

61 – Public Transport at the Cross-roads in the Wake of the Covid-19 Lockdown: Can Fiscal Instruments Provide a Pointer Out of the Quandary?

Hope Ashiabor, Anna Mortimore

The outbreak of Covid-19 and the policy responses to contain it has spawned a whole host of unintended outcomes. With respect to the wider transport sector, it has saddled it with a mixed bag of challenges. This paper's focus will be on the challenges posed to the public transport segment within the wider transport sector.

The paper examines three possible options that are available to governments in tackling the challenges faced by their public transport systems. The paper draws upon historical precedents of how some jurisdictions took on the reins of existential challenges faced by the sector and transformed it into an opportunity to shift their transport network to a more sustainable footing.

In the context of this paper, the first of the options raises questions of the extent to which the demands of addressing the fallout from the pandemic is likely to foster the enactment of environmental taxes that can generate new revenue streams? The other option evaluates the possible role that tax expenditures or other forms of subsidies play in addressing the challenges. The third is the business-as-usual approach where governments sit tight in the hope that the problem will go away once the dust settles.

In concluding, the paper evaluates these divergent approaches by working out whether they could be reconciled in such a way as to re-orient the policy settings in a more sustainable direction.

Biographical note

Dr Hope Ashiabor is an Associate Professor of Taxation at the Macquarie Business School, Sydney - Australia. He is also a Chartered Tax Advisor with the Taxation Institute of Australia. His research is in the areas of environmental taxes, the regulatory aspects of carbon finance, tax expenditures, and international tax policy – areas in which he has published extensively. He is the author of *Tax Expenditures in Environmental Policy* (Edward Elgar, 2020), a co-editor to the leading series – *Critical Issues in Environmental Taxation* (Edward Elgar, UK) and a member of the editorial board of the *Asian Journal of Accounting and Governance*.

Hope has worked on consultancy projects for the OECD Environment Directorate -Paris, Ausaid, the Fiji Islands Inland Revenue and Customs Service, and a member of the City of Ryde's Renewable Energy Advisory Committee. He has held visiting positions at Cleveland State University, Walsh University, and the University of Warwick.

Prior to joining Macquarie, Hope worked as a state attorney; and before that was an in-house counsel to a commercial bank.