

Effectiveness of free public transport for the inclusion of older people (São Paulo)

Efetividade do transporte público gratuito para inclusão de pessoas idosas (São Paulo)

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Abstract

The aging of the world population intensifies discussions about the inadequacy of cities to meet the needs of older people. Free public transport is not enough to provide greater inclusion for this age group. This article aims to present reflections on the effectiveness of free public transport for the inclusion of older people in the city of São Paulo. Qualitative, exploratory research and a documentary survey were carried out. As a result, complementary items are suggested for the implementation of free public transport for older people, relating to public policies, infrastructure, transport systems, education, and incorporation of technologies. It is concluded that these suggestions contribute to the proposition of aspects to be addressed in future studies and the new Legal Framework for Collective Public Transport, aiming at more inclusive cities.

Keywords: public transport; urban mobility; inclusion; walkability; age-friendly city.

Resumo

O envelhecimento da população mundial acirra as discussões sobre a inadequação das cidades às suas necessidades. A gratuidade no transporte público não basta para proporcionar maior inclusão da pessoa idosa. Este artigo visa apresentar reflexões acerca da efetividade do transporte público gratuito para a inclusão de pessoas idosas na cidade de São Paulo. Realizaram-se uma pesquisa qualitativa, exploratória, e um levantamento documental. Como resultado, sugerem-se itens complementares à implementação da gratuidade no transporte público para pessoas idosas, relativos a políticas públicas, infraestrutura, sistemas de transporte, educação e incorporação de tecnologias. Conclui-se que essas sugestões contribuem para a proposição de aspectos a serem endereçados em estudos futuros e no novo Marco Legal do Transporte Público Coletivo, visando a cidades mais inclusivas.

Palavras-chave: transporte público; mobilidade urbana; inclusão; caminhabilidade; cidade amiga da pessoa idosa.



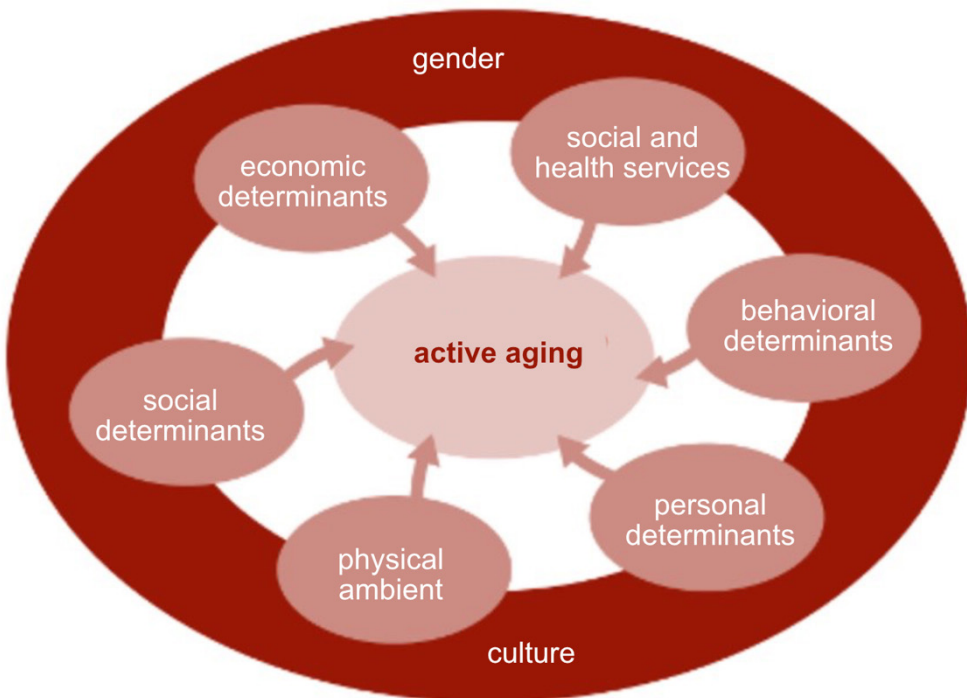
Global aging and growing urbanization

In November 2022, the world's population reached the 8 billion mark and, according to the United Nations (UN) estimates, will reach about 10 billion by 2050, with 70% living in cities (United Nations, 2022). At the same time, there is an increase in their longevity, with estimates that, by 2050, there will be more than 1.5 billion older people worldwide (Ibid.). According to 2010 data in Brazil, 7.3%

of the 194.7 million inhabitants were older people, and 24.7% were young (0 to 14 years old) (Boniface and Guimarães, 2021). Estimates show that by 2100, the population will shrink to 156.4 million Brazilians, with a drastic change in the previous scenario: 40% of older people and 9% of young people.

