

Urban Mobility and Transit-Oriented Development

Rethinking Housing to Drive Sustainable
Urban Development in the Kingdom

by

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Cities are at a crossroads; by 2050, nearly **68% of the world's population will live in urban areas**, and total passenger travel demand is projected to increase three to four times compared to the year 2000 (UN-Habitat, 2020). Freight movement will more than triple. These figures are not abstract forecasts; they are signals, clear, urgent, and unavoidable. They tell us that the way cities move people and goods will determine how they grow, how they compete, and ultimately, how liveable they remain.

Today, urban mobility is a **foundational urban service**, shaping the spatial structure of cities and defining access to jobs, housing, education, healthcare, and opportunity itself. Mobility determines whether cities are inclusive or fragmented, efficient or congested, resilient or vulnerable.



The Mobility Imperative

Urban mobility encompasses the movement of people, goods, and services through connected, multimodal, and increasingly technology-enabled systems. The field is undergoing a profound transition from traditional, car-centric models to a new paradigm defined by **Connected, Autonomous, Shared, and Electric (CASE)** systems.

This shift is not simply technological. It represents a fundamental re-imagining of how cities function, prioritizing human experience, environmental sustainability, and economic productivity over vehicle throughput alone.

Yet the challenges are stark. Traffic fatalities already claim over **one million lives** each year (World Health Organization, 2023), and congestion is projected to consume **106 hours annually** for the average urban resident by 2050 - three times more than today (INRIX, 2022; UN-Habitat, 2020). Urban sprawl continues to push housing farther from employment, increasing travel distances, infrastructure costs, and car dependency. At the same time, private cars and vans remain responsible for a significant share of global energy-related CO₂ emissions (IEA, 2022). These trends are not independent. They reinforce one another.

Integrated Mobility: From Movement to Choice

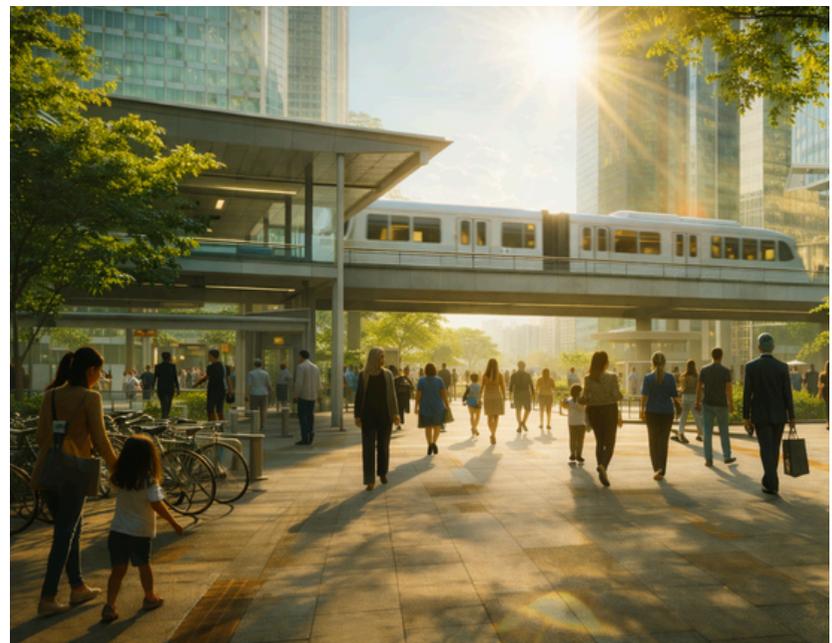
The response lies in **integrated mobility**; systems that enable choice rather than impose necessity. Multimodal mobility brings together walking, micro-mobility, public transport, and private vehicles within a coordinated urban framework. Seamless connections between modes, supported by walkable distances and digital platforms, allow journeys to be efficient, flexible, and inclusive. Active and micro-mobility elevate the quality of public space, improve health outcomes, and strengthen social life.

