



Just Transition X Regions Webinar

Connecting communities: How regions can close the transport divide

March 2026

REPORT



02	Introduction
03	Baden-Württemberg's inclusive approach
05	Removing barriers in North-Holland
07	Mobility inertia antidote, the Douro way
09	Rural e-car sharing in East Tyrol
11	Catalonia's Clic.cat transport-on-demand system
13	Q/A
16	Key conclusions

PICS

On page 3:

—*NShaked*, Shutterstock

On page 6:

—*Dutchmen Photography*, Shutterstock

On page 7:

—*Armando Oliveira*, Shutterstock

On page 10:

—*RMO/FLUGS*

On page 11:

—*Generalitat Catalunya*

On page 12:

—*Generalitat Catalunya*

Table of contents

Titled 'Connecting communities—How regions can close the transport divide', the fourth webinar in the renewed POLIS Just Transition Webinar Series explores how regions can strengthen their role in addressing transport poverty by improving access, coordination, and governance across the rural-urban divide, rather than focusing on isolated modes or projects.

Organised by the Regions Working Group, with support from the Just Transition Taskforce, the session continues POLIS' efforts to highlight inclusive, place-based solutions that tackle structural barriers to fair and sustainable mobility, with a specific focus on the regional scale.

POLIS launched its Just Transition Agenda in 2021 and expanded its efforts in 2022 by establishing a dedicated Taskforce to drive further action across thematic areas. Since 2023, the Taskforce has organised a series of webinars exploring key topics, including urban-rural mobility, EV-charging, active travel for people with disabilities, gender mainstreaming, and more. This edition shifts the focus to public transport as a central tool to combat transport poverty and advance mobility justice.

As highlighted in POLIS' Social Climate Fund policy paper, transport poverty is fundamentally an issue of access, where limited connectivity, high car dependency, and fragmented governance restrict opportunities for many communities.

Regional-level strategies, particularly in low-density areas, can play a decisive role in improving equity and efficiency by integrating services, coordinating stakeholders, and enabling shared mobility solutions.

This webinar explores how regions can connect communities to jobs, services, and opportunities through innovative governance models, improved coordination, and strategic investment. Drawing on case studies from Southern, Central, and Northern Europe, the session demonstrates how territorial approaches can address structural challenges such as depopulation and funding gaps, while advancing mobility justice and regional cohesion.

The webinar featured five expert speakers:

- Hanna Schredl, Region of Baden-Württemberg;
- Chris de Veer, Province of Noord-Holland;
- Vítor Moreira, Intermunicipal Community of Douro;
- Jakob Britz, Regions Management East Tyrol;
- Cristina Pou Fonollà, Government of Catalonia.



Baden-Württemberg's inclusive approach

Hanna Schredl, working student at the Ministry of Transport of **Baden-Württemberg**, Germany and master's student in mobility management at Karlsruhe, outlined how the region is advancing a just mobility transition through **inclusive policymaking, affordability measures, and data-driven tools**.

She framed mobility as a people-centred issue, stressing that transport poverty extends beyond income. While around 15% of the population in the region is at risk of poverty, barriers also affect children and youth (19% under 20), older adults (27% over 65), persons with disabilities (8,5% severely disabled), and people with a migration background (37%), making mobility justice a systemic concern rather than a niche issue.

A key challenge lies in **affordability and access to public transport**. The **Deutschlandticket**, which enables nationwide use of regional transport, now costs **€63 per month**, creating **pressure for low-income users**. According to the Mobilität in Deutschland (MiD) survey of 2023, this is critical, given that 53% of low-income households in Baden-Württemberg do not own a car, and 20% lack access to any alternative, such as car sharing or bicycles. Although 22% of people in very low-income groups use the ticket, **social welfare schemes allocate only about €50 per month for mobility**. Existing subsidies target specific groups, but the **absence of a comprehensive social ticket** highlights a significant policy gap that the Ministry is working to address.

'Strong networks with social ministries and partners are crucial for effective and inclusive mobility strategies.'

—Schredl



Measuring mobility quality

mobi.mapr is an independent platform assessing mobility quality across modes, activities, and personas:



What it covers



The platform covers **10,000+ cities and municipalities** across Germany

It also evaluates **130 daily activities** for **12 persona profiles** (MiD 2025)

What modes it scores



Grades mobility, combining **objective accessibility** data with **qualitative factors**



INSIGHTS

Evaluates **accessibility to services** (supermarkets, doctors, recreation) and **intermodal connections**

BENEFITS

Helps **identify gaps**, plan **people-centred transport**, **compare regions**, and **guide policy**.

