

NATIONALLY DETERMINED CONTRIBUTIONS & PUBLIC TRANSPORT

DECEMBER | 2023

INTRODUCTION

This report provides an assessment of how well public transport is accounted for in Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs).

We can reduce urban emissions and decarbonise people's daily mobility faster, more reliably and affordably with public transport and active mobility¹.

Society will benefit from every increase in modal share to public transport, through fewer road fatalities and injuries, more inclusive access to opportunities, reduced congestion, improved air quality and freeing up space in our cities.

The first Global Stocktake (GST)² shows we are off track, but what national policies and measures are already in place in NDCs and what are the opportunities for more climate action with public transport over this critical decade?

This report identifies a range of options for more ambitious NDCs, which can form the basis of an outline policy template for public transport and active mobility. Building capacity to support its adoption and implementation can provide the strong foundation necessary to progressively and effectively enhance climate ambition.

WHAT ARE NDCs AND WHY ARE THEY IMPORTANT FOR PUBLIC TRANSPORT

NDCs are countries' plans to address climate change under the Paris Agreement. Each Party is required to update one to be more ambitious every five years, with the next update round scheduled for 2025.

Ideal NDCs set out targets for mitigating emissions and define the strategies and measures that will be taken to reach them. Since climate finance is key to implementing the plans, NDCs should also detail a financing strategy and, where necessary, set out their capacity building needs.

NDCs are an important lever for advancing and financing public transport, and, likewise, public transport solutions can help deliver more ambitious NDCs. They can have a catalytic effect for greater multilevel collaboration, drive policy alignment and enable decarbonization.



¹ <https://www.uitp.org/cop/>

² <https://unfccc.int/topics/global-stocktake/about-the-global-stocktake/why-the-global-stocktake-is-important-for-climate-action-this-decade>

The first GST is set to conclude at COP28. It will allow us to see where we are collectively making progress towards meeting the goals of the Paris Climate Change Agreement – and where we are not. It will also lay the foundation for countries to enhance and update their NDCs.

NDCs can play an important role in supporting their cities tackle emissions. Mobility continues to be the largest source of local GHG emissions and pollution, with traffic and congestion the number one cause.

Studies over the past two decades by UN-Habitat³ and elsewhere still show the continued strong dominance in favour of private motorized transport in our cities.

Public transport remains underutilised in many cities around the world and many opportunities are available to invest in the sector as our cities continue to grow and develop.

NDCs represent politically backed commitments by countries. If used right, they could be our way out of tackling the world’s current climate crisis and make public transport the backbone of urban mobility. We can use NDCs to accelerate local climate action and build more strategically on public transport and the potential of active mobility to deliver faster, more reliably and affordably on the Paris Agreement and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

WHY WE NEED MORE PUBLIC TRANSPORT IN NDCs



Avoiding unnecessary motorised trips based on proximity and accessibility, thanks to integrated land use and transport planning



Shifting to less carbon-intensive modes - that is, from private vehicles to public transport, shared mobility, walking and cycling, water-based freight, and cargo bikes for last-mile deliveries, among other.



Improving vehicle design, energy efficiency and clean energy sources for different types of freight and passenger vehicle.

Source: Slocat⁴

Mitigation actions in the transport sector can be categorized according to the Avoid, Shift, and Improve model. “Avoid” refers to the need to improve the transport system’s efficiency by reducing the demand for motorized travel as well as the duration of journeys imposed by current spatial models through integrated plans for land use and transport. “Shift” seeks to improve the efficiency of individual journeys, from more polluting and energy-consuming modes to greener forms, with public

transport and active mobility as the backbone. “Improve” focuses on vehicle and fuel efficiency, introducing renewable energy sources into the transport sector.

Growing evidence shows that Avoid and Shift strategies reduce emissions and improve transport access at lower costs than Improve measures, particularly in rapidly urbanising developing countries.

