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Editorial: Thredbo 17 conference

This volume of *Research in Transportation Economics* collects the workshop reports as well as the best papers presented at the 17th International Conference on Competition and Ownership in Land Passenger Transport (the Thredbo Series) held in Sydney, Australia, in 2022 (after a brief hiatus due to the COVID-19 pandemic and with plans to go to Japan put on hold). The 17th conference in the series followed in the footsteps of previous conferences by bringing together academics, government officials, consultants, policymakers, politicians, students, and public transport operators to review trends and challenges in ownership and competition issues in public transport. It was attended by 125 delegates from 25 countries, with 78 papers presented. The conference included seven workshops. A summary of the history of the conference series, including the themes covered, can be seen in [Table 1](#) at the end of this editorial.

The conference was held over four days, with workshops taking place from the afternoon of the first day to lunchtime on the third day. There was a keynote address from The Hon. Natalie Ward, NSW Minister for Metropolitan Roads at the conference's opening session. Drawing from local and international perspectives, two panel discussions were held on the first morning. Panel 1, chaired by Gunnar Alexandersson from the Stockholm School of Economics, examined Bus Contracts Under a Zero Emission Future and featured Neil Smith (Kelsian), John King (BusNSW) and Matthew Wilson (Pitcher Partners). Panel 2 on MaaS and its Challenges was chaired by David Hensher (ITLS) and featured Ishra Baksh (Transport and Main Roads, Queensland) and John Nelson (ITLS). An operator and regulator round table on Regulatory Reform in Rail and Bus was held on the final day, chaired by John Preston from the University of Southampton. It featured Neil Smith (Kelsian), Jessica Linsell (Transport for NSW) and Brendan Finn (European Transport and Telematics Systems). Following this, the Workshop Chairs and Rapporteurs reported on the conclusions reached in their workshops. The conference concluded with recognition of the three best papers selected by the Michael Beesley Award Committee.

The workshop themes were:

1. Regulatory regimes: national and comparative regulation of public transport
2. Contracting and concessions: governance of the relationship between authorities and operators (split into 2a and 2b)
3. Infrastructure, services and urban development
4. Optimising the impact of technological innovation on achieving sustainable public transport outcomes
5. New service models: governing emerging mobility services
6. Micromobility movement in urban transport

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7. Sustainable transport systems designed to meet the needs of both users and residents

The papers and workshops had a strong emphasis on policy and lessons that can be learnt from international experiences. Each workshop report includes key findings and issues that warrant further discussion and investigation. The workshop themes, objectives, questions addressed and conclusions reached are briefly summarised below.

1. Regulatory regimes: national and comparative regulation of public transport

This workshop was a follow-up to Workshop 2 at Thredbo 16, held in Singapore in 2019. It considered whether there was a need for a fourth way (or ways) to organise and regulate public transport to complement the three existing models of classic regulation, deregulation and limited competition. There was particular emphasis on what constitutes a good (public) transport authority. The key outcome was an update and extension of the Strategic, Tactical and Operational (STO) framework for planning and controlling public transport, with an enhanced focus on organisational and wider socio-economic aspects. However, the search for the elusive fourth way and the specification of the transport authority (and related bodies) to deliver public value continues.

2. Contracting and concessions: governance of the relationship between authorities and operators

This workshop was divided into two parts: public transport governance via contracting, collaboration and hybrid organisational arrangements (2a) and governance of relationships between authorities and operators with particular reference to situations of fundamental change (2b).

A key focus for 2a was the interaction between authorities, operators and other corporate actors involved in public transport, with particular reference to how long-established contracting practices are surviving. Interorganisational relationships were considered from a broader perspective to provide a theoretical rationale for the scope of renegotiation and contractual flexibility, for example, against the background of technical transitions and external shocks like COVID-19. The workshop outcomes led to a proposed tentative policy-oriented framework, which could be used to structure discussions at future conferences.

The papers for 2b were clustered to examine three main themes. The first considered contracting frameworks to formalise and better organise the informal passenger transport sectors, the second discussed contracting issues on resource and pricing strategies, and the third looked at

Table 1
History of the Thredbo Series.