At its core, integrated mobility supports a simple but powerful urban proposition: **Live. Work. Play.**

- **Live:** Diverse housing options located near transit, services, and employment.
- **Work:** Jobs accessible through multiple transport modes.
- **Play:** Recreation, culture, and social spaces within easy reach.

Digital tools play a critical role. **Mobility-as-a-Service (MaaS)** platforms enable real-time trip planning, integrated ticketing, and access to shared mobility. **Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS)** and **digital twins** allow cities to simulate scenarios, optimise networks, and manage demand dynamically—transforming planning from static forecasting to continuous optimisation.

Smart mobility, i.e. using data, digital tools, and real-time management, has become a prerequisite for efficient urban planning. Virtual modelling and predictive analytics are no longer optional; they are essential for building resilient, future-ready cities.



Transit-Oriented Development: Aligning Land and Movement

If mobility is the bloodstream of the city, **Transit-Oriented Development (TOD)** is its organizing principle.

TOD is an urban planning and design strategy that creates **compact, mixed-use communities within walking distance of high-quality public transport**. It prioritizes people over vehicles and proximity over sprawl. At its heart, TOD delivers equitable access, bringing housing, jobs, education, and services within reach of people of all incomes, ages, genders, and abilities.

The defining features are clear:

- A **people-first public realm** with safe, active streets.
- **Multi-modality**, reducing dependence on private cars.
- Integrated housing, commercial uses, and social infrastructure clustered around transit.

These outcomes are not coincidental. They stem from the disciplined application of the **Five Principles of TOD** - walk, connect, cycle, transit, mix, densify, compact, and shift. Together, they form a holistic system in which land use and mobility complement one another rather than compete.

Building Inclusive Cities Through TOD

An inclusive city is one where **access is universal** regardless of income, age, ability, or background. Mobility is the enabler, but urban form is the multiplier.

Walkable catchments, reduced parking minimums, integrated services, and housing diversity allow neighbourhoods to function as complete communities. Residents are connected not only to transport networks, but to opportunity itself.

Global experience reinforces this logic. Transit-oriented corridors have revitalized suburban districts, structured compact growth, and transformed major station areas into vibrant urban centers. Residential-led TOD models, supported by inclusionary zoning and affordability requirements, have demonstrated that density and equity are not opposing forces, they are mutually reinforcing.

Public housing integrated with mass transit has shown how coordinated planning can reduce transport costs, limit car ownership, and ensure that high-capacity transit benefits all segments of society.



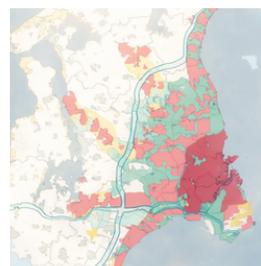
Global Evidence: TOD in Practice

International experience demonstrates that TOD is not a theoretical model—it is a proven delivery mechanism.



Rosslyn–Ballston Corridor, Virginia, USA

Once a car-oriented suburban corridor, Rosslyn–Ballston was transformed through coordinated land-use and transit investment along the Washington Metro’s Orange Line. High-density, mixed-use development concentrated around stations created a vibrant, walkable district, revitalising the local economy while significantly reducing car dependency.



Copenhagen Finger Plan, Denmark

Since 1947, Copenhagen’s Finger Plan has guided compact growth along rail corridors, preserving green wedges between development “fingers.” This long-term strategy aligned transit investment with land use, producing dense, walkable urban centres served efficiently by mass transit.



Shibuya Station Redevelopment, Tokyo, Japan

Shibuya exemplifies TOD at metropolitan scale. The station redevelopment integrates underground pedestrian networks, mixed-use towers, and one of the world's busiest intersections, transforming a transport hub into a seamless urban ecosystem and reinforcing central-city vitality.



Vancouver SkyTrain Corridor, Canada

SkyTrain extensions catalysed high-density, residential-led TOD supported by inclusionary zoning and affordable housing quotas. Reduced parking minimums and density bonuses ensured that transit proximity translated into equitable access, not displacement.



