Egyptian Cities Come Into Focus

Avoid, Shift, Improve.

Sustainable Urban Mobility in Egypt
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As all eyes turn to Egypt as it hosts global climate negotiations and urban fora throughout the 27th Conference of Parties (COP27), Egyptian cities once more come into focus as the world gathers to discuss pressing issues of today, on its ground, where it all begins.

City-level action for sustainable mobility has been highlighted in COP27 as one of the key areas of intervention that the world must attend to. In Egypt, as with many countries of the global south, the largest contributor to air pollution in urban areas is transport. In recognition of the role of people’s mobility in cities and combating accelerated car-dependence in the battle against climate change, a review of best practices and success stories are offered here in the context of activities made possible through collaborations among development partners in Egypt. This may offer a glimpse into another inspiring story in the long history of Egypt and its civilization. This publication showcases the possibilities for many countries around the world with similar contexts and challenges, while nevertheless recognizing the long journey of learning that still remains, and the opportunities for further transformations and paradigm shifts needed, reminding us of the yet untapped potential.

Urban areas, or the city, is at the core of climate action over the next decades, and is the battleground where 70% of global emissions are observed and about a quarter of that comes from transportation. For proper action to be ensured, the political will and a solid ground for urban development policies, plans, and programs is key.

In a solid step towards improved urban development, Egypt launched, and is implementing, the National Strategic Plan for Urban Development 2025, which aims at ensuring, balanced spatial development, and both regional and local urban development. Here, alignment with global best practice is ensured, such as alignment with the New Urban Agenda (NUA), as well as development of the new National Urban Policy (NUP) as the guiding policy framework for policy development, and subsequent strategies dedicated specifically to climate change. These frameworks call for collective action and effective sharing of successful solutions and experiences, with special focus on vulnerable groups and ensuring all stakeholders are contributing to and equally benefitting from sustainable urbanization.

The acceleration of the implementation of the New Urban Agenda (NUA) is being ensured in Egypt through the integration of its principles in Egypt’s National Strategy for Climate Change 2050 (NSCC2050), launched in May 2022, and Egypt’s rise to a leading position in 2022, hosting the 27th Conference of Parties (COP27) of the UN Framework Agreement for Climate Change (UNFCCC).

Today, Egypt asserts its high commitment to climate action more than ever, with focus on cities and multilevel climate action. Hosting COP27 as well as the 12th World Urban Forum (WUF12) is testimony of this unprecedented political will to “walk the talk” and put the spotlight on implementation and tangible outcomes enabled with the required policies and regulatory frameworks, just finance, and enabling institutional setups, as well as boldly launching two global initiatives addressing sustainable mobility: The Sustainable Urban Resilience for the Next Generation (SURGe) and the Low Carbon Transport for Urban Sustainability (LOTUS).

Amidst such calls for global action, a demonstration of parallel local action, so-called national parallels to these global initiatives, becomes imperative. This is central to the activity of UNHABITAT together with the government of Egypt. This publication presents a deep-dive into one of the areas of support: Sustainable mobility and progress in Egypt and presents the frameworks within which UNHABITAT and its partners work.
Many people are familiar with imperatives of resource conservation and sustainable consumption, the “3Rs” framework of “Reduce Reuse Recycle”, which for long has been popularized and mainstreamed in culture and education. Similarly so, in the realm of sustainable mobility, a practical A-S-I framework, Avoid-Shift-Improve has for long also been a practical reference to map out the holistic set of interventions needed to achieve sustainable mobility.

A-S-I refers to Avoiding kilometers traveled at the outset, followed by Shifting towards more sustainable modes of transport, and finally Improving the existing choices, fuels, technologies, and systems.

