

Analysis of public passenger transport service in rural areas of Slovakia



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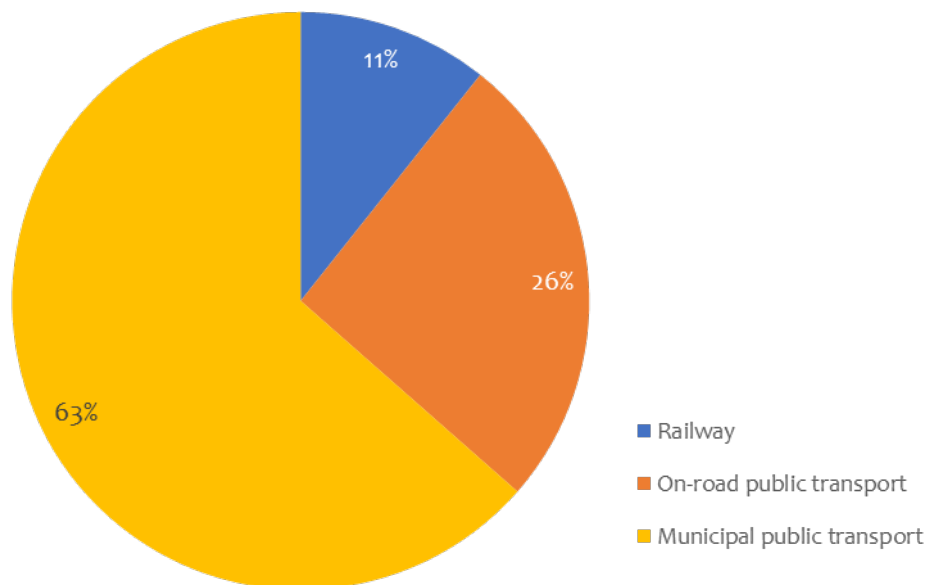
Introduction

Transport poverty remains a significant challenge in rural Slovakia, hindering social and economic development and exacerbating inequalities. This report explores the current state of public transport in rural areas, identifying key issues such as inadequate service coverage, high transportation costs, and limited accessibility that disproportionately affect vulnerable populations. By examining the structure of Slovakia's transport system, legislative frameworks, and funding sources, we aim to highlight the critical gaps and propose viable solutions to enhance the transport infrastructure. Our goal is to ensure that all residents, regardless of their geographic location, have access to reliable, affordable, and efficient transportation options that meet their daily needs and contribute to their quality of life.

1. Overview of public transport in Slovakia

Slovakia's transport network is structured to create comprehensive connectivity between various regions, facilitating mobility from the national level down to local public services. The backbone of this system is the **national rail network**, which connects key cities and towns across the country, providing essential transport routes that link all regions. On road, the **intercity bus network** runs in parallel to compete on some transport lines and to complement the railway services, especially in areas not covered by railway lines. The **regional bus network** complements the rail and intercity bus system, ensuring that cities and towns are well-served by public transport. The intercity bus services establish crucial links between urban centres, served by urban transport, and regional areas.

Figure: Passenger transport split (excl. individual transport), % share of passengers, in 2023



Source: [Statistical Office](#), do1003rs

The management of public transport in Slovakia is a multi-tiered system involving national, regional and municipal authorities, each with specific roles and responsibilities. The Ministry of Transport of SR oversees the formulation of national transport policies and funding on national level, while regional and municipal bodies handle the planning and operation of local services. Transport services are operated by both public and private entities, contributing to a diverse ecosystem. Public transport regulations ensure that these operators adhere to established service standards, promoting safety, reliability, and accessibility for all users.

Legislative framework for transport

The legislative structure governing transport in Slovakia forms a comprehensive system that regulates various modes of transport. This framework comprises several key legislative acts and decrees that address the characteristics and operational needs of road and rail transport, as well

as public transport services. These laws provide guidelines on the management, responsibilities and rights of transport operators and users.

