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
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