

TECHNICAL NOTE N°. 12

**BARRIERS PREVENTING
GROWING CITIES
FROM TRANSITIONING
TOWARDS
SUSTAINABLE
MOBILITY & INCREASED
LIVEABILITY:**

CROSS-CITY COMPARISONS

CREATE PROJECT

**Congestion Reduction in Europe,
Advancing Transport Efficiency**

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What barriers prevent growing cities from transitioning towards sustainable mobility & increased liveability?

Quantitative and qualitative research undertaken in 10 large cities across Europe and the Middle East as part of the CREATE project indicates that in Tallinn, Bucharest, Skopje, Adana and Amman, car-use levels and congestion have been rapidly increasing. The question is, what are the most pressing barriers that prevent those cities from shifting towards sustainable mobility and increased liveability?

This technical note highlights three of the most problematic issues that emerged from the research undertaken in those five Eastern European and middle Eastern cities.

Urban planning issues

Several issues related to urban planning are prominent in those cities. First, general **urban plans and local transport plans (or equivalent) have not been recently updated** in most of the cities looked at, despite some significant changes such as increase in urban population. Second, another issue common across all five case study cities is the **lack of co-operation between metropolitan – in some cases regional - and local urban planning authorities.**

Most common urban planning issues

Lack of updated urban plans
Lack of metropolitan/regional urban plans
Lack of integration between land-use and transport plans
No density requirements

Metropolitan areas in those cities are rapidly expanding but planning decisions and policies remain too fragmented and un-coordinated. In addition, at the local and at the metropolitan level **land-use and transport plans and policies are not integrated.** This continuous policy issue has led to the development of numerous car-dependent urban areas within cities and in particular in the outskirts. There are no planning rules that make public transport links compulsory for new-build developments within and outside cities. These issues coupled with **a lack of the requirement for density** generate urban sprawl and car-dependency. Low-density areas have been rapidly expanding in the outskirts of cities.

In many post-communist countries, ownership reforms did not specify requirements for density. As a result low density areas mushroomed, leading to increased urban sprawl

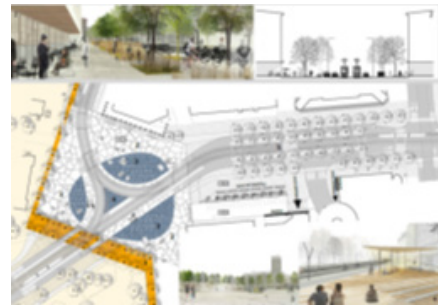
In many low density residential areas built on the outskirts of cities, there is a heavy reliance on cars. Participants reported that, "*whether people are wealthy or not*" even to go and "*buy bread*" cars are an 'absolute necessity'.

Contradictory policy priorities and investments

Another barrier slowing cities from transitioning towards sustainability and liveability is the co-existence of contradictory urban policies. On the one hand, **policies and investments in the five case study cities have been supporting sustainable mobility and place-making initiatives.** In Skopje and in Bucharest for instance, investments in bicycle facilities have been increasing. In Tallinn and in Amman, place-making projects are being established. In Adana (and other cities) investments focus on collective transport is growing.



Cycle Lane in Skopje
Source: Skopje's local authority



Tallinn 'main street' project
Source: www.tallinn.ee



ADANA's local authority plans to add 10 kilometers to its light rail system and purchase new public buses.



The city of **AMMAN** plans to invest in 100 new public buses, and establish a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT).



In **SKOPJE** the objective is to introduce a connected network of bus lanes and to increase public transport's capacity.



Both **BUCHAREST** and **SKOPJE** are in the process of establishing park and ride projects

However, on the other hand, public authorities in those cities still focus on accommodating the demand for car use by investing in, and often prioritising, highway infrastructures for car use.

