

A series of interviews were conducted to overview the Istanbul Transportation Platform (ISUP). Deputy Secretary General İbrahim Orhan Demir, Head of Transportation Department Utku Cihan, and Member of ISUP Advisory Board Assoc. Prof. Eda Beyazıt İnce supported the project by contributing with their knowledge and experience on urban mobility at the stakeholders' meetings as well as agreed to share their views on the ISUP and related topics.

Interviewer: **Şükriye Tümay Erdil**, Project Manager at Sustainable Urban Mobility Office (SUMO), Transportation Planning Department



Interview with İbrahim Orhan Demir Deputy Secretary General of Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality

The Sustainable Urban Mobility Planning Project (SUMP) is concluding by the end of 2021. Could you, please, elaborate, why the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality (IMM) undertakes this kind of project?

Transportation is a sector that affects all, including old, young, disabled, and children. Consequently, our main goal is to make the city more accessible, liveable, and resilient for all citizens. Our SUMP project is a master plan and guiding document, which illustrates the strategies that will allow us to realise these sub-scaled projects as the outputs of the SUMP.

Are you conducting any transportation planning studies to achieve transportation vision in the near future? Can you tell us your main goals and strategies of these studies in consideration of this vision?

Shaped by the Istanbul SUMP project and funded by EU (85%) and IMM (15%) within the next year, we will have the IPA II Project, which aims to implement detailed and comprehensive projects, such as dedicated bus lanes and use of land in the city. There is an interaction between land use and transportation. If you change land use somewhere, you need to make an appropriate transportation infrastructure there and vice versa. If you build a strategically important transportation infrastructure somewhere, land use automatically changes.

The most important points in terms of wrong land use in Istanbul are, firstly, the increase of population density and expansion of the city through the North. Istanbul's first large-scaled master plan was made in the 1980s scaled 1/50000. Till today all city plans, including the 1996's plan scaled 1/100.000 and generated the idea of Istanbul's linear enlargement in parallel with Marmara Sea by making subcentres in peripheral areas. This east-west axis enlargement aims to protect the North forests of Istanbul. We have a railway project titled in Turkish '*Hızray Projesi*' (*speed rail project*) to avoid the enlargement through the North. The fastest metro line in Istanbul has a speed of 38 km/h and continues about 100 km, which takes 2 and half hours of journey from one end of Istanbul to the other. We need to speed up this journey and it should be aligned with the east-west axis. One of the solutions could be to make longer distances between stations, as the train is starting with 0 km/h then accelerates to the maximum speed, then again slows down and brakes. As much as you would assure a travel in maximum speed, you shorten the travel time. In fact, it looks like a flight, you fly from Istanbul to Ankara in almost 45 minutes, and in 1 hour to the City of Kars, even if Kars is 2 times away from Istanbul. Travel time does not rise in direct proportion to distance. Then, Istanbul-Kars doesn't take 45 multiplied 2 equal to 90 minutes, you need to take starting and braking phases into account with the distance as well. We will make a 3 or 5 km distance between two stations, so we could raise the speed up to 100 km/h. This project will help to change the land use in Istanbul according to the east-west axis enlargement planning, and people would live in peripheral areas instead of both centre and the North. At the same time, it will shorten travel time in Istanbul, the travel cost will decrease, economic value and time saved from transportation will rise.

What are the expected outputs/results of SUMP?

SUMP's main goal is to increase quality of life in the city, include the stakeholders into the policy process, decrease the use of private cars, and orient people to use environmentally friendly transportation systems. The main reason for all these efforts is to decrease the negative effects of climate change. We are aware that the main problem worldwide is climate change, not transportation. We have efforts based on regulation to fight back against climate change and projects to mitigate its results. In 2019, the mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu has signed the Deadline 2020 Agreement where we committed to make Istanbul resilient and carbon neutral by 2050. City of Istanbul is the only city which signed it. The Deadline 2020 Agreement followed the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, which is a legally binding international treaty and has recently been ratified by the Turkish Government to strengthen socio-economic resilience against climate change.



