



**Why you should  
use community  
engagement  
to co-create  
mobility plans**



# Index

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>1. Reimagining mobility</b>	<b>3</b>
Shared mobility	4
Here are a few ways to make sure these shared mobility solutions are actually helpful, instead of a hindrance;	4
Stimulating (safer) cycling and walking for Vision Zero plans	5
The 15-minute city	6
<b>2. Why community engagement makes mobility better</b>	<b>7</b>
Health, well-being, and safety	8
Local economy	8
Sustainability and climate change	9
Culture and leisure	9
Social equity	9
<b>3. How to engage your community in your mobility plan</b>	<b>11</b>
Take a hybrid approach	12
Consider your method(s)	12
Engage your community early and continuously	13
Refocus your vision	14
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>15</b>

Written and Published by CitizenLab SA - Boulevard Anspach 65, 1000 Brussels,  
Belgium - BE 0638.901.287  
[www.citizenlab.co](http://www.citizenlab.co)  
© 2022 CitizenLab

All rights reserved.  
No portion of this book may be reproduced in any form  
without permission from the publisher.  
For permissions contact: [hello@citizenlab.co](mailto:hello@citizenlab.co)

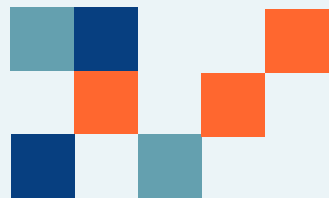


# Introduction

Wherever people live and work — whether in bustling metropolitan areas or in pocket-sized towns in the remote countryside — questions about mobility are bound to arise. After all, mobility defines our ability to move around and stay connected in the communities we call home. Mobility is about making it to work in the morning, without a grueling commute sapping all of our energy. It's about being able to go for a leisurely stroll, jog, or bike ride in a safe and pleasant setting. It's about having access to timely, clean, and safe mobility options, regardless of our age or abilities. We could go as far as to say that mobility facilitates connection, and that connection is absolutely crucial for the productivity, well-being, and stability of our communities. It's no wonder that a city's infrastructure—meaning the quality of its roads and public transportation—is among the five main criteria in The Economist's Global Livability Index, accounting for 20% of the total score.

If we are to develop mobility solutions that are human-centered, inclusive, and sustainable, we must involve our communities in the planning and decision-making processes. A young, disabled person commuting to school will experience mobility in your city differently from a worker on their way to their night shift or a parent taking a walk with a stroller. Tapping into your community's diverse perspectives will allow you to better grasp people's concerns and suggestions for change, and set priorities that will drastically improve mobility for everyone.

In this guide, we'll explore how to engage your community and find innovative, inclusive, collective intelligence-driven solutions for your city's mobility planning.





# 1

## Reimagining mobility

When it comes to rethinking mobility, the last few years have brought significant progress. Tech innovations, namely in-app design and cashless payments, have paved the way for us to hail rides and book bikes with the click of a button. **Shared mobility solutions allow us to pay as we ride** instead of investing in individual means of transportation. And as communities experience an uptick in climate crises, many are realizing that **the traditional ownership model is a key contributor to greenhouse gas emissions, air pollution, and traffic congestion** — and is thus unsustainable on a larger scale. Finally, cities are starting to include ride-sharing and bike-powered commuting in their mobility plans, partly due to the growing political power of millennials who demand greener transportation solutions. By doing so, they're beginning to make these options more widespread and accessible, accounting for things like lanes for scooters and more parking for rideshares at public transit hubs.



## Shared mobility

Ride-hailing, car-renting, and bike-sharing are becoming increasingly popular in cities around the world. According to Emergen Research's recent findings, mobility as a service is expected to expand by 26.3% by 2027, totaling \$523.61 billion in revenue. Younger generations appear to be migrating away from the traditional ownership model and toward a more collective mindset of shared and public transportation alternatives.

However, in many countries, these alternative mobility solutions are often exclusively available in urban centers and more affluent neighborhoods. Over the past few years, scooters, car-share parking spots, and shared bikes seemed to be simply dropped into cities, with little to no regard for where and how the community would need to use them most. To genuinely consider shared mobility an equitable alternative to traditional transportation, we'll have to make sure it's both widely accessible and adapted to local contexts. Of course, this requires careful planning.