To better respond to these challenges, Baden-Württemberg has prioritised **participatory governance**. Through the five-year conference series **'Shaping a Just Mobility Transition'**, the Ministry engaged directly with key groups, including youth, older adults, migrants, and people experiencing poverty. Organised with social associations and the social ministry, this process ensured that policies are co-created with affected communities. The initiative is now moving into an implementation phase, translating dialogue into concrete measures.

Data-driven planning is another cornerstone. In collaboration with the Baden-Württemberg Institute of Sustainable Mobility, the Ministry developed **mobi.mapr**, a mobility quality analysis platform that evaluates accessibility using a detailed spatial grid and grading system.

The tool integrates user perspectives, activity types, and transport modes, allowing municipalities to identify gaps and design targeted interventions. It also highlights structural dependencies on cars while revealing where alternative modes need strengthening.

Complementing this, the Ministry is implementing measures such as a forthcoming mobility poverty study, a recent report on gender equality in transport, a regional ride-sharing platform, and funding for local rail lines and sustainable urban redesign. Together, these actions reflect a comprehensive approach that combines social policy, infrastructure, and service innovation.

mobi.mapr

—Baden-Württemberg Institute for Sustainable Mobility



March 2026

REPORT

Removing barriers in North Holland

The Dutch dilemma

Even in a globally recognised cycling context like the Netherlands, structural mobility challenges persist and affect a significant share of society:



The barriers that affect them:



Mobility impairments



Inaccessible environments



Transport prices



Safety fears and insecurity



Lack of independence



Inability to cycle

Chris de Veer from the Province of North Holland, the Netherlands, presented key findings from the region's study on mobility justice, offering a detailed, data-driven perspective on how unequal access to mobility affects participation in society. The province, located in the northwest of the Netherlands and home to around 3 million inhabitants across 44 municipalities, combines **high levels of cycling**, with more than 4 million bicycles, **with continued reliance on 1.4 million cars**. This duality highlights that even in a globally recognised cycling context, structural mobility challenges persist.

The study adopts mobility justice as a broader and more comprehensive concept than mobility poverty, defining it as the *'extent to which people can access essential destinations to fully participate in society'*. This framing shifts the focus from compensating inequalities to **removing systemic barriers** altogether. While national data already pointed to vulnerable groups, including 2.5 million people with low literacy, 3 million with limited digital skills, 900,000 low-income individuals, and significant numbers with physical or visual impairments, the province aimed to understand how these challenges manifest spatially and socially at the regional level.

The results reveal the scale of the issue. **One in ten residents in North Holland experiences mobility poverty**, while **42% faces constraints in daily mobility**. This indicates that mobility disadvantage extends well beyond the most

Vulnerable users in the Netherlands are many, and they are affected by multiple barriers

—Provincie Noord-Holland



March 2026

REPORT



'Inaccessible environments, cost, and safety concerns are key barriers to mobility.'

—de Veer

vulnerable groups, affecting a substantial share of the population. The study identifies **multiple, overlapping barriers**. These include physical limitations and inaccessible environments, such as poorly located or unreachable public transport stops, financial constraints among price-sensitive users, and psychological factors, particularly safety concerns in public transport. In addition, many depend on others for mobility, including migrants who are unable or unwilling to cycle, a critical limitation in a system where cycling is a foundational mode of transport.

Spatial analysis further underscores regional disparities. In parts of **southeast Amsterdam**, characterised by **lower-income and more diverse populations**, around **16% of residents face mobility challenges**. In contrast, **more affluent areas such as central Haarlem** show significantly lower rates, **around 6%**. These differences illustrate how mobility inequality is closely linked to socio-economic and spatial patterns, reinforcing the need for targeted, place-based interventions.

In response, the study outlines three main policy directions. First, improving **proximity** and **accessibility** of public space, particularly by ensuring that essential services and public transport stops are within reach. Second, advancing the **concept of 'public mobility'**, which extends beyond traditional public transport to include shared mobility systems, with targeted subsidies to improve affordability in underserved areas. Third, strengthening the **cycling** system as an inclusive network, recognising that access to bicycles, infrastructure, and skills is unevenly distributed.

Concrete measures include enhancing the reliability and connectivity of public transport, improving accessibility of mobility hubs, and addressing safety concerns through design and support mechanisms for anxious users. The province is now translating these insights into policy frameworks while engaging directly with affected groups to co-develop solutions—an iterative approach that ensures that interventions are grounded in lived experience.



