



**The 12th International Conference on Competition
and Ownership in Land Passenger Transport**

*Sunday 11th to Thursday 15th September 2011
Durban, South Africa*

<http://thredbo-conference-series.org>

Call for Abstracts

Conference themes are provided below, abstracts may be submitted online at:
<http://thredbo-conference-series.org/call-for-abstracts>

The deadline for the call for abstracts has been extended to 1 February 2011

The Thredbo Series was established in 1989 by Professor David Hensher and the late Professor Michael Beesley CBE. Since this time it has been held biennially in locations all over the world: Tampere, Finland, 1991; Toronto, Canada, 1993; Rotorua, New Zealand, 1995; Leeds, UK, 1997; Cape Town, South Africa, 1999; Molde, Norway, 2001; Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 2003; Lisbon, Portugal, 2005; Hamilton Island, Australia, 2007; and Delft, The Netherlands, 2009.

The objective of the conference series is to provide an international forum to examine passenger transport competition and ownership issues, reporting on recent research and experience and developing conclusions on key issues. The focus is on determining the effects of different forms of competition, ownership and organisation for land-based passenger transport on operators, users, governments / funders and society as a whole. The conference series is directed towards a broad audience of policy makers, planners, decision makers on infrastructure and service operators, consultants, researchers, academics and students, and is recognised as one of the most important international forums for analysis and debate of competition and ownership issues in land passenger transport.

The conference typically features plenary sessions over four days and a series of intensive workshops based around keynote papers and a series of resource papers providing a range of international perspectives on each issue. There is a strong emphasis on what policy lessons can be learnt from recent experience internationally and what issues warrant further investigation.

Workshop Themes

<http://thredbo-conference-series.org/workshops/>

The following six broad workshop themes have been developed for Thredbo 12. They are based on workshop participant's feedback received from Thredbo 11 in 2009 as well as a continuation of the central theme of the conference series, namely competition and ownership issues in land passenger transport. It is important to remember that these themes cut across the land passenger modes of transport i.e. rail transport in all its forms, bus and ferry services as well as low capacity informal transport services. Papers can therefore be developed in support of any mode of transport along the main workshop themes identified for the conference.

Workshop 1: Performance measurement and compliance

One of the challenges of public transport is the measurement of public transport performance and compliance with contractual conditions. These challenges are the main focus of this workshop. The types of performance measures, incentive and penalty regimes, benchmarking and the associated risks in performance measurement form part of the discussion. Issues that are also to be discussed include items such as public transport sustainability, transparency in decision making, innovation e.g. engineering choices regarding technologies, and the overall benefit of public transport to society. What evidence exists about the wider impacts of transport interventions on macro policy goals? (e.g., the environment, reduction in accident rates, traffic volumes, mode switch etc.); the benefits of integration within the transport system and between transport and related economic sectors? The following questions further elaborate on this workshop theme:

- a. What performance measurements and obligations should be built into contract/concession agreements? What are the risks?
- b. What are the views of operators and authorities about performance and compliance measures?
- c. What are the proven incentive and penalty regimes?
- d. Why do actual public transport systems differ from original promises? What are the contributing factors?
- e. Do we understand how the engineering choices regarding technologies and operational models relate to the goals set out? What effects do they eventually deliver?
- f. What are the wider economic benefits of high speed inter-urban rail?

Workshop 2: Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) (as part of enhanced service provision)

BRTs are fast becoming public transport systems of choice on high density urban corridors in developed and developing countries. These systems are not only relatively easier to implement and more flexible than light rail/tram systems but are often less expensive to implement and operate. This workshop will therefore focus on the role of BRTs as part of enhanced public transport service provision. Are these systems delivering on expectations of

enhanced service provision? When do we consider BRT systems as opposed to conventional public bus systems and other options including light and heavy rail? What are the lessons that we can learn from the design, contracting, implementation, performance measurement and monitoring of BRT systems in developed and developing countries? Are these lessons equally applicable between developed and developing countries? The following questions can also be considered as part of this workshop:

- a. What are the experiences, business models, risks and challenges (linked to barriers – political in particular) involving the informal non-regulated public transport sector in BRT systems?
- b. How can BRT systems be retrofitted into an existing public transport system? What are the issues and concerns? What rights do existing operators have when such systems are implemented on their routes?
- c. What are the operational and cost advantages of BRTs versus conventional public transport systems? How do these systems compare to light rail/tram systems as an alternative solution to public transport provision?