Conference	Thredbo 1	Thredbo 2	Thredbo 3	Thredbo 4	Thredbo 5	Thredbo 6	Thredbo 7	Thredbo 8	Thredbo 9	Thredbo 10
Year	1989	1991	1993	1995	1997	1999	2001	2003	2005	2007
Location	Thredbo Australia	Tampere Finland	Mississauga Canada	Rotorua New Zealand	Leeds UK	Cape Town South Africa	Molde Norway	Rio de Janeiro Brazil	Lisbon Portugal	Hamilton Island Australia
Workshop 1	Experience from different countries	Experience with competitive tendering	Competition policy	Competitive models and impacts	Ownership and organisation	Tendering and competition in public transport	Competitive tendering of public transport	Performance based contracts	Design and innovation of competitive public transport to foster patronage	Growing patronage and what has been found to work (two workshops)
Workshop 2	The issues	Understanding competition and anti-trust behaviour	Competitive tendering experience	User requirements	Competition policy: a new area	Funding of public transport and infrastructure	Competition and regulation of public transport	Competition and regulation of public transport	Contract design and implementation issues: Creating and maintaining trusted partnerships	Nations and regions in transition
Workshop 3	The bidding process	Externalities: public interest and private gain	Infrastructure policy for roads and railways	Rail sector issues	Franchising and tendering	User needs and impact on public transport systems	Organisation and ownership of public transport services	Organisation and ownership of public transport services	Key performance indicators and data for monitoring and auditing	Risk and reward in public transport contracting: Bus
Workshop 4	Operator and organisational issues	Management, institutional structures, the TPP and the future of public transport	Planning and analysis	Regulatory reform and transport policy development	Passenger transport infrastructure pricing and investment strategies	Management of public transport systems	Funding of public transport and infrastructure	Funding of public transport and infrastructure	Competition, regulatory change and ownership	Risk and reward in public transport contracting: Rail
Workshop 5	Costing, scheduling and demand	Road pricing and private financing		International experience in competitive operations	Competition, ownership and wider transport policy issues	Ownership and organisation of public transport and infrastructure	Management of public transport systems	Management of public transport systems	Institutional configuration and framework as a driver for system performance	Social exclusion: What can public transport offer?
Workshop 6	Productivity and performance	Corporatisation, privatisation and deregulation							Policy evolution and decision making process	Analytical and institutional methods and frameworks
Papers represented	35	39	31	48	46	69	60	68	93	94
Countries represented	9	13	10	15	15	21	15	17	25	25
Conference	Thredbo 11	Thredbo 12	Thredbo 13	Thredbo 14	Thredbo 15	Thredbo 16	Thredbo 17			
Location	Delft The Netherlands	Durban South Africa	Oxford UK	Santiago Chile	Stockholm Sweden	Singapore	Sydney Australia			
Year	2009	2011	2013	2015	2017	2019	2022			
Workshop 1	Benchmarking the outcome of competitive tendering	Performance measurement and compliance	Developing an effective performance regime	Innovations in service delivery and performance management	Integrating rail and bus based modes (including BRT) into a user-relevant transport system	Models of mainstream public transport provision	Regulatory regimes: national and comparative regulation of public transport			
Workshop 2	A successful contractual setting	Bus Rapid Transit (as part of enhanced service provision)	Bus Rapid Transit (BRT)	Effective institutional relationships, regulatory frameworks and contract strategies	Competitive tendering and other forms of contracting-out: Institutional and contract design and performance measurement	Practical considerations in implementing different institutional regimes	Contracting and concessions: governance of the relationship between authorities and operators (2a and 2b)			

(continued on next page)

Table 1 (continued)

Conference	Thredbo 11	Thredbo 12	Thredbo 13	Thredbo 14	Thredbo 15	Thredbo 16	Thredbo 17
Location	Delft The Netherlands	Durban South Africa	Oxford UK	Santiago Chile	Stockholm Sweden	Singapore	Sydney Australia
Year	2009	2011	2013	2015	2017	2019	2022
Workshop 3	Beyond competitive tendering	Governance, contracting, ownership and competition issues in public transport: Lessons that can be learnt from developed and developing economies	Institutional and operational reforms within different socio-economic and cultural contexts	Sustainable funding sources, and related cost benefit measurements	Market initiative regimes: Experience and measures to improve performance	Emerging business models and implications for the transport ecosystem	Infrastructure, services and urban development
Workshop 4	System development		Governance, ownership and competition in deregulated public transport markets	Developing inter-modal transport systems	Criteria for successful collaboration	Realising the potential benefits of demand-responsive travel	Optimising the impact of technological innovation on achieving sustainable public transport outcomes
Workshop 5	Social inclusion	Designing contracts/concessions: What has worked and what has not and why?	The roles and responsibilities of government and operators	Harnessing big data	Bridging the benefit/funding gap	How much regulation should disruptive transportation technologies be subject to?	New service models: governing emerging mobility services
Workshop 6	Public policy and transport	Network and system planning: How best to deliver this under alternate contract regimes in order to grow patronage and service levels	Delivering sustainable public transport	Reassessing public operations	Wider impacts of public transport and successful implementation of desirable and beneficial projects	Better service delivery through modal integration	Micromobility movement in urban transport
Workshop 7	Public transport markets in development	The public agenda: What is working and what is missing (including social inclusion)	Innovative finance for innovative public transport	Market initiative: Regulatory design, implementation and performance	The “uberisation” of public transport and mobility as a service (MaaS): Implications for future mainstream public transport	Assessing the wider benefits of public transport projects	Sustainable transport systems designed to meet the needs of both users and residents
Workshop 8				The wider economic, social and environmental impacts of public transport investment	Big spatial data and data analytics in the digital age and how it can benefit public transport users	Beyond the farebox: sustainable funding of public transport by better understanding service values	
Papers	86	89	103	106	130	95	78
Countries represented	21	25	26	26	31	30	25

