From A Call for Action to an Action Agenda

Response to COVID-19 by the International Transport Stakeholders - A Draft Summary

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ABBREVIATIONS/ACRONYMS

DFID Department for International Development
HVT High Volume Transport
IMC IMC Worldwide Ltd
SuM4All Sustainable Mobility for All
MDBs Multi-Lateral Development Banks
SDGs Sustainable Development Goals
SLoCaT Partnership for Sustainable Low Carbon Transport
GHG Greenhouse Gas
NDC National Determined Contribution
GCF Green Climate Fund
UNCRD United National Centre for Regional Development
UNECA United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
AU African Union
SSATP African Transport Program
ACT Action Towards Climate Friendly Transport
WHO World Health Organisation
IDFC International Finance Club
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

From a Call to Action to an Action Agenda

In April 2020, the High-Volume Transport Programme (HVT) funded by DFID published a report called ‘A Call for Collective Action for International Transport Stakeholders to Respond to the COVID-19 Pandemic’.

The report concluded, that there is a very active international transport community providing case studies and general guidance related to specific areas of focus such as the effective cleaning of buses and advice for coach and freight drivers, etc.

We found that most of this advice is related to experiences in High-Income countries (HICs). There is less information about issues that affect Low-Income countries (LICs) such as the informal transport sector – a crucial part of the day to day mobility in many African and Asian cities – or the impact on food security through restricting border controls.

The report also showed that despite the launch of COVID-19 related funds, there had been only a few funding requests from countries to multi-lateral development banks (MDBs) for the transport sector. No dedicated programmes had been created nor were there many efforts to align future investment to accelerate a pathway towards decarbonisation and achieve the sustainable development goals (SDGs) in the transport sector.

So, what has happened in the last month since the report came out and what are the key upcoming challenges for transport in the “new normal”?

Many cities are showing leadership by implementing bold actions and sustainable mobility solutions to accelerate their plans to transform their cities to make them more liveable.

All international stakeholders seem to be aligned with the objective of making use of the current crisis to create more accessible, safer, greener and efficient – and therefore healthier – mobility. In other words - sustainable mobility for all.

In recent weeks more stakeholders are beginning to focus and pivot attention to post COVID 19 recovery strategies.

But - there are still challenges for LIC and countries not yet through COVID 19 peak and key evidence gaps when we look to building back in the post-COVID “new normal”.

An updated report will be produced later in June 2020. This document provides a preview executive summary focusing on the suggested action agenda as a contribution to ongoing dialogue aimed at strengthening international collaboration around COVID 19 response and recovery.

This summary elaborates on the original eight areas for suggested action. It provides ideas and initiatives such as knowledge products, common campaigns and investments that could be taken forward by the international transport community. The headings from the first report are followed but adjusted to reflect the latest thinking. It is intended to help inform the COVID 19 action response and open this to alignment with the climate and SDG agenda during and beyond recovery.

While progress had been made with more awareness and attention to LICs, a more common and coordinated action is suggested to accelerate the impact of the responses.
1. Collecting and sharing of LIC specific information and guidance

There is a growing amount of information available not only from the global North, but also the global South – in particular from parts of Asia. The majority of case studies cited showcase the actions in the major capitals around the world. Second and third tier cities, particularly in lower income countries, receive little or no attention. Whilst helpful as flagships showcasing leadership and bold action, there is no certainty that initiatives in capitals will create a “ripple effect” to encourage actions in smaller cities.

There is a growing amount of specific guidance for technical issues from the design of bike lanes and public spaces to hygiene measures for public transport. Lessons can also be drawn from the impact of tele-working and tele-medicine and how the different economic sectors respond to the pandemics in the future. There seems to be substantial guidance gaps such as in the handling of the informal transport sector as well as the accessibility of to this kind of information. There is a need to reflect how the end-user in the countries can easily access the right type of information and in the format they need.

Some activities to consider are:

• Pro-active searching for documentation of second and third tier city examples to share online;
• Creating a gap analysis of what information for the transport sector needs to be better documented (e.g. gender specific impacts, inclusivity, role of logistics in food supply for urban poor) and as a follow-up, create guidance and other knowledge documents to meet the locally identified needs;
• Developing a guidance sourcebook/toolbox to create a full list of guidance documents. Such guidance documents should go through peer review processes and be endorsed by globally recognised institutions like the World Health Organisation (WHO) or a collective of institutions;
• While many institutions are already collecting a lot of useful information, a common website could act as a platform and central repository for all relevant information. It could be either hosted by one of the current institutions or initiatives or through a new collaboration. An alternative could be to create more targeted platforms/hubs on either dedicated topics or by geography.

2. Establishing a common data collection platform

While a lot of transport-related data and information has been disseminated, current approaches to data collection on transport and transport-related impacts are scattered, as the recent SLOCAT (Partnership for Sustainable Low Carbon Transport) analysis highlights. For example, transport activity data on urban freight and walking are not easily collated. A more coordinated approach and culture of sharing might help to better analyse the current impact of policy measures and might also improve future policy actions. Current gaps include no detailed information on freight transport; paratransit; and greenhouse gas (GHG) emission data.

Some activities to consider are:

• Exploring opportunities with existing open data initiatives and existing data platforms to create better datasets and information in a common shared “super-platform”;
• Developing an action plan designed to close the most relevant data gaps on transport related to COVID-19.

