



**Economic and Social  
Commission for Asia  
and the Pacific**



**Asian Institute of  
Transport  
Development**

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# **SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT PRICING AND CHARGES**

**Principles and Issues**

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**United Nations**



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## Foreword


The development of effective and efficient transport services is essential as we move further into the era of globalization. Unfortunately, not all ESCAP member countries are in a position to immediately meet this challenge. Financial resources for infrastructure are limited, transport users are not fully aware of the environmental impacts of their actions and access and mobility are impaired. Part of the core of these problems is the issue of sustainable transport pricing and charges.

Transport pricing is a complex issue because of the multiplicity of sustainability objectives, the institutional separation of infrastructure from operations, pricing from tax components of charges and transport modes from each other. As a result, many governments in the region have yet to introduce transport pricing that covers all direct costs, let alone prices that adequately reflect social and environmental costs.

This publication suggests the adoption of efficient transport prices that can promote a better balancing of economic, social and environmental concerns. It is also intended to form a basis for a deeper applied analysis of pricing in specific transport subsectors. I hope that readers will find the analysis and recommendations helpful.

I am happy to place on record my appreciation for the financial assistance extended by the Royal Netherlands Government and the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ) to the preparation of this publication.

I also acknowledge the contribution of the Asian Institute of Transport Development (AITD), in hosting a regional seminar with ESCAP on Transport Pricing and Charges held at New Delhi in November 2000, assisting in the peer review and publishing this document. I am impressed by the high level of objectivity of the Institute, its regional outreach and its capability to draw on a wide range of academic and professional resources. I am particularly encouraged by the deepening of cooperation between ESCAP and AITD in the spirit of the Memorandum of Understanding between the two organizations.

  
Kim Hak-Su  
Executive Secretary  
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## Preface

The role of transport in the development process is manifold and well recognized. As a result, policy makers usually face a multiplicity of objectives to regulate a complex set of interrelated activities, which affect diverse groups of society. Provision of transport services involves costs that need to be reflected in the prices charged for these services. This is a thorny problem of political economy, especially for the developing countries which have constantly to grapple with the problem: whether these costs should be fully reflected in prices at all levels of service; and if not, how to fund the gaps.

An equally important component of the problem is the definition of sustainable development, which concerns social measures designed to take note of the effects of economic behaviour and economic policies on the environment. This publication clearly identifies the sources of externalities that can be incorporated into the theories of resource allocation and prices. Essentially, it pinpoints two sets of externalities, one related to health and quality of life and the other to the adverse impact of the depletion of exhaustible resources on the future growth prospects of the economy.

The document combines the principles of microeconomic theories and welfare economics with the technological and organizational characteristics of transport industries and provides a comprehensive analysis of the problems of transport pricing. It strongly recommends that in the interest of promoting sustainable development, the users of transport services should ordinarily be required to pay the social costs of providing these services.

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