### Here are a few ways to make sure these shared mobility solutions are actually helpful, instead of a hindrance:

- + Gauge your community's opinions on shared mobility solutions in a quick poll or survey.
- + Ask community members to identify suitable (or unsuitable!) locations for scooters, bike racks, or parking spots on an interactive map.
- + Organize an online workshop to facilitate deeper dialogue and define what needs to happen for these shared solutions to truly benefit everyone.
- + Let community members share their ideas and proposals for new alternative mobility solutions.

We'll elaborate on the different methods and processes you can use to engage your community in the 3rd chapter of this guide.



# Stimulating (safer) cycling and walking for Vision Zero plans

Cities across the United States have their hands full making Vision Zero plans to drastically reduce the number of traffic fatalities. And there's a certain urgency to that because in the last year, in the US alone, 6,283 people were struck and killed while walking and another 857 were killed while riding their bikes, according to data from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

Some of the most common solutions proposed by communities to make cycling and walking safer include:

- + **Improving bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure near transit stations and stops**, acknowledging that public transport passengers, by default, travel part of their journey by bike or on foot.
- + **Creating safer walking environments**, with good lighting, traffic separation barriers, or access to emergency services/call boxes as just a few of the numerous ways we could improve pedestrian mobility.
- + **Reinforcing speed restrictions** in busy places to provide a safer environment for cyclists and pedestrians.
- + **Investing in Complete Streets** by building and maintaining transportation networks that consider users of all ages and abilities — motorists, cyclists, pedestrians, and public transit passengers, also known as the gold standard.
- + **Setting up car-free or car-lite zones**. Across the globe, cities of various sizes are phasing out cars altogether by making (parts of) their city centers car-free.



With its ‘Walk, Cycle, Live Stirling’ project, the Scottish city of Stirling aimed to transform two transport corridors to allow for more cycling and walking, and to create more space for residents to rest, play, and connect with nature. By consulting the community, Stirling was able to tap into the collective intelligence and align decisions with the community’s real-life priorities.

## The 15-minute city

According to Dan Luscher, the San Francisco-based originator of the 15-Minute City Project, everyone should be able to access the places they need to go within a 15-minute walk or bike ride. It’s the idea of a decentralized city ruled by its neighborhoods and rooted in human-centered design, which means it “starts by looking at where an individual lives and where they have to get to, and figures out how to retool our neighborhoods and cities to get the kind of “hyper proximity” and ease of access that makes urban living great.”

In line with this theory, inclusive and sustainable mobility strategies will likely center around focal points of activity and community, making the city significantly easier to navigate in the process



### Cities around the world

The Scottish city of **Edinburgh** has announced its city center will become completely car-free by 2030. The Scottish capital will instead focus on pedestrianization and the elaboration of its tram network. Meanwhile, **Paris**, France has focused on implementing the 15-minute-city as much as possible, radically **embracing a new urban model that puts people first.**



# 2

## Why community engagement makes mobility better

When it comes to your streets, rails, zebra crossings, and intersections, your community members have lived experience that makes them experts. More likely than not, they know their streets and neighborhoods better than policymakers and traffic planners do. They know where cyclists and pedestrians feel unsafe, where public transport is limited or overcrowded, where traffic tends to congest, and where wheelchair-users struggle to access the sidewalks. Taking the community's local expertise into account in the decision-making process increases public buy-in, inspires new approaches to difficult issues, and helps you design a more livable, equitable, and inclusive mobility.





And that's important, because mobility inequality impacts everyone. Not having an inclusive mobility plan in place to ensure transportation equity can have detrimental effects, whether it's a lack of access to basic necessities or the inability to interact and connect with community peers, losing out on professional or educational opportunities, or even perpetuating cycles of poverty across generations. **An inclusive mobility plan—or the lack thereof—affects most, if not all, facets of life.**

## Health, well-being, and safety

Does your community have access to safe, green, and healthy spaces to bike, walk, or run? Can those living in remote areas receive emergency medical care if necessary? Are the streets adequately lit and safe for pedestrians at night? And how does air pollution impact those who live and work in your city? The mobility and infrastructure decisions you make **have a direct impact on the safety and general wellbeing of your community.**

## Local economy

Is it easy for community members to reach and support local businesses? Is your city's public transportation system capable of supporting commuting to and from work? Are schools, malls, supermarkets, or local business hubs well-connected and accessible via alternative modes of transportation, even in remote areas or suburbs? According to research from Politico, **every dollar invested in public transportation yields an economic return of approximately \$4, and 87% of public transport trips directly spur economic growth by getting people to work and connecting them to local businesses.**



With existing plans for parklets, pedestrian-only zones, and outdoor dining accelerated by COVID-19, [Edit the City!](#) helped the [City of Philadelphia](#) expand on prior engagement efforts by documenting neighborhood context and community preferences for the future of an iconic main street: South Street.



