



Trapeze Global Perspectives on **Commuter Rail**

Commuter rail, also sometimes referred to as Regional Rail (RER), is a pivotal mode of passenger transport connecting suburbs to our major cities. It transports millions of passengers to support their everyday activities and enables international travellers to make their way in and out of city centres. Governments around the world are keen to fund expansions and modernisations of their commuter railroads. This need for investment has come at a time when costs of infrastructure have never been higher, and technological advancements are quickening at an exponential rate. The challenge for commuter rail is how to handle the changing mobility landscape (other modes of transport), while still providing safe and reliable service.

What's Changed

- Less mobile workforce – more and more people get the luxury to work from home, which puts a strain on the ridership levels on commuter rail services
- High costs of investing in new infrastructure
- More mobility options
- Requirements to reduce emissions on a global scale
- Ridership demanding better customer experience such as on-time travel, wi-fi, onboard TVs, real-time information, seamless transfers, etc.
- Digitisation and the Industrial Internet of Things
- Expensive urban prices have pushed people to the suburbs
- Rapid urban growth and the evolution of sprawling mega-cities

The Impact

- The increased suburbanisation of the workforce and congestion has forced more people onto commuter railroads
- Aging rail systems – they become less efficient since the investment hasn't been there to make sure to keep up with the times or in a state of good repair
- Governments are investing in public-private partnerships because it helps alleviate agency budgetary pain, spreading payments over time through financing, and transfers some of the risks of building new infrastructure

- New safety requirements to reduce risks of delays and accidents
- A complicated mix of old and new assets that puts pressure on the operations and maintenance workflows
- Inner-city congestion taxing

What Transport Innovators Are Doing

Investing in safety

Railroads will continue to invest in different forms of train control to reduce incidents and make their networks safer for their passengers, along with continuous efforts to improve safety across the board.

Public-private partnerships

Places and commuter railroads all around the world (**Metrolinx – Canada, G:Link – Australia**) are finding the right balance of risk and responsibility sharing using creative public-private partnerships – or, at the very least, offering funding and financing alternatives in the industry.

Growing trend of outsourcing operations and maintenance

The private sector has some value to bring, too – they do have an expertise that enables them to do certain initiatives better (e.g., **65% of commuter railroads in NA** are outsourcing their maintenance and operations).

Expansion of commuter railroads

Leveraging existing, underutilised infrastructure can expand the commuter railroad offerings throughout a region – investing in new infrastructure is expensive, and using existing infrastructure opens opportunities to expand on the level of service your railroad can offer.

The Future of Commuter Rail

Imagine if you didn't have to plan your trip to and from the city-centre around a timetable. A future where your commuter railroad ran on very short headways with no schedule – your riders could simply show up and know a train will arrive in 15 minutes or less. The goals and objectives of our commuter railroads should revolve around (both for society and the passenger) no stress, productivity and not wasting hours within a personal vehicle (time to work, rest, read the newspaper), and the environmental and economic benefits. Railroad-oriented real estate development and city and suburban development will be a prominent factor for the future of commuter railroads. This will allow for rail stations to be the hub for local and satellite towns and communities delivering fast, efficient travel to bring people into cities and providing entertainment, restaurants, and shopping experiences.

In the future, all modes of transit will work to feed and complement one another in an integrated way for seamless trips for riders, with little to no hassle on transfers. And as these modes start to blend, it will allow for hybrid models to weave into the fabric of transit. Things like the Hyperloop could reduce travel times and be the new form of commuter rail. Suburban or inter-city travel could significantly change where we live and how we work, achieved through more efficient and safer rail transport that delivers a new level of passenger experience – all because of the changing framework of public transport.

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