The publication *Active Aging: A Health Policy* (World Health Organization, 2005) states that how aging occurs results from multiple determining factors present in the reality of individuals, families, and nations (Figure 1).

Figure 1 – Determinants of active ageing



Source: adapted from the World Health Organization (2005).

The determinant "physical environment" (Figure 1), among other factors, includes the conditions offered for the safe mobility of the older people and public transportation. Accessible services, including financial ones, are advocated so that all people can actively participate in the society to which they belong. However, albeit defended and safeguarded in numerous contexts, as exposed in the following items, more than free public transportation is required to provide greater inclusion of the older people in their cities and society.

Given this context, this article aims to present reflections on the effectiveness of free public transportation for the inclusion of the older people in the city of São Paulo.

To this end, the authors conducted a qualitative research, aiming at deepening the understanding of a given context, classified as exploratory in terms of its objectives (Silveira and Cordoba, 2009). For the procedures, the authors conducted a bibliographic and documentary survey, presenting pertinent legal studies in various instances.

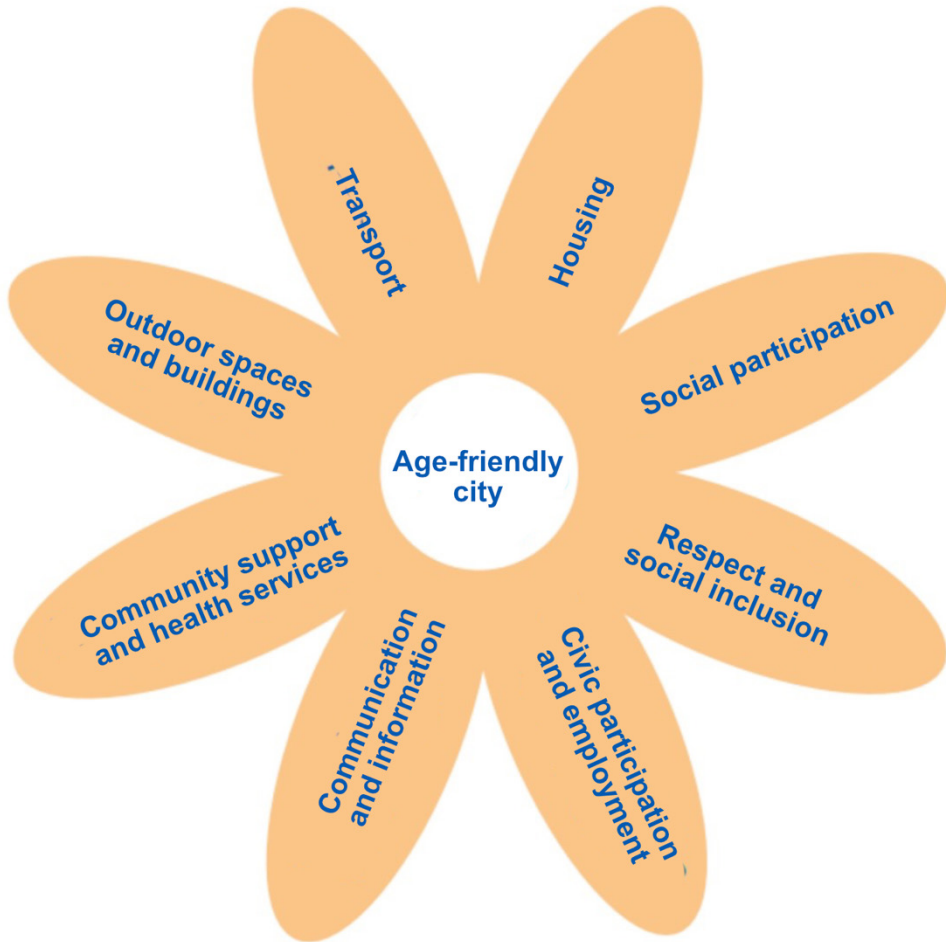
For presenting further information about the context studied, we describe the global project created by the World Health Organization (WHO), *Age-Friendly Cities and Communities* (PAHO/WHO, 2005).

Age-friendly cities and communities

According to WHO data, 61.25% of the people over 60 live in urban areas. Cities need to prepare to meet the needs of long-lived populations. They need environments that offer them support and empowerment, minimally compensating for the social and physical changes resulting from aging. To address these issues, WHO has created the global project *Age-friendly cities and communities* (Ibid.).