There is also wide recognition that current climate policies are over-reliant on technology focused Improve strategies, and are insufficient to achieve the systemic and rapid transformation that is needed to meet global climate and equity goals. More progress on Avoid and Shift actions is needed in NDCs⁵.

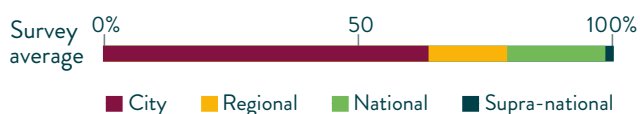
The emissions reduction potential of public transport through efficiency and displacement is undervalued. **Doubling the use of public transport and designing cities around it to reduce car dependency would cut urban transport emissions by more than half. By 2030, a mode share of active travel and public transport of between 40% - 80% is needed - dependent on the type of city⁶.** Investing in public transport not only increases public transport mode share, but also increases active travel as people walk and cycle to access networks⁶.

It will yield a 5% cost saving, and drive industry by creating tens of millions of jobs, compared to continuing on the existing investment pathway. This is because every dollar invested in public transport, brings back five times more into the wider economy⁷. As a result, the investments pay for themselves.

As much public transport can already be run on renewables, it can be the driving force for an energy transition in the urban transport sector and be used as a strategic asset for the further decarbonisation of urban mobility.

While many cities around the world are making significant progress, local action takes place in the context of broader national frameworks. Around a quarter of urban transport policies fall within the jurisdiction of the national level, so there are a wealth of options available to national policy-makers who wish to lay the foundations for better urban structures, boosting public transport use, making it safe and easy to walk or cycle, and provide alternatives to private car use in our cities.

Proportion of policy instruments⁸



³ https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/2023/07/sdg_11_synthesis_report_2023_executive_summary_final.pdf

⁴ <https://slocat.net/asi/>

⁵ SLOCAT (2021) Transport and Climate Change Global Status Report. <https://tcc-gsr.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/1.1-Global-Transport-and-Climate-Change.pdf>

⁶ The Future is Public Transport: <https://thefutureispublictransport.org/>

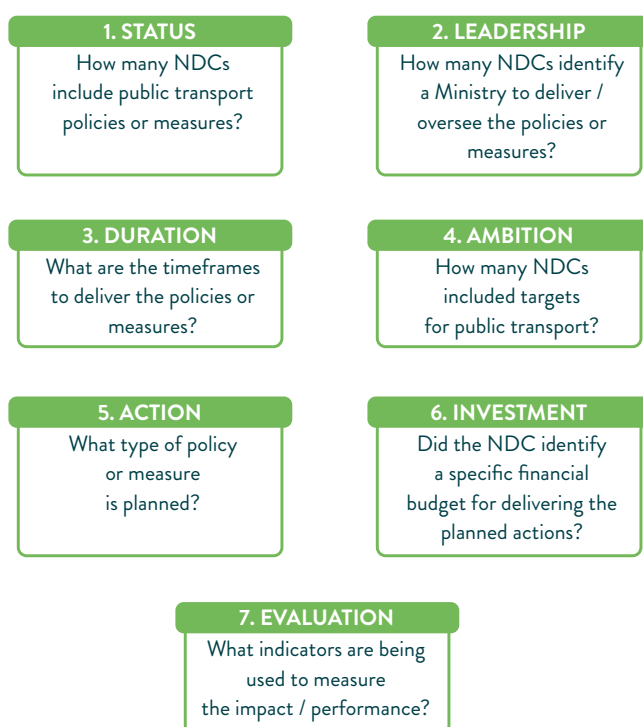
⁷ UITP Policy Brief “Cities for People” <https://cms.uitp.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Policy-Brief-CitiesForPeople-web.pdf>

⁸ Results from the LSE Cities Going Green global survey <https://www.lse.ac.uk/cities/Assets/Documents/Research-Reports/Going-Green-Final-Edition-web-version.pdf>

Supportive national strategies and incentives in NDCs are required to ensure that cities have the resources and abilities at hand to deliver the policies and measures needed. All this can directly impact the attractiveness of investments in public transport.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