**What is the Avoid-Shift-Improve Framework?**

A-S-I refers to Avoiding kilometers traveled at the outset, followed by Shifting towards more sustainable modes of transport, and finally Improving the existing choices, fuels, technologies, and systems.
AVOIDING KILOMETERS TRAVELED AT THE OUTSET.
The New Urban Agenda was adopted at the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III) in Quito, Ecuador, on 20 October 2016. Within its guiding text, it advocates urban planning that enables city-dwellers to reduce their dependence on cars, such as through compact development and ensure mixed-use planning.

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NEW URBAN AGENDA

The New Urban Agenda represents a shared vision for a better and more sustainable future – one in which all people have equal rights and access to the benefits and opportunities that cities can offer, and in which the international community reconsiders the urban systems and physical form of our urban spaces to achieve this. 

UN, New Urban Agenda, 2017

The New Urban Agenda adopts the following Principals to achieve its vision:

a) Leave no one behind, by ending poverty in all its forms and dimensions.
b) Ensure sustainable and inclusive urban economies by leveraging the agglomeration benefits of well-planned urbanization.
c) Ensure environmental sustainability by promoting clean energy and sustainable use of land and resources in urban development.

PRINCIPLES
What is a 15-Minute City?

A 15-minute city aims to provide everything you need within a short 15-minute walk or bike: jobs, schools, food, parks, community, medical and more. It aims to create more sustainable, equitable and healthier cities.

A 15-Minute City

Not a 15-Minute City

District planned with limited and segregated land uses; dependence on cars is likely.

District consisting of a variety of land uses
Sharm El Sheikh is an important secondary city in Egypt that is considered a distinctive global waterfront and leisure tourism destination due to its location and the unique marine life. It is also a notable conference venue. Based on decrees taken by the Prime Minister’s office regarding investment projects for the Sinai Governorate, the decision was taken to create a comprehensive strategic urban plan for Sharm El Sheikh in line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The plan is aligned with the New Urban Agenda and integrated with the planned regional and international projects that could affect the city.
SHIFTING TOWARDS MORE SUSTAINABLE MODES OF TRANSPORT.
SEKATAK KHADRA

Installing 100 bike racks around Cairo to assist cyclists & add playfulness in the city.

An initiative by:
(Cairo Gov, Nahdet El Mahrousa NGO, Danish Embassy, UN Habitat)

Map for Seketak Khadra Installations in Downtown Cairo

Seketak Khadra bike installations in Downtown Cairo
LAUNCHED EGYPT’S FIRST PUBLIC BIKE-SHARING SYSTEM “CAIRO BIKE”
OCTOBER, 2022

Cairo Bike project is the product of a longstanding partnership between Cairo Governorate and development partners working together since 2016, where the MOU was signed in July 2017 between Cairo Governorate and the UN-Habitat, with support and project funding provided by Drosos Foundation, and technical assistance and supervision by the Institute for Transportation and Development Policy (ITDP) and the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UNHABITAT).

The initiative aims to be a signature project added to the mix of solutions to diversify transport options in Cairo. This comes along with a locally-tailored application as well as alternative simple payment options that may cater to various segments of society, and it involves an innovative docking solution and a display for the network map.
CAIRO BIKE OPENING
October 2022
The concept of bike-sharing, which primarily targets youth, is to provide a network of publicly available bicycles that can be safely used between stations using an app and with competitive pricing and various subscription packages. This is rolled out in an initial phase consisting of 250 bikes and 25 stations in downtown Cairo and the nearby areas, while the second phase in the coming months will involve a further expansion to reach a fleet of 500 bikes in 45 stations at key locations in Downtown area, Garden City, and Zamalek Island in Cairo. Bikes include GPS-tracking for optimal management and security. It is covering strategic locations, youth hotspots, several metro stations and bus stops. The price in the promotional period starts with 1 EGP per hour, with a variety of price packages and modes of payments that allow inclusiveness of all stakeholders.
UNHABITAT is working on solutions to enable the “Shift” needed in modes of transport. Together with the New Urban Communities Authority (NUCA) and the Institute of Transport Development Policy (ITDP), various projects are in progress and being gradually linked to each other.