This global project originated in June 2005 and was developed at the WHO headquarters (Geneva, Switzerland) by the Brazilian physician Alexandre Kalache and Louise Plouffe, both researchers in aging and longevity. To determine a set of characteristics and practices adhering to the definition of this type of city, a research protocol was implemented in 33 cities from various parts of the world (Plouffe and Kalache, 2010). Older people, careers, and services were consulted, resulting in the model presented in *Global guide to age-friendly cities* publication (World Health Organization, 2007). Eight areas were investigated (Figure 2) to ascertain how much a city is, in fact, friendly to older people, as well

Figure 2 – Age-friendly city: areas to consider



Source: World Health Organization (2007).

as the aspects that require greater attention from the government. Among them, the area of transportation can be observed.

Age-friendly cities and communities, as the name implies, adapt their services and infrastructure to the needs of these people, making municipalities more accessible and

inclusive. They emphasize the quality of life of this segment of the population, offering conditions that favor healthy aging. In Brazil, programs have adhered to the global project "Age-Friendly Cities", promoting actions in this direction in several locations.

Programs "Age-friendly city" and "Age-friendly São Paulo"

On August 21, 2019, the Federal Senate approved Bill n. 402/2019, which created the "Age-friendly city" program to encourage municipalities to adopt measures adhering to the WHO program for healthy aging related to aspects such as transportation, housing, and health (Brazil – Federal Senate, 2019). The municipalities that do so receive the "Age-friendly city" title granted by the National Council for the Elderly.

In the state of São Paulo, the "São Paulo friend of the older people" program and the "Friend of the older people" seal were created by Decree n. 58,047 of May 15, 2012, under the coordination of the Department of Social Development of São Paulo (State) (2021). An Inter-Secretarial Commission of the Secretariats of State, referring to it, addresses all aspects related to the life of the citizen, including metropolitan transport. Municipalities must comply with a series of requirements for promoting six mandatory actions (to obtain the Initial Seal), three more mandatory and three elective actions (Intermediate Seal), and two more mandatory actions (Full Seal), detailed on the program website (the State of São Paulo Secretariat of Human Rights and Citizenship, 2019). Its wording has undergone numerous changes

since its creation through nine normative acts, the last of which regards the "Longevity" Project by Decree n. 66,347, December 16, 2021 (São Paulo (State), 2021).

The capital of São Paulo joined the program on December 18, 2017 (the São Paulo Municipal Special Secretariat of Communication, 2017), receiving the Full Friend of the Older People seal in November 2020 (São Paulo Municipal Secretariat of Human Rights and Citizenship, 2020). In the field of transport and mobility, the benefit of free public transport stands out, provided by the Special Single Ticket to 1.6 million older people (60 years of age or older), according to data from SPTrans.

Gratuity and alignment with the SDGs

Although all 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are interrelated, free public transport for the older people is particularly aligned with the goals highlighted in Chart 1 (United Nations, 2015).

There is a convergence between the references cited so that mobility conditions that contribute to the active aging of the population are provided. The legal frameworks regarding free public transportation for the older people are listed chronologically below.

Chart 1 – Free public transport for the elderly and its alignment with the SDGs

SDG	Pertinent items	Comments
SDG 1 – No Poverty No poverty in all its forms, everywhere	<p>1.4 By 2030 ensure that all men and women, particularly the poor and the vulnerable, have equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to basic services, ownership, and control over land and other forms of property, inheritance, natural resources, appropriate new technology, and financial services including microfinance.</p> <p>1.5 By 2030 build the resilience of the poor and those in vulnerable situations, and reduce their exposure and vulnerability to climate-related extreme events and other economic, social and environmental shocks and disasters.</p>	<p>Item 1.4 recommends guaranteeing “access to basic services” for “all men and women, particularly the poor and vulnerable”, and in item 1.5, the focus is promoting the resilience of these social groups. Second, there are many definitions of social vulnerability. However, several authors consider it to be associated with poverty, and poverty with many other factors besides the financial conditions of the individual, such as access to basic and public services, the degrees of individual and political freedom provided by society, and the quality of the environment. That is, factors associated with quality of life and well-being.</p> <p>Thus, part of the elderly population is considered to be in a situation of social vulnerability, depending on others for their survival and participation in society, in which they have low representation. These factors, among others, constantly threaten the resilience of the older people, as observed during the COVID-19 pandemic. Costa et al. (2018) (Romero et al., 2022)</p> <p>Free public transportation is a factor that contributes for the older people to have access, free of charge for them or their caregivers and guardians, to opportunities and services, allowing for greater social participation</p>
SDG 3 – Health and Well-being Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages	General message	<p>SDG 3 is closely linked to promoting active and healthy aging, as the UN and WHO advocate, as aforementioned. Older people’s access to health services and places that promote their well-being also involves their access to modes of transport, which contributes to their mobility and their right to the city, as any other citizen.</p>
SDG 10 – Reduce inequalities Reduce inequality within and among countries	<p>10.2 By 2030 empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status</p>	<p>Item 10.2 of this SDG makes clear its priority, which is to promote inclusion for all. Therefore, this includes the older people, whose participation in society will be encouraged, in line with active and healthy aging.</p>
SDG 11 – Sustainable cities and communities Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable	<p>11.2 By 2030 provide access to safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems for all, improving road safety, notably by expanding public transport, with special attention to the needs of those in vulnerable situations, women, children, persons with disabilities and older persons.</p>	<p>Item 11.2 of this SDG focuses on accessibility to transport systems, including from a financial point of view, directly linked to their free transportation.</p>