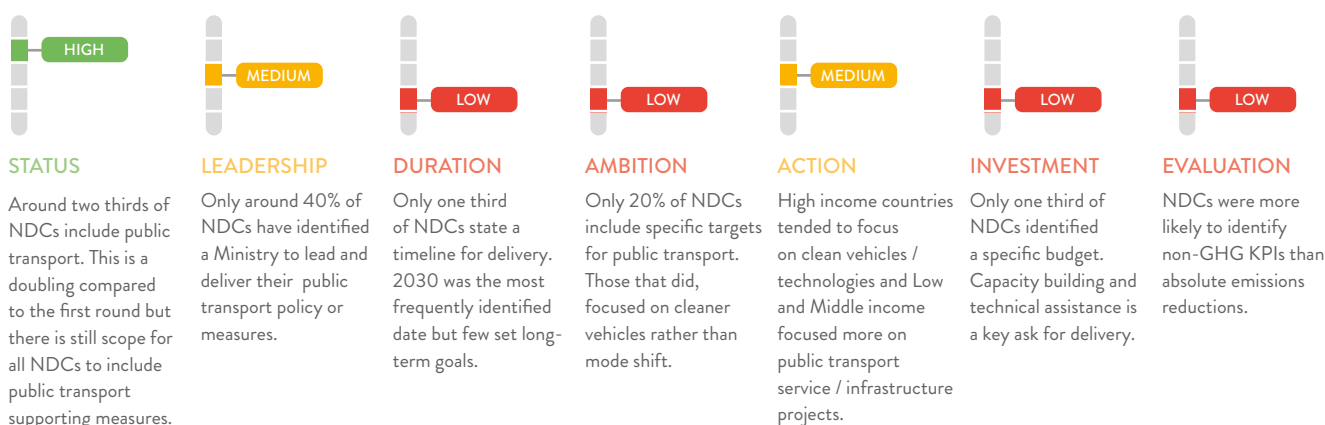
This report presents the findings of the desk-based research of all NDCs that had been submitted to the UNFCCC’s NDC registry up until August 2023 (166 latest available, representing 193 Parties). It focused on identifying the national policies or measures in support of public transport infrastructure and services as well as relevant actions for its further enhancement and uptake.



The criteria for assessment was based on the approach adopted by the Partnership for Active Travel and Health (PATH) in their review of national policies for walking and cycling in ITF Countries⁹. To ensure that the findings were robust, UITP compared its analysis with SLOCAT’s⁴ NDC Tracking tool and the WRI’s public transport NDC assessment¹⁰. Given the large amount of information contained in NDCs, alongside the fact that NDCs are in several languages, it is acknowledged that not all policies or measures may have been identified or that the in-house assessment truly acknowledge their breadth. As a result, the study is focused on the global level as much as possible.

UITP would welcome the opportunity to further engage with Parties under the UNFCCC should they wish to work with us in reviewing their NDC – both current and future – to provide an individual country assessment of how well public transport is accounted for and to provide recommendations as well as capacity building support for their strengthening.

HEADLINE FINDINGS

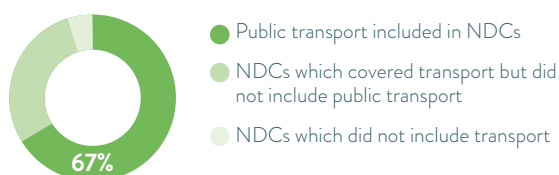


9 <https://pathforwalkingcycling.com/wp-content/uploads/PATH-ITF-policies-report.pdf>

10 <https://www.wri.org/update/assessing-and-improving-essential-role-public-transport-ndcs>

STATUS:

HOW MANY NDCs INCLUDED PUBLIC TRANSPORT POLICIES OR MEASURES?



While individual passenger transport remained the focus of most transport NDCs, 67% of countries made the right choice to include public transport. This is a doubling compared to the first round of submissions back in 2015.