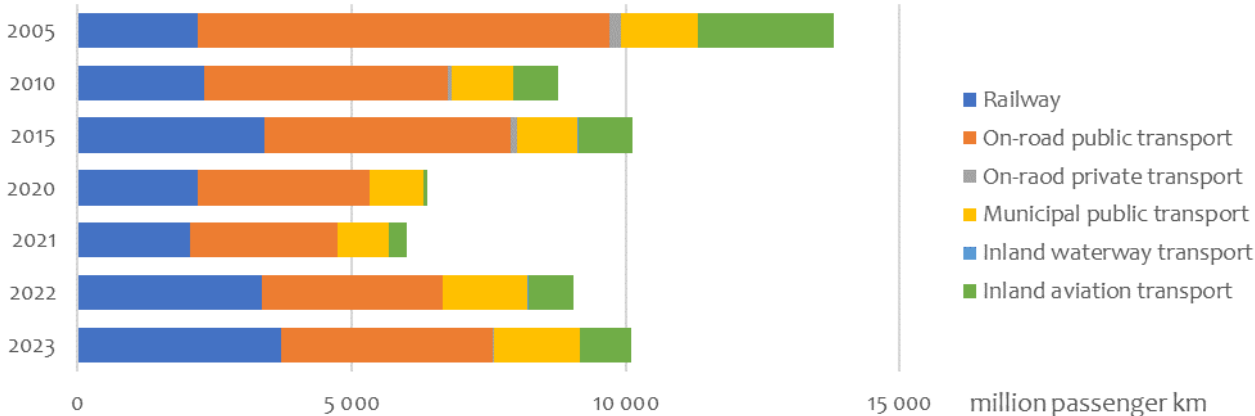
Business operation on railways is regulated by Act No. 514/2009 on railway transport (*Zákon č. 514/2009 Z. z. o doprave na dráhach*). It governs the transport services, operation of railways, trams and trolleybuses, ensuring that safety protocols and consumer protections are maintained within rail transport services.

For business operations in road transport, Act No. 56/2012 on road transport (*Zákon č. 56/2012 Z. z. o cestnej doprave*) sets out regulations, defining how transport operators access and conduct services while outlining the oversight roles of public authorities. This ensures that commercial and passenger transport, including taxis, operates under structured and fair conditions.

The recent Act No. 332/2023 on public personal transport (*Zákon č. 332/2023 Z. z. o verejnej osobnej doprave*) introduces measures aimed at enhancing the provision of public transport services. It emphasizes operational standards, rights and responsibilities of service providers and passengers, and mandates regular and inclusive transport services, promoting public welfare and regional connectivity. Supplementing this, Decree 269/2024 (*Vyhláška 269/2024 Z. z.*), specifies detailed requirements from Act No. 332/2023, including service accessibility, ticketing policies, and financial guidelines to strengthen public transport management and oversight.

This legal framework is complemented by the foundation of road traffic regulation established by Act No. 8/2009 on road traffic (*Zákon č. 8/2009 Z.z. o cestnej premávke*), which lays out rules for road users, vehicle requirements and the duties of traffic authorities, contributing to road safety and orderly traffic management.

Figure : Passenger Transport (excl. individual transport)



Source: [Statistical Office](#), do1003rs

Standards for public transport are defined in the Act No. 332/2023 and the Decree 269/2024. The maximum allowable number of transfers varies based on the destination: one transfer for connections from a village to a regional center, two transfers to a district town, three to a regional capital, and four to the capital city, Bratislava. Standard transfer times range from 10 to 30 minutes, with intervals of 120 minutes for long-distance connections and 60 minutes for regional connections.

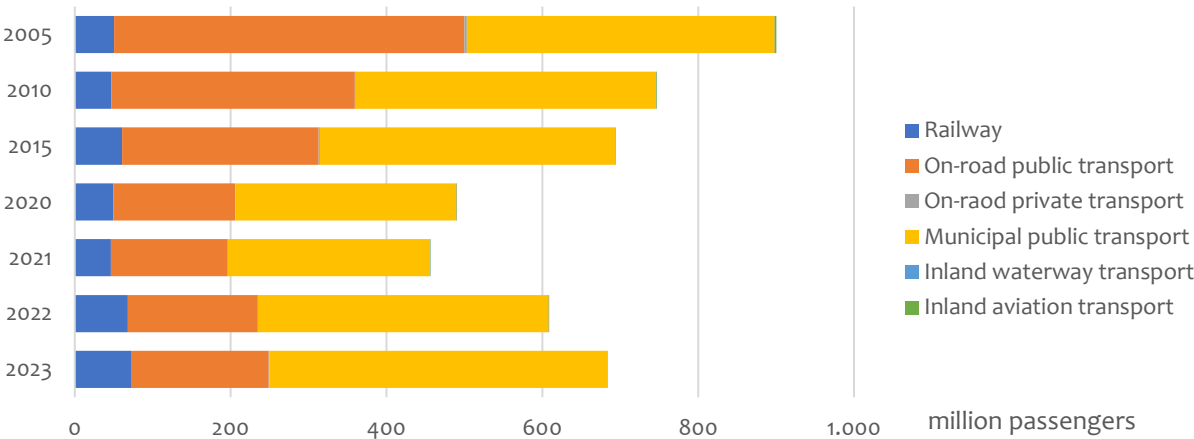
Operating hours differ by transport type, with long-distance transport running from 5:30 AM to 10:30 PM, regional transport from 4:00 AM to 11:30 PM, and municipal transport from 5:00 AM to 11:00 PM. Regional transport has additional standards, including a maximum walking distance of 1,500 meters to the nearest bus stop, adjusted to cover 90% of residents in the area. Adjacent regional centers are connected by direct routes, and overlapping routes are either coordinated or eliminated to improve efficiency.

