

Modernizing Public Transport Systems is Key to a Great Customer Experience

Across North America, there is an enormous backlog of deferred maintenance and replacement projects needed to keep our transit systems running. The connection between asset condition and service performance is clear - transit systems in a state of good repair have fewer breakdowns and fewer safety issues, both of which can disrupt riders' journeys.

It is a huge challenge to keep things moving while improving aging assets. Plus, we all operate within constrained budgets, and the funding needed to achieve just the basic level of good repair is often beyond our financial capacity. The prospect of modernizing our systems into a competitive transportation option can seem an unattainable luxury.

That's why one of the focus areas for UITP North America is to facilitate more dialogue about our system modernization needs and promote increased investment in asset maintenance and replacement.

Within the transit industry, we need a cultural shift. First, we need to move beyond a repair-and-return-to-service approach to maintenance. Instead, we must adopt practices that predict and pre-empt equipment failures and prioritize projects that will improve safety, increase reliability, and even reduce costs.

Second, we need to embrace the idea that great transit asset conditions are necessary for a great rider experience. At the most basic level, our riders expect buses and trains to arrive, on time, and run without breaking down. Comfort and cleanliness during the journey also matter. Modernization takes asset maintenance even further.

System modernization is an opportunity to incorporate advances in technology and design arose after the previous vehicles or facilities were built. We also should ask the end users – our riders and employees – what amenities they want as we replace or renovate our assets.

We want to know how our global peers address transit asset management and long-term capital planning. In addition to learning from each other, let's look for best practices in related industries and government sectors such as transportation departments for roads and bridges, the military, or even private manufacturing firms. Exchanging ideas makes us all stronger.



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