

Getting to the Table - Sustainable Transport and the Early History of the UITP Sustainable Development Commission

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Abstract

The UITP Secretary General, Alain Flausch presented the UITP Declaration on Climate Leadership at the United Nations Climate Summit in New York on 23 September 2014. This represents a significant achievement for the UITP and its Sustainable Development Commission.

This paper will provide a brief overview of sustainable development, specifically highlighting the experience of Hong Kong's MTR in this regard. It also summarises how the work of a few committed UITP members that started the Environmental Working Group in 2001 have been able to leverage UITP's strengths to get UITP to the table where the most significant decisions on climate change are being made.

In particular this article will outline the vision and thinking of the UITP Environmental Working Group and the development of competencies by the Sustainable Development Commission and its Chair. The article will demonstrate how, even with limited resources, passion and commitment can result in broad sectorial change and serve as a role model for other sectors.

Introduction

In 2001, the UITP¹ President, Dr. Wolfgang Meyer, established the UITP Environmental Working Group. The group would be Chaired by Dr. Glenn Frommer from the MTR in Hong Kong, assisted by a group of experts across operators, manufacturers and regulators. It is also supported by Heather Allen, Issue Management, UITP, and Petra Mollet, Director of Corporate Development, UITP.

The initial focus of the group was to identify the environmental issues, prioritise them and develop awareness amongst UITP members.

The group comprised subject matter experts with a rich knowledge of energy and resource use, climate change, noise, air quality, water quality, environmental management systems and much more. However, extensive group discussions revealed that success in changing behaviour on environmental performance with regards to public transport would not be possible without including social and economic aspects.

The three pillars of economic, social and environmental aspects are all deeply embedded in the provision of public transport. UITP

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recognised this in the Toronto Protocol signed and endorsed by 400 transport professionals at the 1999 UITP World Congress in Toronto and the declaration for Cities on the Move (the Melbourne Communiqué) signed by the Asia Pacific Division in 2000.

Public transport was already responding. In 2001, the MTR had just published its first sustainability report referencing the draft Global Reporting Initiative (GRI). Some manufacturers and transport providers were certifying their operations to ISO 14001 for Environmental Management Systems and reporting their outcomes in accordance with the European Union Eco-Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS). After discussion, the UITP agreed to widen the scope of the working group and include the three pillars. The Environmental Working Group was renamed the Sustainable Development (SD) Working Group in 2002 with the aspiration of becoming a formal UITP Commission.

Sustainable Development and Sustainable Transport

The concept of sustainable development was made popular in the book *Our Common Future* (1987), a report prepared in preparation for the United Nations Rio Convention in 1992. The report was edited by Gro Harlem

Brundtland and states that 'sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'.

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A sensible way of applying the concept of sustainability is the framework championed by The Natural Step, developed by a non-profit organisation established by Dr. Karl-Henrik Robèrt in Sweden in 1989. According to the framework, 'In a sustainable society, nature is not subject to systematically increasing:

- Concentrations of substances extracted from the Earth's crust;
- Concentrations of substances produced by society; and
- Degradation by physical means'.

It also states that in that society, 'People are not subject to conditions that systematically undermine their capacity to meet their needs'.

Applying transportation to the above definition within The Natural Step framework, the Group had agreed in 2002 on an understanding of a sustainable transportation system that:

- Allows the basic access needs of individuals and societies to goods, jobs, education, leisure and information to be met safely

and in the manner consistent with human and ecosystem health, and with equity within and between generations;

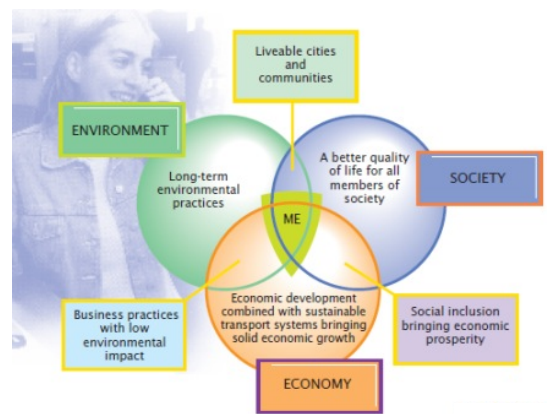
- Is affordable, operates efficiently, offers choice of transport mode, and supports a vibrant economy;
- Limits its emissions and waste to within the planet's ability to absorb them;
- Minimises consumption of non-renewable resources, use of land and production of noise; and
- Reuses and recycles its components whenever possible.