Mobility inertia antidote, the Douro way

Vítor Moreira, representing the **Intermunicipal Community of Douro**, Portugal, outlined the complex challenges and emerging opportunities for mobility in **one of the country's most dispersed regions**.

Covering 217 parishes, over 4,000 km², and home to roughly 184,000 inhabitants, the Douro Valley faces unique difficulties tied to **population dispersion, complex bureaucracy, and limited local control over transport networks**. Historically, centralised state authority governed most transport decisions, creating a mismatch between policy and local needs. The redistribution of transport competencies to municipalities, and subsequently to the Douro community, marked a critical shift, enabling regional authorities to start tailoring services, though significant administrative hurdles remain.

A core challenge lies in **coordinating 19 municipalities under one functional network**. **Public procurement**, particularly for contracts exceeding €750,000, requires approval from all municipalities and multiple layers of legal oversight, a process that has delayed projects for years. For example, attempts to implement a free pass for young people (a policy covering ages 4 to 23) have been slowed by fragmented contracts with multiple operators, limiting the effectiveness of even simple equity-oriented measures. These delays contribute to persistent transport poverty, high car dependency, and difficulty connecting residents to essential services and regional economic centres.

'Sometimes bureaucracy drives transport poverty and car dependence.'

—Moreira



Mobility in the Douro valley

The Intermunicipal Community of Douro is tackling mobility challenges across a vast and scattered region of 217 parishes:



184K inhabitants

4,000+ km²

Scattered population

Slow bureaucracy



Old bus fleets



Limited rail services



High car dependence

OPPORTUNITIES:



Electrification of buses



Modernisation of train lines



Flexible transport



Boat transport



Cycling routes

Moreira highlighted that the first attempt to launch a streamlined procurement for the network began in 2021, illustrating the **systemic inertia that slows innovation**.

In terms of mobility solutions, the region is **heavily reliant on buses**, which are relatively flexible and adaptable to the challenging terrain. However, the existing fleet is ageing, and efforts to electrify services are constrained by limited infrastructure and bureaucratic delays. **Rail transport is minimal**, with only two lines governed by central authorities, further limiting local flexibility. Other opportunities, such as **aerial connections via regional aerodromes** or **boat transport along the Douro River**, remain largely underutilised for residents, serving mainly **tourism** rather than daily mobility. **Cycling** initiatives exist but are largely geared toward sports and tourism rather than practical day-to-day transport due to the valley's topography.

Flexible, demand-responsive transport is identified as a key next step, particularly to serve **elderly populations** in dispersed villages. Moreira stressed that legal obligations exist to provide these services, but implementation is contingent on administrative freedom and coordination capacity.

Despite these challenges, the Intermunicipal Community of Douro is exploring solutions that **integrate buses, cycling, and river transport**, aiming to reduce dependency on cars and increase equitable access across the region.

Transport challenges and opportunities in CIM Douro

—POLIS



March 2026

REPORT

Rural e-car sharing in East Tyrol

Jakob Britz, from [Regions Management East Tyrol](#), Austria, presented a detailed overview of how the region is combining public transport, demand-responsive services, and e-car sharing to address rural mobility gaps.

East Tyrol is a mountainous exclave of Tyrol, covering 2,020 km² with 49,000 residents and a population density of just 24 inhabitants per km². The region's geography and isolation—no direct connections to the rest of Tyrol and limited main transport routes—mean that **private cars dominate travel**, yet significant portions of the population remain underserved.

Recent studies show that **16% of residents are not covered by public transport**, and schedule gaps reduce reliability, leaving many dependent on personal vehicles. Complementing traditional buses, the region **operates two line-based demand-responsive transport (DRT) services** to cover side valleys and settlements beyond the reach of fixed routes.

The centrepiece of East Tyrol's intermodality strategy is the **FLUGS e-car sharing system**, launched in 2015 and coordinated by the regional energy cooperative [Regionalenergie Osttirol](#). The system currently operates **10 vehicles**, with one additional car added weekly, targeting households seeking to reduce second car ownership, businesses for employee travel, and tourists needing local mobility after arriving by public transport. **Integration with local bus services** allows guest card holders to travel for free, enhancing multimodal connectivity.

'Rural intermodality shows that mobility solutions can work outside of cities too.'

