



Local Governments
for Sustainability
EUROPE

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Free Public Transport in Europe: Potential and Priorities

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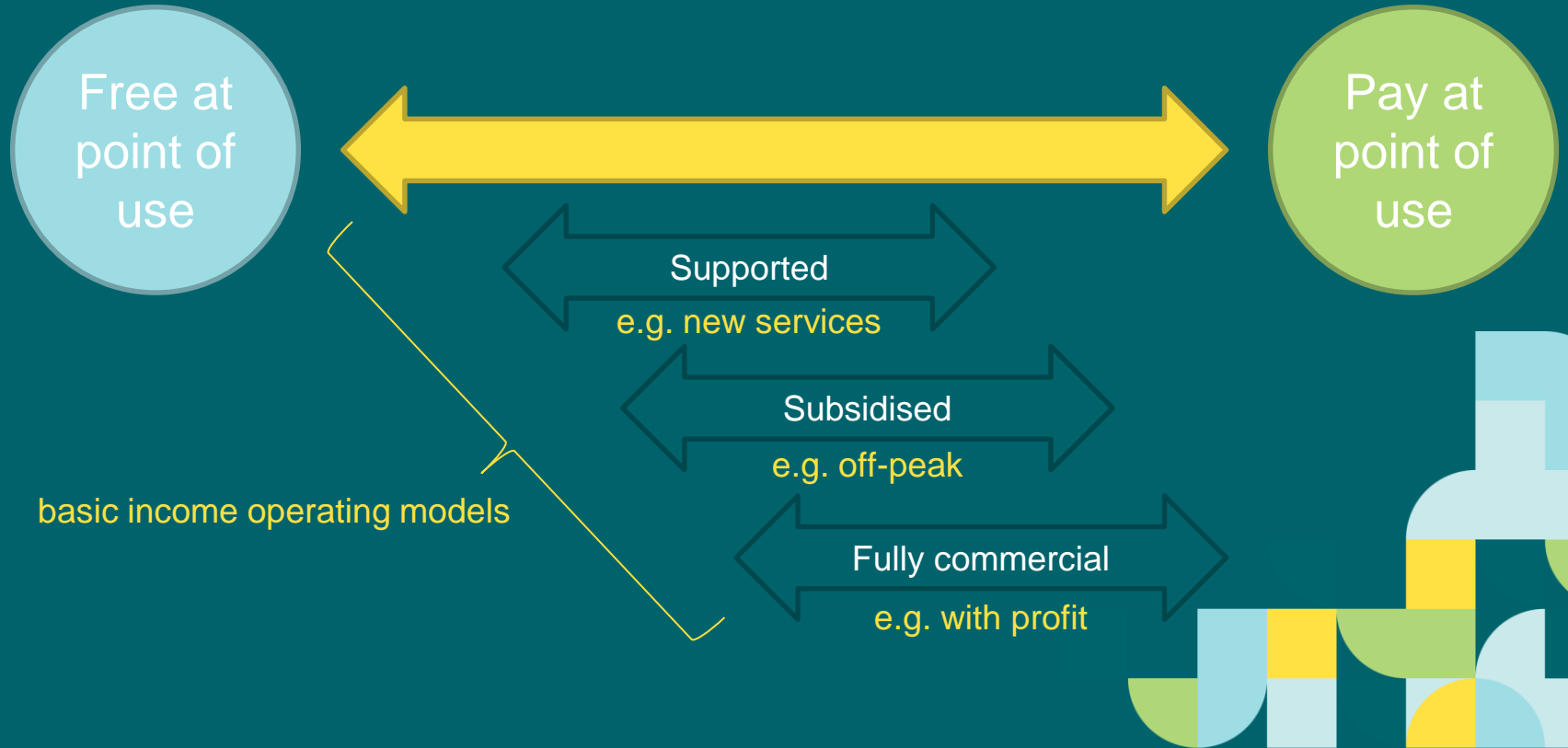
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Outline