In particular, the concept of sustainable mobility builds on the intersection between three issues: economy, society and the environment. The intersection between the economy and society focuses on bringing economic prosperity through social inclusion.

The intersection between economy and the environment focuses on developing business practices with minimal environmental impact while the environment and society interact and develop liveable cities and communities.

This is summarised in *Figure 1*.

Figure 1: The Concept of Sustainable Mobility



Source: *Ticket to the Future*, UITP

Case Study – MTRC Ltd.

The Mass Transit Railway Corporation Ltd (MTRC) in Hong Kong has evolved a unique response in providing a sustainable transport system for Hong Kong's 7 million residents.

The railway supplements revenue from the daily ridership of 4.8 million with returns from commercial and residential developments located above or adjacent to the railway alignment. The Rail and Property model provides integrated developments that benefit the residents, the tenants, the railway, the shareholders and the Government; a win-win-win-win-win situation.

The Corporation has also advanced sustainability, utilising the synergy between Enterprise Risk Management and stakeholder engagement following the Deming Cycle of Plan – Do – Check – Act. MTR's reporting is built on GRI G3.1 A+ Guidelines, through the use of maturity mapping following BSi 8900:2006. More details can be found through MTR's website, www.mtr.com.hk.

The Sustainable Development Working Group

The leadership of the SD Working Group shared the long-term vision that public transport was one of the solutions to urban sustainable development and could have an impact at the highest level. Realisation of this vision would require some years to build competencies, a solid institutional foundation within the UITP and implement a focused programme of international advocacy.

The Chair recognised that a high performing group would be needed to fulfil this vision over an extended period. That meant that the Group meetings needed to be:

- Fun – the host member provided attractive side activities;
- Challenging – the leadership needed to deliver intellectually stimulating and substantive meetings;
- Productive – the work was delegated with support and follow-up provided where needed; and
- Inspirational/Motivational – they were occasions to celebrate the shared successes.

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The initial SD Working Group acquired several critical insights:

- There was a shared passion for advancing sustainable development;

- UITP's structure and breadth would attract and provide the critical input from operators, manufacturers and regulators across all forms of public transport;
- Members' achievements and aspirations needed to be recognised and communicated;
- Competencies would be best developed through training workshops based on the expertise and best practices of the Working Group's members;
- International advocacy would be led by UITP and drawn from members' combined achievements; and
- Progress toward sustainable development at the UITP was not a matter for the SD Working Group alone; broad UITP policy initiatives would be needed.

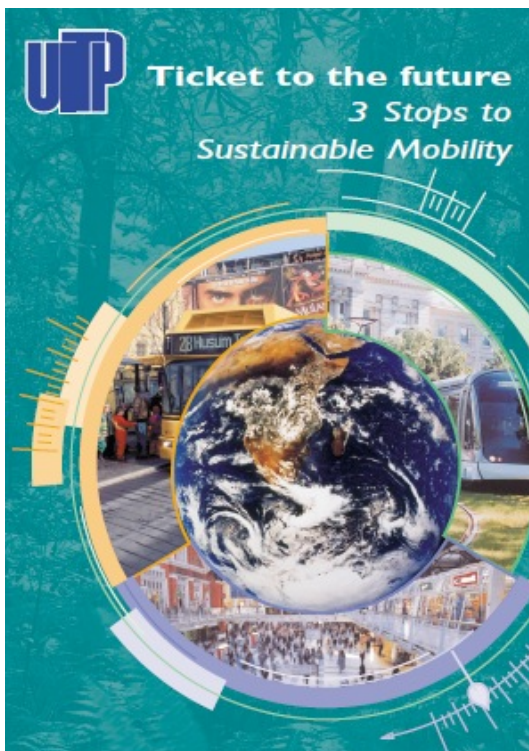
The SD Working Group applied their insights and set very ambitious initial goals:

- To prepare a document outlining UITP's position on sustainable mobility, and members' achievements. This would be published at the 55th UITP World Congress in Madrid in 2003;
- To establish a Charter to celebrate and encourage members' achievements, also to be launched at the Madrid World Congress; and
- To develop and work towards a formal UITP Commission.

