

# MENA CONGRESS WRAP UP REPORT

Dubai - April 25th to 27th - 2016

More than 500 delegates, 101 speakers from 34 countries, 85 exhibitors, and more than 2,000 visitors came together to discuss the future of public transport in the UITP MENA Transport Congress & Exhibition which took place in Dubai from (April 25<sup>th</sup> -27<sup>th</sup> 2016). These public transport stakeholders came together under the theme “think big act smart” and after 3 days of sessions, knowledge sharing, business meetings and discussions we have identified **4 main themes** which have emerged from the congress:

## MEETING THE CHALLENGE OF GOVERNANCE AND FINANCING

- a) Key recommendations included: **governments should take a leading role** in terms of enabling the organization, planning and management of public transport. The setting of institutional bodies will deeply affect how transport is funded and financed.
- b) Cities should establish a long term vision and mandate for public transport, through the creation of “**comprehensive and integrated**” **master plans** and to develop diverse PT infrastructure while at the same time implementing policies to reduce car use.
- c) This should be done through **assessing all key areas**: land use planning, the necessary legislative framework and even supporting activities
- d) Integration of taxi fleets into public transport networks and the **rise of taxi booking apps like UBER and Careem** was one main issue highlighted within the governance theme. Governments may choose to protect the local taxi and public transport sector but at the same time should not stand in the way of progress. They should strive to find a way to regulate and at the same time promote the development of new apps and technologies.
  - The speakers stressed the role and importance of call centers and dispatchers in the taxi market and the need to improve their quality; as they still play critical role in taxi operations even though there is shift towards app booking
  - The recommendations were to insure strict background checks and training programs for taxi drivers to maintain standards. This was highlighted as one of the key weaknesses of taxi booking apps like UBER

- Developing credit card payment options is important for the sector and these options are used in many cities- New York 55% of all trips in Seoul 99% of taxi trips paid for through credit cards
- **Different regulatory frameworks are emerging** to deal with ride booking apps around the world- there is not one size fits all strategy. Transport authorities and city governments ought to be vigilant in regulating and enforcing regulations on taxi booking apps and at the same time maintain customers' satisfaction and expectations

**Key quote: “The future of transport is on our smart phones”**

**Matthew W. Daus, Partner and Transportation Chair, Windels Marx - New York, USA**

- e) Regarding financing, it is clear that there is a responsibility of finding the right balance between increasing fares to cover operation and maintenance costs, while keeping public transport affordable for the working and middle classes.
- f) One main challenges highlighted in the session by the Public Transport Authority of Riyadh, the cities of Dubai and Casablanca and the regional authority of Gauteng is that funding is a common difficulty, but that **different local contexts necessitate diverse funding solutions**. There is not one size fits all solution for funding.
- g) **Increasing fares should only be done in parallel with increasing the level of quality of the service** which requires better training and enhancing capacities of government offices.
- h) RTA's experience in Dubai can be considered as a reference as they have reached a balance between revenues (including fare-box and other sources) and operating and maintenance costs for our public transport systems.
- i) Public transport stakeholders should be open to new possibilities in financing such as PPP, as well as the creation and development of commercial revenues such as marketing and naming rights.

**Key quote: “Nothing will ever happen in public transport without political will” Alioune Thiam, Director General, CETUD - Dakar discussing the support of Senegal's president for public transport**

## EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES AND HOW WE CAN CREATE SMART CITIES

- a) Dubai's ruler, his excellency Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum announced on the first day of the congress a strategy of moving 25% of Dubai's citizens with driverless technology by 2030 (including individual and collective transport). This follows a vision that **technology should be seen as an enabler**. Smart initiatives and projects will influence our urban development and land planning.
- b) Smart public transport entails sustainable and city-specific public transport developments which tackle local challenges and respond to citizens' needs. To achieve this, it is crucial to understand the current situation in our cities through data analysis.
- c) Data provides accurate information and helps policy-makers to make informed decisions. The emergence of technology and the use of big data is an opportunity to understand better traffic flow, improve public transport operation and react in real-time. It is crucial to develop further analytical understanding of available data and to improve data visualization with the aim at increasing operational efficiency.
- d) Cities will be required to invest in new skills and adapt their structures to include and facilitate data-based decisions through the inclusion of data analysts, modelling experts and IT related workforce
- e) Across the sessions we have seen that **technology can improve urban mobility**:
  - i. Through automatization of metros we can increase safety, availability and punctuality in a more cost-effective way through higher commercial speed and requiring less maintenance and labour support
  - ii. Technology and innovation can also provide wide new range of tools. For instance, the Japanese Suica card which has enabled new tools increasing services provided through its e-money system. Helping to widen the scope and amount of commercial revenues.
  - iii. A case study from Singapore explained how an app could be used to book **driverless vehicles** to bring people to and from public transport stations reducing walking distance, especially **for cities with extreme environments (too hot or too cold to walk outside)**
- f) Enhancing quality and seamless travel for the passengers by **improving the customer experience**:

- i. Seamless travel by providing personalised and real time information for public transport users
  - ii. Facilitating door to door services, with a significant improvement in the last/first mile
  - iii. Enhancing the attractiveness of the product itself
- g) Technology is an enabler. However policy development and better cooperation between transport actors is key for integrated public transport development.

