



How Can the World Bank Integrate Climate Action and Disability Inclusion in Transport?

The climate crisis is expected to have a disproportionate impact on marginalized communities, including persons with disabilities. Adopting a disability-inclusive approach to climate action can improve the effectiveness of both climate change adaptation and mitigation.

In 2023, BIC published a [report](#) on the link between climate and disability and how the World Bank should integrate disability inclusion in climate action at the project and policy levels. This policy brief will build off that report and provide sectoral guidance on how the Bank can integrate disability inclusion into its approach to Paris alignment in the transport sector. As the Bank's investments in the transportation sector continue to rise,¹ the Bank should capitalize on opportunities to scale up electric public transportation systems such as Bus Rapid Transit (BRT). These systems and related infrastructure

¹ Annually, the World Bank produces a project level climate finance document. The amount of climate finance for transport has been steadily increasing since Fiscal Year (FY) 2019; however, there was a slight decrease in FY23. See here for climate finance data for [FY19](#), [FY20](#), [FY21](#), [FY22](#), and [FY23](#).

should be universally accessible for persons with disabilities. This will lead to more inclusion, access to services, and job opportunities, and it will also help to reduce transport emissions. Climate change poses significant vulnerabilities and risks to transportation systems, meaning these systems need to be adapted to be resilient to climate change.

The expansion of robust public and active² transport networks presents an opportunity to significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs). However,

² "Active transportation is a human-powered mobility, such as cycling, walking, or rolling (using mobility-assistance devices). When safe, direct infrastructure is provided, active mobility can directly replace vehicle kilometers traveled, making these modes effective at reducing vehicle emissions, bridging the first- and last-mile gap, and improving individual and public health." World Bank. *The Path Less Traveled: Scaling Up Active Mobility to Capture Economic and Climate Benefits* (English). Mobility and Transport Connectivity Series, (Washington DC, World Bank Group, 2023), <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/099112923115517791/P500661086fdc80740ad42070ad301d0b66> & "Active Transportation and Micromobility," US Department of Energy, accessed July 9, 2024, <https://afdc.energy.gov/conserve/active-transportation>.

to maximize these potential emissions reductions, transport systems must be accessible for persons with disabilities. When transport systems are designed to target the most marginalized, transport availability for the entire population is improved. Below, we provide recommendations for the Bank to integrate climate action and disability inclusion in mitigation and adaptation, along with further general recommendations.

Mitigation

- **Integrate disability inclusion in transport decarbonization.** As part of its Paris alignment strategy, the Bank is committed to supporting a shift to public transport. However, many public transport systems are not accessible, and persons with disabilities may find themselves either excluded or reliant on low-occupancy vehicles to meet their mobility needs.³ Relying on private vehicles such as taxis can be costly, increase the number of vehicles on the road, and increase emissions. Therefore, as the Bank helps borrowers decarbonize transport, the Bank should prioritize the development of universally accessible, electric public transport systems. The use of electric vehicles presents an opportunity to reduce local air pollution.⁴ Improved air quality can help reduce rates of heart disease, stroke, lung cancer, and other infections and diseases associated with air pollution and poor air quality, which persons with disabilities are more likely to be exposed and vulnerable to.⁵ The new electric public transport networks should be physically and financially accessible and free of stigma and discrimination to increase ridership amongst persons with disabilities.⁶

3 Luis Artieda, Mackenzie Allan, Ramón Cruz, Sonal Shah, & Victor Santiago Pineda, Access and Persons with Disabilities in Urban Areas (New York: Institute for Transportation and Development Policy, 2022), <https://itdp.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Full-Report-jun21.pdf>

4 Muneeza Mehmood Alam & Yoomin Lee, Cleaner Vehicles and Charging Infrastructure Greening Passenger Fleets for Sustainable Mobility (Washington DC, World Bank Group, 2021), <https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/c05dc9e13171bb63f0fab91cbe6b80b1-0190062021/original/TDI-paper-Cleaner-Vehicles-and-Charging-Infrastructure-October-2021.pdf>. See also: Erika Garcia, Jill Johnston, Rob McConnell, Lawrence Palinkas, & Sandrah P Eckel, California's early transition to electric vehicles: Observed health and air quality co-benefits, (Los Angeles: Science of the Total Environment 867, 2023), <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.scitotenv.2023.161761>, for a study that analyzed the health and air quality benefits associated with electric vehicles in California.

