



Supporting healthy urban transport and mobility in the context of COVID-19

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Introduction

Many countries around the world are easing COVID-19 travel restrictions on the movement of people and goods by various modes of transport.

As the transition to the “new normal” progresses, governments, public health authorities, transport providers and communities are working towards achieving three main objectives:

1. ensuring the health and safety of travellers and transport workers;
2. sustaining the short-term gains in safer, healthier and more sustainable modes of transport that have been observed during the lockdown;
3. preparing for a possible future occurrence of events of a similar nature and responding to all transmission scenarios.

Central to attaining these objectives is maintaining the functioning and economic viability of public transport systems, while rebalancing the distribution of different modes of transport towards reduced car dependency and increased safe walking and cycling.

These shifts are paramount to sustain the positive changes observed in multiple locations during the travel restrictions and achieve various health and environment objectives. These include: reductions in road traffic injuries, emissions of transport-related air pollution and greenhouse gases, noise and traffic congestion; provision of opportunities for increased physical activity; and increased flexibility and resilience of transport and mobility systems to face possible future disruptions.

This document addresses these issues by presenting measures that can be implemented in the transport sector by various actors to achieve these public health objectives. It focuses on ways existing WHO guidance on COVID-19 can be implemented in the transport sector. This document builds on an earlier document that provided guidance on transport during the COVID-19 outbreak and confinement, and should be read in conjunction with existing and evolving WHO guidance from other related areas (e.g. advice for the public on the use of masks, and other preventive measures).

The target audiences for this document are national and local governments, including public health authorities; transport providers; and commuters, all of whom have an important role to play in ensuring that public health and social measures are adhered to.

The actions presented in this document have been identified through reviews of various sources, including emerging scientific and grey literature, websites of international and nongovernmental organizations, databases and collections of case studies and news outlets, reflecting the rapidly evolving development of knowledge in this field. The actions presented in this document are organized by main target audience or actors, namely governments, transport providers and commuters. These measures should be considered as a package comprising a comprehensive response, which should be tailored to the local context.

Specific actions in transport systems supportive of COVID-19 measures

What national and local governments can do

Governments, at both national and local levels, have an important role to play in maintaining the trust of users while providing safe and efficient public transport options that reduce the risk of COVID-19 infection. This support may include government subsidies and investment in the public transport sector to compensate for the loss of revenue from lower rates of usage and additional operating costs resulting from new sanitation measures, such as more frequent cleaning and disinfection of vehicles.

Governments also play a key role in creating the policy frameworks for promoting safe active mobility, including through investment in safe infrastructure for pedestrians and cyclists, reallocation of public space and enforcement of road safety measures (Table 1).

In addition, governments at both national and local levels will play a key role in instituting and enforcing a supportive and coherent regulatory environment in transport and other sectors. For example, governments can support the development and implementation of regulations on heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) in transport systems; they can also encourage teleworking through legislative measures, facilitating and incentivizing its use. In implementing these changes, governments should consider the needs of all transport users, especially those with mobility restrictions, and make sure that the additional measures put in place do not negatively impact access by these groups.

Table 1. Actions governments can take

Hygiene	Physical distancing	Other actions
Regulate and/or provide guidance on cleaning and disinfection of facilities, public transport vehicles, workplaces, bus, tram and train stations and equipment.	Regulate and/or provide guidance on how to control and direct pedestrian traffic at bus, tram and train stations to maintain the recommended safe distance of at least 1 metre, including providing signs.	Ensure that responsibility for walking and cycling policies is assigned to specific authorities at the national and/or local level.
Regulate and/or provide guidance on the provision of public hand-hygiene stations at all transport locations (bus stops and train stations, as well as on buses and trains).	Manage and optimize the road space and services to cater for walkers, cyclists and other non-motorized transport users by creating or improving pedestrian paths, dedicated bicycle lanes and secure bicycle parking places, and by providing bike-share schemes.	Encourage and/or regulate working from home and staggering of working hours.
		Promote and encourage the use of home delivery services.
		Enforce appropriate road safety rules and laws, including those on speeding, and enhance safety measures for cyclists and pedestrians.



Table 1 contd.

Hygiene	Physical distancing	Other actions
<p>Disseminate information on respiratory etiquette – covering mouth and nose with the bent elbow when coughing or sneezing, and avoiding touching eyes, nose and mouth.</p>		<p>Conduct campaigns on the use and benefits of safe walking and cycling.</p>
<p>Provide information and encourage the use of non-medical masks for the potential benefit of source control.</p>		<p>Promote cycle training for children and adults.</p>
<p>Support technological innovation and digitalization tools to contribute to managing the need for improved hygiene/physical distancing around stations and ticketing (e.g. automated door opening and closing, online pre-booking systems for public transport to reduce queueing, on-demand app-based transport services, etc.).</p>		<p>Continue with or start integrated transport and land-use planning so that essential living needs are accessible by walking and cycling.</p> <p>Provide support for the continued operation of public transport, including through public subsidies.</p> <p>Provide financial incentives to support the purchase and maintenance of bicycles (including e-bikes) and other zero-emission vehicles.</p> <p>Review traffic light timing to prioritize pedestrians and cyclists, and intelligent traffic light systems to promote cycling.</p>



What transport providers can do

Even during the current pandemic, it is important that transport operators are able to offer and manage the essential services that facilitate the safe and efficient movement of people and goods. They are responsible for ensuring adherence to government regulations and making sure that public health and social measures are followed through specific actions, such as thorough cleaning of vehicles, disseminating information and making

necessary adjustments in providing services to the public (e.g. in terms of services, timetables and tariffs). They are also responsible for providing safe working conditions for transport workers (Table 2). In implementing these changes, transport providers should safeguard the mechanisms that have been put in place to support those with mobility restrictions including, but not limited to, wheelchair users, frail older people and pregnant women.