Source: the authors, based on United Nations (2015).

Legal frameworks in the various instances

Concerning public policies related to public transportation for the older people, it is worth highlighting the legal and regulatory frameworks that safeguard their rights.

Chart 2 presents a timeline of the pertinent legislation, detailed as follows.

Statute of the Older People (2003)

On October 1, 2003, Law n. 10,741 was enacted in Brazil, establishing the Statute of the the Older People,¹ which aims to "regulate

the rights guaranteed to people aged 60 (sixty) years or older" (Brasil, 2003). Concerning access to public transport, article 39 of Chapter X – Transport stands out: "Article 39: Individuals over 65 (sixty-five) years of age are guaranteed free urban and semi-urban public transport, except for selective and special services, when provided in parallel to regular services".

State Law n. 15,187/2013

On October 30, 2013, Law n. 15,187 was sanctioned in the State of São Paulo, authorizing free transportation in the Metro, trains of the Companhia Paulista de Trens Metropolitanos (CPTM), and buses of the

Chart 2 – Timeline summarizing the legislation pertinent to the country, state and municipality of São Paulo, regarding free public transportation for the older people

Federal legislation	10/1/2003	Law n. 10,741	✓	Article 39: Those over 65 are guaranteed free urban and semi-urban public transportation, except for selective and special services, when provided parallel to regular services.
State legislation	10/30/2013	Law n. 15,187	✓	Authorizes free travel on the Metro, trains of the Paulista Company of Metropolitan Trains (CPTM), and buses of the Metropolitan Company of Urban Transport (EMTU) to people aged 60 years or older.
Municipal legislation	12/16/2013	Law n. 15,912	✓	Exempt people aged 60 years or over from paying the fare on urban bus lines, within the scope of the municipality of São Paulo.
	9/22/2019	Decree n. 58,639	✓	Consolidates and updates the Single Ticket of the company São Paulo Transportes (SPTrans) provided.
	12/31/2020	Decree n. 60,037	✗	It removes the benefit of free public transport for people between 60 and 64.
State legislation	10/28/2022	Project Law n. 608/2022	✓	It grants free tuition to people in the age group between 60 and 65 years old, in a situation of poverty or extreme poverty, registered in CadÚnico, as of 1/1/2023.
	12/15/2022	Law n. 17,611	✓	Concede a gratuidade nos trens da CPTM e no Metrô para todas as pessoas idosas na faixa etária entre 60 e 65 anos.

Source: the authors.

Metropolitan Company of Urban Transport (EMTU), to people aged 60 years or older (São Paulo State – Government Portal, 2013). With this expansion of free fare, trips by the older people on rails more than doubled in the period between the end of 2013 and 2015, from 10.2 to 24.8 million on CPTM trains and from 24.5 to 50.5 million on the Metro (Shores, 2022).

Municipal Law n. 15,912/2013

On December 16, 2013, Law n. 15,912 provided for the exemption of people aged 60 years or older from the payment of fares on urban bus lines within the scope of the municipality of São Paulo (São Paulo Municipality), 2013).

Municipal Decree n. 58,639/2019

In Municipal Decree n. 58,639 of February 22, 2019 (São Paulo Municipality, 2019), regarding the consolidation and updating of the Single Ticket provided by the company São Paulo Transportes (SPTrans), the gratuity granted by Law n. 15,912 of 2013 was still observed. The timelines for the periods from 1993 to 2013 and 2013 to 2019 (Figure 3) summarize the gratuities to the various modes of public transport in the city of São Paulo conferred on the older people, according to gender and age group (Vieira, 2019).