## Sustainability and climate change

Can community members get around without the use of a car, cutting greenhouse gas emissions in the process? Are there enough bike lanes, bike racks, walkable streets, and accessible sidewalks available for people to move around in a healthy, climate-neutral way? Are open spaces converted into parking lots, or are they used to create pocket parks or community gardens? **Sustainable mobility plays a crucial role in environmentally friendly living, and helps prepare us for the effects of climate change.**

## Culture and leisure

Do community members have easy access to movie theaters, museums, libraries, recreational activities, sports games, and community spaces? Are there open spaces for people to organize gatherings, block parties, or community festivals? Mobility doesn't only impact people's ability to attend or access cultural events or institutions—public transportation is even shown to stimulate creativity. **Sustainable mobility plays a crucial role in environmental**

## Social equity

Which transportation options are available to people who cannot afford a car? How do intersectionalities like race, ethnicity, gender, age, and ability impact how individuals travel around, and what they require to do so safely? Who is the present mobility strategy designed for (and by), and in whose interest? **Mobility, social mobility, and social equity are all intertwined.**

Involving your community in mobility planning contributes to more inclusive, sustainable, and community-driven decision-making that is more widely supported. Moreover, it fosters trust between community members and representatives, helps strengthen community ties, takes traditionally underheard voices into account, and often results in more vibrant cities overall.



## CASE STUDY MOBILITY & INFRASTRUCTURE

### City of Lancaster

When the City of Lancaster decided to engage their community to make South Duke Street a safer, more community-friendly corridor, they shared data from subject-matter experts and turned to their community's expertise by using the community engagement platform's mapping functionality to visualize problems.

They turned to their community, citing

*"Before breaking ground on any of these plans, the City would like to hear your thoughts, ideas, and experiences on the neighborhood streets. You know where the sidewalks and crosswalks need to be improved, where you like to cross the street (and where you don't), where you see drivers speeding, and where we need more light, more trees, and places to sit."*



# 3

## How to engage your community in your mobility plan

So, how do you engage your community in your mobility planning? We'll be the first to admit that setting up a community engagement project isn't a trivial task. It requires thorough preparation, planning, flexibility, and, ideally, a dedicated person or team monitoring progress and streamlining collaboration across departments.



## Take a hybrid approach

A digital community engagement platform can help you bring more people around the table. Digital options provide a flexible way to participate for people who have busy work schedules or caregiving responsibilities, or live in remote areas. Consider enlisting multi-sector partners, such as NGOs, businesses, employers, the transit authority, and informal community leaders, to assist you in raising awareness about your platform. This ensures that the message spreads and reaches underheard populations who may not have discovered the platform on their own.

That said, not everyone prefers an online approach. Older people or those who are less digitally inclined tend to prefer traditional forms of offline engagement. For a community engagement project that is truly inclusive, consider blending online and offline participation methods. For example, the digital process on your engagement platform could be complemented with offline polls, info sessions, or workshops, or offline participants could be referred to the platform via QR-codes.

## Consider your method(s)

There are numerous ways to involve your community. This is where the participation ladder—a hierarchy that ranks engagement methods depending on the degree of true impact and power transfer—comes into play. The higher up the ladder you venture—and thus, the more decision-making power you transfer to your communities — the more these communities will consider you a legitimate representative of the common good.

The different rungs of the engagement ladder are:

- + Information.** The city administration commits to informing the community and sharing accessible information about upcoming or implemented decisions or policies. In a mobility context, this could mean sharing up-to-date and transparent information on new mobility strategies, public works, parking spaces, or infrastructure updates.
- + Consultation.** This means the local government asks the community for feedback, ideas, or opinions on specific topics, decisions, or plans. Launch a quick poll or a more elaborate survey to gauge how people feel about things like traffic congestion, accessibility, the quality of local public transportation, etcetera.



