

## **Audit of Women's Challenges in Public Transportation Usage in the Philippines: Considerations in Public Transportation Development**

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### **Abstract:**

Men and women have persistent different transportation needs, travel behaviors and levels of access to services and infrastructure. These differences are linked to key factors including household structure and stage in life, income, and availability of travel options. Results of focus group discussions conducted for the proposed Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) systems in Cebu City and Metro Manila show that women are exposed to threats to physical safety and security and difficulty in accessing public transportation due to the physical design. The paper also shows that top criteria of women in their selection of public transportation modes are safety, reliability, comfort, and affordability. Hence, in the development of a more gender sensitive public transportation must address these must be considered.

*Keywords:* Inclusive Mobility, Women, Public Transportation

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Research has shown that men and women have persistent different transportation needs, travel behaviors and levels of access to services and infrastructure. These differences are linked to key factors including household structure and stage in life, income, and availability of travel options. Peters (2013, as quoted by Bhatt, A, et.al.) stated that "Within any given urban setting, women have inferior access to both private and public means of transport while at the same time assuming a higher share of their household's travel burden and making more trips associated with reproductive and caretaking responsibilities". Women tend to travel short distances (Sarmiento, S., undated), make more chained trips due to multi-tasks, walk more and are main users of public transportation (GenderSTE, 2015). Two-thirds of public transportation users in France are women (Hasson and Polevey, 2011), 55% in the US and in Germany, there are more women than men who use public transportation (Buehler and Pucher, 2012, as quoted by Amit, et.al., 2015).

## **2. OBJECTIVES**

The primary objective of this paper is to present the views and challenges of women when using public transportation within the Philippine context. Primary data is based on the results of the focus group discussions (FGD) held as part of the feasibility studies for the Cebu City (2012) and Manila (2013). It will likewise describe the female perspectives on the use and benefits of the emerging smartphone application-based transportation service.

### **3. RESPONDENTS PROFILE AND TRAVEL CHARACTERISTICS OF FGD PARTICIPANTS**

A total of about 60 women commuters were engaged in the focus group discussions between 2009 to 2013 during the conduct of feasibility studies for the planned Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) in Cebu City and in Manila. The participants included students, government employees, small retail business (i.e., sari-sari store and eateries) owners and vendors. Ages of the participants ranged between 17 to 81 years old. The most commonly used transportation modes varied across participants, trip purpose, urgency of trip, and available budget. However, these were all public transportation vehicles, which include 1) tricycles (i.e, motorbikes with sidecars) for short trips, 2) buses for work and when they need to carry large merchandises, 3) Jeepneys, and 4) Asian Utility vehicles (AUV). Walking is also an option when they are not in a hurry and sidewalks are not occupied by street vendors or when weather is pleasant.

### **4. CHALLENGES IN USING PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION**

Respondents across all group ages articulated similar observations about the current public transportation system in their cities.

#### **4.1 Lack of Concern for Passengers**

The participants perceived that public transportation drivers have no concern for their comfort or convenience. Some of them drive too fast, especially the younger ones and when requested to slow down by the passengers, they drive even faster. Moreover, they can be rude to passengers, particularly when one is asking for change. Bus and jeepney drivers also have a penchant of moving their vehicles forward even before passengers are properly seated. This pervading practice makes it difficult for women with young children to board the vehicle.

#### **4.2 Threat to Physical Security**

Another challenge issue raised was that most buses and jeepneys tend to be overloaded, particularly during peak periods. This makes for an uncomfortable ride and opens opportunity for physical harassment and thievery. Several participants recounted instances when they were subjected to physical harassment by male passengers seated or standing close to them.

Several respondents shared their experiences of taxi drivers with bad intentions. One recounted that when she got into the taxi, the driver did not flag down the meter, but instead stated that since her destination is quite a distance, they should agree on a fixed amount. When she refused, the driver became angry and started driving erratically. It was fortunate, though, that another taxi driver noticed and stopped the taxi that she was in.