—Britz



How FLUGS e-car sharing works

—POLIS



March 2026

REPORT



EU projects such as **SMACKER**, **LAST MILE**, and **SMARTA-NET** supported the program as a lighthouse initiative, improving service quality and operational efficiency. Strategic partnerships, including free parking in Lienz and preferential electricity rates from the local energy provider, further reduce barriers for users.

Usage data from the past year demonstrates both adoption and operational impact. The **571 registered users are evenly distributed across age groups**: under 30, 30–50, and over 50. Of these, 445 users booked at least once, 212 booked over 10 times, and 45 booked over 100 times. **The most frequent user made 554 trips, effectively substituting a private vehicle.**

In total, the cars travelled 146,449 km—roughly 14,000 km per vehicle—across **3,394 bookings**, split nearly evenly between private and business trips, with business trips generally shorter. Tariff structures accommodate different usage patterns, with monthly subscription plans offering lower hourly and per-kilometre rates, and flat-rate options for weekend or longer trips. Night-time usage is incentivised with reduced rates, encouraging off-peak adoption.

Britz emphasised that **rural intermodality** requires targeted, flexible solutions. Unlike urban areas where multiple transport modes are standard, rural regions benefit from a mix of buses, DRT, and e-car sharing to reduce car dependency, optimise traffic flows, and lower parking demand.



Catalonia's Clic.cat transport-on-demand system



Cristina Pou Fonollà, from the **Government of Catalonia**, presented the development and operational insights of **Clic.cat**, a digitalised transport-on-demand (ToD) system designed to enhance mobility in rural and low-density areas across Catalonia. By 2024, Clic.cat operates nearly **250 routes**, connecting over 700 settlements and moving close to 200,000 passengers annually. The service is **concentrated in the Pyrenees and other sparsely populated regions**, addressing the challenge of providing reliable public transport across geographically fragmented areas. Clic.cat was launched in 2021 as a modernisation and rebranding of earlier ToD services, aiming to make rural transport more attractive, user-friendly, and responsive to local mobility needs.

The system uses a **variety of vehicles**, including minibuses, electric minibuses, taxis, minivans, and buses, to accommodate different service types and terrain. Clic.cat offers multiple service models: single-stop requests, semi-flexible lines, and fully flexible 'cloud-of-points' routes that allow users to choose multiple boarding locations. The platform emphasises accessibility for diverse users: approximately **75% of bookings are digital through the app**, while **25% remain phone-based** to ensure **inclusion of elderly passengers or those with limited digital literacy**. Branding consistency is central to the approach, with all buses, stops, leaflets, and digital platforms adopting the Clic.cat identity, while individual bus operators can select technology providers such as Shotl or Ne-mi to implement the service.



Clic.cat has demonstrated strong adoption and satisfaction. By 2025, the system is expected to serve 130,000 passengers (over half of the total ToD ridership) across **70 networks** and **58 service routes**. Real-time tracking, notifications, and booking confirmations provide passengers with visibility and reliability, addressing common barriers to rural transport. Surveys indicate a **97% user satisfaction rate**, highlighting both the usability and reliability of the system in rural contexts. Expansion plans for 2025 include the implementation of 10 additional networks, increasing total Clic.cat systems from 17 to 27, **extending coverage** into more underserved counties and settlements.



'Real-time tracking and notifications make rural public transport reliable and attractive.'

—Pou Fonollà

DRT in Catalonia

Demand-Responsive Transport (DRT) in Catalonia serves 247 bus routes and more than 700 settlements.



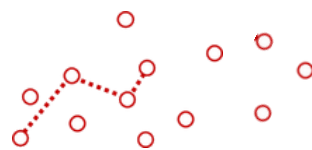
On-demand stop service

Buses detouring to a stop located off the route if a passenger requests it



Semi-flexible service

Stop times are predefined, but vehicles will only travel between the requested stops



Cloud of points flexible service

With no predefined route or stop times, buses will move towards the requested stops according to an algorithm.

DRT services in Catalonia

—Generalitat Catalunya/POLIS

March 2026

REPORT



Q1

on *political stability and community*

How can reliance on political support be reduced, and can community networks help?

Schredl's :

Schredl mentioned that strong networks and long-term programmes provide stability. In Baden-Württemberg, consistent political support since 2011 has helped initiatives become well-established and more resilient to future political changes.

Q2

on *stakeholder engagement formats*

What are the formats for stakeholder interactions?

