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ASIA-PACIFIC MAYORS ACADEMY

MALDIVES
Malé
Integrated Urban Mobility Plan for Malé City

ESCAP Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific · UN-HABITAT · UCLG ASPAC United Cities and Local Governments Asia-Pacific · APRU Association of Pacific Rim Universities · UNU IAS · IGES Institute for Global Environmental Strategies

The Challenge

Severe traffic congestion in Greater Malé is driven by high population density, limited road space, and a rapidly increasing number of vehicles. Despite a dense network of paved roads, congestion persists, primarily due to the dominance of motorcycles. The Sinamalé Bridge has improved connectivity between Malé, Hulhulé, and Hulhumalé by reducing reliance on ferries, while the Greater Malé Connectivity Project aims to link Malé with Vilimalé, Gulhifalhu, and Thilafushi to ease bottlenecks. Public transport is provided by MTCC through buses and ferries, but users frequently report inconsistent schedules and delays. Across Malé, Hulhumalé, and Vilimalé, there are 549 roads, with 119,093 active vehicles recorded in 2024—equivalent to 0.5 vehicles per person, of which motorcycles account for 87% and cars 6%. Notably, 71% of imported vehicles are registered in Malé, and nearly 60% (71,868) are not roadworthy, posing significant safety and environmental risks.

The Initiative

Proposed solutions for improving urban mobility in Greater Malé include enhancing public transport through the introduction of electric buses with tracking systems, pocket bus stops, and a reliable, affordable HUB network. Non-motorized transport will be promoted with expanded walkways, protected bike lanes, and awareness campaigns. Smart traffic management will be implemented through intelligent signals, real-time monitoring, and data-driven flow optimization. Vehicle regulation measures include congestion charges, limits on registrations, and the promotion of carpooling. Urban planning efforts focus on decentralizing services, encouraging mixed-use development, and implementing long-term decongestion strategies. Resilience measures emphasize green corridors, nature-based solutions such as green roofs, permeable pavements, and urban greening, while also improving air quality and providing socio-economic benefits including EV-related jobs and healthcare savings. Inclusivity is also prioritized, with designated bus seats and free travel for children under 18, elderly over 65, and persons with disabilities, as well as reserved ferry seating and free travel for the same groups.

The Evidence

What's Available:

- Traffic studies
- by the Ministry of Transport and Maldives Police Service.
- Vehicle registration data from the Transport Authority.
- Air quality and health impact reports from the Ministry of Health and EPA.
- Urban development plans from the Ministry of National Planning, Housing and Infrastructure.

What's Needed:

- Real-time traffic flow and congestion mapping.
- Public transport usage statistics.
- Community mobility behavior and preferences.
- Environmental impact assessments of current traffic patterns.

Policies, Plans, and Regulations

- Urban Transport Policy Update: Incorporate sustainable and inclusive mobility goals.
- Vehicle Regulation Reform: Cap on new vehicle registrations and incentives for electric vehicles.
- Zoning Laws: Encourage mixed-use development to reduce travel demand.
- Bylaws for Non-Motorized Transport: Mandate pedestrian and cycling infrastructure in new developments.

Governance

- Public Sector: Ministry of Transport, Malé City Council, Maldives Police Service.
- Private Sector: Taxi associations, logistics companies, EV suppliers.
- Academia: Maldives National University (urban planning and environmental studies).
- Civil Society: NGOs focused on environment, disability rights, and youth engagement.
  - Establish a Multi-Stakeholder Urban Mobility Taskforce with quarterly public consultations and a digital feedback platform.

Resilience Approach

- Climate Resilience: Promote electric and non-motorized transport to reduce emissions.
- Infrastructure Resilience: Design flood-resistant roads and transport hubs.
- Social Resilience: Ensure transport access for all, including women, elderly, and persons with disabilities.
- Adaptive Planning: Use data-driven monitoring to adjust policies dynamically.

Financing

- Government Budget Allocations (Ministry of Finance).
- Green Climate Fund (GCF) and Adaptation Fund.
- Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) for infrastructure and EV deployment.
- Development Partners: ADB, World Bank, UNDP.

Technical Support

- Urban mobility planning and modeling.
- Smart traffic systems and data analytics.
- EV infrastructure and renewable energy integration.
- Community engagement and behavior change communication.

Potential Providers: UN-Habitat, GIZ, ADB, World Bank, and ICLEI (Local Governments for Sustainability).

0–3 MONTHS

Objective: Establish governance, gather data, and initiate public engagement.
Governance & Coordination
·Form the Multi-Stakeholder Urban Mobility Taskforce.
·Launch quarterly public consultations and a digital feedback platform.
Data Collection & Assessment
·Begin real-time traffic flow and congestion mapping.
·Collect public transport usage statistics and community mobility preferences.
·Initiate environmental impact assessments of current traffic patterns.
Policy & Planning
·Start updating the Urban Transport Policy to include sustainability and inclusivity.
·Draft bylaws for non-motorized transport (pedestrian and cycling infrastructure).
Public Engagement
·Launch awareness campaigns for non-motorized transport and EV adoption.

6 MONTHS

Objective: Begin pilot implementations and refine policies.
Public Transport Enhancement
·Pilot electric buses with tracking systems.
·Install pocket bus stops in key areas.
·Begin planning for a HUB network for reliable and affordable transport.
Smart Traffic Management
·Deploy intelligent traffic signals and real-time monitoring systems.
·Start data-driven traffic flow optimization.
Urban Planning
·Identify zones for mixed-use development to reduce travel demand.
·Begin decentralization of services to reduce congestion in central areas.
Vehicle Regulation
·Introduce registration caps and incentives for EVs.
·Design congestion charge zones and carpooling incentives.

12 MONTHS

Infrastructure Resilience
·Begin construction of flood-resistant roads and transport hubs.
·Implement green corridors, green roofs, and permeable pavements.
Social Inclusion
·Ensure designated bus seats and free travel for children under 18, elderly over 65, and persons with disabilities.
·Implement reserved ferry seating for the same groups.
EV Infrastructure
·Expand EV charging stations and integrate with renewable energy sources.
Monitoring & Adaptive Planning
·Use collected data to dynamically adjust policies and improve service delivery.

>12 MONTHS

Objective: Institutionalize reforms and ensure long-term impact.
·Fully implement vehicle regulation reforms and zoning laws.
·Scale up smart traffic systems across Greater Malé.
·Institutionalize resilience measures in all future urban development.
·Continue community engagement and behavior change communication.
·Monitor and report on air quality improvements, healthcare savings, and EV-related job creation.