

Abstract Title: Density and Equity: Pink Transportation and TODs

'Pink Transportation' is becoming increasingly prevalent in densely populated cities to combat unsettling levels of sexual harassment and violence experienced by women on public transport networks. Pink Transportation refers to the segregation of men and women on public transport and other form of transportation, such as taxis and rideshare options. This is evident in Mexico City, where women only metro and rapid bus carriages were first implemented in 2001. Similar examples can be found in Japan and India.

Recent reforms to the NSW Housing SEPP have fast-tracked Greater Sydney's residential densification around key transport nodes, otherwise referred to as Transport Oriented Development (TOD). This approach to housing delivery offers a significant opportunity for creating liveable, sustainable urban spaces that prioritise public and active transport, and diverse housing options. Increased use in public transport is inevitable in these precincts, even with minimal modal intervention. This will result in heightened risks of gender related harassment or violence

It is widely known that women and gender diverse groups typically feel less safe when accessing public and active transport compared to men. Several studies have been undertaken to support this in Sydney, such as the TfNSW Safer Cities Survey (2023 https://www.transport.nsw.gov.au/system/files/media/documents/2023/Safer-Cities_Survey-Report_0.pdf) that found 60% of women surveyed feel unsafe at train stations after dark, compared to 37% of men. Further to this, Free to Be Maps published by Plan International (2025) provides women with a platform to "call out unsafe experiences and geographically identify spaces where change needs to occur" (Plan International 2025 <https://www.plan.org.au/you-can-help/join-the-movement-for-girls-rights/free-to-be/>). In Sydney, public transport locations were the second highest tagged location for bad spots, particularly while going to and from work, as they were prime locations for groping and harassment in crowded settings where men could pass quickly without being identified (Plan International, Unsafe in The City 2018 <https://plan-international.org/publications/unsafe-in-the-city/>). This highlights the opportunity and need for planners to carefully consider and improve the experiences of women and gender diverse groups when planning for new TOD precincts to ensure their successful implementation.

The NSW Government's TOD Program (2023 <https://www.planning.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/2023-12/transport-oriented-development-program.pdf>) does not acknowledge the potential risks of gender related harassment or violence, nor does it provide any mitigation strategies. Without consideration of the existing challenges faced by women and gender diverse groups accessing public transport, it is highly likely for these to worsen as public transport utilisation and crowding increases across Sydney. The challenge is for planners to become more proactive in identifying potential risks associated with housing densification and increased public transport usage, rather than solutions after the problem has surfaced.

The Victorian Government has taken a more proactive approach in assessing gender related risks associated with transport developments by requiring Gender Impact Assessments to be undertaken. As part of this, they acknowledge the potential mitigation measure of gender segregated transport (or Pink Transportation) as a "quick fix". The 'Conducting Gender Impact Assessment in the Transport Sector' Tip Sheet (2023 <https://www.genderequalitycommission.vic.gov.au/department-transport-and-planning-tip-sheets-gender-impact-assessments>) critiques this approach as it does not address behaviour change from the perpetrators but rather the victims and that it marginalises the LGTIQ+ community and non-gender conforming groups. While there are international best practices out there such as in Umeå Sweden (<https://www.nzz.ch/english/in-swedens-north-a-city-where-women-feel-safe-ld.1869654.these>), these practices have are not widely adopted in Australia. Failing to plan for the unintended consequences of uplift may result in situations where draconian measures could be implemented in the long-term future. This is not a desirable outcome for safe and connected communities and places and a wholistic, proactive response during the planning stage needs to be considered.

In this presentation we attempt to go beyond just problem-solving and instead become "problem finders" to create more inclusive, thriving communities.