5 Michael Brauer, Narantuya Davaakhuu, Maria Consuelo Escamilla Nuñez, Michael Hadley, Daniel Kass, Mark Miller, Dorairaj Prabhakaran, Karen Silwa, Ta-Chen Su, Ilonca C.H. Vaartjes, Rajesh Vedanthan, Kelsey Armstrong-Walenczak, & Jeremiah Mwangi, Clean Air, Smart Cities, Healthy Hearts: Action on Air Pollution for Cardiovascular Health. (Global Heart. 2021). DOI: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8428302/>

6 Luis Artieda, Mackenzie Allan, Ramón Cruz, Sonal Shah, & Victor Santiago Pineda, Access and Persons with Disabilities in Urban Areas (New York: Institute for Transportation and Development Policy, 2022), <https://itdp.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Full-Report-jun21.pdf>

- **Adopt a holistic, disability-inclusive approach to the transport system.** As the Bank supports the development of public and [active](#) transport, it is critical to consider how the entire transport system is inclusive and accessible because “even if new corridors are constructed with more attention to disability, they can end up as islands within an inaccessible transport network.”⁷ A fully accessible transport system will help maximize the number of users, therefore maximizing emissions reductions.
- **Apply universal access features to active transport infrastructure.** As the Bank develops [active transportation](#) infrastructure such as sidewalks or bike lanes, it is important that these interventions are aligned with [universal access standards](#).⁸ This should include, but not be limited to, adhering to standards on minimum sidewalk width for wheelchair users, barrier-free sidewalks and crossings, and wide cycling lanes.⁹ If the active transport infrastructure is safe and accessible it “can directly replace vehicle kilometers traveled, making [active transport] effective at reducing vehicle emissions and bridging the first- and last-mile gap, and improving individual and public health.”¹⁰

Adaptation

- **Risk assessments should be more holistic and prioritize avoiding risks and maximizing social and environmental benefits.** The Bank’s [Transport Sector Note](#) says that “the risk assessment should be used to prioritize climate hazards that need to be addressed by classifying the hazards that pose the highest potential risk to the operation’s success.”¹¹ The current approach is focused on mitigating potential negative environmental or climate impacts, but it should also include a social inclusion

7 Ibid.

8 “The concept of universal access means unimpeded access for people of all ages and abilities in different situations and under various circumstances, as set out in GIIP.” World Bank, Environmental and Social Framework, (Washington DC, World Bank, 2016), <https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/837721522762050108-0290022018/original/ESFFramework.pdf#page=59&zoom=80>.

9 “Universal Design: Streets,” American Society of Landscape Architects, accessed July 11, 2024, [https://www.asla.org/universalstreets.aspx#:~:text=Universally%20designed%20streets%20have%3A,14%20feet%20\(4.2%20meters\)](https://www.asla.org/universalstreets.aspx#:~:text=Universally%20designed%20streets%20have%3A,14%20feet%20(4.2%20meters)) & Luis Artieda, Mackenzie Allan, Ramón Cruz, Sonal Shah, & Victor Santiago Pineda, Access and Persons with Disabilities in Urban Areas (New York: Institute for Transportation and Development Policy, 2022), <https://itdp.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Full-Report-jun21.pdf>

10 World Bank. The Path Less Traveled: Scaling Up Active Mobility to Capture Economic and Climate Benefits (English). Mobility and Transport Connectivity Series (Washington DC, World Bank Group, 2023), <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/099112923115517791/P500661086fdc80740ad42070ad301d0b66>.

