



TUMI INITIATIVE'S TRANSFORMATIVE STORIES

ACCRA, GHANA: MOVING MORE PEOPLE WITH HIGH QUALITY BUSES

Each day, Accra's population almost doubles as commuters enter the city from surrounding cities and peri-urban areas. Most of the available transport options can only accommodate a limited number of people, yet occupy most of the road space, resulting in crippling traffic jams in the mornings and evenings. Accra's efforts to improve the quality and capacity of the vehicles used by public transport providers include shifting toward higher occupancy models, and demonstrate the importance of establishing sound financial and operational models that allow for financial sustainability in the long term.

ABOUT ACCRA

Considered by many as the gateway to West Africa due to its location on the Atlantic Coast, Accra has been the capital city of Ghana since the 18th century. Although this multicultural, multilingual city is believed to be **one of the safest in Africa**, this is not the lived experience for many of its citizens who face numerous hazards in their daily commute. A significant portion of those working in Accra reside outside the city, and it is estimated that **the CBD population swells by more than two million people during business hours**. This mass movement of people results in crippling traffic jams that bring the circulation of people and goods to a standstill during peak hours. In addition, **almost half of Accra's citizens walk to work and face numerous hazards** in the absence of dedicated walkways. There is an urgent need for a high capacity transit system connected by a well designed and maintained network of sidewalks and cycle lanes that allow for shorter trips undertaken on foot or by bicycle.

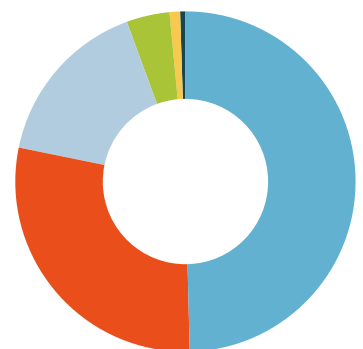


Population (2018 estimate) 2,036,889

Land area: 226 km²

MODAL SPLIT

- 49.6% Walking
- 28.6% Car
- 16.2% Bus & minibus
- 4.1% Private taxi
- 1.0% Motorcycle
- 0.5% Cycling



Source: Ghana Statistical Service, 2018

TARGETS by 2030:

Accra aims to be a multi-modal transit-oriented city by 2030, providing its citizens with mass transit, light rail, buses and non-motorised transport (NMT) infrastructure.

MOBILITY IN ACCRA

Around half of all trips in Accra take place on foot. When driving through the city, it is not uncommon to see pedestrians walking in the road carriageway amongst fast-moving cars due to a lack of dedicated pavements for walking. In Ghana, active mobility options such as walking and cycling are negatively perceived as being for the poor, and **car ownership is considered a sign of status**. While some roads have paved sidewalks, these are often interrupted or non-continuous, or occupied by informal traders and/or parked cars. It is estimated that 69% of all road fatalities in Accra are pedestrians and three percent are cyclists.

In the absence of an appealing public transport network, many Accra residents purchase a private car as soon as they can afford one. As a result, the percentage of the population that owns cars increases by around eight percent per annum in the Accra area, with typically only one person occupying each car. Although average travel distances from the city center are estimated to be within nine kilometers, **travel times can be extensive during peak hours** due to severe congestion along major routes. In response to this, some residents use 'okada' motorbikes to weave through the immobile traffic, but this practise is extremely dangerous and contributes to 14% of road fatalities.

Public transport is not as popular and the sector is dominated by privately owned minibuses and shared taxis. There are a few modern, fuel efficient, medium-size or large buses, but **most vehicles used for public transport are old and rickety 'tro tro' minibuses** which tend to only be used by those who cannot afford other options. Around 98% of public transport operators are informal, which makes it difficult to ensure the safety of passengers and other road users. In addition, as many of the vehicles are second hand and have low emission standards, annual mean Particulate Matter pollution is around five times the levels deemed safe by the World Health Organization (WHO) standard, with serious repercussions for the health of Accra's citizens.

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INTRODUCING QUALITY BUS SERVICES IN ACCRA

In response to inadequate public transport services in Accra, the Quality Bus Service initiative is an ongoing effort to promote the use of high occupancy vehicles and to improve the capacity and quality of public buses. Initially envisaged as a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) service, it was downgraded to a Quality Bus Service and implemented under the auspices of the Department of Urban Roads in eight local government administration areas of Accra. The project represents a **partnership between minibus taxi owners and the Government to transition toward higher occupancy vehicles**, with the ultimate aim of removing low occupancy vehicles from public transport operations.

