First Steps Towards a Bus System That Is More Sensitive to Early Childhood

The daily experiences of children in their first years of life, from age 0 to 6, may influence their full development. At this stage, caregivers are primarily responsible for their day-to-day activities. Their well-being and the way they move and interact with the environment have a direct impact on the lives of babies and toddlers.
Unlike the typical pattern of commuting from home to work, caregivers move around the city on off-peak chained trips.

Although routine trips with children can be done on foot or by bicycle, caregivers use the bus system to:

- facilitate chained day-to-day trips;
- reduce travel time;
- access more distant leisure spaces;
- avoid climbing slopes and stairways in hilly areas or on uneven terrain while carrying a child.
The interests and needs of caregivers and young children need to be considered at all stages of designing a transport system (planning, implementation, and operation) so as to make all stages of the journey more sensitive to early childhood. A bus system that is sensitive to early childhood is one that has:

1. FULL TRANSPORT SYSTEM INTEGRATION

**Physical integration**
Installing safe and comfortable physical connections between boarding areas for different lines or modes of transportation.
- Boarding areas close to each other, with a walking distance of up to 300 m;
- Clear information on transfers and connections with other lines and modes;
- Physical connections that allow safe and convenient access to public transport stations (for example, no overpasses, stairs, or long tunnels);
- Shelter against sun and rain along the access routes;
- Presence of public facilities between boarding areas and/or at the terminal, such as waste bins, benches, restrooms, and public baby changing stations.

**Fare integration**
Facilitating the fare payment across different lines or modes of transportation in order to reduce time and costs.
- Use of a single card to access the entire transportation system;
- Off-board fare collection;
- Fare policy that reduces the total cost of travel;
- Information about fares and existing discounts;
- Sharing data among operators and public authorities to ensure transparent management across different entities.

**Operational integration**
Coordinating and communicating different lines or modes of transportation in a complementary and unified way.
- Complementary schedules between different lines and modes at boarding points;
- Up-to-date information about the entire transport network at the boarding points;
- Priority seats for children, caregivers, and pregnant women in vehicles, at stations, and terminals;
- Frequent and regular services, including at off-peak times.
2. ROAD PRIORITY
- Dedicated and priority bus lanes;
- Priority for implementing priority lanes in areas that are within a 10-minutes walk from local services and public early childhood facilities.

3. STAFF TRAINING
- Protocols to facilitate caregivers’ access to the system;
- Mechanisms for reporting security incidents;
- Standardized content and mandatory training for the whole staff with a focus on interacting with users, especially women, children, and people with disabilities and/or reduced mobility.

4. SAFE AND COMFORTABLE BOARDING AREAS
- Bus platforms at stops and stations on the same level with floor of the bus;
- Bus stops integrated with the sidewalk installed in a way that does not obstruct the circulation of pedestrians, with a minimum free space of 1.5 meters;
- Shelter against sun and rain at boarding areas, with a minimum width of 1.2 meters;
- Safe and comfortable seating for resting and waiting at boarding areas;
- Static or dynamic information about the services and their complete routes at the stations and stops, as well as at the main early childhood facilities in the neighborhood;
- Incorporation of playful elements including colors, textures, foliage and nature elements within the bus shelter, on the benches, or on the ground near the boarding area.

5. FLEET ADAPTATION
- Adoption of low-floor vehicles;
- Replacement and/or upgrade of the fleet with less polluting vehicles, preferably electric buses.