Another respondent shared she was a victim of a new *modus operandi* of taxi drivers where they place a cloth doused with a kind of liquid which will make the passengers dizzy. When she boarded the taxi, she immediately noticed that there was a piece of cloth and a liquid container beside that driver. She stated that it was good thing that she had read about this in a post in Facebook so she was immediately on guard. She was starting to feel dizzy so

she decided to call and give the license plate number of the taxi to a friend within the driver's earshot. Then she told that driver that she was going to meet a friend and will get off at a nearer destination. When she alighted from the taxi, she almost fell to the ground because she was so dizzy. She felt that she had narrowly escaped being robbed and molested by the taxi driver.

#### **4.3 Difficulty in Boarding and Alighting Due to Vehicle**

The participants find air-conditioned buses inconvenient to alight from because there is only one door located on the front section. This becomes more challenging if the bus is overcrowded and one is seated at the back portion. Several participants shared that there had been times that they had to walk quite a distance from where they intended to alight because of this difficulty. For jeepneys, the common issue is the high step board to get on and off.

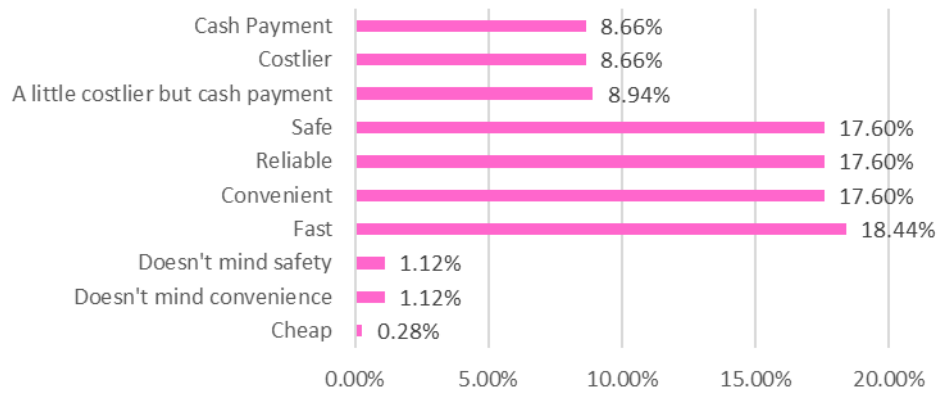
### **5. PERSPECTIVES AND PREFERENCES ON RIDESOURCING MODES OF TRANSPORTATION**

Due to the declining level of service of public transportation and increase in congestion, innovative modes of transportation using smartphone application are becoming more popular in Metro Manila. Ridesourcing companies utilize technology to provide on-demand transport services with the promise of higher reliability and reduced wait times (Rayle, et al, 2014). These are generally referred to Transportation Network Companies (TNCs) and defined as 'an organization that provides pre-arranged transportation services for compensation using an internet-based technology application or a digital platform technology to connect passengers with drivers using their own personal vehicles' (DOTC, 2015). In Metro Manila, the most popular TNCs are *Uber* and *Grab*. This sub-section attempts to distill the perspectives of the 68 female respondents in an online survey conducted in 2016.

#### **5.1 Considerations in Transportation Mode Selection and Willingness to Pay**

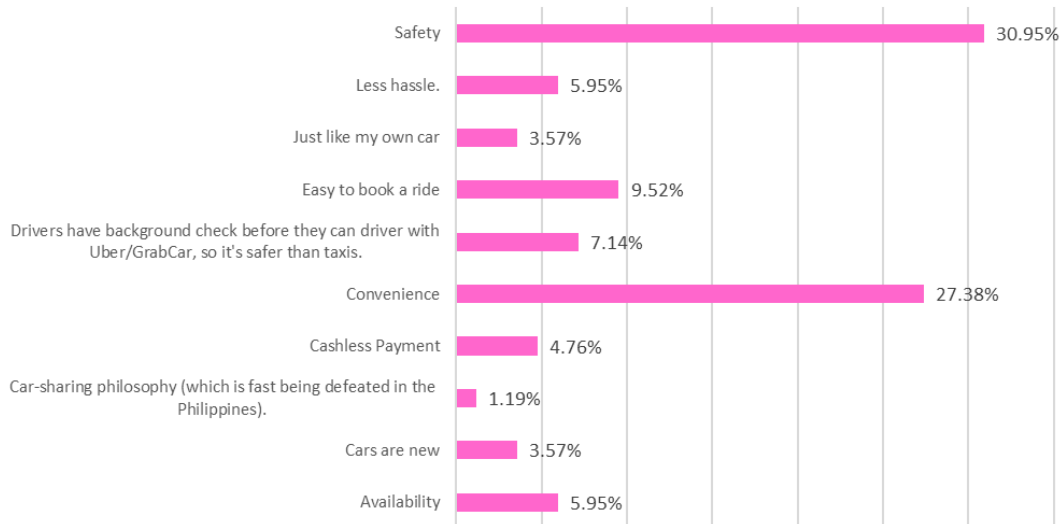
Considering the challenges that have been articulated in the previous sub-sections, the respondents were asked what their top considerations are in selecting a transportation mode. As can be seen from the figure below, the top four factors are speed, safety, reliability, and convenience.