Consequently, in May 2003, UITP launched its brochure, *Ticket to the future – 3 Steps to Sustainable Mobility (2003)*, Figure 2, at the 55th UITP World Congress in Madrid. The brochure presented discussions on

social equity, environmental balance and economic value. Each stop clarified the key issues, provided UITP recommendations and presented international examples. The social stop considered equitable transport, efficient land use, health and safety, and women's mobility. Environmental value was described through challenges to energy and resources, urban space, global warming, air pollution and noise impacts. The economic value summarised the relationship between city density and the cost of transport, the true cost of transport, the impact of congestion and job creation. The brochure concluded with a compendium of best practice examples.

Figure 2: The brochure launched at the 55th UITP World Congress in Madrid



The Charter on Sustainable Development

The UITP Charter (the Charter) on Sustainable Development was also launched at the Congress. The Charter presents a voluntary, measurable commitment to monitor and report on an organisations' performance in economic, social and environmental terms. Three types of signatories were promoted for UITP members: Full, Pledge and Association, *Figure 3*. Full signatories had already demonstrated their commitment to sustainable development with policies and measures in place, and were reporting on the three pillars of sustainability. Pledge signatories were committed to putting these initiatives into action within a reasonable time frame, and Association signatories would work with UITP via events and workshops to increase the awareness on this topic in their regions.

Figure 3: The 3 types of signatories for UITP membership



The UN Environmental Programme (UNEP) supported the Charter, providing a keynote address at the Congress where 33 UITP

members signed their Charters. Signing ceremonies have since become a highlight of UITP meetings around the world, and there are now almost 200 Charter signatories worldwide.

The working plan for the SD Working Group focused on promulgating the Charter, building internal capacity and advocacy. Heather Allen led a number of training workshops for UITP members in Brussels, Hong Kong, Brisbane, Montreal and Naples to develop their understanding of sustainable development and its measurement, and promote reporting on the three pillars.

Heather also undertook the international advocacy role of the UITP SD Working Group through numerous presentations and meetings with groups within Europe on sustainability related issues. Where beneficial, the UITP worked in conjunction with the UIC and UNIFE to build cross-industry understanding of the issues.

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As public transport has a unique role with regards to urban development and climate change, advocacy was directed in support of the United Nations Forum on Climate Change Convention (UNFCCC) and the related COP meetings, where the SD Working Group participated in a number of transport-related side events.

SD Working Group meetings through 2003 – 2005 focused on maturing insights into the three pillars and developing the skills and competencies to move measurement and reporting forward. Meetings were held in the Group's member cities, highlighting their sustainability contributions. The intellectual stimulation wonderfully complimented the camaraderie.

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The SD Working Group focused on providing an updated publication for the 56th UITP World Congress supporting the Charter, promoting Working Group members' achievements and providing a further tool for the international advocacy of the sector, *Figure 4*.

Figure 4: The SD Working Group's publication for the 56th UITP World Congress in Rome in 2005



Work on the Charter implementation was updated with links between environmental objectives and key performance indicators. UITP Recommendations were included in the final section and more than 50 examples of best practices from Commission members were included throughout the report.

It was also at this meeting that the SD Working Group was formally upgraded to the UITP Sustainable Development (SD) Commission.

The Sustainable Development Commission

Later that year the SD Commission issued a video message, *A Letter from Rome*, highlighting one of the Commission's working meetings. This provides unique insights into the workings of a high performance team.

The Commission Working Plan 2005 – 2007 maintained focus on the Charter and getting new signatories, building capacity through workshops and training sessions, and international advocacy. A Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the UITP President and the Director of the Division of Sustainable Development, United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development (UNCSD) in July 2005, cementing UITP's role in supporting UN activities in the public transport sector. The first UITP International Conference on Sustainable Development was held in Bilbao in 2006. More than 150 people attended and were treated to substantive presentations on sustainable transport, urban development

and members' progress in measurement and reporting. The highlight of the event was a guided tour and dinner at the Guggenheim Museum.

The first UITP International Conference on Sustainable Development was held in Bilbao in 2006.