Two key activities are noted:
1. 6th of October Bus Rapid Transport (BRT) project connecting to Greater Cairo planning and support in implementation.

Overall Goal
The aim is to provide diverse sustainable transport options for all stakeholder groups that are not only safe and functional, but also ‘enjoyable’.

Render and Visualization of the station

Render of vision & plan for industrial road, October Sector
Render of vision & plan for Industrial road, October Sector

Renders & visualization from Outside the station & Station entrance
Meshwary is a study undertaken by UN Habitat and UN Women, in partnership with the National Council for Women (NCW), the New Urban Communities Authority (NUCA), and the technical assistance of the Institute for Transportation and Development Policy (ITDP) with the support of USAID. It aims to develop a better understanding and evidence-base on the challenges women face while using public transport.

Data collection methodology included the following:
Public transport terminal survey, focus group discussions, online travel pattern survey, operator assessments, frequency-occupancy survey and non-motorized transport (NMT) facility survey.

Photo Copyright: Alaa ElKamhawi
IMPROVE

IMPROVING THE EXISTING CHOICES, FUELS, TECHNOLOGIES, AND SYSTEMS.
FUEL ECONOMY

After we fulfill the ASI commitments, the next step is moving all the practices to improve these mobility options. Ex. Improving fuel economy & promoting electric vehicles.

Exmaple fuel economy label from the United Kingdom

FUEL ECONOMY LABELS

The figures on the coloured areas [A-M] indicate the 13 ranges of emission by g/km that correspond to level of annual Vehicle Excise Duty (VED or Road Tax). Low carbon-emitting cars pay less tax. The lowest - Bans A - pay no tax.

CO2 emissions figure
The black arrow points to the vehicle’s relevant band of CO2 emission on which Vehicle Excise Duty (VED or Road Tax) is based.

Running costs
Average yearly fuel costs are calculated and displayed together with the relevant level of Road Tax. Figures updated with recent prices.

Make, model and engine details
The vehicle make, model, fuel type, engine capacity and transmission type are all listed. Together they determine the CO2 emission and running costs.

Fuel consumption
Shows how efficient the car is in miles per gallon and litres per 100km in town, country and combined driving situations.

Exmaple fuel economy label from the United Kingdom
This policy paper aims to introduce Low-Emission Zones (LEZs) concepts in Egypt in a manner accessible to the general public and non-experts and experts alike. It aims to discuss the position of the country in terms of readiness to implement LEZs policies and recommend how to meet such ambitions in a manner suitable for the current circumstances.

The LEZs policy in the GCR can be implemented on three different phases, each with a certain level of restrictions that is suitable to the area infrastructure.

The first scenario shall include different sub-zones in historical and old Cairo neighborhoods, to decrease the inner-city pollution, protect valuable touristic locations and benefit from the existing public transportation network. This phase can act as a pilot LEZs practice, even though the sub-zones might have a minor impact, they will provide proper marketing for the policy application. The initial phase, however, can either be composed of sub-zones or be covered as one large LEZ, to guarantee the maximum emission reduction effect.

The second scenario can include the New Administrative Capital to connect with the latest public transport developments. It can start after the area is relatively inhabited to prevent future pollutants’ spread and allow the area to sustain its natural air quality. The third scenario is suggested to include all the areas within the inner ring road boundaries (learning from the global practices, i.e. London and Rotterdam). The delay in this phase is to guarantee more social, economic, and political preparations for the restrictions. Finally, the LEZ can be simultaneously experimented and applied in neighboring cities, to prevent future pollution threats and to regulate all the new vehicle registrations.
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IMPROVING THE WALKING EXPERIENCE

Access to Public Spaces - Upgrading the Urban Environment to be enjoyable and safer pedestrian experience.

ABDEEN SQUARE URBAN UPGRADE

Renders from the Project

Real life photos after the Urban Upgrade

Renders from the Project