During the interview with İ. Orhan Demir

In addition to regulation activities, such as working together with C40 Cities, the Climate Action Plan and the Solid Waste Action Plan were revised, and the Noise Pollution Action Plan was elaborated. The Climate Action Plan was for the first time elaborated in such a big city as Istanbul and thus presented as good a practice to the C40 Cities' network. **IMM's vision and its work are fighting against climate change and the Transportation Department is working aligned with this vision and the commitments.**

What is your transportation vision at the city level, and what are the challenging areas, which you should to overcome? Please describe it regarding the national level, is there any liaison or/and disconnection between them?

As IMM, we have several bilateral relations with the central government. One of them is a legal link, which means we need confirmation for the projects, and the other one is an infrastructure issues, which means that intercity transportation infrastructure does not end at the city borders; it enters the city and affects. So, we naturally have correlation with the central government in terms of transportation. On the other hand, some transportation infrastructures are under the responsibility of the central government, such as TEM Highway and Bosphorus bridges, ports and airports as well.

There are 3 types of integration in order for public transport to work well: firstly, seamless connections between different modes and lines; secondly, timetable interpretation, and finally, multiple validity of the tickets. So, the new system proposed by the Transportation Ministry would damage this integration as we need to work in cooperation with the central government, in order for urban transportation and intercity transportation to be planned together. All these should be gathered under a unique authority in a city, however, recently the a resilient integration structure in city's transportation is under danger of being weakened.

What are the opportunities for both the local government and the Istanbul residents in the planning studies (relating to Istanbul SUMP project)?

The most important opportunity in Istanbul is enhancing more maritime transportation. What we need is to make it more accessible and preferable by residents. Firstly, we need to implement infrastructure that allows people to reach the seaside. Hisarüstü-Aşıyan Funicular project runs, and İTÜ- İstinye, Yıldız – Ortaköy and Altunizade-Beylerbeyi Funicular projects are in the tender and/or planning process. All these funicular projects aim to make a connection between metro stations and maritime transportation. Plus, there is also a sea taxi project in pipeline conceptualised to meet different public demand on maritime transportation.

A large percentage of people in Istanbul do not live near the seaside. We need to implement infrastructure that allows them to easily reach the sea axis. On the other hand, a maritime line parallel with the shore is not preferable because they are slower than road vehicles. Secondly, boats' passenger capacity is high, so headways increase the

waiting period as well. Lastly, it is not economically sustainable or environmentally friendly. We need an innovative design and engine, we succeeded with the sea taxi project as we can easily reach 25 knots with a small motor.

Can you describe your dream transportation / mobility system for Istanbul? What do you need to achieve this in the near future?

My dream transportation system for Istanbul incorporates Smart City solutions which decrease travel time. This will also include artificial intelligence technology and autonomous vehicles. In this way we could assure transportation optimization. The most important challenge to overcome is to regulate land use in accordance with decreasing travel time. For example, the proposition of the Mayor of Paris Hidalgo, is "the 15 minutes cities". Time saving from travel can be used in other more useful fields such as education, art, or sport as well. This will create benefits on an individual as well as social, structural level. We could create holistic planning and implementation due to tools from smart city solutions and high-tech outputs. We know that Istanbul is a challenging city with its huge population and immense land use and these problems are rapidly intensifying. Our goal is to subvert these problems and make Istanbul a liveable city with its affordable, inclusive, seamless transportation structure.



Interview with Utku Cihan Head of Transportation Department, Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality

What encouraged you to form such an organisation (ISUP)? What kind of needs related to transportation will ISUP meet?