3. Creating a transformative transport agenda for a post-COVID-19 world

There are many calls to use the crisis to trigger a more rapid and radical response on climate change and delivery of the Sustainable Development Goals agenda. There is need for collective efforts by multi-stakeholder initiatives to create specific roadmaps based on the existing work to provide dedicated analysis for green stimulus packages to transform the future economy. With multi-lateral development banks setting-up initial response programs worth US$80bn, there are no dedicated resources for transport.

Some activities to consider are:
• Supporting studies on past experience of economic measures within the transport sector to analyse the impacts of stimulus/recovery packages and the lessons learned;

• Mounting a campaign to influence national governments and international finance institutions to advocate for a green, inclusive stimulus package;

• Creating policy notes and/or checklists for green stimulus packages which could be targeted towards specific industries and the need to consider economic disparities. This should also include a list of what not to do to avoid non climate and sustainable-friendly investment;

• Discuss within the MDB/IDFC community how to create a new commitment to sustainable transport based on the RIO+20 commitment;

• Creation/alignment of current initiatives on National Climate Actions Plans (National Determined Contribution (NDC)) enhancements with COVID-19 activities. Create a voluntary reporting framework on Transport NDC enhancement collecting specific COVID-19 related economic recovery investments. Those could be presented as common efforts by the transport community at COP26 in 2021 to gain further attention to the decarbonisation of the sector;

• Discuss with the Green Climate Fund (GCF) and other climate finance programs, how to accelerate the low carbon investments aligning with COVID-19 economy recovery packages.

4. A collective research agenda

There is a unique opportunity to collect evidence on the impact of specific transport impacts and specific policy interventions. To ensure more and better data, there needs to be a comprehensive overview of transport and COVID-19 related research to identify what is most needed to better inform decision-makers.

Some activities to consider are:

• Creating an opensource global impact database with an overview of current research studies;

• Creating a gap analysis (topic and region), to expose top priority research gaps

• Creating an Open Call for additional applied research focussing on LICs;

• Coordinating existing research funding and pivoting toward COVID 19 recovery and reliance.

5. A dedicated national or regional transport response initiative for LICs

National governments and cities need dedicated collective guidance and targeted good practice as well as finance. The National Transport Response Center in the US could be a blueprint for other countries or groups of countries, including in the global South, where there seems to be the largest gap in information and informed policy action. Given the resource challenges, a regional hub on transport and COVID-19 responses could be considered as an alternative option (e.g. initiated by regional UN institutions like the United National Centre for Regional Development(UNCRD), United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) or other like African Union (AU), the African Transport Program (SSATP) etc.). In any case, human capacity and immediate finance are lacking to improve the situation on the ground.

Some activities to consider are:

• Creating material and information in the local language. The vast majority of the current material is in English and needs to be translated;

• Creating Regional Hubs as “one stop shops” for transport and COVID-19 related information;

• Supporting National Hubs in partnership with local organisations.

6. Create a future of education and a capacity building agenda

A detailed look into the activities and lessons learned to share into future of education and capacity building curricula for the transport sector would be valuable. At the same time, it is vital to pay attention to the
challenges of those students without digital options so activities would need to ensure access to information for all.

Some activities to draw in lessons learning from the COVID 19 pandemic on transport to consider are:

- Scaling E-learning programs and making them publicly available as open source;
- Creating training programs targeted to different stakeholders (public authorities, politicians, public transport operators, etc.);
- Creating a toolbox for online learning.

7. Communication and events

COVID 19 has exposed the sector to new ways to communicate, work together and host virtual events. Collecting experiences and providing guidance on how to better use facilities for future activities. Rethinking how we run events is key for the sector to transform. We need to showcase good practices by reducing travel as well as allowing more people to engage with the sector agenda.

Some activities to consider are:

- Creating a toolbox/good practice guidance for hosting events and workshops;
- Developing training courses on how to create, manage and facilitate online workshops and events;
- Optimising the use of social media to disseminate transport information and counter widespread misinformation.

8. Look beyond transport

The initial work has been based on an urgent need to understand the response from international and multi-initiative transport organisations. But this obviously offers a very limited perspective. To gain more insights and ideas, it would be useful to take a broader perspective. This could include a deeper dive into the business community at large, the urban sector as a whole, jobs and look across at supply lines with multi-modal transport agenda. Particular emphasis should be placed upon learning from the future of urban settlements and the energy, food and health sectors.

Towards a common action agenda

Despite a large amount of rapid response activities by the transport community, there continues to be gap in the provision of targeted support for LICs. While most of the activities suggested here can be carried out by individual organisations, transparency and coordination would increase the speed and impact of current and future activities for the wider transport sector and user. Multi-stakeholder initiatives and organisations like SuM4All, SLOCAT, ACT (Action towards Climate friendly Transport) and other collaborations, can enhance the current activities.

With the upcoming consortium meeting of SuM4ALL and other international fora, there is an opportunity for the international community to reflect on the suggested ideas and to set priorities for creating a common action agenda for transport in the Post COVID-19 world. The international transport stakeholders can showcase leadership to other sectors by demonstrating how collective action can lead to a more sustainable future in a Post COVID-19 world.