Accessibility and safety standards prioritize persons with disabilities and reduced mobility, ensuring public transport remains inclusive. In urban areas, at least one main route must operate with a maximum recommended interval of 30 minutes during peak hours. For municipalities with fewer than 30,000 residents, transport focuses on connecting key facilities such as workplaces, schools, healthcare institutions, and social services, with links to regional or long-distance stops if these are located more than 1,500 meters or a 20-minute walk away.

The public transport system

The public transport services in Slovakia are provided by state-owned, municipal and private companies. **Rail passenger transport** in Slovakia has long been a fundamental pillar of public transport, but faces several challenges such as outdated infrastructure and economic constraints, including the reduction of services. Railways of the Slovak Republic (ŽSR) manage the infrastructure, while Railway Company Slovakia (ZSSK) provides passenger transport. ZSSK also offers free travel for students and seniors, funded by state subsidies. Private operators, such as Leo Express and RegioJet, are at a disadvantage compared to the state-owned carrier due to these subsidies. The planned market liberalization in 2025/2026 could bring positive changes.

Figure: Passenger Transport (excl. individual transport)



Source: [Statistical Office](#), do1003rs

On road transport is operated by a mix of private and municipal companies. **Intercity long distance transport** is mostly organised by private companies providing competition to the rail services or serving other location on economically viable routes. Long-distance transport is considered a transport route that is generally longer than 100 km and connects significant city centres, passing through multiple regions and is not primarily intended for daily commuting to regional centres (Act 269, § 16).

Meanwhile, **regional bus transport** is managed by regional administration, often through public service contracts and financed by the regional authority to provide routes and services that might otherwise be underserved. Regional transport primarily serves daily commuting, particularly to the regional centres or to ensure transport service within the region (Act 269, § 16). It is operated and mainly funded from the budgets of regional administration offices. Contributions from European funds can be obtained for the modernization and development of regional transport infrastructure and fleet.

Municipal public transport provides transportation within a city or municipality and its immediate surroundings (Act 269, § 16). Currently, municipal public transport operates in 61 cities, served by buses and minibuses. Trolleybuses are used in Bratislava, Košice, Prešov, Banská Bystrica, and Žilina. Trams are deployed in Košice and Bratislava. Municipal public transport is largely financed from the municipal budget, which is primarily composed of revenue from taxes and fees. Passenger fare revenues do not cover the operational costs associated with running municipal public transport.

A specific challenge arises for school-aged children who need to reach school at a specific time. In Slovakia, there is no unified school bus system like in other countries. School routes are most often integrated into regular public transport and adapted to the needs of children in terms of time and route. While municipalities are responsible for elementary education, and regional administrations oversee higher education, both entities collaborate with transport providers to design public transport schedules that accommodate school start times.

The issue emerges when there is lack of connection in or from municipalities with a large number of schoolchildren to the municipality where the designated school is located. Given that both transport and school operations fall under the jurisdiction of regional administrations, these regions usually ensure the operation and funding of school buses. In some cases, municipalities support the routes by contributing to the operation costs. In remote areas, local initiatives operate, funded by municipalities or regional governments, with transport either integrated into public transport or organized on demand. A special category includes school buses for private schools, which are funded by private sources—either by the school itself or by parents.

Integrated transport systems

Several regions in Slovakia have implemented integrated public transport systems, successfully connecting various types of transportation, including buses, trains, trams and trolleybuses. These systems encompass municipal, suburban, intercity and even long-distance services.

This integration simplifies travel for residents, offering several benefits:

- **Reduced car dependence:** Easier public transport use encourages a shift away from individual car use, which contributes to lowering greenhouse gas emissions, noise pollution, and traffic congestion.
- **Single tickets:** Passengers can use a unified fare system, eliminating the need for multiple tickets for different modes of transport.
- **Smoother transfers:** Coordinated routes and schedules ensure smoother connections between different modes, saving time and reducing wait periods.

- **Improved accessibility:** The integration of various services expands travel options, especially for longer distances and connections through hubs, making public transport a more viable choice.

There are four functional integrated transport systems in Slovakia, with two more being prepared, covering nearly 80% of the country's territory.