First, transportation projects are high budgeted projects to facilitate people's mobility, and are in fact designed by their requests and technical requirements. For that reason, we established Istanbul Transportation Platform (ISUP) as a participatory tool to organise people's demands and regularly get their feedback about the projects' implementations and transportation regulations instead of collecting them randomly. For discussions at the municipality level we bring together all stakeholders, including NGOs, academics, public authorities within ISUP, so we include both beneficiaries and decision makers. **We aim to make decisions together with stakeholders and citizens instead of taking decisions in the name of the public.**

During the preparatory period of ISUP, we made 8 stakeholder meetings with representatives of 95 different institutions from NGOs to public bodies and collected more than 150 feedbacks and suggestions. On the other hand, we collected almost 100 suggestions from 95 stakeholders and 1705 IMM workers via a survey which is designed to consider main transportation problems in Istanbul, prioritise them and gather the feedback from stakeholders. IMM is a huge organisation with its 30 subsidiary companies and more than 85.000 employees, all departments and enterprises within IMM are also inner-stakeholders. All these efforts were fulfilled to implement a participatory tool in a sustainable way and assure an inclusive mechanism.

Could you please elaborate on the preparation process of Sustainable Urban Mobility Planning Project (SUMP)? What were the challenges you overcame, how long did it take? Which teams did you assign within the municipality?

The SUMP paradigm is a bit unfamiliar to us in comparison with the transportation master planning which were prepared before approval of the railway or highways system investment. We realised that old fashioned master planning does not provide solutions to urban problems which are rising day by day and are getting more complicated and challenging. Thus, we looked for a new point of view to handle these problems in a sustainable way. Under the urban mobility umbrella, cities in the world are changing their urban transportation paradigm and adding new processes to planning such as being environmentally, socially and economically resilient. In many European cities, this sustainable urban mobility planning was designed and applied with the intention of being updated yearly. This is according to the SUMP planning cycle which consists of 4 main phases: the preparation and analysis phase, the strategy development phase, the measure implementation phase, and the evaluation & monitoring phase. We also conducted research about the applicability of the SUMP in Istanbul, the largest city in Turkey. We are in the final stages of the Istanbul's SUMP Project, which is funded by the UK's Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (UKFCDO) Global Future Cities Programme.

Could you please share some facts and figures about ISUP? How many different stakeholders are there within the ISUP? Can you please give us the figures of each of them? What is the role of IMM and/or IMM Transportation Department within the ISUP?

The Istanbul Transportation Platform consists of about 300 representatives from academia, private and public sectors, and NGOs. We have 15 commissions which are focused on different transportation topics in Istanbul. These flexible commissions are working both horizontally and vertically: vertical commissions on thematic subjects such as logistic, pedestrian transportation or micro mobility, and so on; horizontal commissions mostly focus on cross-cutting issues such as innovative and smart transportation or environment



During the interview with Utku Cihan

and climate, and so on. There are also two facilitating bodies within the Platform: an Advisory Board, which includes academics, and a Coordination Board, which members are representatives from NGOs and Municipality. Establishment work is carried out by IMM Transportation Department. We are working towards improving this platform. **We are acting as a facilitator within the platform.** Commissions are one of the best indicators of stakeholder engagement, and we want each of them to design their citizen participatory tool and methods.



Source: <https://www.eltis.org/mobility-plans/sump-process>

ISUP is a local level organisation that consists of mostly local partners. What do you think about ISUP's possible influences on national level transportation regulation and/or implementation?

Istanbul is a significant city in Turkey specifically for its economic activities and its vast population. The Istanbul Transportation Platform includes all stakeholders, who want to take part in this project. First we have a regulation commission which aims to work on transportation issues and rise rational solutions. One of the missions of the platform is to suggest some solutions on a national level, taking Istanbul case as an example. Istanbul in this instance is a living lab where you can easily see how to solve (or not) a problem and its process, then there are some scalable outputs.

Can you describe the functioning of ISUP? What are the innovative components within the municipal management?