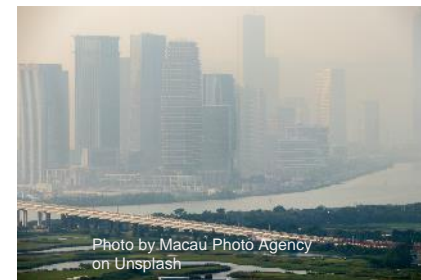
- 1 A free transport typology
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1. A free transport typology



Applications for Free Public Transport

Mix of one-off, short term, limited scale or irregular applications



- **Trial and Test**

e.g. shopping Saturdays - Luxembourg

- **Event Management**

e.g. Shuttles at major sports such as Olympics – London, UK

- **Equalities and Safety**

e.g. reductions for specific target groups by age, gender – Berlin, UK, Brussels

- **Environmental Imperatives**

e.g. low air quality – Paris, France (2016)

Applications for Free Public Transport

Mix of one-off, short term, limited scale or irregular applications



- New Customers**

e.g. obligations on new housing developments, e.g. Somerset, UK

- Workplace Travel Planning**

e.g. staff buses at edge of town sites, e.g. Edinburgh, UK

- Visitors**

e.g. as part of tourist tax, e.g. Geneva, Switzerland

- Special cases**

e.g. ferries, Amsterdam, Netherlands

Long term strategic examples

2. Examples

Free and subsidised public transport in Europe



Example: Tallinn and Estonia – Free Fares

- Introduced **2013**
- **Free** for residents
- **Expanded** across Estonia in 2018
- Public transport modal split c. **25%**

- **Social rewards** – mobility countering loneliness in elderly people, increasing mobility of those on low incomes inc. access to healthcare
- **Political benefits**
- **Increased desirability of city** as a registered place of residence

- Some tax redistribution to cities but unequal **distribution of funding**
- Need to **reconfigure network** to ensure new riders' needs are met
- Requires further **car restraint-based measures** to deal with continued high car use and “lock in” benefits to reduce rebound effects from car use falls
- **High existing public transport use/low fares** diminish extra impact
- **Undesired shift from active travel** journeys
- **Limitations on revenues** for ongoing improvements



Example: Luxembourg – Recent Free Public Transport

- Launched **February 2020**
- Across **entire country** (613k population)
 - **State/ministry** involvement
 - Funded by **general tax** burden
- Residents, cross-border workers **and** tourists within Luxembourg
 - 214k daily **cross-border commuters**
- Aimed to reduce **traffic congestion/space inefficiency** issues
- Started with a **Saturdays** scheme
- Removed sales of already subsidised €2 tickets
 - = €41 million / **8%** annual transport budget
- Public transport modal split c. **12%**

- Signs of **increased public transport use** e.g. tram
- **Reputational** benefits internationally ('brand')

- Affected by ongoing **teleworking**
- Subject to further study pending **pandemic**
- **Long term transport improvement** still needed/work in progress
- **Fuel prices** remain attractive for private transport use/ownership



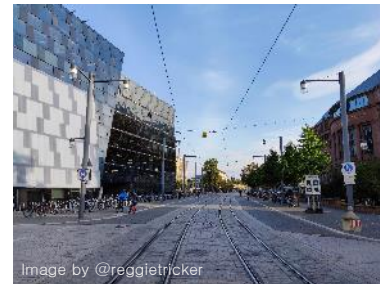
**MOBILITÉ
GRATUITE
AU LUXEMBOURG**

Example: Freiburg, Germany – Subsidised Transport Integration

- 5 **tram routes** – ongoing extensions, modifications
- Supporting but not primary **bus network**
- 2.40 euros / 1.50 euros single
- Public transport modal split **c. 16%**