Only 5% of countries did not include the transport sector in their NDCs, the most typical reason given is that the sector did not constitute a major source of national emissions.

Although most NDCs target emission reductions in transport, most focus on private passenger vehicles and in 28% of the case, just on this mode. Not all NDCs explained the reasons for this prioritization but some explain that this was because individual private transport was the main means by which people travel around the country. Efforts are constrained to private vehicle efficiency measures, like fuel switching (either biofuels or electricity) rather than mode shift.

Low and Middle income countries were more likely to identify public transport policies or measures compared to High income countries, and frequently cited it as a dual mitigation and development opportunity. Yet, many of the efforts are broad and unmeasurable and there is a notable lack of coherence between domestic policy on public transport and what is included in NDCs. These ties need to be addressed in updated NDCs.



LEADERSHIP:

HOW MANY NDCs IDENTIFY A MINISTRY TO DELIVER OR OVERSEE THE POLICIES OR MEASURES?



Most NDCs do not identify a Ministry to lead or deliver public transport policy or measures. When one is identified, 38% of NDCs specify that the Ministry of Transport will oversee implementation.

In most cases, details of governance arrangements were not included, so it is unlikely that the measures will have secured broad agreement and consultation within governments, which is required for ownership and delivery of actions. This is a major barrier to implementation.

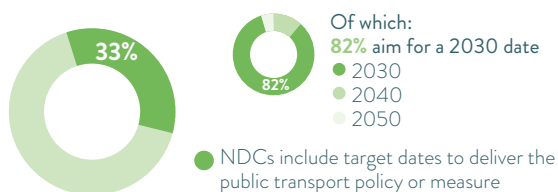
Almost exclusively, Low and Middle income countries identified the Ministry of Transport as the lead agency but contained no information on their role or remit.

Ministries of Transport do not always have public transport as part of their powers and duties. Rather this falls to the responsibility of another Ministry or is devolved to the local level. Some NDCs reflect this by stating that the delivery of the public transport intervention will be overseen by the local authority but provide almost no information on how national governments plan to engage, enable and support this city-level action. Well-designed NDCs need to take this into account and specify the roles and mandates of all levels of government and what actions will be taken.

DURATION:

WHAT ARE THE TIMEFRAMES TO DELIVER THE POLICIES OR MEASURES?

Only a third of NDCs have a set timeline to deliver the public transport policy or measure, with 2030 the most frequently identified date.



High income countries were no more likely to set a delivery date compared to Low and Middle incomes ones, but in the case of the latter, delivery dates were conditional on the provision of adequate finance and capacity building as well as technical assistance.

It is noted in some NDCs, public transport projects are complex and time intensive, their delivery will be achieved at an undefined time.

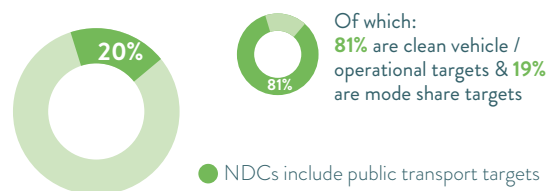
Only 5% set a long-term target date for delivery (i.e. 2040 or longer). With the GST set to inform the preparation of subsequent and more ambitious NDCs, an important learning is the need to include more long-term commitments toward public transport investments. This will send a strong signal to markets and help build investor confidence.

Another is that NDCs need to be more specific in their intentions as, in too many cases, the policies or measures are vague in their terminology: for example, they aim to “increase efficiency in public transport”, “expand public transport” or “prioritise public transport”. While they demonstrate a commitment towards public transport, their actions are unclear, so it is not possible to set a target delivery date.



AMBITION:

HOW MANY NDCs INCLUDE TARGETS FOR PUBLIC TRANSPORT?