Municipal Decree n. 60.037/2020

On December 30, 2020, the benefit of free collective public transportation for the older people aged between 60 and 64 years was withdrawn through municipal decree n. 60,037 (São Paulo Municipality), 2020).

Municipal Public Hearing (2021)

On May 11, 2021, the Extraordinary Commission on the Elderly and Social Assistance of the São Paulo City Council held a virtual public hearing to discuss the impacts of the end of the gratuity granted to the older people between 60 and 64 years old in public transport in the capital. One of the statements was based on the fact that the social impacts would be much more significant than the financial ones: about 850,000 São Paulo residents occupied this age group, with 60% of them working precariously (without transportation vouchers and other labor rights), and contributed more than 50% of the family budget. In other words, the withdrawal of the benefit would impact the income of these citizens by about 30% per month (Monteiro, 2021).

Municipal Government Announcement (2022)

On September 26, 2022, the municipal government of São Paulo announced that the older people, between 60 and 64 years old,

registered in the Single Registry or CadÚnico (Brazil, 2022), would be contemplated with free municipal buses as of January 1, 2023 (São Paulo Municipality) – Special Secretariat of Communication, 2022).

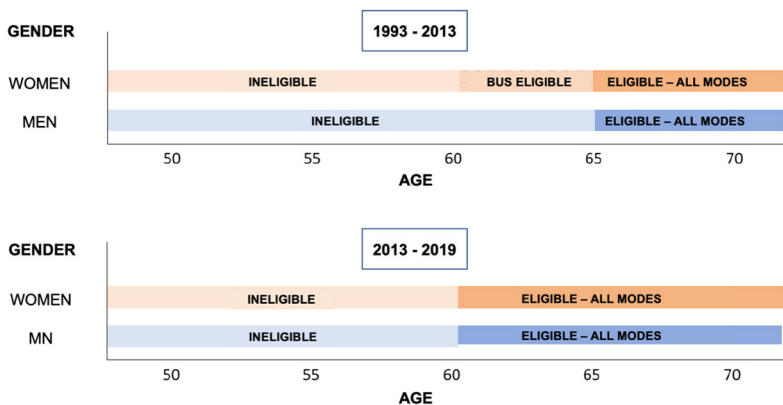
State Bill n. 608/2022

On October 28, 2022, Bill n. 608/2022, authored by the then governor of the state of São Paulo, was urgently being processed, which proposed granting free CPTM trains and the Metro, as of January 1, 2023, to people between 60 and 65 years old, registered in CadÚnico (São Paulo (State, 2022).

State Law n. 17,611/2022

On December 15, 2022, after changes in Bill n. 608/2022, Law n. 17,611 was enacted, granting free travel on CPTM trains and the Metro to all the older people in the age group between 60 and 65 years old (São Paulo (State, 2022). As of that same date, free bus travel in the capital of São Paulo was resumed for people aged 60 to 64 years, which had been suspended since January 2021 (SPTrans, 2022). The resumption resulted from a decision by the São Paulo Court of Justice, which considered the 2021 measure unconstitutional.

Figure 3 – Timelines with free public transportation in the city of São Paulo, given to elderly people according to gender and age group



Source: adapted from Vieira (2019).

Analysis and discussion

A study by the Urban Mobility Information System of the National Association of Public Transport (ANTP) in 533 Brazilian cities reports that the Urban Mobility Index (IMU) is 1.65 trips per inhabitant per day (National Association of Public Transport, 2018). Although the Origin-Destination survey carried out in 2017 by the Metro in the Metropolitan Region of São Paulo (RMSP) pointed to an increase in the IMU from 1.95 in 2007 to 2.02 trips/day/inhabitant in 2017 (average for the MRSP) (Pilotto and Novaski, 2023), the contrast is observed in large cities in more developed countries, in which the IMU is close to 4. In the most vulnerable populations, priority is given to travel for health, work, school, or daycare reasons. Excluding these motivations, the IMU calculated by ANTP was 0.72, evidencing the difficulties of access to public transport. It can be inferred that, without free public transport, the impact on the most vulnerable older people who depend on their families would be even more significant.