**Figure 1. Criteria in Picking Transportation Mode**



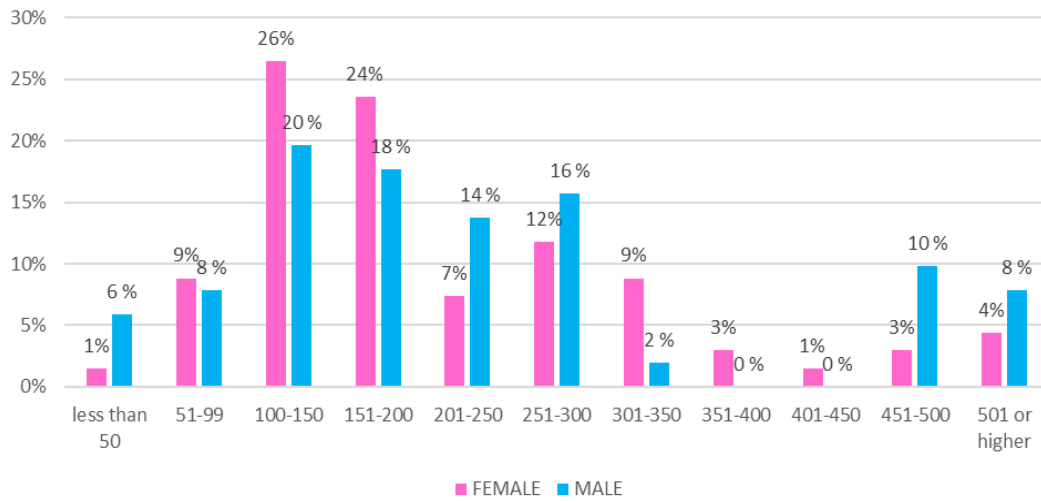
The reasons for choosing TNCs reflect the female's primordial concern of safety and convenience.

**Figure 2. Reasons for Choosing TNCs**



However, when asked until how much they are willing to pay for improved transportation services, the women were less inclined to spend than men. The majority of women stated that they were willing to spend until P200 (\$4) more for convenience and reliability.