Schredl's response:

Engagement takes the form of annual two-day summer conferences with workshops and varied methods. Beyond this, ongoing contact with social ministries and associations ensures community requests are translated into actionable measures, supporting sustained collaboration.

Q3

on *action prioritisation criteria*

Are actions in the regional plan prioritised solely by geography, or are other factors considered?

de Veer's response:

de Veer explained that some measures, such as public transport pricing, apply universally. Others are targeted to specific local issues identified through consultation with residents. The approach balances general actions with interventions addressing transport poverty or other localised challenges.

Q4

on *platform*

Has a mobility platform been considered to manage operators' activities and data?

Moreira's response:

Moreira noted that a platform is desirable but complex; larger teams and contracts for new operators would be needed, too.



Q5

on *e-bike support*
in hilly areas

Are there subsidies or support schemes for e-bikes in hilly regions?

Moreira's response:

Support is mainly for shared e-bikes, with direct subsidies limited. Success varies with local infrastructure and tourism patterns. Residents face barriers such as unreliable trains, so current efforts focus on establishing basic mobility infrastructure before expanding e-bike subsidies.

Q6

on *carsharing*
balance

Are measures needed to balance carsharing between tourists and residents?

Britz's response:

Britz stated that there is little competition, as bookings per day do not saturate the system. Cars are generally available to all users without conflict.

Q7

on *e-car sharing*
vs private cars

Does the e-car sharing system primarily complement private car ownership?

Britz's response:

The system complements private vehicles and reduces traffic, not transport poverty. Demand-responsive and flexible services better serve underserved areas. Car locations are fixed for now, with plans to increase flexibility.

Q8

on *youth demand*
for carsharing

Could demographic changes increase demand for carsharing among younger people?

Britz's response:

Britz highlighted that driver's licences are expensive, limiting access for younger people. Expanding ridesharing, pooling, and combining services could increase access for those without cars.



Q9

on *booking demographics*

Are there demographic differences between app and telephone bookings in Clic.cat?

Pou Fonollà's response:

Pou Fonollà reported that bookings are evenly distributed across age groups, with no significant differences between app and telephone users.

Q10

on *route determination*

How are routes determined in the Clic.cat DRT system?

Pou Fonollà's response:

Routes vary by service type. Most Clic.cat implementations are new rather than conversions. For the 17 new systems, there was no prior bus service, so Clic.cat complements areas previously unserved.



Across four regional approaches—from inclusive policymaking to rural e-car sharing, transport-on-demand, and mobility justice analysis—eight insights for building equitable, user-focused mobility emerged:

1 Address systemic barriers.

Financial, bureaucratic, and geographic obstacles must be tackled comprehensively to ensure fair access for all residents.

2 Design for dispersed populations.

Flexible, demand-responsive services can serve rural, low-density, and hard-to-reach areas effectively and reliably.

3 Empower local actors.

Decentralised decision-making and municipal coordination improve responsiveness to community needs.

4 Blend technology with human support.

Digital tools, combined with phone-based or in-person assistance, broaden usability and inclusion for all users.

5 Foster intermodal connections.

Coordinating buses, e-car sharing, cycling, and river or rail transport strategically increases mobility options across regions.

6 Ground decisions in evidence.

Data on demographics, travel patterns, and accessibility gaps guides well-targeted, evidence-based interventions.

7 Use innovation to reduce inequalities.

New mobility solutions should explicitly prioritise inclusion and help close, rather than widen, existing access gaps.

8 Leverage partnerships.

Collaboration with local authorities, operators, and community organisations amplifies impact and strengthens policy implementation.

Together, these insights demonstrate that effective mobility requires **combining flexible services, participatory governance, data-driven planning, and inclusive innovation** to create fairer, more accessible transport systems.



POLIS

CITIES AND REGIONS FOR TRANSPORT INNOVATION

AUTHORS:

Alessia Giorgiutti, POLIS
Andréia Lopes Azevedo, POLIS
Ben Luoma, POLIS
Laura Babío Somoza, POLIS

WITH THE CONTRIBUTION OF:

Hanna Schredl, Region of Baden-Württemberg
Chris de Veer, Province of Noord-Holland
Vítor Moreira, Intermunicipal Community of Douro
Jakob Britz, Regions Management East Tyrol;
Cristina Pou Fonollà, Government of Catalonia

Contact

POLIS
Rue du Trône 98
B-1050
Brussels, Belgium
Tel +32 (0)2 500 56 70
polis@polisnetwork.eu
www.polisnetwork.eu