

Covid-19 Impacts on Transport Policy Priorities: Barriers and Opportunities for Sustainable Urban Mobility Planning



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Introduction

Whilst there is considerable research on how Covid-19 impacted travel demand, the supply side and transport business, little attention has been paid on how Covid-19 affected the transport planning priorities of authorities.

The research questions that guide this research are:

1. How have transport planning priorities changed since the Covid-19 outbreak?
2. What are the barriers in confronting emergency scenarios in transport planning?
3. How can the planning phases be strengthened to support a more resilient planning environment?
4. What are the lessons learnt and opportunities for improvement in the future?

Methodology

- An online survey was designed within the H2020 funded project HARMONY, looking into Covid-19 effects on transport planning.
- As a follow up activity, 1:1 interviews were conducted with representatives from selected European cities who agreed to further contribute to the study.
- Data collection was addressed to public authorities and was completed in November and December 2020 via the online survey and interviews.
- 13 public authorities participated in the online survey, while 9 out of them were further interviewed to elicit in depth information.

Figure 1: Location of public authorities participated in the study (a star indicates a follow-up interview)



Results

- Planning objectives were significantly different in the period after Covid-19 outbreak compared to the period before that.
- The response to the pandemic involved mostly actions that were readily available and defined before the Covid-19 outbreak
- ‘Promote active mobility’ and ‘Improve safety, security and resilience’ planning objectives have been ranked higher for the period after Covid-19, reflecting the need for securing public health while promoting active travel which enables trips to be carried out in isolation.
- Most public authorities confronted several barriers in their planning environment when dealing with Covid-19 crisis, revealing lack of emergency planning and preparedness in response to the pandemic.

