

PRESS RELEASE

THE GLOBAL LIGHT RAIL AND TRAM LANDSCAPE: NEW UITP STATISTICS ON A MODE CONTINUING TO ADVANCE



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Living through the so-called 'renaissance period', the light rail and tram landscape is a regular extensive data collection exercise at UITP, covering the infrastructural aspects of LRT.

The latest version ready for release takes an extensive look at the 2019-21 period, showing the changes over the last three years - and how the coronavirus pandemic has impacted this mode of public transport.

Did you know that Melbourne has the longest Light Rail Transit (LRT) network in the world?

Or that Europe has opened a whopping 624km of lines since 2016?

How about the rise of low-floored vehicles, better serving users with access needs, rising to 45% globally?

LRT is a transport system based on electrically powered light rail vehicles (LRV) that operates on a track in a dedicated right-of-way (meaning separated lanes).

They are designed to deliver rapid, reliable, and safe services. LRT systems can have different purposes depending on the context: they provide the backbone of the public transport system in small and medium-sized towns, or act as additional lines in support of the metro system in larger cities.

There are currently an average of 6.7 new systems opening each year.

“Light rail transit can serve as a backbone for cities or a feeder service to heavier rail systems. What also makes this mode attractive from the passenger point of view is reliability, comfort and ease of use. And, for those in the city, it brings a whole range of urban upgrades which often accompanies a line’s construction; from adding green spaces to better road space design and improving air quality.”

Corentin Wauters
Head of Rail Unit, UITP

More and more light rail and tram lines...

As of 2021, there were 15,824km of LRT network in operation, mainly distributed between Europe (58%) and Eurasia (22%). At a global level, the length of infrastructure has been increasing by 1% per year on average since 2015.

Ridership is recovering after COVID-19...

In 2019, the volume of ridership was around 14.8 billion trips and, globally, this decreased by 37% on average in the following year. The regions most affected were MENA and North America, where the decline in ridership exceeded 50%.

Africa and MENA were the two regions with the highest positive ridership variation between 2020 and 2021. They are the only two cases which had recovered at least 80% of their ridership in 2021 compared with 2019. In contrast, North America is the only region where 2021 ridership was even lower than in 2020, and only reached 42% of pre-COVID-19 levels.

The latest data on Light Rail and Trams from UITP shows the growth and development of a mode vitally important to urban life.

Light Rail and Trams: Download the Statistics Brief

FOR EDITORS

(UITP) The International Association of Public Transport works to enhance quality of life and economic well-being by supporting and promoting sustainable transport in urban areas worldwide. As a passionate champion of sustainable urban mobility, UITP is internationally recognised for its work to advance the development of this critical policy agenda. With more than **1900 members** in **100 countries**, UITP has a long history to its name, and is the only worldwide network to bring together all public transport stakeholders and all sustainable transport modes. Visit the [newsroom](#) and follow us on [Twitter](#).

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