

# THE MANDELA INITIATIVE

*Dialogue and action to overcome poverty and inequality*



CENTRE FOR  
TRANSPORT STUDIES  
Faculty of Engineering  
and the Built Environment



UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN  
IYUNIVESITHI YASEKAPA • UNIVERSITEIT VAN KAAPSTAD

## Theme: Transport

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### Land passenger transport

#### 1. What are the major issues you have identified about the manifestations of structural poverty and persistent, deep inequalities, in passenger transport?

- Excessive proportions of disposable household income are allocated to transport costs (reported to be as high as ~40% in some studies, well above the policy target of <10% – although this can be a crude indicator as the relationship between the proportion of transport expenditure and household welfare is non-monotonic). This can be associated with a decline in income available for essential goods and services.
- Excessive time budget is used on travel activities. This can be associated with a decline in discretionary time for activities necessary to break out of structural poverty (e.g. supervising child homework, adult education, family time, etc.), notwithstanding the theory of constant travel time budgets, which illustrates that there is a fairly universal tolerance for travel time (at ~70 minutes/person/day) and that time savings are often reinvested in travel time to more attractive, further away trip destinations.
- Public transport services, including unscheduled paratransit services and

### About this brief

This brief was commissioned by the Mandela Initiative to help inform a synthesis report on its work since the 2012 national conference, *Strategies to Overcome Poverty and Inequality*, organised by the University of Cape Town. The MI provides a multi-sectoral platform to investigate and develop strategies to overcome poverty and reduce inequality in South Africa. While the Nelson Mandela Foundation is a key partner, the Initiative has relied on collaborations between academics and researchers, government, business leaders, civil society, the church and unions.

The synthesis report serves as a framework for reporting on the work of the MI at a national gathering on 12 – 14 February 2018 at the University of Cape Town. The MI *Think Tank* has identified the objectives for the gathering as:

- to anchor the contributions of the MI within an analysis of the current South African political and economic context;
- to share the recommendations emanating from the MI-related work streams at a policy/strategic level to advance the goal of eliminating poverty and reducing inequality;
- to critically engage with the potential impact of the recommendations on eliminating structural poverty and inequality; and
- to discuss ways of promoting popular conversations and debate about what needs to be done to eliminate poverty and reduce inequality, beyond the MI.

The synthesis report aims to assist participants to prepare for the national gathering. The report drew on findings from the sectoral research projects of Think Tank members; the MI's *Action Dialogues*; a report on an MI *Community of Practice workshop* with research chairs from different universities to identify cross-cutting themes emerging from the MI's *research programme*; and the work programmes of others who have expressed an interest in contributing to the goals of the MI.

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scheduled mass transit services, are often unreliable, with respect to both frequency, service span and coverage. This can be associated with increased vulnerability in employment security.

- There is a disproportionate burden of road crash fatality and injury risk on low-income households, particularly pedestrians. This can be associated with shocks to household income when a breadwinner is no longer able to work.
- There is a disproportionate burden of personal security risks on low-income households when walking to public transport, waiting for public transport, and travelling in public transport vehicles. Walking distances in neighbourhoods experiencing high rates of assault crime and gangsterism are often long. This can be associated with increased exposure to personal security risk, especially amongst women.

## **2. What do you think are the main reasons for the persistence of the deep inequalities and poverty in passenger transport?**

- A. Apartheid spatial planning, perpetuated to some extent by post-apartheid housing policies geared to providing the greatest number of dwelling units on the cheapest land, has produced fragmented urban forms and a jobs–housing balance in which motorised and non-motorised trip lengths are long and expensive, pedestrian trips often require the crossing of high-speed arterials and freeways, and effective/viable public transport services are difficult to achieve. The distribution of residential density (where the highest densities are associated with peripheral townships) is dysfunctional with respect to bi-directional flow and public transport seat renewal (i.e. the number of fares yielded by a single seat over the service route).
- B. Despite policy rhetoric, there appear to be political/class barriers to the equitable allocation of road space for public transport vehicles, as well as to a more equitable charging for the use of public sector-funded transport infrastructure and for externalities.
- C. The past decade has revealed institutional capacity limitations in estimating operating costs (and associated subsidy requirements) for scheduled public transport services, as well as in understanding the distributional equity and opportunity cost implications of transport system improvements. Alternatives analysis has been weak, and the strengths and potential role of minibus taxis in the context of fiscal constraint have yet to be recognised by many city authorities.
- D. The national public transport policy framework is inequitable across cities and modes, and is poorly targeted towards passengers who are in greatest need of assistance.
- E. The passenger rail service is arguably in decline, and the leadership of the Passenger Rail Agency of South Africa (PRASA) is unstable as a result of continual personnel changes associated with allegations of corruption and qualifications fraud.
- F. The current legislative framework fails to enable the devolution of rail planning and service provision responsibilities to multi-modal public transport authorities at the city sphere, and the devolution of responsibility for regulating bus and minibus-taxi services, which is enabled by the legislation, has stalled.

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G. (Linked to #A above) There is a general lack of understanding regarding the impact of service delivery, including housing and public transport service delivery, on impoverished communities. Providing services in the wrong place may trap future generations in areas where economic opportunities remain scarce.

### **3. What is being recommended at a macro policy/strategic level to deal with the major issues you have identified?**

- A. Densification along trunk public transport service corridors, principally through higher density, pedestrian-friendly, mixed use and inclusionary Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) within the walking catchments of stations/stops (noting the importance of location, as peripheral township densification would have counterproductive results with respect to public transport viability).
- B. Installation of bus and minibus-taxi lanes, queue jumpers and/or signal priority on a network basis, as well as the ramping-up of car restraint through parking policies and road use charges.
- C. City authority support programmes aimed at capacity building and policy development support, including the promotion of public transport network 'hybridity' (i.e. a complementary network of scheduled mass transit and unscheduled paratransit services) and associated regulatory reform.
- D. Reform of the public transport subsidy framework, and the introduction of user-side subsidies in particular.
- F. Legislative reform (perhaps in the form of a mooted Integrated Transport Planning Bill) to enable multi-modal public transport regulation to be devolved to city authorities, and an associated opportunity for innovations in rail service provision and regulation.
- G. On a policy/strategy level, there often appears to be limited understanding of the entrapment issues related to service delivery.

### **4. What do you think the potential impact of the recommendations will be on eliminating structural poverty and reducing inequality?**

- A. Shortened trip lengths and increased bi-directional flows – should reduce transport cost and time burden, and improve public transport viability and cost accessibility (but, even with favourable housing finance and cross-subsidisation, TOD is likely to have limitations in meeting the needs of the poorest bands of the housing market).
- B. Increased public transport commercial speeds, and schedule or headway reliability – should make services more reliable.
- C. Better planning and decision-making, leading to incentivised 'hybridity' and associated shifts to feeder area quantity licensing to consolidated taxi associations or companies – should make city-wide public transport improvements more financially viable and equitable, and improve spatial and temporal accessibility.

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- D. User-side public transport subsidies would enable subsidy to be targeted to those who need it most, and remove tendencies to subsidise operator inefficiency – should reduce the transport cost burden on poor households.
- F. Multi-model service planning would enable integrated timetables, complementary service routes, integrated fare structures and collection, integrated passenger information systems, and better alternatives analysis in mode choice investment decision-making – should improve the spatial, cost and temporal accessibility dimensions of the public transport network.

**For more information on the Mandela Initiative:**