Table 2. Actions transport providers can take

Hygiene	Physical distancing	Other actions
Thoroughly and frequently clean and disinfect facilities, public transport vehicles, bus, tram and train stations and equipment (elevators, escalators, handrails, seats, ticketing devices and other surfaces).	Control and direct pedestrian traffic at bus, tram and train stations to maintain the recommended safe distance of at least 1 metre, including providing signs to indicate where individuals should sit, stand and queue on vehicles.	Assure proper ventilation for transport means and facilities through natural or mechanical systems with enhanced air filtration and HVAC systems.
Provide public hand-hygiene stations at all transport locations (bus stops and train stations, as well as on buses and trains).	Provide financial and other incentives to promote an even distribution of passenger numbers across the whole day to reduce peak-time crowding (e.g. through differentiated tariffs).	Provide parking facilities for private and shared bicycles to facilitate commuters' use of multiple modes of transport and cyclists' access to public transport.
Disseminate information encouraging respiratory etiquette – covering mouth and nose with the bent elbow when coughing or sneezing, and avoiding touching eyes, nose and mouth.		Continue to promote the use of public transport over private car use as a safe and reliable mode of transport.
Adhere to the requirements of the national and local government on the use of masks in public transport vehicles for the benefit of source control.		
Create barriers to separate drivers from passengers and provide drivers with personal protection equipment such as non-medical masks, disposable gloves and hand sanitizer.		
Provide and encourage the use of online booking systems for public transport to reduce queueing, and on-demand app-based transport services.		
Provide and encourage the use of contactless technology for door opening and closing, ticketing, entry/exit turnstiles and other actions.		

What commuters can do

The responsibility for ensuring that COVID-19 measures are executed effectively in transport systems also lies with commuters, who are expected to avoid travelling and seek medical care if they are feeling unwell or develop symptoms consistent with COVID-19. They are also expected to observe good respiratory hygiene and physical distancing as they use different modes of transport (Table 3).

Table 3. Actions commuters can take

Hygiene	Physical distancing	Other actions
Do not move around when unwell or symptoms consistent with COVID-19 develop.	Consider flexible entry and exit hours when working from the office, whenever possible, to reduce commuting during peak hours.	Ride a bicycle or walk whenever feasible.
Avoid touching handrails and doors.	Avoid sharing taxis.	Consider teleworking options, whenever feasible.
Adhere to good hygiene practices – covering mouth and nose with the bent elbow when coughing or sneezing; avoiding touching eyes, nose and mouth; washing/sanitizing hands after exiting public transport facilities.	Keep a distance of at least 1 metre from other individuals.	Utilize home delivery services, whenever feasible.
Comply with national/local requirements on the use of masks.	Whenever feasible, avoid travelling during peak hours.	
Use contactless technology for ticketing, entry/exit turnstiles and other actions.		



Conclusion

Effective implementation of the recommended actions in transport systems can protect people from the risk posed by COVID-19 while supporting economic recovery, as prescribed in the *WHO manifesto for a healthy recovery from COVID-19*. The recommendations in this guidance are supportive of Prescription 5 of the manifesto, on building healthy and liveable cities. Specifically, they can help in achieving multiple societal objectives, including: transport safety and efficiency; improved quality of urban life; reduced emission of air pollutants and greenhouse gases, and reduced noise; and greater opportunities to adopt a physically active lifestyle.

It is important to remember that implementation of these actions requires working across various groups of stakeholders. In addition to the three target audiences – governments, transport providers and commuters – other actors also have a role to play. For example, employers, producers and distributors can contribute to sharing information, encouraging or permitting working from home and staggering of working hours, encouraging active mobility by providing changing and washing facilities at workplaces and parking facilities for bicycles, and providing home delivery services.

Working in partnership at the international level, national and local governments can also share experiences, develop joint initiatives and actions, support each other and agree on shared policy objectives to support the transition towards more resilient, safe, equitable and sustainable transport and mobility systems – one example of which is the policy platform provided by THE PEP.

Investment in approaches that diversify and better balance different modes of transport will also have the additional benefit of increasing the resilience of transport systems and cities to face potential events of a similar nature, through greater flexibility to adapt and respond to them. In turn, this would reduce the risk of disruption while maximizing health, safety and well-being for all.

The decisions that countries and institutions take today can promote a safe and sustainable transport system in the short term and pave the way for healthier and more effective transport options for all users, including those with limited mobility, in the decades ahead.

Other resources

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