Workshop Summary

Accessibility and Civic Engagement

Corporate Partnership Board of the ITF

27 April 2022
12:00 PM – 3:00 PM CEST

Workshop on Accessibility and Civic Engagement

Background

A lot of work at the ITF has addressed spatial accessibility from a generalised angle as well as from the perspective of access to work, education/health facilities and equity. This workshop further explored accessibility from the perspective of its impact on citizen's exercise of their fundamental rights (freedom of movement and civic engagement activities such as participation in electoral processes). It also considered the role of civic engagement in transport governance and different means of engagement to support inclusive transport policies.

Workshop objectives

The workshop summary will feed into the ITF's working group on Sustainable Accessibility for All, which is taking place over the course of 2022 – 2023. This Working Group will consider how governments can best ensure that all transport users have adequate accessibility in the context of a sustainable mobility future. This will include a particular focus on the needs of vulnerable demographics, including the elderly, people with disabilities, low-income groups, and residents of urban peripheries, regional towns and remote areas. The main topics are likely to include making sustainable transport physically accessible to all, addressing the digital divide in the transport context, providing affordable public transport for the periphery, the role of on-demand public transport services and their integration with other modes, and addressing cultural impediments to modal shift.

Workshop summary

The workshop had two main components. After a keynote given by Ms. Sminu Jindal, Founder of Svayam India, two sessions explored different aspects of accessibility in transport planning. Each session opened with presentations from invited speakers to prime subsequent discussion among participants, adopting a roundtable style format.

A first 90-minute session looked at examples of measures that have been adopted to understand and improve accessibility. The session included presentations from Meg Fencil (Sustain Charlotte), Kristina Jasiunaitė (World Bicycle Relief), Eka Hintaran (TIER Mobility) and Matt McCann (Access Earth).

A second 90-minute session provided insights for how civic engagement can also support inclusive transport policies. The focus of this session was to highlight examples of different mechanisms that can support better and more inclusive planning for transport, especially highlighting governance and engagement approaches adopted by different organisations. Presentations in this session were made by Barbara Mwanje (Civil Society Coalition on Transport in Uganda), Letícia Rizério (Municipality of Belo Horizonte, Brazil), Caroline Stickland (Transport for All) and Mauricio Mejía Galván (OECD).