Only 20% of the public transport NDCs include quantitative targets and mainly focus on clean vehicles (buses) but this covers a range of technologies and clean fuels. More NDCs need to include stronger, more ambitious targets that combine the goal to increasing the use of more public transport alongside the greater uptake of clean and zero emissions public transport vehicles.

While around half of all the public transport promoting NDCs express a desired mode shift, a minority set specific targets in this area. Low and Middle income countries almost exclusively set targets here, with mode shift aspirations from road to public transport at around the 25-30% mark. They were rarely combined with walking and cycling goals, or clean vehicle targets.

High income and the largest emitting countries with the highest private vehicle kilometers travelled do not include targets to reduce this or support a shift to public transport.

Many of the leading plans and efforts of the public transport sector in reducing their operational carbon footprint and supporting a shift towards a more sustainable balance of transport modes in cities are not reflected in NDCs. In many cases, they hold true and go beyond their national commitments. Incorporating them in updated NDCs can immediately strengthen the level of national ambition.

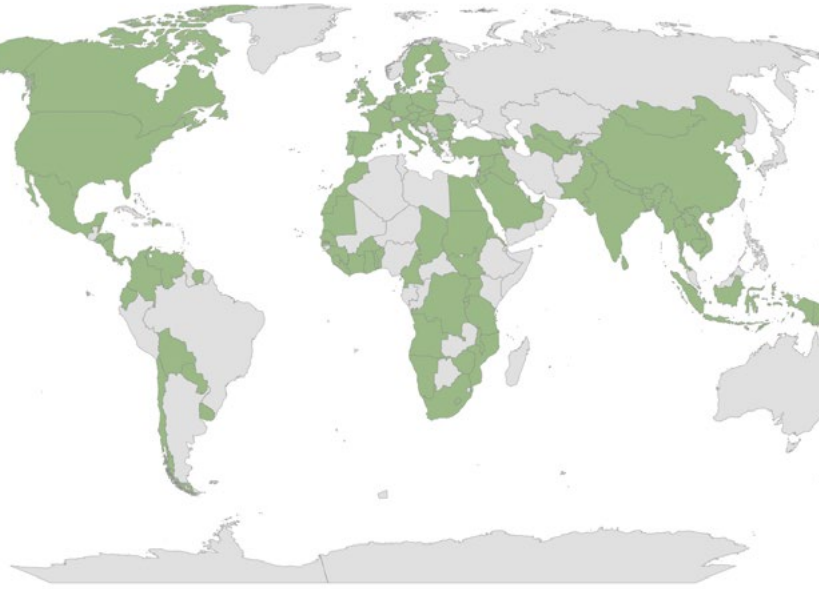
POLICY ACTIONS AND MEASURES IN THE GLOBAL REGIONS

EUROPE & NORTH AMERICA:

NDCs focused primarily on “Improve” approaches aimed at increasing fuel efficiency and zero emissions vehicles.

LATIN AMERICA & CARIBBEAN:

The largest countries in the region focused more on private vehicles measures¹¹, with Middle and Low income countries prioritizing more on public transport infrastructure investments and more efficient vehicles / alternative fuel standards.



AFRICA:

The region with the most public transport policies and measures aimed at expanding public transport infrastructure and services.

ASIA PACIFIC:

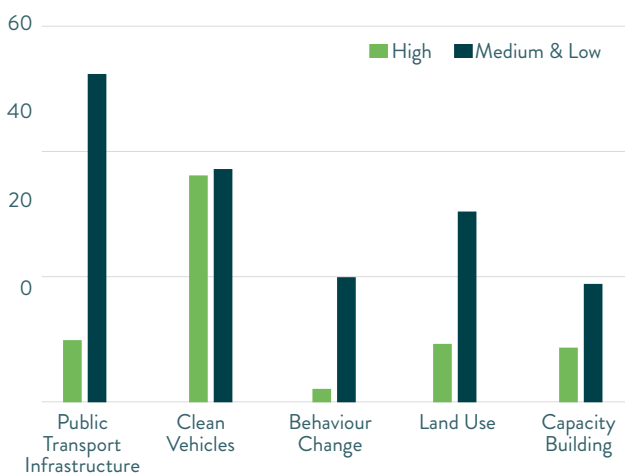
High income countries tended to focus on clean technologies and vehicles whereas Low and Middle income focused more on public transport infrastructure and service enhancements.