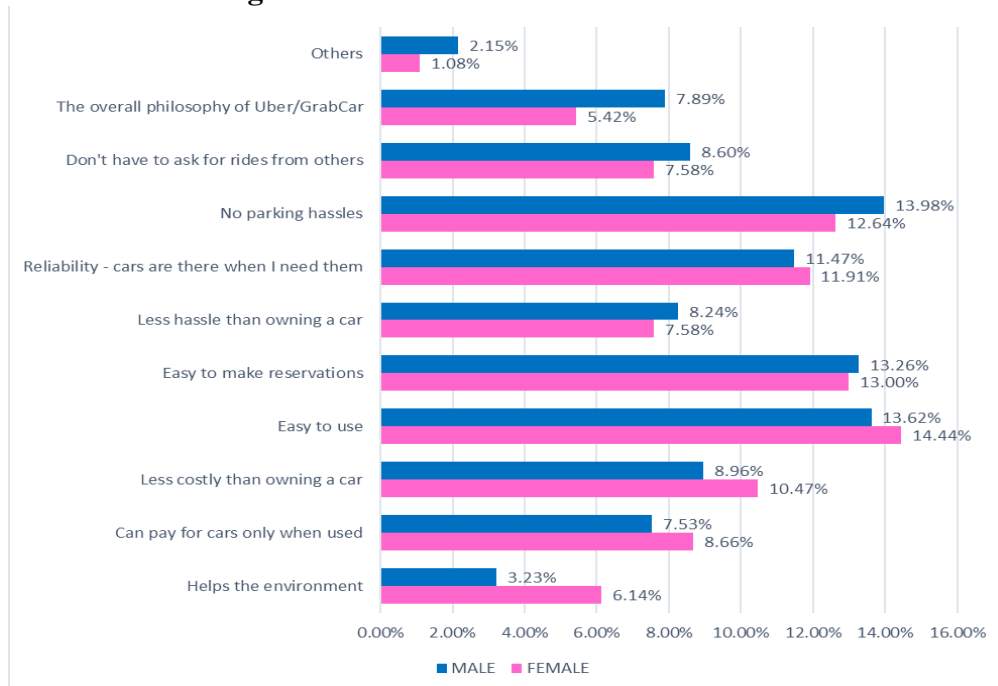
**Figure 3. Willingness to Pay for Convenient and Reliable Service**



### 5.3 Perceived Benefits of TNCs

The female respondents of the online survey indicated that the top factors that encourage them to use ridesourcing services are that it is easy to use, reliable, easy to book, and less costly than owning a car.

**Figure 4. Most attractive features of TNCs**



## **6. KEY GENDER CONSIDERATIONS IN PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION PLANNING**

The key improvements suggested by the female in the focus group discussions are submitted for consideration in moving forward to a more equitable public transportation system.

### **6.1 Reliability**

When asked about the current waiting time, the respondents responded that this would depend on the time of day. The usual is about 30 minutes, although this can easily become longer. They stated that one of the improvements they would like to happen is the reduction of waiting time to 3-10 minutes. However, more important to the participants is information on the availability of vehicles.

### **6.2 Safety**

Having gone through several harrowing experiences where their safety was compromised, the participants suggested that CCTV and emergency buttons be installed at stations and in vehicles. They also suggested that the stations be well-lit and security guards stationed strategically. Additionally, to ensure safety, the participants stated that overloading should not be allowed and the boarding and alighting be done at prescribed stations only.

### **6.3 Comfort and Convenience in Boarding and Alighting**

Recommendations for increased comfort included:

- Buses with 2 doors for boarding and alighting
- Wider seats
- No standees to eliminate difficulty in getting on and off the bus
- Space for packages
- Sufficient hand holds, in case standees are allowed

It was also suggested that boarding and alighting stations be provided with clean restrooms and seats for senior citizens and PWDs while waiting. They also suggested that vendors should not be allowed and kiosks be kept to a minimum number.

### **6.4 Driver characteristics**

When asked about public transport drivers characteristics, they enumerated the following:

- Good grooming
- Good manners
- Not too old. Until 55 years old

They further recommended that drivers should undergo gender sensitivity training as a requirement for getting a driver's license. For tricycle drivers, they suggested that all drivers must be members of a tricycle association to filter drug addicts and prevent them from driving.

## **6.5 Affordability**

The results of the FGDs and the survey confirm that women are more conscious of transportation costs and consider affordability as a key factor.

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Men and women have persistent different transportation needs, travel behaviors and levels of access to services and infrastructure. These differences are linked to key factors including household structure and stage in life, income, and availability of travel options. Results of focus group discussions conducted for the proposed Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) systems in Cebu City and Metro Manila show that women are exposed to threats to physical safety and security and difficulty in accessing public transportation due to the physical design. The paper also presents the results of an online survey for ridesourcing services with 68 women respondents on their desired qualities for public transportation. The results indicate that the top criteria of women in their selection of public transportation modes are safety, reliability, comfort, and affordability. Hence, in the development of a more gender sensitive public transportation, these must be addressed.

