

How to make public transport affordable for urban populations in African cities?

While new mass-transit projects are multiplying in African cities, one of the observed limitations regarding their use remains the cost, which is often too high for households, particularly in contexts where fare integration does not exist and intermodality is high (Adolehoumé et al., 2005; Olvera, Guézéré, Plat & Pochet, 2016). This session therefore aims to address the issue of the affordability of public transport services, first considering the economic aspects: what proportion of household income is spent on urban transport in African cities, how can this be measured, and above all, how can sustainable solutions be found to offer users equity in transport?

A corollary leads us to consider price elasticity, particularly in cities where all transport networks are due to be reformed. Far from being trivial, these methodological issues deserve even more attention as they are now central to pre-feasibility studies for mass-transit projects.

Next, public policies should also be considered: how can fare policies be implemented to encourage the use of public transport in contexts where there are few or no subsidies (Dowui & Ndiaye, 2024)? How can a comprehensive approach be taken to public transport pricing so as not to penalise users? Finally, another area of concern is the notion of "fair" pricing in African cities, where funding mechanisms are limited and travel needs are high, particularly for the most vulnerable populations.

The richness of this session will lie in its ability to bring together different disciplines (transport economics, sociology, political science, etc.) to address a key public policy issue.