Figure 2: Prioritised or introduced planning objectives after Covid-19

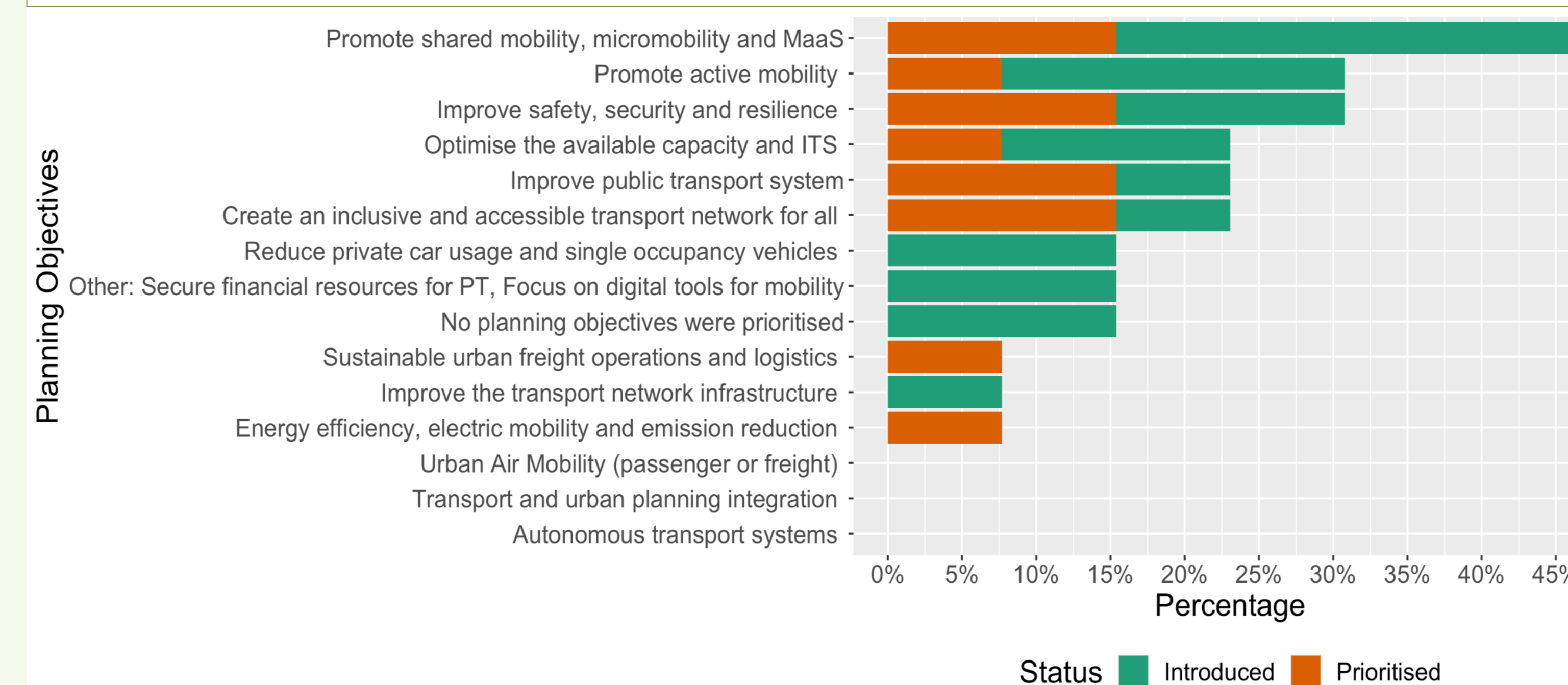


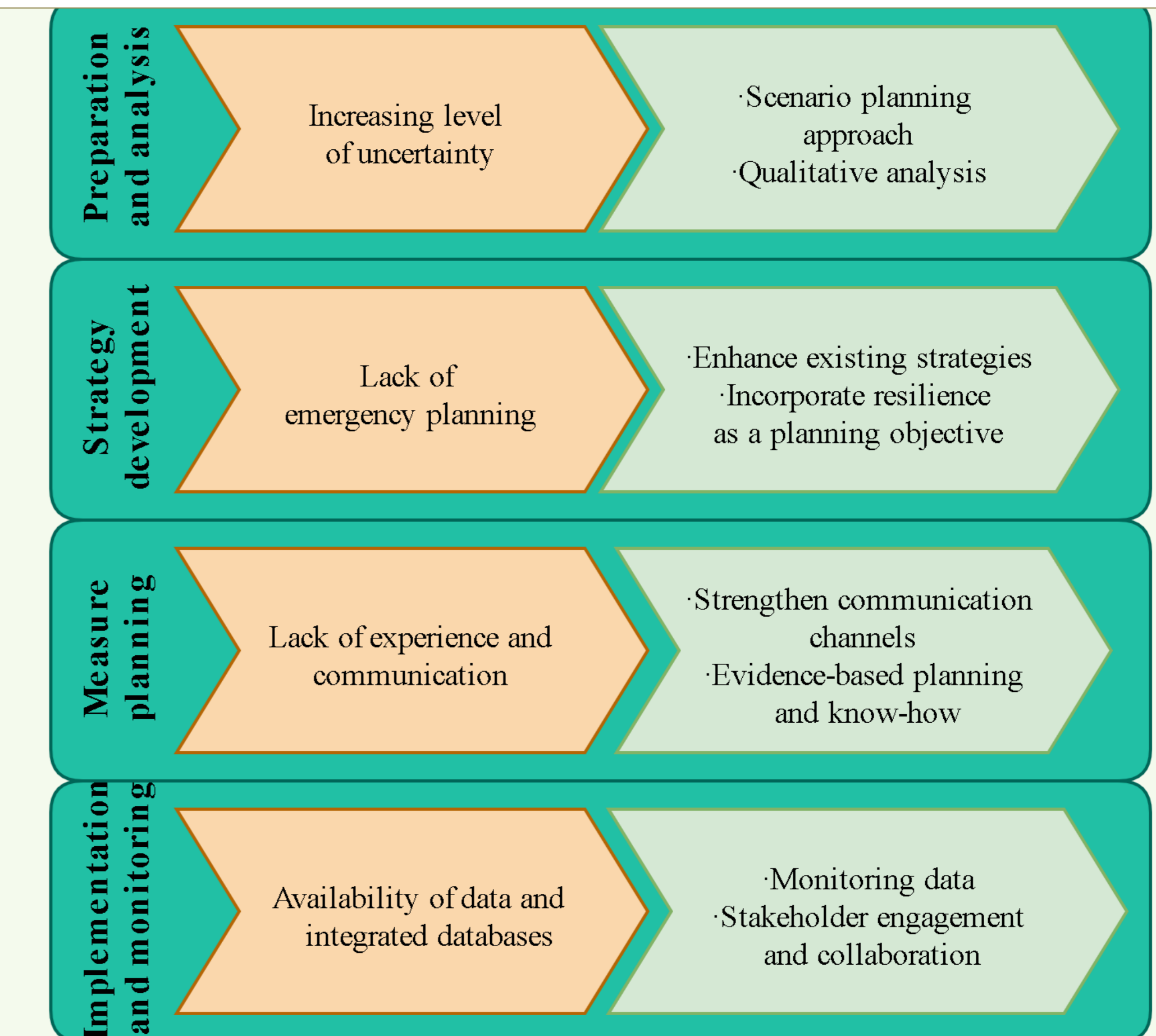
Table 1: Planning environment elements

Question	Responses		
	Yes	No	Somehow
Opportunity to promote and retain active transport policies	9	1	-
Flexibility in the planning environment to mitigate Covid-19 impacts	3	2	5
Emergency planning test before Covid-19	0	5	5
Sharing knowledge on Covid-19 with other areas	6	0	4

Conclusions

- Crisis management and emergency planning should be embedded in the SUMP process to strengthen future responsiveness to unforeseen scenarios.
- Communication channels between different levels of the planning process need to be enhanced, to ensure smooth collaboration among stakeholders.
- Availability of data and integrated data sets can also provide valuable insights for dealing with crisis, when time constraints are imposed.

Figure 3: Barriers and recommendations across SUMP planning phases in confronting crisis



Key References

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