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Research has shown that men and women have persistent different transportation needs, travel behaviors and levels of access to services and infrastructure. These differences are linked to key factors including household structure and stage in life, income, and availability of travel options. Peters (2013, as quoted by Bhatt, A, et.al.) stated that “Within any given urban setting, women have inferior access to both private and public means of transport while at the same time assuming a higher share of their household’s travel burden and making more trips associated with reproductive and caretaking responsibilities”. Women tend to travel short distances (Sarmiento, S., undated), make more chained trips due to multi-tasks, walk more and are main users of public transportation (GenderSTE, 2015). Two-thirds of public transportation users in France are women (Hasson and Polevey, 2011), 55% in the US and in Germany, there are more women than men who use public transportation (Buehler and Pucher, 2012, as quoted by Amit, et.al., 2015).

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(2012) and Manila (2013). It also presents the survey results on the use and benefits of the emerging smartphone application-based transportation service from the female perspective.

### **3. RESPONDENTS PROFILE AND TRAVEL CHARACTERISTICS OF FGD PARTICIPANTS**

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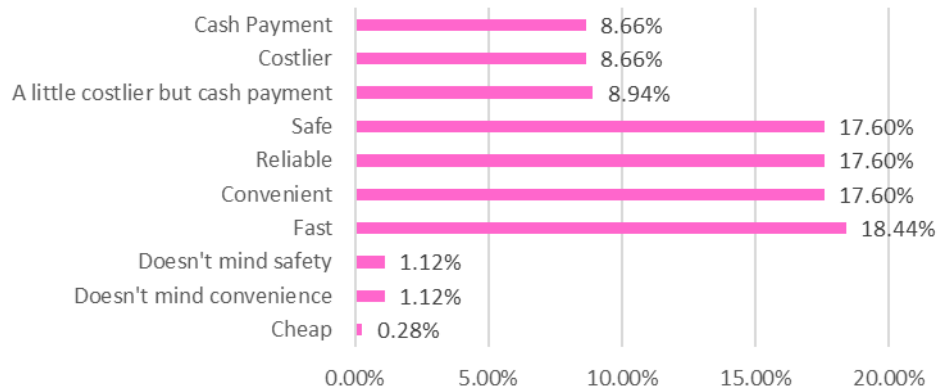
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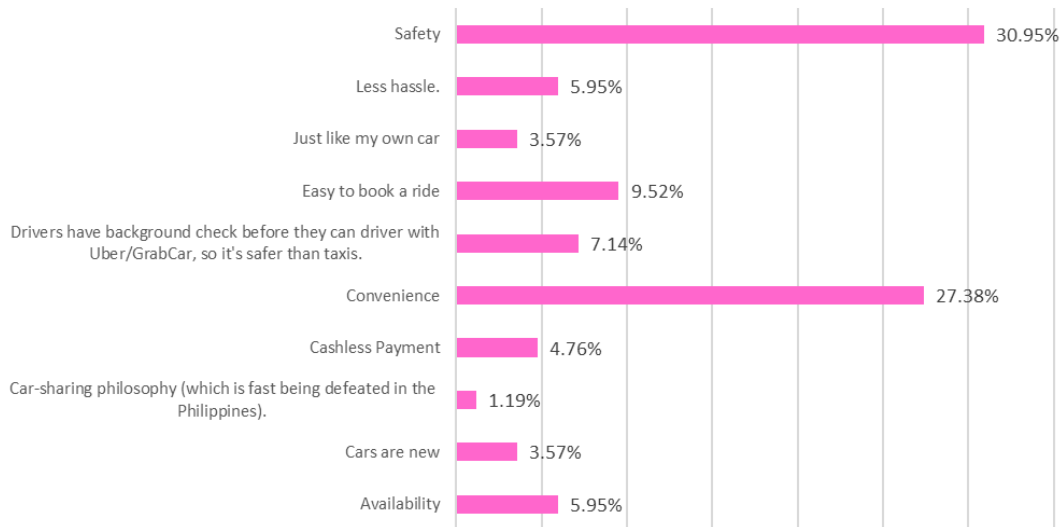
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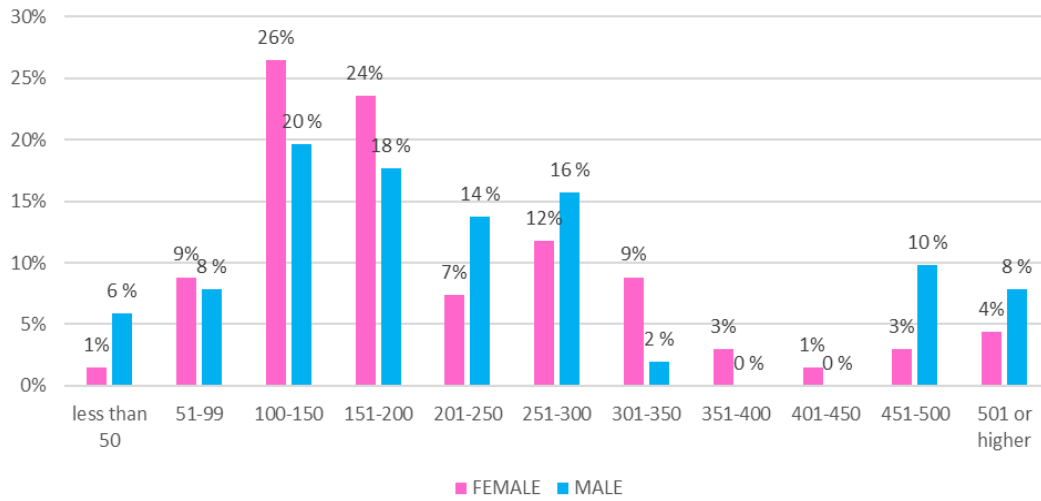
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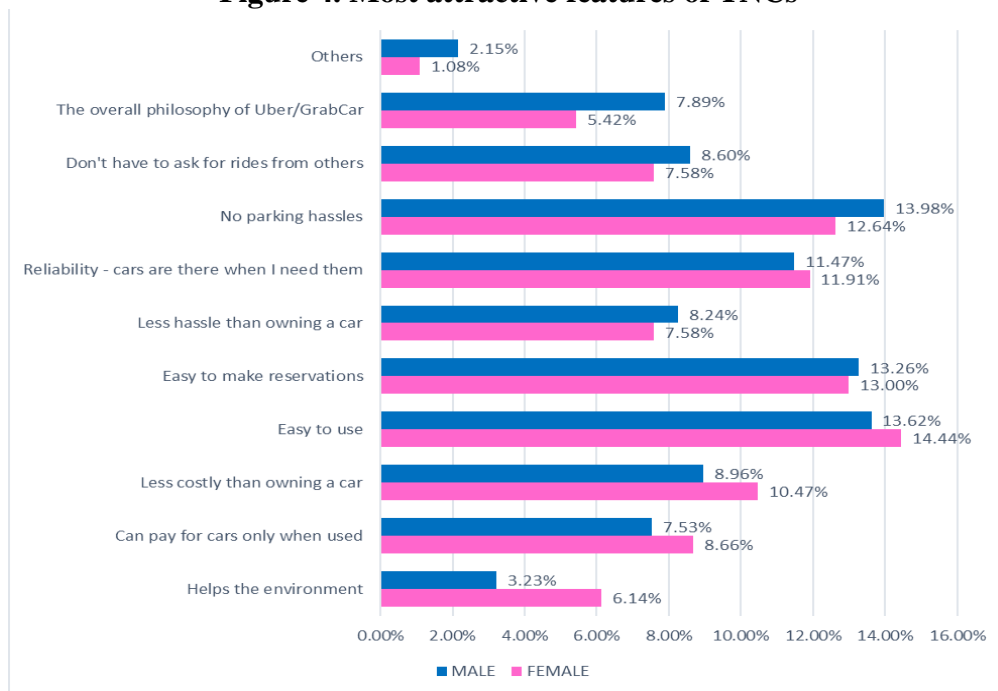
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## **6. KEY GENDER CONSIDERATIONS IN PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION PLANNING**

Based on the results of the online survey and focus group discussions, these are the key considerations in moving forward to a more equitable public transportation system.

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