Policy Initiatives and Further Progress

To reinforce the position that sustainable development is not only a matter for the SD Commission, but for all UITP Commissions, the SD Commission promoted two policy papers within the UITP. The UITP issued a position paper for *Fuel Choices for Public Transport* in late 2006, followed by a further position paper on *A Low-Carbon Future With Public Transport* in early 2007. This second paper was groundbreaking as it included the first sector-wide policy on climate change predicated on a risk-based approach.

By 2007, UITP members' understanding of sustainable development and the three pillars were rapidly maturing. The SD Commission and its efforts were established and the UITP's achievements in implementing sustainable development were recognised world-wide as a successful role model.

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The next Commission document, *Making Tomorrow Today (2007)*, Figure 5, published at the 57th World Congress in Helsinki, provided a basis for the first sector-wide report on progress. Sustainable development and its context were updated, and progress on the promulgation of the Charter included. More than 60 examples of best practices from Charter members and signatories are included. Details on measurement and reporting are illustrated, as are the barriers and drivers to implementing sustainable practices. Once again, UITP recommendations complete the report.

UITP’s second conference on sustainable development was held in Milan in 2008.

The author became the Honorary Chair of the SD Commission in 2007, when John Inghlish, the General Manager of Utah Transport Association (UTA), United States, took over as the Chair until 2013 and was succeeded by Gunnar Heipp, Head of Strategy and Policy Stadwerke München GmbH (SVM), Germany, to the present. Philip Turner replaced Heather Allen as the UITP Manager for Sustainable Development. The SD Commission has moved from strength to strength.

Figure 5: The SD Commission’s document published at the 57th UITP World Congress in 2007



The UITP Secretary General, Alain Flausch presented the UITP Declaration on Climate Leadership at the UN Climate Summit in New York on 23 September 2014. The Declaration followed the spirit of the previous documents, including hundreds of commitments on climate mitigation and adaptation made by UITP members. It was warmly received by the UN Secretary General, Mr Ban Ki Moon. The Summit was called to build political momentum for a legally binding agreement at the Climate Conference in December 2015. As identified by the UN, transport is one of eight areas identified as crucial for limiting temperature rise.

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The UITP is at the table participating in decisions that will impact all of its members, customers and the jurisdictions in which they operate.

Conclusions

The test of time has shown that the critical SD Working Group insights have provided a viable roadmap for the SD Commission, and the achievements of the Commission demonstrate

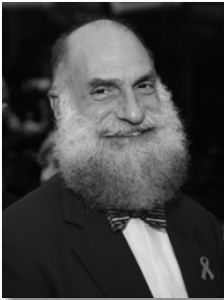
the success of high performance teams. The Commission's vision of providing leadership at the highest level is being fulfilled and public transport is incorporating sustainable development into its own vision within PTx2². The SD Commission is recognised as one of the most forward-thinking and productive UITP commissions.

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The SD Commission would not have succeeded without the passion and commitment of its members and collaborators over the years. Many of them have maintained their membership over an extended period, and the author would like to thank each of them for their contributions and their continued friendship. Readers will note the Working Group and Commission members in each of the documents published by the UITP. They are too numerous to mention individually in this article. All of the documents and the video message referenced herein are available on Mobi +.

Notes

1. The International Association for Public Transport, the UITP, is the worldwide association of urban and regional passenger transport operators, their authorities and the supplying industry. It is the only worldwide network to bring together all public transport stakeholders and all sustainable transport modes.
2. PTx2 is a vision and strategy launched at the UITP 2009 World Congress in Vienna, which sets out to double the market share of public transport worldwide by 2025.



Glenn Frommer is Honorary Chair, UITP Sustainable Development Commission, and Managing Partner at ESG Matters Ltd, as well as, former Head of Corporate Sustainability, Mass Transit Railway Corporation Ltd (MTRC), Hong Kong.

Dr Frommer is one of the pioneers of sustainability and the environmental movement, having worked in the field for more than 30 years. Prior to joining ESG Matters, he held senior executive positions with the MTRC for more than 21 years. His extensive cross-sector and cross-industrial experience extends throughout the international arena, specifically in Europe and Asia-Pacific.

Dr Frommer holds a PhD in Aerospace Sciences, is a Fellow and member of several international and local professional institutes and bodies, and a Fulbright Fellow. He is a published author and is currently the Senior Advisor to the GRI Focal Point in China.