- **Integrated transport system of the Bratislava Region (IDS BK):** Covers the capital city Bratislava and its surrounding area (Bratislava region), with connections to neighbouring regions, specifically Trnava, which is the only adjacent region. It offers a unified fare system and enables travel by buses, trains, trolleybuses, and trams.
- **Integrated transport system East (IDS Vychod):** Focuses on the Košice and Prešov regions and is gradually expanding to include other areas.
- **Integrated transport system of the Žilina Region (IDS ZK):** This system covers parts of the Žilina region, including the districts of Žilina, Martin, Turčianske Teplice, Čadca, and Kysucké Nové Mesto. It offers integrated travel by buses and trains.
- **Integrated transport system of the Banská Bystrica Region (IDS BBSK).**

Further efforts among other transport operators exist to coordinate connections between railway and bus transport and to establish an efficient semi-integrated transport system that improves accessibility and services for passengers, especially over longer distances and through various transport hubs. Long distance bus routes but also municipal transport often coordinate their schedules with train connections, enabling more effective links between urban and regional centres.

The introduction of these systems have the advantages of improved travel coordination, enabling smoother transfers and reducing the inconvenience of multiple separate tickets. Integration efforts focus on ensuring that transport schedules align, making it easier for passengers to transition between modes and reach their destinations efficiently.

Ticketing systems in Slovak public transport

The ticketing systems in Slovakia are designed to facilitate ease of use for public transport users, offering a variety of ticket types and options. These systems aim to integrate multiple modes of transport and provide convenient access across different regions and transport operators.

Slovak transport companies offer a range of ticket options to cater to diverse passenger needs:

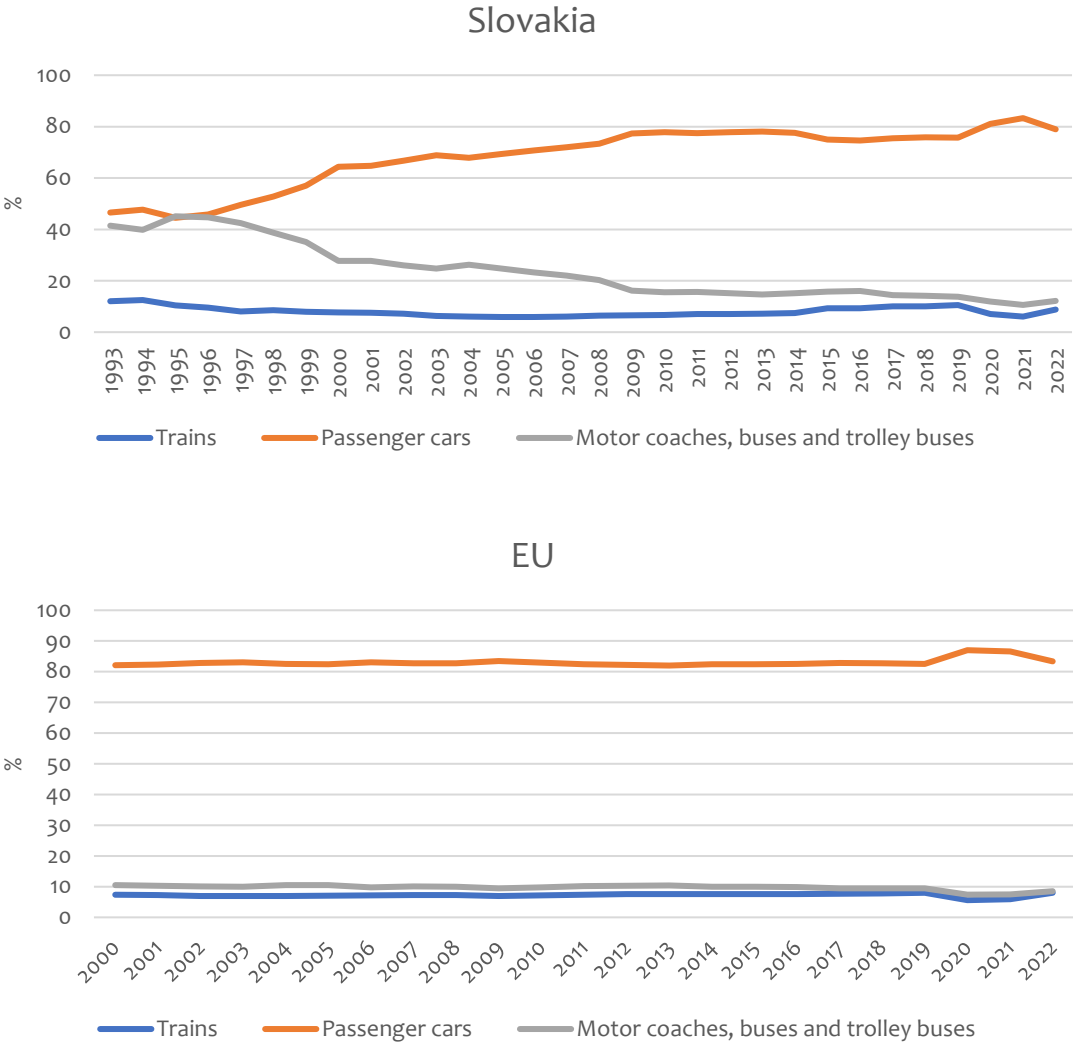
- **Single-ride tickets:** These tickets are available for individual trips and are typically valid for a specified time frame, depending on the city or transport operator. Pricing can vary between urban and regional services.
- **Season tickets:** Regular users can benefit from daily, weekly, monthly, and yearly **season tickets** that offer cost savings and provide unlimited travel within the designated period and transport network.
- **Discounts and concessions:** Special ticketing arrangements are available for students, seniors, and low-income individuals, providing them with reduced fares or even free travel in certain cases. These concessions are critical for ensuring affordability and accessibility for vulnerable groups, supporting their mobility needs.

