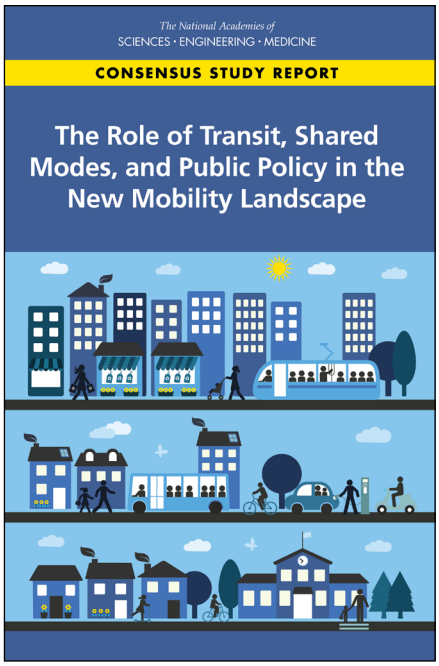
Consensus Study Report

MARCH 2021

HIGHLIGHTS

The Role of Transit, Shared Modes, and Public Policy in the New Mobility Landscape



By early 2020, when the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic began, the transportation systems of most metropolitan areas included shared modes such as Uber and Lyft, bikeshare, e-scooters, and more. Although they still accounted for a small share of total travel, the shared modes were growing in availability and popularity. They showed the potential to serve many societal goals to further mobility, equity, and sustainability, especially if carefully combined with public transit and scaled up substantially. This report on opportunities to more effectively use shared modes in coordination with public transit was largely completed before the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic led to unprecedented drops in travel demand and deep uncertainty about when and how demand will rebound. At the time of this report's completion, the pandemic and its immediate aftermath threatened to reshape both demand for and supply of transportation services in most locations, including public transit systems in distress from months of lost patronage and revenues.

As society rebounds from the pandemic, realizing the full and potentially transformative benefits of shared services and transit will require (1) providing travelers with real- or near-real-time information on modal and multi-modal travel options and their relative costs, duration, reliability, and impacts on concerns such as carbon emissions; (2) integrated e-tickets and payment apps that will greatly simplify the process of arranging and paying for the use of multiple modes for a single trip; and (3) management across modes and jurisdictions to facilitate such outcomes.

This report recommends steps to help bring about this transformation, starting in urban cores with historically robust transit service but with the aim of increasing the value and viability of transit and shared mobility services more broadly across regions.

Currently, there are barriers to having a fully integrated set of transportation services. Significantly, public agencies are unable to systematically gather information on the availability and real-time performance of all public and private shared mode options, particularly from the ridehailing companies that currently provide the majority of

private shared mode trips. The many separate public agencies providing transit, operating roads, and overseeing shared mobility providers means that even if this information could be acquired, it can be challenging to put it to beneficial use. Because of fragmented governance, regions lack common goals and shared strategies to facilitate multi-modal trips that cross jurisdictional boundaries. The few organizations with a regional perspective, such as regional planning bodies, are generally weak institutions without strong influence on regional operations.

Other important barriers include

- Local, regional, state, and federal laws and policies that underprice road use when accounting for the effects of congestion and emissions and encourage driving alone over all other modes;
- A lack of integrated transit fares, routes, and schedules across the multiple transit providers at the regional scale, a reflection of funding often tied to local revenue sources and service intended for only local taxpayers; and
- A shared mobility landscape that is rapidly evolving, with services regularly arriving, leaving, and changing as private providers seek profitable markets.

Opportunities to overcome these barriers include collaboration among cities, transit agencies, and shared mobility providers based on the following recommendations:

1. **Share information:** To provide consumers with information about real-time service availability across all modes, cities and states should change their shared mode enabling regulations to require access to such information. With these data in hand, agencies and jurisdictions should collaborate to create publicly available platforms that integrate and share information from all sources about modal options and their cost, duration, and emissions.

2. **Prioritize transit:** Cities, states, and other jurisdictions should prioritize transit in their transportation networks and evaluate the outcomes of prioritization measures to improve the reliability and quality of road-based transit services.

3. **Price appropriately:** Cities and local jurisdictions should institute strategies such as dynamic street and garage parking pricing, congestion pricing, and employee cash-out benefits of parking subsidies, to better charge for the externalities of all modes. Such policies may improve traffic flow and the performance of the networks on which road-based transit systems depend.

4. **Promote equity:** The public sector should use its regulatory powers over shared mode providers to encourage equitable access to transit and shared services by all travelers within its jurisdiction.

5. **Partner for paratransit services:** Transit agencies should take action under their own authorities to improve mobility options and choices for riders by partnering with ridehailing companies, taxis, and other providers.

6. **Test and analyze:** All entities involved in a partnership with transit or shared modes should pilot test, evaluate, and share best practices. Public-sector research agencies could provide a valuable public service by supporting such pilot testing and evaluation as well as conducting research to address other important unanswered questions identified in Chapters 4 and 5.

7. **Overcome fragmentation and expand geographically:** The previous recommendations can be adopted most readily by core cities and transit agencies due to the smaller number of involved jurisdictions and agencies across regions. Over time, adoption should expand beyond core cities to their metropolitan areas. Every region will have to work out its own governance solutions given great disparities across the country in how governments are organized and the authorities they can exercise under prevailing laws and policies. Metropolitan planning organizations can facilitate this process by serving as coordinators and conveners.

Technology and innovation have ushered in a new set of private shared modes that, operating alone and in combination with transit, can improve consumer mobility options and enhance efficiency. Adoption of these recommendations will help transit agencies, cities, and others offer multi-modal transportation options that reduce carbon and other emissions and improve equity as well. This report provides background on private shared mobility providers, transit, and regional governance, and outlines a mobility management framework that cities and regions can use to implement the recommendations listed above.

COMMITTEE FOR THE ROLE OF PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION AND MOBILITY MANAGEMENT IN AN ERA OF NEW AND EXPANDING SHARED MOBILITY

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