Given that Accra's public bus services are dominated by the informal sector, it was decided that re-organising existing providers to meet formal sector requirements for business establishment and support would be more appropriate than trying to replace them with a new formal system. **Formalising the informal operators into public transport companies creates opportunities for them to gain better access to commercial funding** that allows them to operate more sustainable business enterprises, whilst incrementally improving service standards.

The Quality Bus Service initiative achieved early successes, increasing ridership from about 5,000 to 11,000 passengers per day between December 2016 and mid-2017. However, poorly conceived business models led to a steady decline in operating revenues, which resulted in losses of \$1,6 million in 2016 and \$1,9 million in 2017.





As a result, bus services have now been temporarily suspended.

In part, the operational problems were a result of improper alignment of the bus service's governance structure. Operations were largely supervised and partly run by the Greater Accra Passenger Transport Executive (GAPTE) secretariat, and would have been better run by re-organised public transport service providers. In addition, a lack of funds to develop supporting infrastructure (e.g. dedicated bus lanes and bus stops) negatively impacted on the efficiency and profitability of bus routes.

A great deal has been learned from the Quality Bus Service initiative, and this will increase the chances of success of future efforts to improve public transport in Accra. The activities were well aligned with regional and national transport objectives, and the initiative benefitted from political support and the commitment of stakeholders who could appreciate the benefit of the improved system. The introduction of regulations, enhanced capacity of local government administrations and re-organisation of private informal sector operators were not in vain, having created a more conducive environment for public buses in Accra.

In addition to shifting toward high occupancy vehicles, Accra has ambitious plans to improve the sustainability of its bus fleet. With the support of the Ministry of Transport, it seeks to achieve a significant transition toward electric buses by 2050. Currently about **1,000 electric buses have been procured by the Government of Ghana** and are awaiting deployment across the country. These buses will raise the total percentage of passenger kilometers executed by electric mass transit in Ghana to two percent by 2050 (with fossil fuel-powered buses representing 47%).

IMPROVING ROAD SAFETY FOR PEDESTRIANS AND CYCLISTS

In December 2017, the **Pedestrian Road Safety Action Plan** was launched with the principle aim of developing **strategies to ensure the safety of all road users** in the city, especially that of pedestrians, cyclists and other vulnerable groups. This policy document outlines phased actions to improve safety and design pedestrian-friendly streets, and assigns responsibilities to relevant departments and other stakeholders between 2018 and 2022. The City aims to add one kilometer of paved walkways per year to arterial roads between 2018 and 2022, and maintain two kilometers of existing walkways per year between 2018 and 2020 by removing debris, advertising posts and kiosks. It will also establish an inventory of where pedestrian pavements are provided or missing by 2019, and create a map of proposed pedestrian only routes along selected corridors by 2020. To ensure accountability and action, workshops are held annually in which all participating stakeholders provide an update on progress in implementing their assigned activities.



Linked to this is the Bloomberg Initiative on Global Road Safety (BIGRS), which is a road safety initiative currently being implemented in ten Cities across the world. The BIGRS has been active in Accra since 2016, **building local institutional capacity for the management of road safety issues**. Core implementation staff are embedded in the Department of Transport to build a Road Safety Unit as provided for by the Legislative Instrument 1961 under Ghana's local Government law. This unit will help build understanding of road safety issues within local Government, and will act as champions for pedestrians and cyclists to reduce accidents and fatalities.



"Let us all challenge ourselves to enhance pedestrian safety within the city because irrespective of the different trips we undertake, we are all at one point or the other, PEDESTRIANS."

Hon. Mohammed Adjei Sowah
Mayor of Accra

KEY CONTACTS

Department of Urban Roads

Akua Sakyibea Vander-Pallen, Transport Urban Planner

Department of Transport, Accra Metropolitan Assembly

Alex Johnson, Head of Department

Greater Accra Passenger Transport Executive (GAPTE)

Samson Gyamera, Head of Unit

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Author: Blake Robinson

Contributors: Akua Sakyibea Vander-Pallen and Alex Johnson

Editor: Nadja Martinussen

Layout: Duven Diener

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ADDITIONAL READING

Accra Metropolitan Assembly, 2017:
Pedestrian Road Safety Action Plan
2018-2022

The [Transformative Urban Mobility Initiative \(TUMI\)](#) enables leaders in developing countries and emerging economies to create sustainable urban mobility. It offers technical and financial support for innovative ideas. In TUMI the German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) has brought together some of the world's leading institutions working on sustainable mobility with city networks and think tanks to implement projects on site where they are needed most. Partners include ADB, CAF, WRI, ITDP, UN-Habitat, SLoCaT, ITDP, ICLEI, GIZ, KfW and C40. [transformative-mobility.org](https://www.transformative-mobility.org)

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