



**1st UITP SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
CONFERENCE**

***" Sustainable Cities and Public Transport
Bringing Quality to Life"***

Bilbao, 18-20 October 2006

Brian Williams

Friday 20 October 2006, Session 4

Transport as a Tool for Poverty Alleviation in Developing Countries

1. Biographical note

Mr. Brian Williams' main areas of specialization include sustainable development through transport interventions, international comparative research and program development in housing, transport and urban development, gender considerations in transport sustaining economic growth in developing countries, global climate change, air quality and transport demand management. His professional experience includes working for the United Nations Human Settlements Program (UN-HABITAT) in Nairobi, Kenya (December 1995-present) as a Human Settlements Officer and transport and energy specialist. He has also been a consultant at UNDP, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia (1995) ; the Program Director at the Institute for Transportation and Development Policy, New York City (1993-1995); and Environment Fellow at the Asia Foundation, Manila, Philippines (1994); Teaching assistant at Columbia University School of Urban Planning, New York City (1991) and an Urban and Regional Planner at New York City's Department of Housing Presentation and Development (1986-1988).

Brian Williams

Human Settlements Officer
United Nations Human Settlements Programme
UN-Habitat, Nairobi
PO Box 30030 Nairobi, Kenya
TEL: 254207623916
FAX: 254207623588
EMAIL: brian.williams@unhabitat.org

2. Abstract

More often than not, getting from Point A to Point B in any city in the world is an endurance test. Regardless of income or social status, the conditions under which we all travel have become more and more difficult and, for some, absolutely intolerable. But should urban traffic congestion and air pollution be the price we must all pay for economic development?

The unsustainable patterns of urban transport each of us must deal with on a day-to-day basis are usually quietly accepted as a necessary evil of contemporary urban life. While improvements in transport technology have enabled us to move ourselves and the goods we want to consume faster and more cheaply, travel speeds in many urban areas have been reduced back to the levels of the horse-carriage. Whether we are in a private car, a public transport vehicle, riding a bicycle or simply walking, the time we spend transporting ourselves is longer, the costs are higher and the air we breathe gets dirtier.

Poor or inadequate transport has led to a deteriorating quality of life for an increasing share of our urban populations and is often cited by many as the single most negative aspect of urban existence. No matter how sustainable a particular community may be with respect to housing quality, sanitation services and water availability, if it is not adequately linked in terms of affordable access to the wider urban area to employment opportunities and other urban services, it cannot sustain itself.