Key takeaways

The key discussion points from the workshop are summarised below.
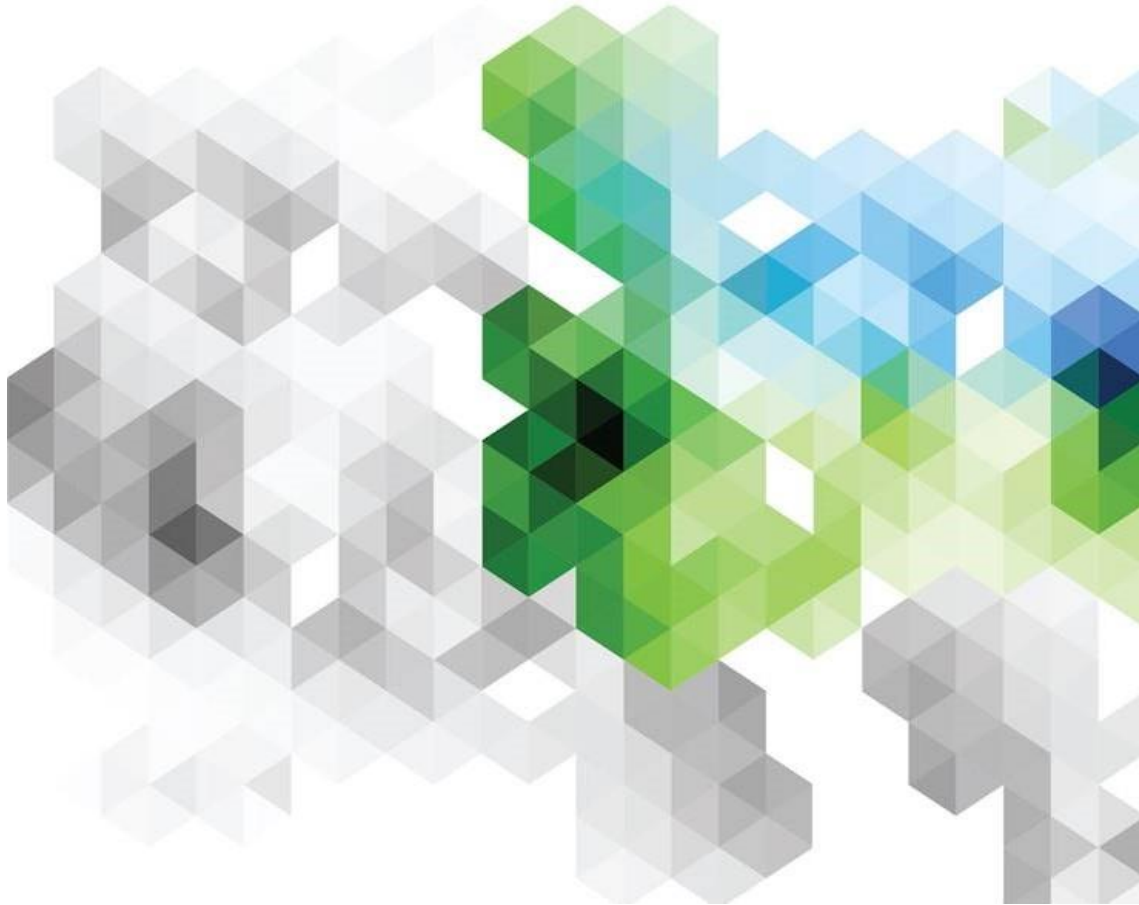
- **Transport options shape people's lives**. The transport options available and affordable to different neighbourhoods and user groups can impact employment, education, economic and social mobility opportunities. Transport decisions can lead to access gaps and create, or reinforce, inequity among different communities and social groups. Transport needs evidence-based decision-making to ensure a good fit for those who use the system.

- **Evidence-based decision-making needs good data.** Better data can also support a greater understanding of transport needs by sociodemographic groups and demand patterns. This data is not always available, or collected specifically for the purposes of transport planning. Engagement across stakeholder groups, and breaking down traditional organisational silos, can help to gather greater spatial data and understanding of communities.

- **There is a need to recognise the voices missing from transport discussions.** Adopting a variety of channels to reach-out to different potential user groups and those impacted by transport decisions can help improve the representativeness of the engagement. When planning outreach and engagement activities, there is a need to think of accessible venues and information formats beforehand (for example, wheelchair friendly buildings, childcare facilities at meetings, etc.). Enabling engagement from different groups of society can help policymakers and planners identify potential pitfalls at the design stage, before implementation begins.

- **Diversity in the transport labour-force can support more inclusive decision-making.** Diversity in the transport sector's workforce, particularly in decision-making roles, can support better awareness of different needs when planning transport policies and system design. Training for planning professionals could also help to improve awareness of the different issues facing different sectors of society at the planning stage.

- **Two-way communication can help to engender confidence in the process**. Once mechanisms have been set up to engage with target user or social groups, it is important to provide feedback to those citizens who have spent their time and effort to provide input. Without it, there is a risk participants in such exercise would not see value in further engagement activities. While one-off meetings can help to reach various groups, establishing working groups can also help ensure a longer dialogue between different stakeholder groups. This can help evaluate policy impacts and therefore address some accountability gaps in the governance sphere of transport planning.

- **Commercial entities can also adopt civil engagement practices.** For example, with new mobility modes (i.e. e-scooters) and safety considerations for other users of public spaces, the discussion heard of the concept of safety boards established for all groups to have the opportunity to raise their concerns.

Closing remarks

ITF staff thanked all participants and recalled that all inputs from this workshop would serve as input for the Working Group on Sustainable Accessibility for All[1], which will have its first kick-off meeting in June 2022.

---

[1] Please refer to the 'Workshop objectives' section of this document for more information.