Green indicates countries with public transport in their NDC

ACTION:

WHAT TYPE OF PUBLIC TRANSPORT POLICY OR MEASURE IS PLANNED?

NDCs typically outline more than one specific policy or measure covering a range of Avoid-Shift-Improve strategies, focusing almost exclusively on mitigation efforts.



The most common policy or measure identified was to either develop or expand existing (formal) public transport infrastructure and services, such as Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) or new tram or metro developments; or to scale up the use of / purchase of cleaner vehicles, with electrification or biofuels frequently cited.

High income countries were more likely to focus on clean vehicle approaches, which is typically regarded as an Improve measure. Low and Middle income countries were more likely to focus on public transport infrastructure and service development, which can be regarded as an Avoid-Shift approach. Clean vehicle policies and measures were more specific in their nature, meaning that the Avoid-Shift approaches are not fully maximized.

Land use measures, linked to urban planning such as Transit Oriented Development or national urban mobility plans that encourages their uptake at the local level for more compact and connected urban development alongside public transport, were the next most frequently identified measure.

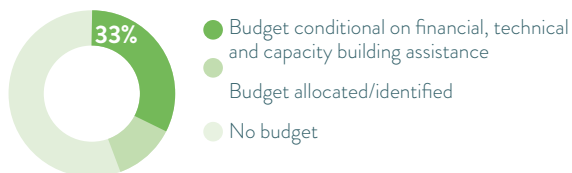
Behavioral change policies, such as pricing schemes that encourage the uptake of public transport or dissuading people using private vehicles, as well as soft policy tools to raise awareness of the benefits of public transport, were identified in NDCs, but to a lesser extent. The least frequently identified policy or measure was around capacity building and governance reforms, such as the establishing local transport authorities. This is critical to establishing the enabling institutional and regulatory environment for the delivery of policies at the local level.

The ideal NDC should cover all the aspects identified and can form the basis of a NDC template for encouraging and supporting public transport and active mobility.

¹¹ 'Transportation 2050: pathways to decarbonization and climate resilience in Latin America and the Caribbean' <https://publications.iadb.org/en/transportation-2050-pathways-decarbonization-and-climate-resilience-latin-america-and-caribbean>

INVESTMENT:

DID THE NDC IDENTIFY A SPECIFIC FINANCIAL BUDGET FOR DELIVERING THE PLANNED PUBLIC TRANSPORT ACTIONS?



Nearly half of public transport NDCs include a visible financial budget but were often conditional on the provision of financial, technical and capacity building support.

Low and Middle income countries were three times more likely to identify a financial budget compared to High income countries. However, these were conditional on external financial assistance as well as having technical and capacity building support. The needs covered a range of facets, such as governance, skills, training, technical knowledge and knowledge transfer as well as the ability to raise money for investment. This is critical to the institutional set-up and mechanisms for implementation, to ensure that the policies and measures taken are of quality.

Bridging this capacity gap will be critical for more ambitious NDCs. To help countries to prepare for the future NDC update processes; tools, guidance, platforms, and advisory support from leading institutions to help countries plan and implement their NDCs is critically needed. The development of an NDC policy template on public transport and active mobility and building capacity to deliver such a framework would help countries to assess their policy strategies and instruments as well as institutional readiness for implementing the NDC.