For railway, intercity and public transport, mobile applications are available that provide either real-time public transport information or at least relevant time schedules. The implementation of contactless payment systems in public transport is also growing, simplifying the payment process.

Passenger transport and mobility patterns in Slovakia

Over recent decades, Slovakia has experienced significant changes in the modal share of passenger transport. Historically, a larger portion of the population relied on public transport, with buses and trains being the predominant modes of travel. In 1993, more than 53% of trips were made using public transport, driven largely by limited access to private vehicles. However, this trend has shifted dramatically, and by 2022, the use of private cars increased to nearly 80%, aligning with EU averages. The shift reflects broader economic growth, increased car ownership, and urban sprawl, which have influenced public preferences for individual transport over public options.

Figure: Modal split of passenger transport, in %



Source: Eurostat, Modal split of inland passenger transport

The total passenger kilometres travelled by various modes highlight the dominant role of private car use. While public transport services, especially rail and intercity buses, still play crucial roles in the overall network, their share of passenger kilometres has been surpassed by private transport. In comparison to neighbouring countries and EU averages, Slovakia's reliance on personal vehicles is substantial, though efforts to boost the use of public transport continue through infrastructure investments and policy changes aimed at improving service quality and integration.

According to the National Census 2021, individual motorized transport is the most frequently used mode of commuting, accounting for 59% of all trips. Public motorized transport represents 19%, while non-motorized transport (walking or cycling) accounts for 17%. This transportation structure varies significantly across regions. Rural areas rely more heavily on individual vehicles, whereas urban areas have a higher share of public transport and non-motorized forms of mobility. The average commuting distance in Slovakia is 14.6 km, with public and individual motorized transport covering similar distances (15 km). Non-motorized transport is predominantly used for short distances (1.07 km), primarily in urban areas. Commuting from rural areas to cities dominates among mobility types, highlighting the concentration of job opportunities in urban centers while also indicating that rural areas are more dependent on individual transport to cover longer distances.

The environmental impact of Slovakia's **transport system** is closely tied to the modal share of different types of vehicles. The heavy use of private cars has contributed to higher emissions, which presents a challenge for meeting environmental targets. Public transport, particularly electric-powered options like trams and trolleybuses in cities, provides a more sustainable alternative, reducing emissions and traffic congestion. **Policies promoting sustainable transport**, such as investments in electric buses, cycling infrastructure and integrated transport systems, aim to encourage a shift back toward public and non-motorized transport modes to mitigate environmental impacts.

2. Services for vulnerable groups

In Slovakia, the Anti-Discrimination Act (Act No. 365/2004, *Zákon o rovnakom zaobchádzaní v niektorých oblastiach a o ochrane pred diskrimináciou*) manages protection against discrimination on various grounds including disability, age, gender, ethnicity, or nationality, specifically addressing public services such as transport. This act states that all individuals have equal access to these services and are safeguarded against discriminatory practices.

The transportation sector in Slovakia is further regulated under specific laws such as the Act on Railways and the Act on Road Transport. These laws have provisions to enhance accessibility for persons with disabilities, mandating suitable modifications to infrastructure and transportation vehicles to accommodate such needs. Moreover, the National Building Standards complement these regulations by setting technical standards for the construction of accessible transport facilities.

