

[SPECIAL SESSION]

WHERE ARE TAXIS GOING?

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PRESENTATION SESSION, ROUND TABLE AND TAXI NETWORK

As a continuation of the 2007 Lisbon conference organized by the IVM/Cities on the Move, a special session looking at current and future role of the taxi as a form of Public Transport.

The taxicab, worldwide, plays a central role in urban mobility. The mode is significant, and displays many common patterns across continents, regimes and regulatory environments. The mode represents the oldest licensed form of public transport in the world, but is far from being staid or without new potential. On the supply side, the revolutions in mobile phone GPS technologies have started a revolution in operating practices that is still far from realizing their full potential, including service improvements and cost reductions. On the demand side, demographic transition, changing lifestyle and environmental constraints highlight new needs that the taxi may be better able to meet, at lower cost, than public transport heretofore.

The pace of such evolution is very much conditioned by the regulatory framework in which taxis operate. As compared to other transport modes, taxis have attracted precious little academic research leaving government bodies or regulators looking for consistent guidelines when they try to update regulation, to provide new services to specific groups of the population, or to reduce the environmental impact of taxi operations. The result has been individually commissioned ad hoc studies that constitute, in sum, a body of grey literature.

The aim of this special session is to bring together researchers, profession and regulators who, together, can determine future directions, research priorities and encourage common understandings and best practice. Key questions include:

- Who uses taxi services, when and why?
- How is this use conditioned by transport policy?
- What have we learned from past deregulation policies?

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- How do airports or railway stations regulate taxi flows?
- How does the supply of taxis services affect the use of other transport modes?
- How does the structure of the taxi industry (e.g. owner-operated vs. oligopolistic companies) affects the outcome of governments contracting taxis to perform subsidized public transport services?
- What is the impact of new technologies on the industry's structure?

The session will include podium presentations from leading academics in the field including: Richard Darbéra, Rosario Macario, James Cooper and Ray Mundy, and will be followed by a round table entitled Research priorities in Taxicab Transportation.

The session will also host the launch of a Taxi Network, a continuing academic and professional activity to develop further round table discussion and a common knowledge base for taxi transport. The network will be open to regional international participants and will be chaired by Dr. James Cooper.