

MINISTRY OF TRANSPORT, HIGHWAYS, AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT

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NATIONAL LAND TRANSPORT POLICY OF SRI LANKA - 2025

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

The Government of Sri Lanka is responsible for formulating national policies in key sectors, including transport, as per the 13th Amendment to the Constitution, while institutions under the central government are tasked with national-level transport policy. Provincial Councils hold responsibility for regulating intraprovincial passenger and goods transport.

This policy applies to land-based, fee-charging, passenger and freight transport services, excluding internal water transport and international maritime and aviation sectors.

1.2 Rationale

Sri Lanka's road network spans roughly 114,093 kilometers, and its railway network is 1476km, while having approximately 1,562 kilometers of route kms. The total road network includes trunk roads (A - 4217 Km), main roads (B - 8045 Km), expressways (E - 313 Km), and local roads (C). The railway network consists predominantly of single-track lines, with limited sections featuring dual, triple, and quadruple tracks.

The land transport system faces growing congestion, rising public dissatisfaction, fuel inefficiency, environmental degradation, and unaffordable infrastructure debt. A public service with stakeholder feedback-oriented, socially inclusive, and economically viable policy is crucial for correcting inefficiencies, promoting equitable access, and facilitating cost-effective mobility for all, thereby focusing on economic enhancement. As mobility demand continues to expand with urbanization, economic transition, and technological change, the sector must evolve from a supply-driven model to one that is strategic, inclusive, and sustainable.

1.3 Policy Context

This policy builds on earlier frameworks introduced in 1997, 1998 and 2009. It responds to emerging socio-economic realities, evolving stakeholder expectations, and global sustainability commitments. This National Land Transport Policy (2025) provides a comprehensive scientific and

regulatory framework to formulate sustainable business transformations in the transportation sector. It places people at the center of mobility decisions, ensuring that every intervention contributes to equitable access, safety, affordability, and environmental stewardship, driven by research and innovation, while providing priority for local transport-related industrial development.

2. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

2.1 Equity and social justice

Transport is not just a technical service-it is a human right and a social equalizer. This principle ensures that all segments of society, including marginalized and underserved communities, are covered and resource allocations are being provided with cross-subsidies and public service obligations when necessary.

Transport systems serve a public function and shall prioritize social outcomes. This principle does not reject private participation but ensures that public interest remains paramount in all decisions.

2.2 Accessibility and inclusion

Every citizen should have the physical and systemic ability to Use transport services. This means removing barriers-whether physical, economic, digital, or institutional-that prevent full access. Planning and investment decisions at the stage of project formulation, the feasibility study will be conducted, and an evaluation will be made between different modes of transport before finalizing.

2.3 Affordability and efficiency

The State recognizes mobility as a basic right, and transport must be affordable for users and efficient in its use of national resources. This principle ensures that transport services do not burden household incomes while maximizing operational and infrastructure cost-effectiveness.

2.4 Environmental Sustainability

The transport system shall be sustainable to comply with national and international environmental commitments and promote long-term ecological health. This principle aligns national transport policy with global climate goals and intergenerational responsibility.

2.5 Safety and Security

Transport systems must be designed, implemented, and regulated to ensure a safe and secure service, thereby gaining the confidence of the public with minimal risk to life, health, or property.

2.6 Reliability and Quality of Service

Transport systems must be dependable by virtue of punctuality, comfort, cleanliness, and people should be able to trust that services will operate on time.

2.7 Modernization and Technology

The transport system shall integrate technology while focusing on improving efficiency, quality, safety, and transparency, remaining open to future innovations and local industry developments.

2.8 Systems and Institutional Reforms

The existing transport organizational arrangements shall be reformed for efficiency, quality improvement, development, and transparency.

2.9 Systems Development for Mobility Demand and Traffic Management

The transport system shall be developed to provide a seamless system with smooth, efficient, and user-friendly mobility, ensuring multimodal connectivity across distances and demographics.

2.10 Research and Development

Development of transport systems should be driven by research and development initiatives and data-driven decisions, while focusing on efficiency, quality of service, economic feasibility, and technological adaptation.

3. POLICY OBJECTIVES

3.1 Ensure equitable, affordable, and inclusive mobility for all citizens by prioritizing underserved regions, vulnerable communities, and essential social and economic services.

3.2 Enhance the efficiency and reliability of transport services through system optimization, demand management, and improved operational standards across all modes.

3.3 Promote environmentally sustainable transport by reducing emissions, encouraging low-carbon mobility, and aligning with national and global climate targets.

3.4 Strengthen public safety and security by adopting rigorous standards, modern technologies, and institutional mechanisms to minimize risks to passengers, operators, and goods.