Workshop 3: Governance, contracting, ownership and competition issues in public transport: Lessons that can be learnt from developed and developing economies

This workshop will focus on a recurring theme of the Thredbo series of conferences namely contracting, ownership and competition issues in public transport. In addition, it will focus on the experiences thus far with these foci in both the developed and developing worlds, within the broad overarching theme of governance. A useful further division would be to look at these themes at the strategic, tactical and operational levels of planning, implementing and operating public transport systems. Are there major differences in these approaches between the developed and developing world, and if so, what are they and why?

It is also important to understand the operator dynamics in developing countries – both formal and informal, i.e. their structure, motivations, financing, ownership and capacity to transform; their potential and limitations to transform in structure/corporate form; their potential and limitations to transform their transport offer and to integrate with conventional transport and major systems such as BRT systems. These characteristics have a major bearing on the outcomes of policy objectives of contracting, ownership and competition issues. In addition, the following questions can be considered in this workshop:

- a. How can the connection between the strategic and tactical levels of management and policy objectives be improved?
- b. How can across-sector (whole of government) planning impacting on transport be improved?
- c. What is the best way of stimulating the operator at the tactical level of management?
- d. What are the advantages and disadvantages of operator involvement at the tactical level (design level of service offerings) and how important is the scale of the market and contract duration?
- e. What are the transaction costs of competitive tendering to enable a more complete evaluation of the options available?

- f. What are the effects of service “cherry picking” on the ability to utilize economies of scale and scope on both demand and supply side; what are the effects on levels of innovation and ultimately ridership?
- g. What are the costs of “appropriately regulating” deregulated markets?
- h. What is the role of the transport authority in deregulated markets (rules of the game/controls) to improve market outcomes?
- i. The private sector is playing an increasingly important role in the provision of public transport services. How should one ensure public values in the public transport sector given that a great deal of the funding is coming from the public sector?
- j. What innovative public transport financing techniques could be made applicable to developing countries?
- k. What are the successes and failures/barriers in public transport improvements in the developing world?
- l. What are the points of relevance regarding competition and ownership solutions between developed and developing countries? Are different solutions, principles, methods and practices needed, if so, what are they and why?
- m. What are the barriers to the implementation of desired policy strategies in developed/developing countries?
- n. How does competitive tendering influence the labour market? How is labour treated in different competitive regimes? Does the transfer of labour from the incumbent operator to a new operator impact the cost structure/competitiveness of the new operator? What are the options in this regard?
- o. How should public transport be funded/co-funded at the local level? What sources of funding could be explored?
- p. What are the critical success factors for a successful local authority involvement in the management of public transport at that level?
- q. Can we accept a sub-optimal level of contestability as a regulatory alternative, knowing that CT as an alternative is also sub-optimal? What conditions need to be present before successful market principles/initiatives can be introduced?

On the themes above for workshop 3, we welcome papers that consider how one might best deliver an integrated approach to resolving transport issues, including cross-sectoral issues and means of tackling problems. This brings in land use, telecommunications, social policy, etc. Matters to consider could include the most suitable formal governmental structure (e.g. transport department, land use/transport department, planning commission, etc), what roles should the politicians play, who does the strategic transport planning, how is PT service planning and contracting managed, what evidence supports particular arrangements, and is it the people or the organizational design that really drives successful; outcomes?

Workshop 4: Designing contracts/concessions: What has worked and what has not and why?