Singapore HDB–MRT Integration

Singapore demonstrates TOD at national scale. Approximately 80% of residents live in public housing within walking distance of MRT stations, enabled by the Build-to-Order (BTO) system. Integrated planning has reduced car ownership, lowered transport costs, and ensured daily services—schools, clinics, retail—are embedded within transit-oriented neighbourhoods

The Evidence Is Clear

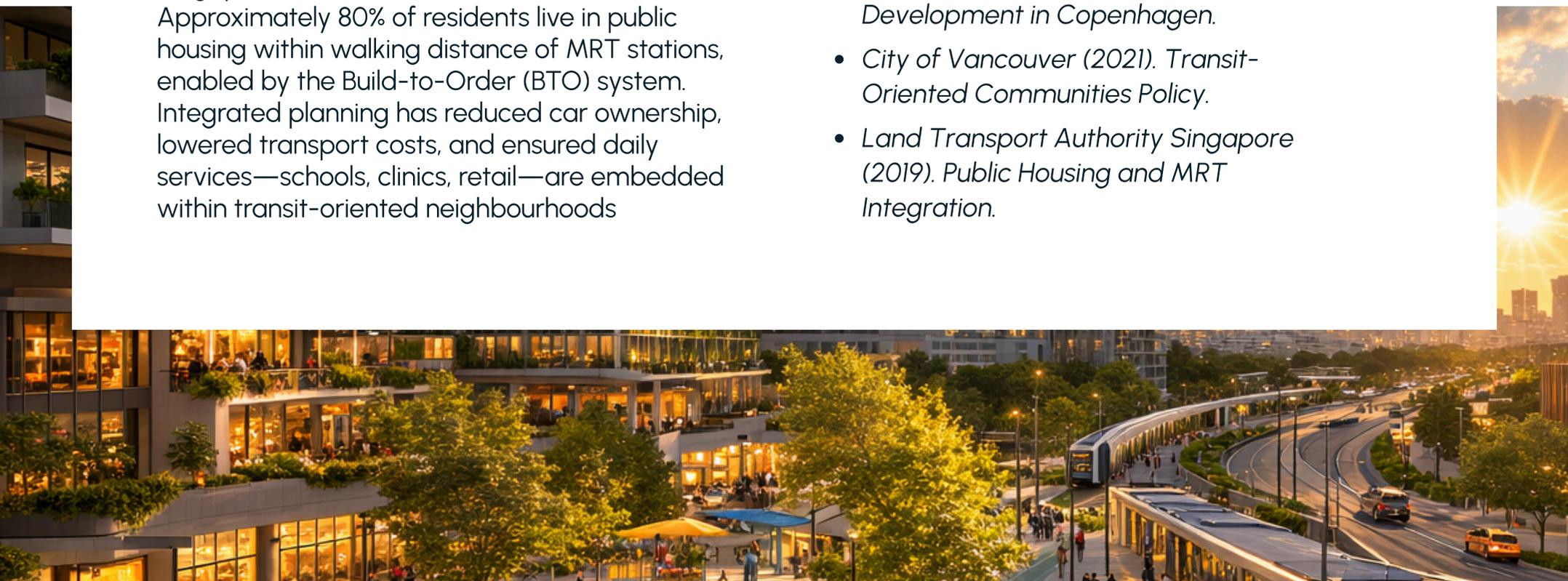
High-capacity transit reduces household transport costs. Compact development lowers emissions. Integrated mobility increases access to economic opportunity.

Cities that align transport investment with land-use planning **build resilience, productivity, and social value**. They create places where people can live well, work productively, and participate fully in urban life.

For truly global cities, the path forward is not incremental adjustment, but **strategic integration**. Together, urban mobility and transit-oriented development form the backbone of sustainable urban development. Therefore, the future of cities will not be defined by how fast we move, but by **how intelligently we connect people, places, and possibilities**.

Sources

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