow other important public policy objectives to be implemented as well, often in more effective and efficient ways, e.g. healthier, more active lifestyles can be encouraged and public safety can be enhanced through walkable neighbourhoods that further reduce car use and emissions.

By allowing employees to get to work more efficiently and affordably, a sound Light Rail system also enables local businesses to access a broader work force, while giving commuters more disposable income to reinvest in the local economy rather than at the gas pump.

The new generation of Light Rail is often seen as the catalyst for urban regeneration and urban rebirth: cutting commutes and putting more job opportunities within reach; connecting local businesses with more customers; spurring development that creates new jobs and tax revenues while rebuilding our neighbourhoods.

**Light Rail is much more than moving people
from one place to another.**

It's about moving the city itself!

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