Regarding free public transport granted to specific groups in society, we must consider the issue of the so-called cross-subsidies. They refer to the financing of gratuities by paying users, which, of course, is reflected in the price of the fare. A study entitled "Population aging, free public transport and its effects on fares in the Metropolitan Region of São Paulo" (Pereira et al., 2015) presented the results of the Origin-Destination Survey for the Metropolitan Region of São Paulo (carried out by Metrô in 2007), as well as the demographic

projections carried out by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) and the State Data Analysis System Foundation (Seade) for 2020, 2030 and 2050, relating to the progressive aging of the population in the region, considering the maintenance of cross-subsidies. Although there was no prospect of the covid-19 pandemic at the time of the study, the results showed that, in 2020, population aging would not bring significant variations in the number and composition of trips by age, not generating impacts on the value of the fare. However, for 2030 and 2050, forecasts pointed to a considerable increase in the proportion of zero-fare passengers, which could lead to a fare increase of 10% and 20%, respectively. The impacts can be inferred to be significant, considering that, in 2017, 10% of the total bus trips in São Paulo were made by the older people, with zero fares. They totaled 14.8 million monthly trips, corresponding to R\$1 billion annually (Vieira, 2019). Studies of this nature foster discussions about how much paying users are burdened by gratuities and how it is necessary to review the current model, based on cross-subsidies, among other unsustainable aspects.

In the same study, Vieira (Ibid.) evaluated the effects of free public transportation on the travel behavior of the older people in the cities of São Paulo and Belo Horizonte. The author found that not all those aged 65 or more use the benefit because a portion of better socioeconomic status pays for transportation (which minimizes the impact on paying users). In general, these people have a higher level of education, can have their vehicle and a job,

and therefore have a very different profile from most of the group that enjoys the benefit. Also, there may be some difficulty in applying for the benefit with the competent body, which requires completing a form and providing a valid identity document. In the portion of the older people who used the zero-fare, had completed high school, or owned a vehicle, there was no change in their use of public transportation. There was a decrease in walking trips, replaced by short trips made by public transport, intending to access the services and opportunities offered in the neighborhoods where they live, usually with more options. This effect is not attractive either from the point of view of the health of the older people, in which active mobility contributes, or from the externalities caused by car traffic. The gratuity provided access to a broader range of services and opportunities for the most disadvantaged.

In conclusion (Ibid.), he noted that the public transport subsidy can increase beneficiaries' travel by 27.3%, with the most significant impact on those in worse socioeconomic conditions. In addition to the aspects of social inclusion provided by greater mobility, the subsidy to public transport may directly impact the IMU presented above. The study also pointed out that there was no reduction in the number of car trips and, therefore, in traffic externalities.

To some extent, the study by Fatima et al. (2020) corroborates the previous study. Both works are based on a review of the scientific literature, aiming to understand travel patterns among the elderly population, preferences

regarding modes of transport, and synthesizing infrastructure solutions associated with their trips, among others (ibid.). The more than 100 studies on accessibility to transportation for the older people were classified into four main categories (Figure 4): Social and Transportation, Infrastructure Improvement, Accessibility Index, and Choice of Mode of Transportation.

The first of these, Social and Transportation, refers to articles that address the lifestyle of the older people, travel patterns and destinations, and their preferences concerning transportation modes. The Infrastructure Enhancement category includes articles dealing with infrastructure solutions related to the mobility of the older people. In the Accessibility Index, some studies address accessibility indices to walkability and public transport and, in this case, are classified by methodologies based on distance or time.

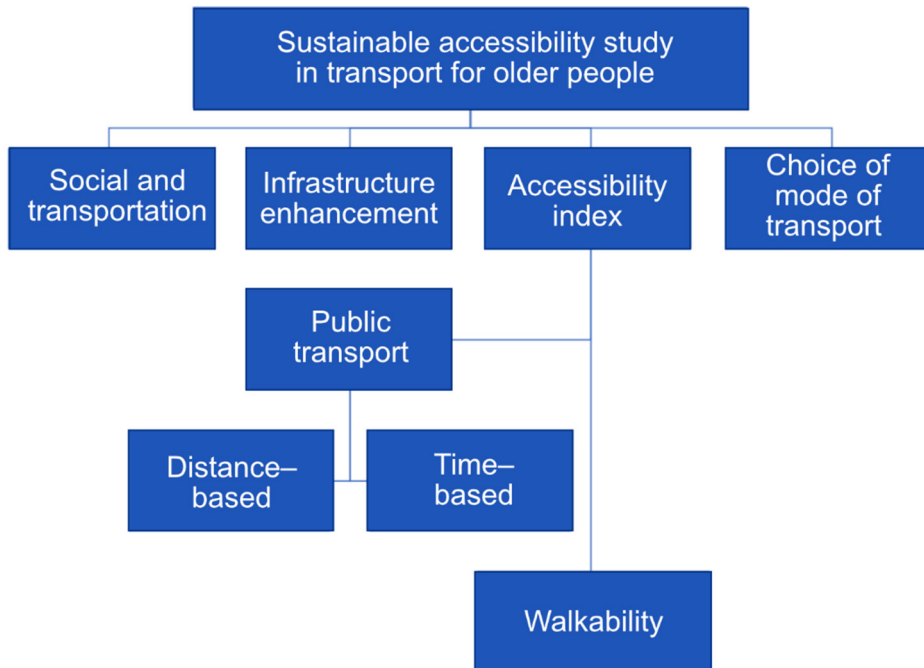
It is worth highlighting here the concept of walkability (Bradshaw, 1993), associated with the degree of adequacy of sidewalks for walking, that is, how much they provide pedestrians with a safe and comfortable walk, stimulating them (or not) to active mobility, especially for access to public transport and from there to their destinations (first and last miles). It also implies the investment of resources for restructuring the physical infrastructure, which, in addition to adequate and attractive sidewalks, includes appropriate urban furniture, stimulating spaces, and good signage, among other factors. Finally, in the category of Choosing the mode of transport, some articles present mathematical

