First Steps: Urban Mobility in Early Childhood

Research study in Recife, Brazil
April / 2022
Objectives of the project

Propose improvements to Recife's bus system and its immediate surroundings in order to improve the daily lives of babies, children and caregivers.

- Understand the interests and needs of babies and their caregivers, especially the limitations and obstacles experienced in their daily displacements;

- Understand and analyze the performance of public authorities and transport operators, especially in relation to the consideration of the needs and interests of early childhood;

- Contribute to the improvement of existing mobility infrastructure and to the planning of early childhood-sensitive public bus transport systems, as well as to greater intersectoral articulation for mobility and early childhood policies, projects and initiatives.
Study area
Methodology

- **Analysis of results of focus group survey**
  - October 30th to November 1st 2019;
  - Main caregivers of children aged 0 to 3 years with a similar socioeconomic profile.

- **Survey and analysis of complementary data**
  - Walkability Index 2.0, adapted to take into account the needs of caregivers and their babies;
  - Bus stop conditions, methodology developed considering the infrastructure, information and location on the sidewalk.

- **Semi-structured interviews with key actors**
  - Video conferences between July 20 and August 5, 2020;
  - Carried out with the main actors involved with early childhood and/or urban mobility.
Sidewalks: 165 segments
- 0.6% great;
- 11.4% good;
- 18% sufficient;
- 70% insufficient.

Bus stops: 25 evaluated
- 2 total furniture;
- 11 partial furniture;
- 3 vertical signage;
- 9 no furniture.
Final reports

Conclusions and recommendations specific to Recife and general to other cities
Main results
“Thing we take 20 minutes, with the child it takes 1h30. A person's step is longer than a child's.”

“For you to walk with the child on the sidewalk, you either put it in front of you and walk like that, or you put it on your arm because you can't. The sidewalk is too narrow.”

“It's hard, it's not one or the other, all lines are unsuitable for walking with a child.”

“One shadow, a small chair to sit on, that doesn't exist, we wait on the sidewalk, and if it's too crowded we wait in the corner of the street and so on. Sometimes we're not even there on the sidewalk, we're on the street waiting.”

- when routes are shorter or when they have no money: walk
- when they have a child and/or the journey is long: use public transport
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 + Fare + Operational)

2. **ROAD PRIORITY**

3. **STAFF TRAINING**

4. **SAFE AND COMFORTABLE BOARDING AREAS**

5. **FLEET ADAPTATION**
1. Strengthening of technical knowledge
   - Training for alignment of vision and concepts on mobility and early childhood;
   - Continued surveys of caregivers' perceptions;
   - Multidisciplinary and diverse teams;
   - Specialized training for the technical team to monitor and manage the system.

2. Consolidation of integrated approaches
   - Governance that guarantees intersectoral articulation and understands the role of each actor without losing the systemic vision;
   - Establish spaces for dialogue and communication strategies;
   - Standardization to consolidate exchanges.

3. Ensuring the political continuity of initiatives
   - Communicate to the population the social and economic benefits of mobility policies for early childhood;
   - Policies and plans need to establish clear guidelines, indicators and targets;
   - Availability of a permanent and qualified technical team, the forecast of costs and the guarantee of financial resources for the initiatives.
Thanks!

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