3.5 Modernize and integrate transport infrastructure and services to create seamless, multimodal, technologically enabled mobility systems that support economic productivity and resilience.

3.6 Reform institutions and governance structures to ensure transparency, accountability, coordination, and efficiency in transport planning, regulation, and service delivery.

3.7 Support domestic industry development and technological innovation to advance local manufacturing, digital systems, research, and knowledge-driven transport solutions.

3.8 Promote financially sustainable and socially responsible investment through cost-effective planning, cross-subsidization frameworks, and strategic public-private participation.

3.9 Strengthen data-driven planning and research capacity to ensure evidence-based decision making, continuous performance monitoring, and adaptive policy evolution.

4. THRUST AREA FRAMEWORK

4.1 Social Equity and Inclusive Access

- Universal accessibility standards across all modes.
- Targeted service improvements for rural, hill-country, and low-income communities.
- Cross-subsidy and public service obligation frameworks to ensure essential mobility.

4.2 Public Transport Development and Service Quality

- Upgrading bus and rail services for reliability, comfort, punctuality, cleanliness, and frequency.
- Transitioning from fragmented operations to integrated service models.
- Establishing national service quality benchmarks.

4.3 Multimodal Integration and Mobility Management

- Seamless connections between bus, rail, paratransit, non-motorized transport, and emerging modes.
- Unified ticketing systems, real-time information services, and integrated timetables.
- Traffic demand management, congestion mitigation, and urban mobility plans.
- Ensure last mile connectivity.

4.4 Sustainable and Low-Carbon Transport

- Electric mobility, alternative fuels, and green logistics.
- Shift from private vehicle dependency towards public and active transport.
- Environmental impact assessments integrated into transport planning.

4.5 Infrastructure Modernization and Network Optimization

- Rail modernization, capacity expansion, and dedicated corridors.
- Intelligent transport systems (ITS), digital traffic management, and smart intersections.
- Maintenance-first infrastructure planning to reduce lifecycle costs.
- Integrate decentralized urban development and transport to minimize the mobility requirements.
- Develop quality, convenient, and safe urban vehicle parking spaces with emphasis on park and ride at Railway stations and Intermodal hubs.
- Develop quality, convenient, and safe walking and non-motorized mobility spaces.

4.6 Institutional and Regulatory Reform

- Clarification of mandates between national, provincial and local authorities.
- Independent regulatory bodies for public transport service standards and competition.
- Modernization of transport sector legislation.
- Regulation of para-transit modes

4.7 Safety, Security, and Passenger Protection

- Strengthening road safety audits, enforcement, and driver training.
- Safety technologies for vehicles, rail systems, and public spaces.
- Emergency preparedness and disaster-resilient transport systems.
- Compulsory training, periodic development programmes and feedback mechanisms for passenger service crews
- Improve resting and other necessary on-duty facilities for passenger service crews

4.8 Economic Efficiency and Financial Sustainability

- Cost-effective investment prioritization based on socio-economic returns.
- Public-private partnerships with strong safeguards for public interest.
- Rational fare regulation supported by transparent subsidy mechanisms.

4.9 Technology Adoption and Digital Transformation

- Integrated digital platforms for mobility as a service (MaaS).
- Automated fare collection, e-ticketing, and smart scheduling systems.
- Support for local technology innovation and transport-related industries.

4.10 Research, Innovation, and Data Systems

- National transport research programs address operational, economic, social, and environmental challenges.
- Centralized transport data observatory for analytics and forecasting.
- University-industry-government collaboration for innovation and workforce development.

5. CONCLUSION

The National Land Transport Policy (2025) marks a critical step toward transforming Sri Lanka's land transport sector into a modern, people-centered, and future-ready system. Grounded in equity, sustainability, efficiency, and technological progress, the policy sets out a coherent framework to address long-standing structural challenges while unlocking new opportunities for national development. It emphasizes inclusive mobility, institutional reform, environmental responsibility, and evidence-based decision making, ensuring that transport services contribute directly to improved quality of life, economic productivity, and social cohesion.

By prioritizing public interest, fostering collaboration across national and provincial authorities, and promoting innovation within local industries, this policy provides a clear pathway for creating

a safer, cleaner, and more integrated transport ecosystem. Its successful implementation will require sustained political commitment, coordinated action among stakeholders, and continuous monitoring supported by research and data. Ultimately, this policy envisions a transport system that not only moves people and goods efficiently but also strengthens communities, supports sustainable economic growth, and upholds Sri Lanka's long-term development aspirations. With collective effort and responsible governance, the National Land Transport Policy will serve as a foundation for shaping a resilient, accessible, and globally competitive mobility landscape for generations to come.