This workshop will focus on issues involved in the design of contracts and concessions in a complex environment. The designer has to take cognisance of a range of policy objectives (and constraints) such as accessibility to the transport system, limited funding sources (e.g., subsidies), integration and coordination of service delivery, intermodalism, through ticketing, social objectives such as affordability, the inclusion of small operators etc. What are the experiences in the design of contracts and concessions in the developed and developing world? What has worked and why? What has not worked and why not? Other considerations are:

- a. How does competitive tendering, negotiated contracts or direct awards influence public transport quality, customer satisfaction and patronage?
- b. Which contractive solutions are perceived by professionals as sources of efficiency or inefficiency?
- c. What is the role that one could expect the public authorities to play in competition between operators, service delivery and quality, incentive and penalty schemes?
- d. How should one avoid the risk of over-regulation?
- e. What role do regulatory authorities fulfil in passenger rail restructuring to achieve success or contribute to failure; which types of contracts/concessions work best?
- f. What role does accountability and service level agreements play at the authority and operator level in making rail concessions successful?

Workshop 5: Network and system planning: How best to deliver this under alternate contract regimes in order to grow patronage and service levels

This workshop will consider the different contracting regimes that can be explored in network and systems planning. What type of competitive tendering results in high quality services and efficiencies? Can this also be achieved with negotiated contracts? There are fears of market concentration under both competitive tendering and deregulation. What are the effects on company structure and on the level of competition in the long run of various kinds of market regimes? Should these contracts be of a net or gross cost nature? What are the experiences with these contracting regimes? Other questions to consider include:

- a. Which of the competitive regimes is best suitable to sustain a less concentrated market structure?
- b. What are considered to be the effective sets of regulatory instruments to secure minimum standards of service delivery from an authority point of view?
- c. What are the innovations that appear in a deregulated market regime? Under which circumstances are such innovations possible under a contracting regime?
- d. An overview of the successes and failures in international and national passenger rail markets. What role do the contracting regimes play in these successes and failures?
- e. A comparative analysis of the performance of various versions of the “market initiative”: What works best in terms of welfare or quality for passengers?

- f. How should public transport systems development cater for a wide variety of public values such as sustainability, transparency in decision-making and financing, bring innovation and secure mobility in a congested world?

Workshop 6: The Public Agenda: What is working and what is missing? (including social inclusion)

Social and environmental planning and policy is increasingly being recognised as a central issue in transport. The ability to travel despite not having car access is of considerable importance to society in terms of the wellbeing of citizens and the national economic costs associated with inequality and disadvantage. Private cars are a large source of greenhouse gasses, an issue which needs transformational thinking and actions by those involved in the transport sector. The implications and opportunities of these issues for the development of the public transport sector is very significant, yet one which we are yet to really understand and plan for. While some considerations are being given to these issues by some developed countries, we are yet to grasp the magnitude of these issues in developing countries who are often largely dependent on the informal transport sector. There is presently a small window of opportunity to facilitate much better planning and solutions within developing countries to avoid the significant problems (in terms of congestion, greenhouse gas emissions and other pollution, poor land spatial and urban planning, and inequality and promulgation of disadvantage) which are now occurring in many developed car dependent economies. This workshop will consider the present state of these fields, the interdependence of these issues with economic policy, the opportunities which will arise with solutions to these problems and the future development of solutions to these issues. Additional points to consider include, but are not limited to:

- a. What evidence can be provided in reducing social exclusion through a better provision of public transport?
- b. What are the policy links between social exclusion, climate change, and sustainable growth of patronage?
- c. An overview of innovative ways of marketing and service provision to target socially excluded people
- d. Standards and specifications for achieving an inclusive transport provision and minimum service levels
- e. What are the wider benefits of public transport services?
- f. What are the impacts of operating contracts on mainstream public transport options originally designed to meet the need of socially excluded people?
- g. What evidence can be provided of corporate social responsibility in public transport systems?
- h. What is the role of informal transport in the public transport mix in developing and developed countries?