In Slovakia, there isn't a specific system of school buses as might be found in some other countries. Instead, Slovak students typically use the regular public transport system to commute to and from schools. The law enforces general safety measures across public transport, benefiting all users, including schoolchildren. However, there are no specific operational guidelines or safety standards exclusively designed for school buses.

At the European level, Slovakia aligns with the EU Accessibility Act (No. 2019/882), integrating EU standards into its national framework to enhance accessibility across various products and services, including transport. This is part of a broader initiative to ensure uniform accessibility standards across all EU member states. Additionally, EU regulations like Regulation (EU) No 181/2011 and Regulation (EU) No 1371/2007 define the rights of bus, coach, and rail passengers, emphasizing protections and accessibility for all, particularly those with reduced mobility.

Internationally, Slovakia has committed to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), which advocates for comprehensive rights and accessibility for persons with disabilities in public transportation among other areas.

Accessibility of stations, stops and vehicles

In major urban areas, public transport stations and stops are equipped shelters, some also with seating, enhancing comfort while waiting for the connection. Public transport fleet in larger cities in Slovakia provide visual and auditory announcements, have dedicated spaces for wheelchair, baby trolleys or seating pregnant women, catering to the needs of vulnerable passengers

In Bratislava, the public transportation system has made efforts to improve accessibility, particularly for buses and trams. Some vehicles are equipped with ramps or lifts to assist passengers with mobility challenges in boarding. For passengers requiring these facilities, the availability of accessible vehicles is indicated by a wheelchair symbol in the public transportation timetables, which helps in identifying which services are equipped to accommodate their needs. A significant portion of the municipal public transport fleet in Bratislava, is designed with low-floor vehicles to enhance accessibility for passengers with reduced mobility, such as those using wheelchairs. These vehicles also feature dedicated spaces and priority seating for vulnerable groups like the elderly and pregnant women. Additionally, most of the buses and trams are

equipped with systems that provide visual and auditory announcements, including stop information and safety instructions.

Rural areas face more challenges in providing accessible fleet and infrastructure due to lower funding and geographical constraints. While there is an intent to improve comfort, the progress is slower and less uniform compared to urban settings.

On railway stations across the country, there are usually covered waiting rooms and facilities. Investments from EU funds have resulted in many railway stations being equipped with ramps and elevators for passengers with mobility challenges reach the designated platform. For travellers on the train, the Slovak Rail (ZSSK) provides facilities for passengers with reduced mobility, including the ability to order assistance and use special compartments on certain trains. These services need to be arranged in advance and are designed to improve accessibility for travellers with disabilities.

Accessibility passengers with reduced mobility in regional and long distance bus transport varies. Some regional routes are equipped with low-floor buses, but this is not valid across all regions. Accessibility for passengers with disabilities on long-distance bus routes varies by carrier and specific route. Some carriers may offer assistance for passengers with reduced mobility, but the availability of ramps, designated seating, and onboard announcements is limited.

Discounts on ticket purchases

In regional transport, many groups, especially the most vulnerable like the disabled, seniors, or families with children, can access travel discounts. The fare categories in addition to the standard fare in Slovakia are:

- Children up to 6 years old,
- Children from 6 to under 18 years old,
- Students of all levels of full-time study up to 26 years old,
- Seniors (from 63 years old),
- Individuals with disabilities.

Pensioners over 63 years old are entitled to an automatic fare discount, which they prove with an identity document. The discount is provided at 50% of the basic fare. Moreover, pensioners over 70 years have the right to "special fare," which is at the level of an 80% discount off the basic fare. In some cases, the discount can extend to free travel, for which it is necessary to secure a subscription ticket costing 0 EUR (a registration required).

Disabled travellers (must possess a certificate for severe health impairment) and their companions are entitled to discounted travel upon presenting their ŤZP or ŤZP-S cards. The discount provided is usually 50% off the basic fare.

Children under 6 travel free on trains and buses in city, regional, and long-distance transport. In some cases, proof of the child's age is required in documentary form.

School-aged children up to 16 years or until the end of mandatory schooling are entitled to discounted bus travel at 50% of the basic fare. When traveling by train, they can obtain a free ticket, available in limited numbers for specific connections. If the limit for free tickets is exceeded, they can purchase tickets at a 50% discount. All children must have an age-based ID to use discounted

train travel. For bus travel, they are entitled to discounted fares, which do not require proof. However, in cases of age doubt, passengers must verify the child's age with a valid ID or insurance card.

Students need a school attendance card or ISIC for issuing a discount travel card, and in the case of train travel, also a voucher that allows them discounted travel.

Other travellers, such as blood donors and anti-fascist resistance participants, can also receive travel discounts. The extent of these discounts can vary by public transport operators.

In city public transport, the extent of fare discounts, which can be notably higher for passengers over 60 years, varies by transport operator.