11 World Bank. Transport Sector Note on Applying the World Bank Group Paris Alignment Assessment Methods (English), (Washington DC, World Bank Group, 2023), <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/099802104072399820/IDU042c63ab700a4904fdb09fea073c99ff21977>

dimension that analyzes potential risks to persons with disabilities. For example, an analysis of why persons with disabilities are unable to use transport could help to transform the risk assessment into a tool for maximizing the benefits of the operation.

- **Adaptation interventions should be inclusive and accessible.** Interventions designed to increase the resilience of the transport sector should take into account how they are accessible for persons with disabilities. For example, if a transport system is vulnerable to flooding and the operation uses elevated platforms, it is important that the system is still accessible for persons with disabilities. If a BRT station utilizes elevated platforms, the buses should be at the same level or have the ability to move up or down so passengers can board on a level surface.¹² The design of adaptation interventions should consider all persons with disabilities, including but not limited to people with visual impairments, those who use a wheelchair or other mobility device, and people with hearing loss.
- **Collect disaggregated data on disability and include disability metrics in adaptation projects.** The Bank should collect data on how persons with disabilities are affected by the impacts of climate change, including increased frequency of extreme weather events, heatwaves, etc., and how adaptation projects are increasing the resilience of persons with disabilities to these impacts. The Bank should develop metrics in adaptation projects that are disability-specific and help to increase understanding of how adaptation projects benefit or harm persons with disabilities.
- **Define “vulnerable groups.”** The Bank’s Transport Sector Note presents two factors used to assess an operation’s risk to climate hazards. One assesses “whether the assets, systems, beneficiaries, and/or vulnerable groups might be exposed to these hazards.”¹³ The Bank should define “vulnerable groups” to include persons with disabilities.

¹² Ann Frye Obe, Disability Inclusive Public Transport- Practical Steps to Making Public Transport Disability Inclusive, (London: High Volume Transport Applied Research, 2019)

¹³ World Bank. Transport Sector Note on Applying the World Bank Group Paris Alignment Assessment Methods (English), (Washington DC, World Bank Group, 2023), <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/099802104072399820/IDU042c63ab700a4904fdb09fea073c99ff21977>

General

- **Increase transparency and engage with stakeholders.** The Bank’s Paris alignment process thus far has been closed off to the public. The Bank should engage with stakeholders, particularly with persons with disabilities, around instrument and sector notes and universally-aligned activities. Persons with disabilities have knowledge and expertise that should be incorporated into the Paris alignment process so that it is more accessible for all people and maximizes emissions reductions.
- **Mainstream disability inclusion in climate policies.** Persons with disabilities have routinely been left out of climate action, both at the international and national level, including the [Paris Agreement](#) and [Nationally Determined Contributions](#) (NDCs) and in climate and environment policies at the Bank like the [Climate Change Action Plan](#) (CCAP) and [Action Plan on Climate Change Adaptation and Resilience](#) (Action Plan). Currently, the CCAP and Action Plan do not address how climate change disproportionately affects persons with disabilities, nor do they include a single reference to persons with disabilities. As the Bank supports its clients to increase the ambition of their NDCs and Long-Term Strategies, it should emphasize the importance of integrating a disability-inclusive approach. In addition, the Bank should integrate inclusion into its own guidance, including the Bank’s new diagnostic tool, [Country Climate Development Reports](#) (CCDRs). CCDRs present countries with strategies for low-carbon resilient development and are expected to feed into future projects, country strategies, and Paris alignment. It is important that CCDRs recognize how climate change disproportionately affects persons with disabilities and include disability-inclusive recommendations.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION ON THE ISSUES RAISED IN THIS REPORT, PLEASE CONTACT BANK INFORMATION CENTER AT:

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