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Passage 1. *An author critiques car dependency and advocates public transport.*

- 1 Cars are everywhere. The proliferation of private vehicles has created fundamental problems that threaten our collective future: it accelerates environmental degradation, perpetuates social inequality by privileging those who can afford personal transport, and transforms our cities into concrete jungles designed for cars rather than humans. These interconnected challenges demand urgent reconsideration of our transport priorities. 5
- 2 Previous generations built communities around reliable public transport, where trams and trains created natural gathering points that fostered daily interaction and a strong sense of belonging. These systems were environmentally sustainable, producing fewer emissions and preserving quiet green spaces within urban areas. Mobility was affordable, ensuring access for all regardless of economic status. In contrast, today's urban environments are shaped by car dependency – sprawling, fragmented, and often isolating. Roads and traffic dominate, replacing parks and social spaces with concrete and noise. Mobility now depends largely on private vehicle ownership, dividing society between those with freedom to move and those confined to unreliable alternatives. 10
- 3 As a result, our cities have become victims of tyranny on wheels, where car needs override human requirements. Urban planners allocate vast swathes of precious land to parking spaces and multi-lane highways, creating dead zones that repel pedestrian activity. This car-centric design philosophy prioritises speed over liveability, transforming once-vibrant neighbourhoods into mere pathways. The human cost extends beyond inconvenience – it fundamentally reshapes urban experience. 15
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- 4 What most fail to even comprehend is that there is a staggering inefficiency of private transport systems. Comprehensive urban studies reveal that private cars remain unused for 95% of their operational lifetime, yet continue consuming valuable city spaces that could accommodate housing or green areas for thousands of residents. This fundamental wastefulness exposes how societies have prioritised individual ownership over rational resource allocation, creating a system where expensive assets contribute nothing to mobility for the vast majority of their existence. 25
- 5 The environmental problem created by private vehicle dependency grows more alarming annually. Urban areas suffocate under exhaust fumes, with residents breathing toxic cocktails of nitrogen oxides and particulate matter. Private cars generate approximately 70% of transport-related carbon emissions in developed nations, resulting in devastating consequences for our climate that we cannot ignore. Can we honestly claim to care about our children's future while perpetuating this dependency? 30
- 6 Perhaps redirecting these resources toward public transport could yield long-term, transformative gains. Well-designed transport systems reduce traffic congestion and air pollution, and are significantly more space and energy-efficient than private vehicles. Public transport hubs also reinvigorate urban life by creating vibrant, accessible spaces that support commerce and community interaction. In cities that prioritise such systems, the shift is not merely logistical but cultural, fostering a shared civic rhythm and a more inclusive sense of belonging. Thus, the reallocation of funds towards a world-class public transport system can only be a good thing. 35
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- 7 We stand at a critical juncture. Will we continue down this unsustainable path of private vehicle worship, or embrace public transport's transformative potential? The choice rests with us all.



Passage 2. *An author argues that public transport systems fail to meet modern urban needs.*

- 1 Public transport systems, despite widespread advocacy, demonstrate fundamental inadequacies that undermine their effectiveness as solutions to urban mobility challenges. A glaring deficiency lies in their inflexibility – fixed routes create constraints that poorly serve the diverse needs of a population. Worse still, rigid schedules force passengers to conform to predetermined patterns rather than adapting to individual circumstances. This structural rigidity becomes particularly problematic during emergencies or unexpected schedule changes when immediate departure becomes essential. What advocates fail to acknowledge is how the theoretical efficiency of mass transit dissolves when examined against real-world demands for responsive, personalised mobility solutions. 5
- 2 Equally troubling are the financial implications of comprehensive public transport expansion. Governments routinely invest billions in infrastructure projects that exceed budgets, with usage rates consistently falling below projections. London's Crossrail project, initially budgeted at £14.8 billion, ultimately cost £18.9 billion while opening years behind schedule. This pattern repeats globally – Berlin's airport rail link exceeded original estimates by 400%. More concerning still is the opportunity cost: these massive public expenditures could alternatively fund infrastructure improvements that benefit broader populations far more efficiently. 10 15
- 3 Beyond financial waste, the day-to-day reality reveals deeper systemic failures. Overcrowding has become endemic, creating stressful commuting experiences that actively degrade quality of life. During peak hours, this congestion transforms buses and trains into uncomfortable environments where passengers endure physical proximity that violates personal space. Moreover, the system's fragility becomes apparent when bad weather, mechanical failures, and labour disputes regularly paralyse entire networks. The irony is stark: these service interruptions disproportionately affect lower-income workers who cannot afford backup transport options, thus penalising the very population public transport ostensibly serves. 20
- 4 Perhaps most damaging are the security concerns that permeate these systems. Incidents of harassment, theft, and violence occur with disturbing frequency in confined public spaces, particularly affecting vulnerable passengers during off-peak hours. Inadequate lighting, insufficient security presence, and isolated stations create environments where criminal activity flourishes unchecked. 25
- 5 The relentless push for public transport expansion threatens to trap entire populations within dysfunctional systems that prioritise ideology over practicality. Furthermore, these systems often fail to serve suburban and rural communities entirely, creating a two-tier mobility system that perpetuates geographic inequality. Unless we abandon this misguided obsession with mass transit, our cities face a grim future of deteriorating mobility, spiralling costs, and diminished quality of life for millions. 30 35



Passage 3. *An urban planner shares her evolving perspective on transport solutions.*

- 1 After twenty years designing transport systems, I found myself questioning everything about mobility solutions. Most would be quick to champion how a well-developed public transportation system trumps private vehicle ownership, but few fail to see that the transportation challenge that modern cities face is more complex than it seems.
- 2 “The sustainability argument isn't clear-cut,” I note. “Our studies found that public transport in medium-density areas often operates below capacity, resulting in higher per-passenger emissions than carpooling. Instead of massive infrastructure expenditure for new public rail lines, channelling money into thousands of electric vehicle charging stations could potentially achieve faster emission reductions once private electric vehicle adoption reaches a large enough scale.” 5 10
- 3 Sadly, not everybody wants the same things when thinking about what makes an ideal public transportation system. Working with diverse communities taught me that transport needs vary dramatically. Shift workers explained how reduced night services forced expensive taxis or dangerous walks. Parents described the impossibility of managing shopping and school runs via public transport. When public transport is timetabled, it results in severe overcrowding during peak times and inadequate service during off-peak hours, satisfying neither group effectively. 15
- 4 “Neither pure public transport advocacy nor private vehicle dependence offers complete solutions,” I conclude. “Each community requires different approaches. Dense urban cores might thrive with extensive public networks; suburban areas need hybrid solutions. The future involves intelligent integration – park-and-ride facilities, on-demand public services, shared autonomous vehicles – rather than ideological adherence to single transport modes.” 20