models depicting patterns of choices. The review showed that the travel behavior of the older people is closely associated with the characteristics of the places they live in, including geographical issues in their city, availability of public transportation, primary purposes of each trip, and costs involved.

Although limited to only 100 older people, the study conducted by Lage et al. (2020) highlighted other factors that impact active aging concerning the broader contact of the older individual with the city. About their travel behavior, the preferred modes of

transportation are public transportation and automobiles. Of the people interviewed, 82% use public transport because it is easy to use considering where they live, corroborating the findings of Fátima et al. (2020), and 41% consider this good quality transport. However, 20% have difficulty getting in and out of vehicles, especially buses, due to the height of the steps and the tight turnstiles, in addition to the factors intrinsic to aging. 39% need to sit on public transport due to various commitments, but even when seated, many reported insecurity in traveling by bus due to

Figure 4 – Study of sustainable accessibility in transportation for the elderly



Source: Fatima et al. (2020).

the drivers' way of driving. Although these people do not recognize the changes resulting from aging in their visual, cognitive, and motor capacities, be it in commuting as pedestrians, cyclists, motorcyclists, drivers, or users of public transport, they have perceptions of mobility difficulties imposed by the external environment, such as irregular sidewalks with various obstructions, potholed roads, and poor lighting, again highlighting the relevance of walkability.

This concept is also present in the study by Micheletto (2011), which highlights the need for an urban environment to support walking, which effectively complements the use of public transportation by all people, whether they are elderly or not. Law n. 12,587, of January 3, 2012, which establishes the guidelines of the National Urban Mobility Policy (Brazil, 2012), makes explicit the priority to non-motorized modes of transport but does not provide guidelines to guarantee and make it viable. As long as there is no public policy that responsibly and efficiently treats the sidewalks of cities (Santos et al., 2017), freeing them from the irregularities committed by the public-private partnership with which they are currently governed, the older people will continue to be the greatest victims of the most common traffic accident: falls on the sidewalks. In the city of São Paulo, for example, lot owners are responsible for paving, renovating, and maintaining contiguous sidewalks, and it is up to the government to provide guidelines on how to do so and monitor compliance (São

Paulo (Municipality, 2011). However, many times, these obligations have been breached by both parties.

These and other aspects, such as the positioning, type, and timing of traffic lights for pedestrian crossing, are associated with their set of needs to be met by the external environment, affecting their walkability. Regarding traffic light timing, projects usually consider the time required to meet an average pedestrian travel speed of 1.2 m/s Van Hoof et al. (2021). However, people over 65 move, on average, at 0.9 m/s for men and 0.8 m/s for women. Over 85 years of age, the speed can be 0.4 m/s lower. Insecurity when crossing the streets was also reported in this study, given the lack of respect for pedestrians by many vehicle drivers (motorized or not).

The path to more inclusive, intelligent cities that adhere to the aging population also involves the incorporation of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) (Kuo, Leung and Yan, 2022). Therefore, it is appropriate to propose the incorporation of ICTs that provide greater efficiency and effectiveness to the transport network, from the point of view of operators and public management, promoting the sustainability of the system. In addition, digital tools are proposed that offer greater resources to public transport users, from the planning of each trip to its completion, as well as the promotion of the necessary digital literacy, taking into account specific groups, such as the elderly. As observed in all the studies presented, it is

necessary to consider the cultural, social and political aspects, as well as the technological and mobility aspects, when achieving an "Age-Friendly City" is intended (Loos, Sourbati and Behrendt, 2020), constituting what they called "Mobility Digital Ecosystem".

