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Latest Report in ITDP's Access for All Series Asserts that Universal Design is Vital for Inclusive Cities

Persons with disabilities make up nearly 15 percent of the global population, and more than half of all people with disabilities live in towns and cities. Yet our cities rarely address mobility needs across the full spectrum of people's abilities. Most cities are designed from the perspective of people without disabilities and for the convenience of people in motor vehicles rather than walking, cycling, or public transportation. By viewing urban policies and design through the lens of people with disabilities, we can foster accessible, transit-oriented development and sustainable mobility and offer a set of recommendations to promote responsive actions.

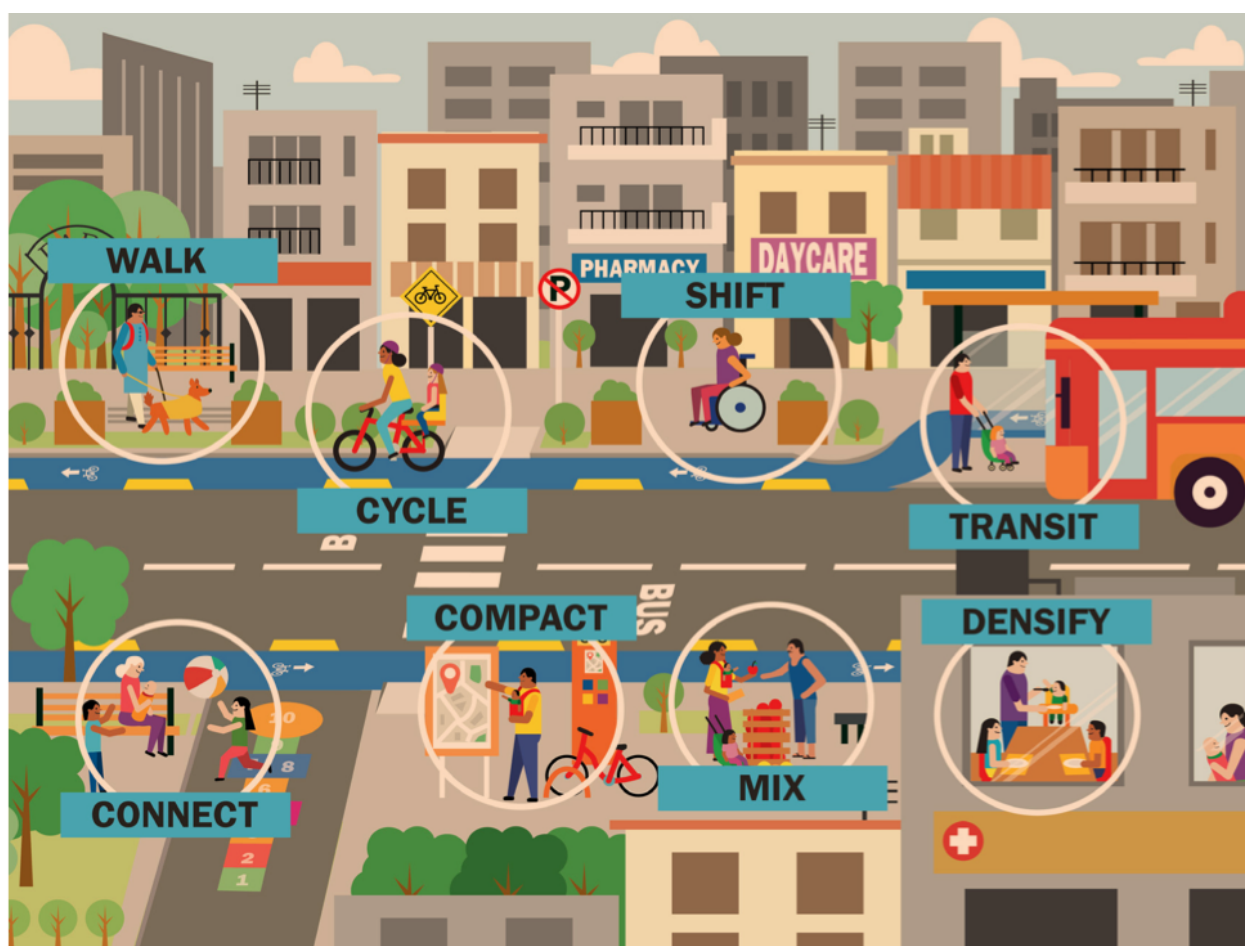
Most people will experience some form of disability in their lifetime. Disability may be temporary or permanent and can include difficulties seeing, hearing, walking, climbing, remembering, concentrating, completing self-care/washing all over, communicating, or being understood. People with disabilities are a diverse group with a wide variety of experiences who face a multitude of barriers to equitable participation and inclusion in societies around the world.

A June 2022 report from the Institute for Transportation and Development Policy (ITDP) and [World Enabled](#) (The Victor Pineda Foundation) showcases the need for designing and building cities with the disabled in mind. With over one billion people worldwide qualifying as people with disabilities, and over half of them living in cities, it is imperative that accessibility stays at the forefront of the minds of designers and planners.

The report, titled [Access and Persons with Disabilities in Urban Areas](#), is the third installment of ITDP's [Access for All Series](#), which has sought to distill common messages spotlighting inclusion, equity, and access for everyone to achieve urban mobility that meets their needs. The findings also make clear that people of all abilities benefit from universal design measures, like wider sidewalks, improved public space, and more compact neighborhoods.

Three main types of barriers — physical, social, and institutional — inhibit easy mobility for people with disabilities to make just a single trip through the urban landscape. Walking, cycling, on-demand carshares, and public transportation (both formal and informal) can be safe mobility options for people with disabilities. However, for this to be true, universal design features across these modes and their supporting infrastructure should not only be fully accessible, but comfortable and safe to use.

According to the report, inclusive [transit-oriented development](#) (TOD) — by providing a mix of goods, services, people, and opportunities within short enough distances to complete daily trips by walking, cycling, or transit — is an important approach for improving accessibility for people with disabilities and those with limited mobility. The eight principles of TOD are exemplified below: WALK, CYCLE, CONNECT, TRANSIT, MIX, DENSIFY, COMPACT, and SHIFT. Alongside TOD, universally accessible walking, cycling, and public transportation facilities improve the access and inclusion of persons with disabilities in urban areas.



People with disabilities are a diverse group with a wide variety of experiences who face a multitude of barriers to equitable participation and inclusion in

societies around the world. While disability was previously understood using a primarily medical model in which an impairment *is* the disability, the concept of disability is now increasingly viewed through a social model instead. Through this lens, the concept does not center on individual functionality but rather on disability as being an interaction of health, functioning, environmental, and personal factors.

When cities provide access for all types of persons, including those with disabilities, they are better cities for us all to live. To ensure our built environments are truly inclusive, it is critical that planners, policymakers, and public officials take actions that center the needs and perspectives of people with disabilities and limited mobility.

“Improving walkability is particularly important now, as safety concerns have led to a sharp drop in the use of public transit, posing greater risks for the most vulnerable populations,” said ITDP CEO Heather Thompson. “Planners and designers must realize that inclusive urban design measures and policies stand to benefit everyone, especially the millions of people who experience disabilities every day.”

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The Institute for Transportation and Development Policy is a global nonprofit that works with cities around the world to design and implement high-quality transport systems and policy solutions that make cities more livable, equitable and sustainable.

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