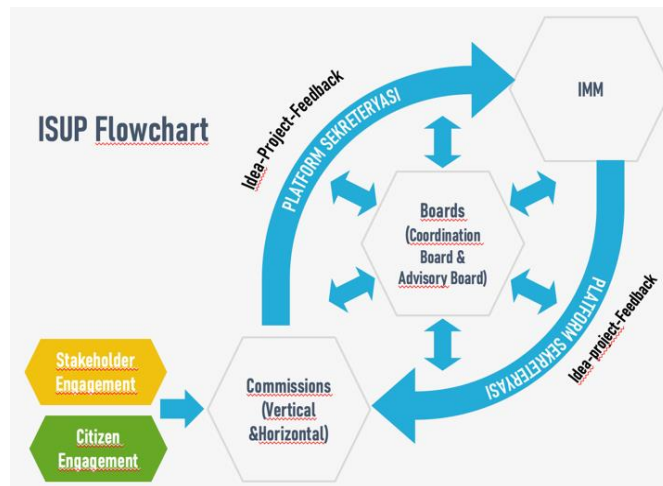
There is a two-way flow within the ISUP. At the Transportation Department, we have lots of project planning to do and while we are planning them, we are gathering feedback via meetings and/or surveys. Thus, we can monitor and appreciate public opinion even if it is not yet on the municipality's agenda. They are also able to suggest their project and/or idea from their area of work and thus the valued ideas by stakeholders would be delivered to IMM via the platform, creating a successful cooperation.

What are the key contributions of Istanbul Transport Platform in supporting SUMP implementation?

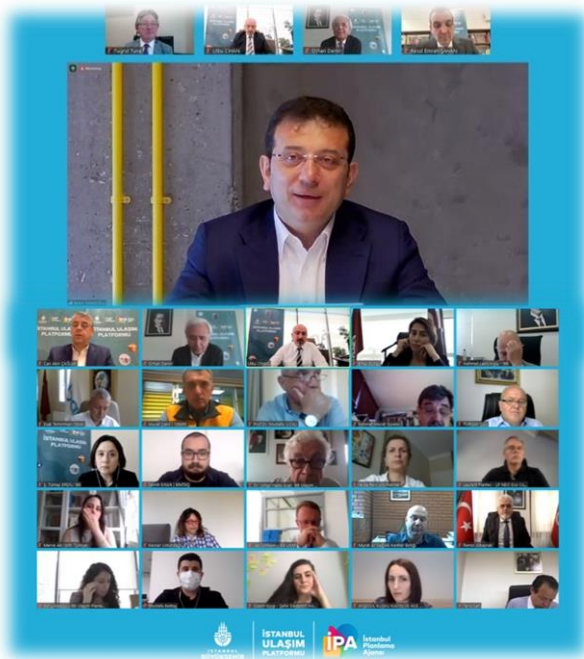
We have prepared a participatory tool within the SUMP project and a list of stakeholder, which we had used for the platform. The networking of both ISUP and the platform are basically the same. SUMP has no direct connection with the platform, but there is a mutual interaction. We made a presentation to ISUP participants about the SUMP project and got the feedback too. SUMP process started before the platform settlement works, so SUMP is a program which consists of all work packages in the transportation field which we will realise by 2040. Now, we are able to organise a meeting with all members of the platform.

What are your expectations and planning for the future of ISUP?

At the Transportation Department **we created a platform secretariat with idea to have a platform structure which would be able to autonomously create its own agenda and deliver the requests and outputs to the Transportation Department.** We wanted to create a platform where all different stakeholders can meet and make a communal decision about the future of the city and transportation as well. After its preparation period, we launched a brainstorming conference with the stakeholders and participation of the Mayor of IMM Ekrem İmamoğlu, in May 2021. We will be able to reach an autonomous structure by January 2022 at the end of all these efforts.



The flowchart of the ISUP proposing at the launch, May 2021



The online session to launch the ISUP and brainstorm

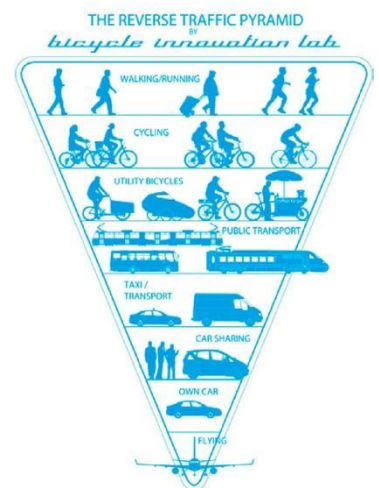
When thinking about a big city like Istanbul, what are the challenging issues one should expect during the transportation planning and implementation process? Secondly, are there any aspects of Istanbul SUMP that differ from traditional planning studies?

