

Warsaw Program Eliminating Barriers

Background

Warsaw, like many rapidly modernising cities, has had to tackle environmental challenges while improving mobility access for everyone. Historically built for cars, the city recognised the need to pivot toward sustainable and inclusive transport, especially considering its ageing population and rising urban density. The municipality worked to make sure that green transport initiatives wouldn't marginalise persons with disabilities, older adults, or lower-income residents. Therefore, Warsaw has systematically enhanced transport equity while pursuing sustainability. From 1995, the city introduced low-floor buses and gradually extended accessible features to trams and stations. This shift aimed to make mobility inclusive for users of all ages and abilities.

Key Activities

Between 2018 and 2025, the city allocated €1.91 million for the "Warsaw Program Eliminating Barriers," alongside national funding aimed at expanding accessible transport:

- Universal Design principles were integrated into the city planning documents to make all new infrastructure accessible by default.
- Persons with disabilities were involved in public consultations to tailor services effectively.
- The public transport system was upgraded to include low-floor buses and trams with wide doors and audio-visual passenger information systems.
- Metro stations were retrofitted with lifts and tactile paths.

Key Activities

- Traffic-calming zones, wider pavements, and green corridors were added to encourage walking and biking.
- Redesigned kerbs, tactile paving, detectable warning slabs, and audio-visual information systems ensure easier boarding and navigation.
- Researchers analysed travel times and accessibility across transport modes and areas of the city, finding public transport ranked behind cars and bikes in speed and reach, highlighting the need for continued expansion.

Impact

Increased use of public transport: The city saw a significant reduction in private car usage in the city centre and an increase in multimodal travel. Accessibility audits show that most public transport modes are now usable by people with limited mobility. Surveys also indicate increased public satisfaction and a rise in public transport use among older adults and persons with disabilities.

Enhanced accessibility: 100% of buses, metro trains, fast city trains (SKM), and about 59% of trams are now more accessible. As of 2019, 87% of bus and tram stops were fully accessible, with another 8% partially accessible. All metro stations met accessibility standards, with a few final improvements pending.

Environmental benefits: In terms of environmental performance, Warsaw has cut CO₂ emissions from transport and improved air quality in several zones

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Challenges & Solutions

- Balancing environmental targets with the everyday needs of groups at risk of exclusion requires constant feedback loops. For example, cycling infrastructure that interfered with pedestrian routes was redesigned.
- Ongoing efforts are tackling uneven accessibility rollout. Older infrastructure is being gradually modernised.
- The city addressed awareness barriers by conducting accessibility audits and expanding public outreach.
- While car travel is still faster, factoring in parking time makes public transport more competitive.
- Budget limitations were addressed through EU co-financing, and staff training ensured public transport workers understood accessibility needs.

Tips for Similar Projects

- Invest early in inclusive infrastructure like tactile guidance and low-floor transport.
- Invest in data-driven planning and identify and prioritise high-impact zones.
- Maintain continuous stakeholder engagement and flexibility in design choices.
- Track accessibility metrics over time to motivate action.
- Pair environmental goals with inclusive design - don't address one without the other.

Identified Limitations/Weaknesses

- Accessibility upgrades have progressed unevenly, with outlying districts requiring further attention. Infrastructure barriers persist in underserved districts.
- Completion of tram accessibility improvements

Identified Limitations/Weaknesses

- is lengthy and ongoing.
- Additionally, some older infrastructure, particularly metro stations, built decades ago, still requires modernisation. The metro network remains limited to two lines, restricting faster multimodal commuting.



Image Source

- Warsaw Public Transport Official Website

Resources

- [EU Urban Mobility Observatory: Case Study – Warsaw](#)

Partners