For example, suppose systems capable of showing their location, in real-time, the number of passengers per vehicle (Milênio Bus, 2022), and the availability of seats for the older people on board buses in the capital of São Paulo. With the collection of this data, over time, a mobile application equipped with Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning would be able to suggest, to each older individual registered in it and user of public transport, the best times and days of the week to carry out each of their activities, within their priorities, so that they could move, whenever possible, during off-peak hours and therefore more safely, comfortably, and tranquilly. Considering that many older people have greater flexibility in their schedules to organize their appointments, this app would be of great use as long as they can use it. To this end, actions promoting their digital literacy and participation in developing products and interfaces that meet their cognitive and technological abilities and everyday needs would be welcome (Iancu and Iancu, 2020).

The provision of public services such as transportation depends on the definition of public policies that bring financial resources from the various government bodies so as not to overload municipal budgets or paying users of public transportation, as well as other sources to be evaluated, eventually by the criterion of negative externalities imposed

on urban mobility (such as transportation by automobiles). For example, in November 2022, the mayor of the capital of São Paulo stated that, for 2023, there would be public resources to finance free public transportation only for the older people in the age group between 60 and 64 years old, registered in CadÚnico. This decision raised the question: where would the resources come from to finance the expanded gratuity to all the older people in this age group as of December 15, 2022, according to a court decision?

One must consider that, not infrequently, there is a discontinuity in public policies in Brazil when the political party in power changes or the scarcity in the transfer of resources between instances when occupied by different parties. This fact can impact the population, fully or partly, positively or negatively (Baldráia, 2019; Aquino Cavalcante, 2021; Axe and Piccinini, 2018).

In 2023, new mandates began at the state and federal levels, and municipal elections will occur in 2024. What will happen to the policies of gratuity defined by the previous state government, with the current administration being a different party, in the case of the state of São Paulo? What will this change impact on the city of São Paulo, whose current mayor is from a different party from the current governor? Furthermore, what will happen to the policies defined by the current mayor if he is not elected in 2024 or if there is a change in the political party in power?

Despite the subjectivity associated with partisan politics and its impacts on public policies, the data and facts presented here point to an integrated and holistic

assessment of the urban transport network, which includes free transportation. In other words, gratuitousness should not be an end in itself. In view of this, some complementary items are suggested to the implementation of free public transport for the elderly that, it is understood, can improve the quality of their journeys: the education and preparation of all public transport agents involved in the care of the elderly, essential to the set of adaptations necessary to cities; an integrated action of the municipal and state authorities, so that the mobility of the elderly, free of charge, is possible between neighboring/ border municipalities (including, therefore, intercity buses, within this geographical scope) and by the municipalities through which trains circulate; the effective fulfillment of all the rights of the elderly in public transport, with specific seats available to them and the incorporation of mechanical devices that allow easy entry and exit of buses; the incorporation of ICTs that contribute to meeting the needs of operators, managers and users of the transport network; the revision and adaptation of the urban mobility network, here considering the concept of walkability, favoring mobility on foot, which, in addition to being fundamental for active aging, is also fundamental to serve the first and last miles of public transport users and connect all other modes of transport.

Final thoughts

All these reports show the numerous factors that affect the mobility of the older people; that is, it is not enough to grant them free public transport to motivate them to leave home. There is a need to adapt cities to an aging population, which involves changes in architectural elements, infrastructure, transport systems, and even the population's education.

Although some aspects of this article still need to be addressed by the new Legal Framework for Collective Public Transport (Brazil – National Secretariat of Mobility and Regional and Urban Development, 2022),¹ they are expected to contribute to the discussions and decisions about free public transport for the older people. The Legal Framework aims to "deal with the restructuring of the Collective Public Transport service provision model and bring principles, guidelines, objectives and definitions on Collective Public Transport, in addition to the organization and financing of transport services and aspects of operation, such as the hiring of operators and their economic and financial regime". It is expected to be approved by the Federal Senate by the end of 2023 and forwarded to the Federal Chamber (Soares, 2023).

Therefore, taking advantage of this opportunity is essential so that due responsibilities are assigned to meet the needs of the older people (among others with

particular displacement characteristics) as citizens and users of public transport, based on an integrated and holistic approach to the urban transport network.

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Note

- (1) In July 2022, Law n. 14,423 was enacted, determining the replacement, throughout Law n. 10,741, “of the expression ‘elderly’ by the expressions ‘elderly person(s)’”.

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Translation: this article was translated from Portuguese to English by he authors themselves, with supervision from Professor Maria Cristina Vidal Borba, email: cristina.borba@usp.br

Received: July 7, 2023
Approved: October 19, 2023