***“Technology is important, but we should also discuss the way we are organized. We should think about the way we make decisions.”***

**Andreas Mehlhorn, Head Consulting, Siemens Mobility - Munich, Germany**

## **PRIORITIZING SCHOOL BUS TRANSPORT**

- a) The role of school bus has its place within urban mobility and the bus mode **should be the preferred choice for children and parents**, reducing congestion and building younger generation accustomed to the usage of public transport
- b) Role of technology was praised particularly for monitoring to improve quality of service for parents and children, while facilitating the work of drivers in the maintenance and operation of the fleet
- c) The role of regulation was widely discussed particularly as a support for the introduction and application of monitoring procedures to ensure the agreed level of standards and specifications in the school bus regulation. In Dubai, the school regulations, introduction of standards and technologies has been praised as they have led to an 81% reduction in school bus accidents.
- d) There is a need to **move from preventative maintenance to predictive maintenance** to insure the safety of school buses by analyzing data of all vehicle components to insure worn out components are replaced long before failure.
- e) The region needs a stronger role for regulators to maintain strict standards, specifications, management systems and inspections procedures
- f) International standards should be enforced requiring manufacturers to insure the sturdiest possible structural integrity of the buses to prevent damage from collisions.

- g) There is a need for **proper hiring and training programs of school bus drivers and attendants** as these are the first people a child interacts with on their way to school
- h) Technological developments for school buses were revealed including rearview cameras to increase visibility for bus drivers and an app which allows parents to know when their children have entered and exited the buses.

*'We should follow a simple principle focusing on the safety of the children, trust of the parents'*

**Alexandra Robinson, Executive Director Office of Pupil Transportation, New York City Department of Education, New York, USA**

### **ADVANCING MASS TRANSIT SYSTEMS IN MENA, DESPITE CHALLENGES**

- a) The main regional challenges identified in the sessions were the expected rise in travel demand (due to fast population growth and urbanization), a rapid increase in car ownership (motorization rate) and daily commuting from satellite cities which significantly increases traffic in the cities every day. (Dubai, Amman, Tehran)
- b) It is important to draw on the best practices and international and regional experiences in public transport:
  - A Barcelona case study of bus network optimization stressed the importance of developing a comprehensive and multi-level bus network.
    - They used an approach with 3 different types of routes including high and very high frequency routes, conventional routes and local networks which have proved very successful.
    - The case also showed the importance of the network being easy to use, the benefits of an environmentally friendly fleet and the need for enhancing the travelling experience of users
  - A Dakar case study highlighted the importance of engaging the informal transport sector and enhancing the role of the formal transport, which currently stands at 43.5% of the urban mobility supply in the city.
    - Through a professionalization of the urban transport sector, Dakar expects to develop a favourable regulatory environment
    - The case study shows the importance of supporting private initiatives to adopt new operation's methods for informal operators

- Market restructuring and the creation of an integrated network, would positively affect Dakar's rail network, bus systems and minibuses.
- A Dubai case study highlighted the city's efforts in optimising the safety of passengers by enhancing the quality of transport through the EFQM framework.
  - The methodology has five main criteria: leadership, strategic, human resources, partnerships, and quality and operation which enables them to measure and maintain key indicators and provide a safe and favourable public transport environment.
  - The Dubai Transport Security Department's methodology promotes the use of databases and available monitoring tools to foster the trust of its riders. They expect to maintain such an approach, particularly in line with upcoming mass events such as the expo2020, which can lead to high levels of passengers and subsequently crime.

**Key quote “What is good public transport? A good public transport system is the one you are willing to use and you accept that your son and your wife will use it too.”**

**Tammam Nakkash, Managing Partner, Team International - Beirut, Lebanon**

- c) MENA's rapidly growing cities and the current increase of private car ownership is unsustainable and during the conference we have seen that there is a clear realization that there is a need to act now before it is too late.
- d) The MENA region has proven that even though with the low price of oil and its effect on the economies, they are still investing heavily in public transport
- e) From Dubai, to Riyadh in Saudi Arabia, and Morocco in the Maghreb region, for example, cities in MENA are rolling out public transport projects including BRT, metro, light rail and cable transport with significant investments and commitments
- f) Our role now as public transport stakeholders, through taking advantage of technological advances in connectivity, data collection, fare collection and state of the art engineering and management systems, is to make sure these investments allow the transformation of MENA cities into modern- safe and smart environments for their citizens.

**Key Quote: “[Our job as operators, authorities, industry and other public transport stakeholders is to improve the lives of our people and to make it as easy as possible for them to get to school and work, giving them better access to opportunities and making our cities better places to live in.]”**

**Moovel Global President Joseph Kopser during the closing keynote address**