EVALUATION:

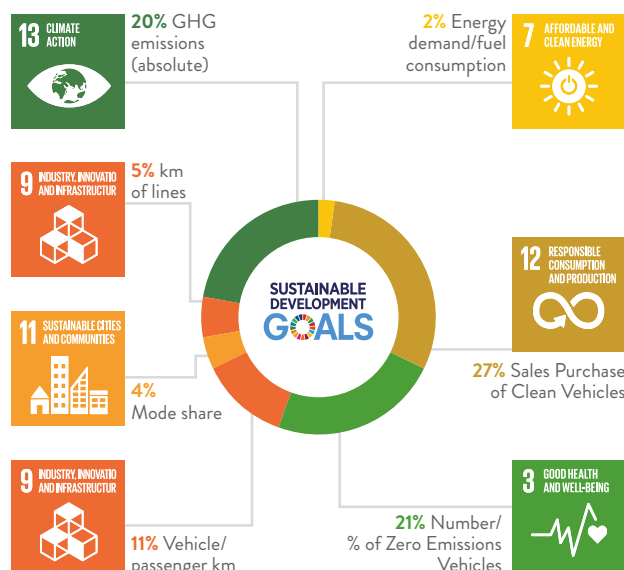
WHAT INDICATORS ARE BEING USED TO MEASURE THE IMPACT / PERFORMANCE?

Around one third of public transport NDCs have a clear evaluation framework (indicators) for assessing their impact. Rather than evaluating performance on emissions reductions alone, NDCs were more likely to measure performance using non-GHG KPIs.

Updated NDCs show increasing connections between climate action and SDGs. By measuring a range of GHG and non-GHG KPIs, it is possible to make the connection with relevant Goals and targets. In doing so, it can help to bring change beyond technology transitions.

If indicators are used regularly over time and in a consistent way, they can be an extremely important tool in the assessment of whether NDC policy interventions are having the desired effect at the local level.

Feeding this back to the national level can reinforce vertical coherence and multi-level collaboration as well as complement and contribute to NDC impact and SDG implementation.



CONCLUSIONS AND 5 OPPORTUNITIES TO ENHANCE NDCs

A number of opportunities exist to strengthen NDCs. The easiest being that all updated NDCs should include commitments to reducing emissions with public transport and active mobility.

The ideal NDC should connect national and sub-national policies, include data on current transport sector emissions and articulate ambitious emissions reduction targets and wider sustainable transport goals. It would be accompanied by a strong national and local governance framework and long-term investments in public transport at the national and local level. It should also address adaptation measures to prepare for the changes brought by climate change and make links to the wider SDG agenda. Effective collaboration is key to delivery.

Since climate finance is key to implementing the plans, NDCs should also detail a financing strategy. NDCs should include a range of plans and actions of the public transport sector in reducing their operational carbon footprint and supporting a shift towards a more sustainable balance of transport modes. In doing so, they will strengthen countries efforts and help raise the level of ambition.

The right enabling conditions will be key to delivery, for which capacity building and technical assistance is an essential ingredient. The development of a template NDC for encouraging and supporting public transport and active mobility would help significantly.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1 All NDCs should include a range of public transport and active mobility policies and measures. They should include long-term commitments and finance for public transport as well as include firm and ambitious targets to increase the share of journeys being taken by sustainable public transport and active mobility.
- 2 NDCs should support sub-national governments in NDC implementation and should detail how they will enable and support city-level action on public transport. National ministries and local governments as well as the public transport sector to cooperate, align strategies, communication and processes for collective multi-level coordinated NDC efforts and updates.
- 3 Include the leading plans and actions of the public transport sector in reducing their operational carbon footprint and supporting a shift towards public transport in NDCs to make them more ambitious.
- 4 Capacity building support and technical assistance should be leveraged – particularly from non-state actors – to ensure NDCs are delivered and made more ambitious.
- 5 NDCs to measure GHG and non-GHG KPIs to allow for linkages to be made with relevant SDGs.

This is an Analysis Report of UITP, the International Association of Public Transport. UITP represents the interests of key players in the public transport sector. Its membership includes transport authorities, operators, both private and public, in all modes of collective passenger transport, and the industry. UITP addresses the economic, technical, organisation and management aspects of passenger transport, as well as the development of policy for mobility and public transport worldwide.