On the railways, the Railway Company of Slovakia (ZSSK) offers free travel for selected groups of the population, such as students and seniors. This increases the accessibility of railway transport but also represents a significant financial burden on the company (i.e., the state budget).

Substantial fare discounts are a practical solution that enables all population groups, including the economically disadvantaged, to use public transport, an eco-friendly mode of transportation. However, the issue of free train travel is contentious. While it helps vulnerable groups like pensioners and students/children by potentially alleviating transport poverty, it does not promote economically rational behaviour and creates artificial demand for transport not based on actual need. Reevaluating free travel for these groups to limit its scope or introduce minimal fees could be considered.

3. Services in rural areas

In rural areas of Slovakia, public transport primarily consists of trains operated by a state-company and buses managed by regional authorities. Fare revenues typically cover less than half of the operational costs, with subsidies from national and regional authorities providing the remaining funding to ensure service continuity. However, the limited availability and frequency of public transport often force residents to rely on private vehicles. This reliance contributes to environmental issues such as increased emissions, noise pollution, and traffic congestion, particularly during peak hours near major transport hubs.

In some areas, new measures are gradually being introduced to improve transportation accessibility, particularly for more vulnerable segments of the population.

Social taxis are available in dozens of Slovak towns and cities, operated in various ways: the city may own a car/minivan, lease it from another company, rent taxi services from another company (such as the Red Cross), allow the use of regular taxi services at reduced prices, or the city may pay a contribution towards the taxi fare.

Social taxi services are usually limited to weekdays and not all day—typically from 6:00 AM to 2:30 PM (3:00 PM). They are mostly provided to citizens with severe disabilities and their companions, seniors over 62-70 years (depending on the town), and in some cases with a limit on total income. In some towns, the service is also provided to citizens with severe health conditions and families with young children. It can be used for transportation within the city, but in rare cases in some towns, to the nearest larger center or up to 100km away.

In some cities, taxis are also equipped with lifting platforms that facilitate the transportation of immobile patients. It is mainly used for transportation to medical facilities but also for regular city travel—post office, cemetery, shopping, and in some cases, for securing basic socio-economic activities.

In some towns, the social taxi is reserved only for residents with permanent residence in that town. Passengers must prove eligibility for the service with a valid document—ID card, ŤZP, exchange ticket, or doctor's appointment note.

Fares per travelled km may vary for different groups of inhabitants—e.g., pensioners and ŤZP usually have lower fares than parents with young children or people with severe health conditions. Rates range from approximately 0.20 EUR/km to 1 EUR/km, with standing fees of 1-5 EUR per hour.

Orders must be reported 6-24 hours in advance—either in person or by phone. In addition to social taxis operated by municipalities, there are non-profit organizations that provide social transportation services also including transportation of minors to/from school and extracurricular activities, delivery of medicines, groceries, food, and medical supplies and aids (helpo.sk, kovnz.sk).

On-demand transport is a solution for sparsely populated areas with limited public transport availability.

In Slovakia, the Trnava region introduced the "bus on demand" service in September 2019, initially serving villages with few passengers such as Prietrž and its settlements. These settlements were

again served after eight years by public transport. Initially available only on weekdays, the service expanded to other villages and included weekends the following month. Travelers must request this service between 48 hours and 30 minutes before the scheduled departure by SMS or phone call during the hours of 8:00 AM to 7:00 PM. Ticket prices are consistent with standard fare rates.

The service has integrated into a broader transport network, allowing transfer to routes to district towns and the capital. In its first year, nearly 1,400 people used the service, covering 6,174 km, saving up to 15,000 km compared to regular service operations.

Over time, the service expanded to other parts of the Trnava region and into the Košice region, and in 2022, due to legislative changes, traditional buses were replaced with minibuses (8 + 1 capacity).

Ridesharing for commutes to and from work or school operates on a basis of individual or group initiatives. A group of people creates a platform for sharing available transportation options. From informal agreements among colleagues or neighbours to using apps like WhatsApp, or even developing custom applications—as seen in Žiar nad Hronom where a group of students initiated a school commute rideshare. They created an app that works across multiple interfaces and includes safety features for both drivers and passengers, like user verification.

4. Proposed measures and solutions for more efficient public transport (with special focus on rural areas)

Transport poverty can be caused by several factors – the most significant include the inaccessibility of public transport, high transportation costs, or the inability to use public transport due to poor availability.

The inaccessibility of public transport means that it does not sufficiently meet the needs of the population, requiring excessive travel times to access basic socio-economic services and activities, or public transport connections are only available to a limited extent. In Slovakia, a large group of villages have fewer than three connections per day to the nearest center. During weekends, some villages are not served at all. This lack of public transport is a significant contributor to transport poverty in Slovakia.