contracting issues for innovative services. In addition to the detail provided by the evidence in papers, the workshop discussion identified a trade-off relationship between many aspects of the tendering process and broadly defined stakeholder relationships. The workshop developed five areas for further research: review mechanisms across regions, settings and disciplines; stakeholder relationships in contracting and concessions; the importance of social outcomes of contracted/concessioned services; quantifying the informal sector; and innovation.

3. Infrastructure, services and urban development

Workshop 3 concentrated its discussion on critical factors for strategic transport planning, implementation and service provision in the post-pandemic era. There is a strong and growing case for social and environmental considerations to be included in transport and land use planning, including metrics to guide these two foci. Both bottom-up and top-down processes must converge, and policies that focus on equity (justice and fairness) in transport planning are needed. There was a recognition of the benefits of transport services for all and, in turn, the importance of threshold mobility services that are inclusive. In the discussion on service improvements and wider benefits, it was established that there is a need to recognise the value of transport and distribution impacts of transport resourcing, linked to better use of existing resources and working with methods that capture the value of transport improvements. Drawing on the discussion on service improvement, it was also recognised that there is a need to further develop objective decision-making tools that assess the outcomes of planned processes. This includes considering a wider social perspective in existing methods and further developing the existing tools traditionally used in transport planning.

4. Optimising the impact of technological innovation on achieving sustainable public transport outcomes

This workshop viewed technology as an underpinning theme, not a mobility service in itself, but a wide range of tools that enable or enhance mobility services of whatever kind. Sustainability was also a central theme – to what extent does the digital transformation support sustainable mobility outcomes or not? Technology was given a broader interpretation. A recurring theme when discussing the role of technology was to be aware of the hype and rhetoric associated with many technologies. This means that a ‘level head’ is necessary, avoiding the technological/engineering deterministic mindset to ensure that technologies are not implemented for technologies’ sake but rather leveraged to ensure societal advantage. A positive example of the latter was discussed: the potential to implement governance systems which can ensure that the volumes of data associated with digital capture can be made available to support more informed decisions on the planning of mobility and place decisions for travellers and other stakeholders.

5. New service models: governing emerging mobility services

This workshop focused on how to govern emerging service models for passenger transport, such as demand-responsive transit, ridesourcing, ridesharing and mobility-as-a-service. The underpinning objective

was to gather new lessons regarding the governance and market conditions under which new service models for mobility make mobility service systems (here understood as the system of services for personal mobility within a given geography) more attractive to users and more sustainable. The workshop papers presented new evidence on what roles governments have adopted, what types of regulations and policies they have been using in relation to mobility service innovation, what is known about the impacts of these governance approaches on the innovation processes and what impacts the mobility service innovations might have on mobility service systems.

6. Micromobility movement in urban transport

The theme of micromobility was introduced for the first time in Thredbo 17 as the growth of shared and privately-owned e-scooters, bicycles and e-bicycles continue to affect the nature and structure of urban transport systems worldwide. The discussion in this workshop focused on questions about the benefits of micromobility and the main incentives for their use as an urban mode of transport, questioning the role of government and describing the potential threats, if any, to public transport systems coming together in what we expect for the future of micromobility. The need for multimodal integration is evident and remains essential to ensure complementarity across city transport. However, other concerns were identified and discussed, such as the need for regulation, education/enforcement structures, stronger business models and more effective tendering procedures.

7. Sustainable transport systems designed to meet the needs of both users and residents

This workshop looked beyond the narrow focus on efficiency and sustainable funding of transport systems to a broader view to meet a variety of different users’ needs as well as those of residents and taxpayers, recognising that these are not always the same people. The focus was on identifying the factors which lead to different levels of accessibility for different individuals and households and how these may not be reflected in area-based measures. Whether these differences can be met by more flexible transport systems targeted at specific (groups of) individuals or by providing better access to regular public transport by addressing the first/last mile problem needs careful analysis. Ultimately, understanding different needs depends on understanding different types of households and their needs based on their characteristics, including recognising that many transport demands (and constraints) are created by the need to provide care for other household members. This has implications for both the funding of public transport and how it is priced in a broader approach to underwriting mobility.

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