- High levels of **integration** across modes
- **High quality of place**

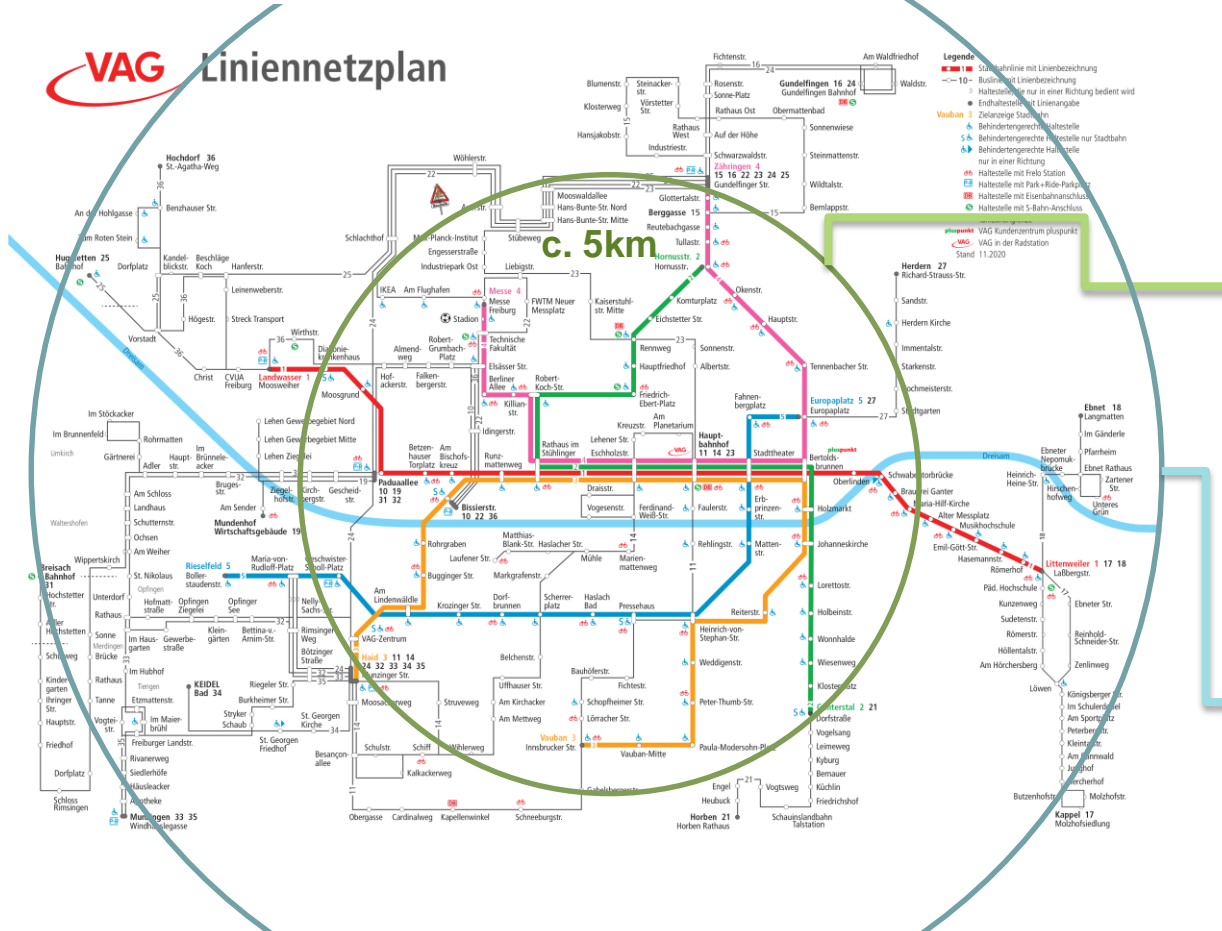
- c.€20M **subsidy** (v. €62M income)