Since the 1950s, a numerical modelling method has been used for city transportation planning worldwide which is focused on cars. All transportation policies and investments in Istanbul were car-oriented in the past, because of this approach and its implementation, the traffic problem and mobility challenges in the city were caused. Thus all studies in Turkey were focused on cars, while it is important to consider more human mobility instead. The rise of the car number in the cities we live in has negative effects. These disadvantages include noise and environmental pollution and time wastage induced by traffic. There is not any city in the world which is able to solve the traffic challenge by investing in roads or cars. Many cities across the world are beginning to apply transportation policies which are human-oriented as opposed to car-oriented policies. **SUMP is the strategy paper that shows our policy changes in transportation.** What we need to do is to make people more mobile and make them use public transport and active mobility modes as well. By making public transport more

comfortable, accessible, and preferable, we will be able to reverse upside down the traffic pyramid, which is dominated by cars, as putting the human at the top. This kind of transportation policy and practice are not familiar, but we will be applying this new approach to the city of Istanbul.

In fact, the reason for abandoning old fashioned transportation planning and passing into sustainable urban mobility planning is exactly what we are focusing on; now we are focused on human mobility instead of cars. We established a couple of certain offices within the Transportation Department, one of them is Sustainable Urban Mobility Office which aims to make projects more inclusive and holistic by considering all mobility demands of all citizens. Pedestrian Chieftaincy and Bicycle Chieftaincy work towards promoting the active mobility modes in Istanbul, as well as implementing infrastructure and development projects to change mobility culture. Each of them is a living output of the SUMP project. In sustainable urban mobility planning we are focused on human, environment, participation, and we have strategies considering human mobilities. Our SUMP project will be ending by November 2021. After that we will implement another phase of SUMP in 2022, IPA II, funded by grant of 5.5 million Euro.

Source: https://www.researchgate.net/figure/The-reverse-traffic-pyramid-Source-Bicycle-Innovation-Lab_fig1_328748845





Interview with Assoc. Prof. Eda Beyazıt İnce Member of ISUP Advisory Board

What is the main theme of SUMP? What is the vision and the main objectives?

The main theme of SUMP is to improve the quality of life in the city with the development of the transport system in a sustainable manner in coordination with changes in the land use. SUMP's differ from conventional transport plans by emphasising the high level of participation and cooperation of stakeholders and citizens throughout the preparation and implementation of the plan. A SUMP considers the city beyond its administrative borders and connects with neighbouring cities and districts within its functional area. SUMP's also ensure the sustainability of the plans through a rigorous monitoring scheme with carefully designed indicators.

Our vision for the Istanbul SUMP is to realise 'an inclusive, and innovative transportation system, focusing on people and the environment, providing the right mix of safe, integrated, accessible and affordable mobility alternatives, compatible with the unique geography and historical values of Istanbul for a sustainable and resilient future.' So, we have an inclusive SUMP vision that ensures ecological sustainability and an economically affordable and inclusive transportation system for people living in the city.

In relation to this vision and to ensure its success, we have developed 9 main objectives. These objectives also lead to precise targets to achieve the SUMP vision for Istanbul.

The main objectives of SUMP:

1. Have an accessible, affordable, integrated, and inclusive transportation system
2. Have an environmentally sustainable transportation system
3. Have an economically sustainable and resilient transportation system
4. Improve the safety and security of transport and travelling
5. Reduce traffic volumes, congestion, and automobile dependency
6. Stimulate the modal shift to public transport
7. Stimulate the modal shift to active modes
8. Have a transportation system that promotes compact and polycentric development
9. Have an efficient city logistics system with minimal negative impact

Can you please describe how the participatory process at SUMP works? What kind of activities have you undertaken?