High transportation costs mean that the average Slovak household spends approximately 7.3% of its income on transportation, including expenses for personal vehicles and public transport. The majority of these expenses are for personal car travel. Public transport expenses account for only 0.4% of household expenditures. Discounts on fares significantly reduce transportation costs for Slovak households. Vulnerable population groups receive fare discounts—for instance, children up to 6 years old travel for free on trains and buses, while students and seniors receive discounts of about 50% or more on regional and long-distance buses and trains.

Accessibility of public transportation is especially crucial for vulnerable groups such as families with small children, the elderly, and people with disabilities. Many of these individuals are unable to use public transport due to the distance to stops or the infeasibility of using mass transit with a wheelchair.

Depending on the cause of transport poverty, various solutions can be implemented:

On-demand transport could be an effective solution for sparsely populated areas, like remote settlements with few residents, where public transport was discontinued due to inefficiency. Often the buses were underutilized, serving very few passengers along most routes. This situation left some areas isolated for those without personal vehicles or taxi access.

On-demand transport operates only when there is a notified through the transport company's dispatch. This service started in 2019 in un-serviced villages in the Trnava region and was later expanded to the Košice region. For this type of transport, passengers must notify their interest at least 30 minutes before the scheduled departure. Such solutions are suitable for other areas of Slovakia as well.

Minibus transport services can be effectively provided in less densely populated areas where traditional bus transportation proves unnecessarily costly due to the mismatch between transport capacity and the actual number of passengers. This alternative significantly reduces both acquisition and operational costs of the vehicles. Although driver labour costs largely remain constant, such services could potentially be operated by individuals holding a Class B driving license (suitable for personal vehicles), depending on the size of the van.

Social taxi service can significantly assist groups who are unable to use public transport, whether due to its unavailability (e.g., at times needed to reach medical appointments) or the inability to board buses or trains. Such services are already operational in various Slovak towns and municipalities, including Čierny Balog, Sliač, Sereď, Púchov, Martin, Žiar nad Hronom, Považská Bystrica, and Trenčín.

Travel voucher could support households that spend a significant portion of their income on public transport, enabling them to travel at reduced rates and ensuring access to essential socio-economic services while fostering responsible public transport use. In areas lacking public transport connections, subsidized fuel cards could be considered for low-income households to help cover fuel expenses, offering direct aid to families in remote regions.

Integrated transport systems ensure efficient connections, enabling quicker and more affordable access to essential services for regional residents. Currently, four integrated transport systems operate in Slovakia, covering the Bratislava region with links to Trnava, as well as Banská Bystrica, Košice, Prešov, and Žilina regions, collectively spanning nearly 80% of the country.

Shared transport is a viable solution in areas with limited public transport access, offering partial replacement.

Active transport, including building cycle paths and supporting cycling, can combat transport poverty and boost physical and mental health. E-bike support complements this by enabling broader usage, even for less active individuals. A project in Brussels showed that low-income households often favoured bicycles as a primary transport mode. ([EGUM](#))

Failing to address transport poverty exacerbates existing issues, particularly for certain population groups. Transport poverty results in:

- **Unemployment:** In regions with poor transport services, it is harder to meet job requirements like early or non-standard work hours.
- **Reduced Income** People in transport-poor areas must consider transport availability when choosing jobs, often accepting lower-paid but more accessible positions, worsening income poverty.
- **Social Isolation:** Affects particular population groups, including parents on maternity/parental leave, children, students, workers and pensioners, who, due to a lack of transport services, cannot meet with friends, peers or people with similar interests.
- **Lower Education Levels:** Students often have to make school choices based on transport availability, which can mean selecting a school that is not suitable for their interests or is of lower quality.
- **Worsened Health:** Residents with poor transport links may do not visit doctors or use additional medical services such as rehabilitation or regular preventive check-ups.

Conclusion

Addressing transport poverty in rural Slovakia is crucial for enhancing the socio-economic wellbeing of its residents. The challenges faced due to limited access, high costs, and inadequate services can significantly impede daily life, leading to unemployment, reduced income, social isolation, and lower educational and health outcomes. However, effective strategies such as implementing on-demand transport, expanding minibuss services, introducing social taxi services, and promoting integrated transport systems can significantly improve accessibility and reduce the reliance on personal vehicles. Furthermore, incentivizing active transport solutions like cycling could contribute to a more sustainable and inclusive transport network. By prioritizing these interventions, Slovakia can ensure equitable transport access, fostering greater economic and social integration across its regions.