Example: Freiburg, Germany

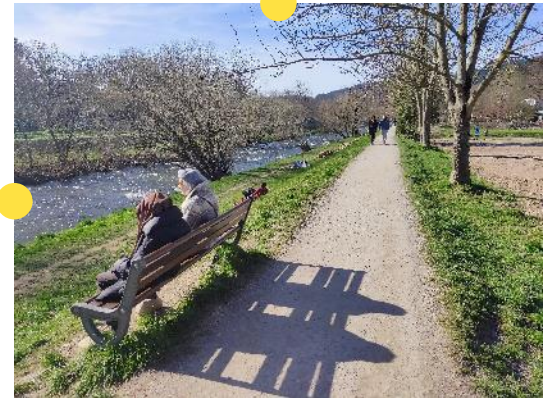
c. 10km

VAG Liniennetzplan





Example: Freiburg, Germany – Subsidised Transport Integration



Example: Edinburgh, UK – Trams Built on Successful and Profitable Bus Network

- **1 tram** route – proposed extensions
- **Highly performing** routes
- Public transport modal split c. **19%**

→ **Profitable**

- ◆ £46.3 million local authority **dividend** over last 10 years from buses
 - Subsidy to **support tram** extension

- **Tensions** over role of tram and bus in city
- Still awaiting progress to truly **integrated transport/city as a place** concept
- Efficiency limited by city centre **congestion**



Example: Vienna – Open Access and Barrier “Free”

- Aim to **maximise accessibility** to public transport
- **Season tickets** commonplace
- **Open access** to stations/transport but fare is expected to have been paid
- Aim for **barrier free, emissions free, congestion free, conflict free, free flowing** transport

- **Integrated** travel tickets

→ Acknowledged there is fare evasion but **no continuous fare** inspection regime



Further recent examples

Dunkirk, France

- Significant **increase** in local bus use since September 2018, particularly weekends
- Accompanied by significant **expansion and improvement** in quality of bus network against baseline (already heavily subsidised)

Heidelberg, Germany

- Residents who give up their cars can ride **public transportation free for a year** as part of an overall sustainable mobility concept

Coventry, UK

- Residents will be offered up to **£3,000 in credits** to use on public transport – in exchange for giving up their car for two years.

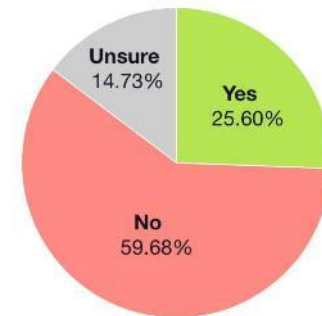
Brussels, Belgium

- From September 2021, services will be free of charge for **travellers under the age of 25**
- Transit company's budget has been increased by over €61 million
- Additional investments in the public transport network that will improve the frequency of buses and increase network capacity

→ UK-wide survey (n=1000) by uswitch

- ◆ **25.6% said they would be willing to give up their cars** in exchange for transport credit (**Half** of younger drivers (17-24))
- ◆ nearly 60% of drivers polled said they would not (39% of younger drivers)
- ◆ **Younger generations more open** to public transport
- ◆ In **large cities** (with better public transport) would be more inclined to give up their personal modes of transport, in exchange for free public transport

Would you be willing to give up your car in exchange for free travel on public transport?



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<https://www.uswitch.com/car-insurance/guides/one-in-four-drivers-would-give-up-car-for-environment/>

Many other schemes, e.g. community level, particularly in France, Poland and Scandinavia (Sweden, Norway, Denmark)

3. Lessons



Closing thoughts

- **COVID** - Impacts on public transport appeal, need and patronage – and space needed for extra passengers
- **Relationship and balance with sticks** - e.g. congestion charging, cost of private transport. Need to ensure road space rewards are locked-in
- **Consider wider package** – impact on Park & Ride, active travel
- **Context** - Country/city size, density and level of self containment
- **Social dimension** - How significant is transport in societal disparities (e.g. compared to other factors, e.g. housing, health)
- **Be prepared** - Trying a bad experience is not persuasive. Improve first
- **Monitor** – Collect statistics to justify expenditures going forward – particularly when relying on partnerships
- **All in?** Look at options including further discounted fares

4. Links

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References and reading

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Compendiums

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