In January 2020 we developed a comprehensive strategy of stakeholders' engagement and integration in the preliminary phases of the SUMP. Surveys, exhibitions, workshops, and so on, these all would have been implemented on the site through face-to-face activities. But due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we changed our strategy accordingly moving all our activities to online platforms. Until now, we have conducted more than 25 online workshops with 220 different stakeholders both external, including NGOs, professional chambers, private sector, and academia, and internal including IMM's different departments. Besides workshops, we held focused group meetings on special topics, conducted interviews with the representatives of the least represented groups, and disseminated SUMP through conference presentations and radio podcasts. So, we were able to talk about SUMP's vision and objectives at different platforms; and at the same time, we have collected feedback from participants and stakeholders.

At the Istanbul SUMP we specifically focused on the inclusivity issue. There are eight underrepresented groups: women, children and youth, elderly, individuals living with a disability, refugees, ethnic minorities, low-income groups, and foreigners/tourists, which are highlighted in the Global Future Cities Programme of the UK FCDO and the UN Habitat. The representatives of civil society, working in these fields, have been specially invited to our meetings. Where necessary, we also conducted some one-to-one meetings to receive their contributions.

What is the Istanbul Transport Platform (ISUP)? How can the ISUP help the Municipality of Istanbul to develop the resilient and sustainable transportation system? And what is the potential impacts on increasing inclusiveness, accessibility for all and stakeholder engagement?

ISUP is an open and inclusive platform where people, who work and live in this city, as well as transport experts can easily express their opinions. This is my definition, including my expectations as well, in fact. We need to implement a participatory process to ensure the sustainability of the projects and make sure they are adopted by the citizens and other stakeholders who should be involved throughout the process. ISUP may support the participation of all relevant stakeholders to make Istanbul's transportation system more sustainable and liveable. Beyond these, discussions on developing solutions are important as well as ensuring people to pursue the success of these solutions. So, we will be able to make it happen all together with the ISUP members, this way, IMM's projects would be more sustainable and resilient. On the other hand, ISUP has been established recently, and it will grow with many stakeholders in the near future. At this stage, the entities, which have representatives, can take part in, but I believe that citizens in general will participate easily and share their opinions at ISUP.



During online interview with Eda Beyazıt İnce

Do you know any examples worldwide of such as an organisation, which promotes participatory mechanism?

The best example that I could share with you is the Amsterdam Institute for the Advanced Metropolitan Solutions (AMS Institute). If we talk about an organisational structure, they work in a triple helix including academia, private sector, and civil society. They are working in different fields to make Amsterdam a more liveable city. As far as I know they have monthly round table discussions, where each participant has an equal voice. In terms of planning processes, I think a good practice was the Local Transport Plans in the UK, which are the basis of SUMP. Lastly, the SUMP project we run in Istanbul, is a good example as well, in terms of the stakeholders participation. It was run especially throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, it's the first SUMP in Turkey and the first to have ever been realised in such a big city worldwide.

Can you describe what differences you expect in the transportation of ecosystem in Istanbul after ISUP is implemented? As for both a representative of the stakeholder and a member of the Advisory Board what is your favourite best practice which is enhancing the quality of life of the residents?

While ISUP is working with both the private sector and civil society, it should connect the residents, including the youth and entrepreneurs, with innovative projects which should be pioneering in society. I believe that ISUP will be an innovative platform and open to ideas and technology-based solutions and will enable the entrepreneurship ecosystem. On the other hand, there is also the issue of the utilisation of the data. Processing data and transforming it into valuable information is an important subject. This can be done by entrepreneurs and data enthusiasts. The ISUP could become a platform where information is shared between the IMM and such groups, enhancing the co-production of knowledge and data-driven decision-making tools.

SUMP is a strategic plan, and we know that some strategic plans would stay at the policy or strategic level without actualising the proposed actions. Of course, a strategic plan does not always aim to realise spatial interventions, but ISUP and IMM could carry out projects directly connected to the urban space such as running participatory processes with the public, place-making together with neighbourhood residents and businesses, and the like. I believe in this regard, ISUP could have a crucial position that we have long needed to assure participation at each step of planning and implementing transport and mobility solutions for a more liveable, inclusive, and sustainable Istanbul.