"We have a mixture of policies, on the one hand the use of motor vehicles is being encouraged by the construction of highways, and on the other end the city tries to encourage alternative mobilities".

workshop participant, Skopje

In the five case study cities, **public authorities still plan to invest large amounts of money to build additional highways**, or bridges, expand roads or create new parking facilities to accommodate car use. This dominant policy-mindset is explained by several factors. On the one hand, these policies are the continuation of decades of planned highway infrastructure projects. On the other hand, building highway infrastructure is often very popular for politicians. Political representatives tend to favour road or bridge building as an easy way to achieve political recognition.

"Every Mayor wants to show an achievement" and building a road is an "easy way" to do so.

workshop participant, Amman



Abdoun Bridge, Amman, Jordan
Source: Shutterstock.com

Another key factor that explains the continuation of car-oriented policies is the fact that most decision-makers believe that adding highway capacity is key to solving congestion issues in their city.

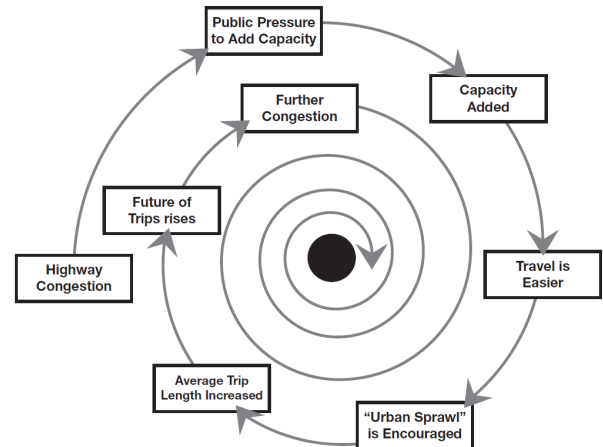
Highway extension is viewed as necessary to *"relieve the primary traffic network",*

workshop participant, Skopje

Relocating certain centres of activity to disperse traffic can help *"move the congestion to the outskirts of the city"*

workshop participant, Adana

Yet, as highlighted by Plane (1995) adding highway capacity improves traffic flow – temporarily – attracting a greater number of car users from the metropolitan area and contributing to urban sprawl. Eventually traffic increases and leads to further congestion, and the cycle repeats itself. *"Over time [...] this increased demand, stimulated by the initial investment in increased transport supply, fuels the need for even more facilities, and the feedback process repeats itself"* explains Plane.¹



Urban transportation: policy alternatives.

Source: Adapted from Plane, D. A. (1995). In Hanson & Giuliano (Eds.) The geography of urban transportation. (2nd ed.) New York ; London: Guilford Press. Picture adapted from Rafael Pereira, Blog Urban Demographics, <https://urbandemographics.blogspot.com/2015/>

Parking management and enforcement issues

One of the most problematic issues in Amman, Bucharest, Adana and Skopje is related to parking management and enforcement. In those four cities parking is mostly free, even in the city centre. Despite this policy, car users commonly park in areas that are not designated parking spaces. This obstructs and frequently damages pedestrian facilities and in some cases, bus or cycle lanes.

"Illegal parking in Bucharest is difficult to handle"

workshop participant, Bucharest

The lack of enforcement is a common issue across cities. Three specific issues are often mentioned. The most problematic one is the fact that enforcement is managed by the police which is under the authority of the national government. The lack of institutional collaboration between the police and the local authority was highlighted in several cities.

¹ Plane, D. A. (1995). Urban transportation: policy alternatives. In Hanson & Giuliano (Eds.) The geography of urban transportation. (2nd ed.) New York; London: Guilford Press, p.439



Cars parked on a side walk in Adana.
Source: Cavoli, C.



Illegal parking in Skopje
Source: Cavoli, C.



Cars parked in Bucharest city centre
Source: Cavoli, C.

Specific recommendations include:

- Integrate land-use and transport at the metropolitan level
- Plan & regulate for high density
- Prioritise alternatives to car use, in particular collective transport and active travel through policies & investments.
 - Reallocate road-space where necessary
- Increase collaboration between the national and the local level to tackle enforcement issues
 - Change legal framework to give enforcement powers to the local authority
- Put in place parking management policies

This note reflects only the authors' view and the agency is not responsible for any use that may be made of the information it contains.

THIS SUMMARY IS BASED ON:

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