- + Involvement.** In this rung, the local administration actively seeks to engage the community through option analysis, interactive maps, and more. You could, for example, ask community members to identify unsafe crosswalks on a map of the city or use mapping to help choose locations for new scooter docking stations.
- + Collaboration.** With this method, your local government is open to a genuine, two-way discussion that leaves space for community ideas. Tap into the collective intelligence and ask your community for their ideas on bike-friendlier streets, shared mobility, or improved public transport, whether it's in an ideation project or in an online workshop.
- + Empowerment.** The top level of the participation ladder, here local governments allows residents to make their own proposals or allocate budgets to the policy areas that matter most to them. For example, you could launch a participatory budgeting project for the funding of different accessibility initiatives, new mobility options, or traffic calming measures.

All methods of participation can be extremely beneficial, and the one you choose depends on your specific project and desired outcome. However, as a general rule, we recommend aiming high or combining several steps of the participation ladder. While the methods at the top of the ladder will result in the most deliberate process and potentially the most valuable feedback, the methods at the bottom of the ladder can provide additional value with a small investment of time and resources.

## Engage your community early and continuously

Of course, the ideal scenario would be to co-create a mobility strategy with your community from scratch. But because that's not always practically feasible, it's essential to consider which phase(s) of the project you'll let the community weigh in. The earlier you engage your community, the more you'll foster trust and align the outcomes with the community's needs. And by maintaining engagement throughout the process and involving your community at several stages, you'll really maximize the benefits of tapping into the collective intelligence. Stronger mutual trust between residents and the administration, more buy-in for decisions, more innovative approaches to mobility questions ... the list goes on.

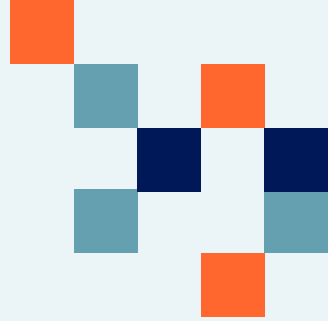


## Refocus your vision

As mentioned before, community engagement is no easy feat. It can be quite a challenge to reach a wide and diverse segment of your population and convince them to get involved. It can be a good idea to reevaluate what is preventing you from engaging more people. By shifting your thinking from "hard to reach" groups to "unheard groups", and considering common engagement barriers that may be impeding wider participation, you'll boost your chances of higher engagement rates. shared mobility solutions in your local context.



Want to know more about the process of setting up a community engagement project? [Check out our free guide on getting community feedback on your plans.](#)

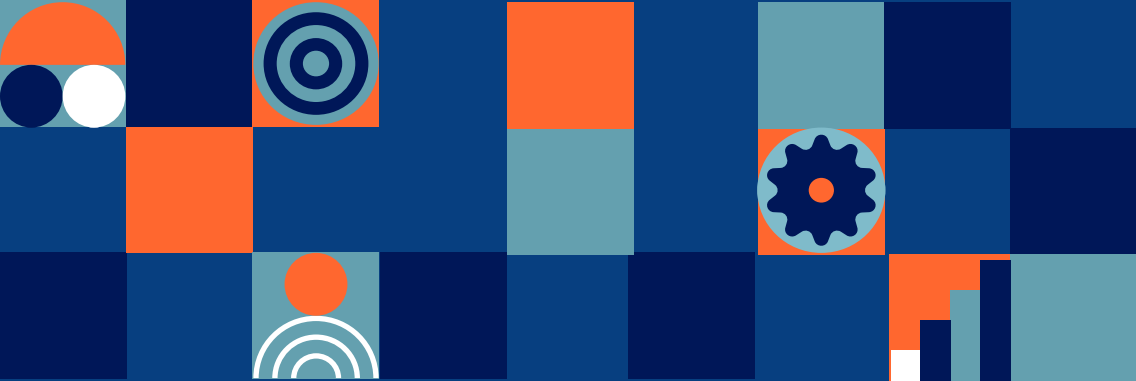


# Conclusion

Community engagement can help local governments account for diverse community needs in their mobility plans and policies to ensure they set the correct priorities and make mobility safe and accessible for all. It is time for local governments to prioritize inclusive and sustainable mobility in their policies, programs, and projects.

**Ready to get started? Get in touch with one of our participation experts. They'll be happy to guide you through the process.**





[www.citizenlab.co](http://www.citizenlab.co)

[hello@citizenlab.co](mailto:hello@citizenlab.co)