



# A look into Dubai's multifaceted strategies for transport infrastructure development

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Innovation today is not an option but a necessity, not a general culture but a business style. Without innovation and renovation, businesses and governments lose competitiveness and are doomed to regress.

His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE, and Ruler of Dubai





The transportation system in Dubai operates seamlessly around the clock and caters to millions of residents, tourists, and business travellers every day. Leading government agencies in Dubai, such as the Roads and Transport Authority (RTA) and all its affiliate entities, are always looking for new ways to take its world-class public transportation infrastructure to the next level.

At present, the emirate anticipates two noteworthy developments, namely the opening of the Dubai Metro Blue Line and the full-scale operation of flying taxis. The rail development project was officially approved by H.H. Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai. This plan supports the larger vision of the Dubai 2040 Urban Master Plan, which outlines a comprehensive strategy for fostering sustainable urban development across the city.

On the other hand, Dubai's RTA first explored and showcased its plans to launch an autonomous aerial taxi at the World Government Summit in 2017. During this year's WGS, H.H. Sheikh Mohammed gave his approval to the RTA's prototype design of vertiports that will be used for the aerial taxi service.

The city's rigorous pursuit of cutting-edge excellence inarguably makes its transportation network one of the most efficient and advanced internationally. This e-book discusses Dubai's future-ready transportation sector, highlighting key innovative projects, partnerships, and investment initiatives.

# Part I

## Insights Dubai's integrated public transportation system



The population of Dubai has seen significant growth over the past couple of decades, with the current number of residents standing at approximately 3.05 million. Projections suggest that this figure will skyrocket to 5.80 million by 2040. Given this population growth, the increase in ridership across the emirate's transportation services comes as no surprise.

Dubai's RTA recently reported a rise in the use of public transport and shared mobility services in 2023. This includes its metro station, tram, public buses, and marine transport options — such as abras, ferries, water taxis, and water buses. In addition, shared mobility services like e-hailing, smart car rentals, and on-demand buses, as well as taxis from the Dubai Taxi Company and other franchises, contributed to this surge. In total, these services catered to roughly 702 million commuters in 2023 alone. This marked a 13% growth compared to the 621.4 million riders recorded in 2022.

These figures emphasise the city's growing reliance on public transportation. Fortunately, a plethora of ongoing projects that address this welcome challenge are on the horizon. Such initiatives are designed to further expand and boost the transport and mobility channels available in Dubai.





## Dubai Metro: Red, Green, and the upcoming Blue Line

The Dubai Metro is regarded as the artery of the city's transportation system that connects key areas within the urban metropolis. Remarkably, it holds the Guinness World Records for being the longest driverless metro line since May 23, 2011. The Red Line spans 52.1 kilometres, while the Green Line covers 22.5 kilometres in length. Connecting this extensive rail network are the public buses that run 24/7, the 11-kilometre-long Dubai Tram, and a fleet of tech-automated marine public vehicles.

Recognising the need to further develop and modernise Dubai's public transportation field, H.E. Mattar Al Tayer, the Director-General and Chairman of the Board of Executive Directors of the RTA, and the Commissioner-General for Infrastructure, Urban Planning, and Well-Being, oversees a major development that will steer the city's transportation and mobility system to the next stage.

The RTA is all set to begin the construction of the approximately 18-billion-dirham Dubai Metro Blue Line expansion project this 2024. This project will stretch over a total of 30 km, with 15.5 km running underground and 14.5 km above ground, including 14 stations and three interchange platforms. Due to the majority of the expansion being situated underground, it is expected to provide seamless connectivity across five principal urban regions of Dubai, including Bur Dubai, Deira, Downtown and Business Bay, Dubai Silicon Oasis, Dubai Marina and JBR, and Expo City Dubai.

This undertaking is designed to address the projected growth in Dubai's population. It's worth emphasising that such development aligns with the overarching goal of the well-detailed Dubai Urban Master Plan 2040.

## **DTC and Salik's role in shaping Dubai's urban development**

The ongoing development of the urban landscape of Dubai can also be attributed to the key responsibilities fulfilled by two important public organisations: Dubai Taxi Company (DTC) and Salik. These entities have acquired impressive financial growth and have been instrumental in moulding the city's transportation infrastructure.

### Dubai Taxi Company's net profit up by 54%

DTC, a leading provider of mobility solutions, saw exceptional financial results in Fiscal Year 2023, as its sales increased by 11% YoY (year-over-year) to AED 1.95 billion. According to reports, the impressive growth can be attributed to the robust performance of its Taxi segment. DTC's net profit also rose by 54% YoY, amounting to AED 345.3 million.

DTC's commitment to operational efficiency through technology adoption has been the driving force behind its success. Its state-of-the-art control centre and increased focus on e-hailing have led to a significant improvement in fleet distribution and customer experience.

### Salik sets impressive revenue in 2023

On the other hand, Salik, the exclusive tollgate operator of the city, also generated a revenue of AED 2.109 billion in 2023. Moreover, it yielded an AED 1.84 billion in revenue from toll usage, which accounts for a substantial 87.5% of overall revenue.

Inarguably, the rise in revenue for both DTC and Salik in 2023 mirrors Dubai's holistic approach to urban development. Their complementary

roles truly provide comprehensive mobility solutions and foster infrastructure growth.

## **New three-year plan: RTA to upgrade 22 bus stations and depots**

Besides plans to construct the Metro Blue Line, the RTA is recently executing an expansive three-year project to redevelop 22 bus stations and depots in Dubai. This initiative encompasses a multifaceted approach that includes infrastructure refurbishments, passenger amenities, and operational enhancements.

Specifically, 16 bus stations will be upgraded with better passenger facilities, expanded waiting areas, and improved driver offices. Six depots will also undergo comprehensive renovations, providing new overnight parking spaces, workshops, and maintenance bays. Key renovations include advanced system upgrades, prayer rooms, and aesthetically refurbished exteriors at several stations in Deira and Bur Dubai.

Moreover, driver-centric facilities will be introduced at Jebel Ali and Al Quoz depots to improve operational efficiency and workforce satisfaction. To ensure seamless connectivity and integration with other modes of transport, RTA's upgrades will incorporate bicycle racks and pedestrian-friendly infrastructure.

It's worth mentioning that RTA has already accomplished significant milestones in 2021 by completing renovations at key bus stations such as Al Ghubaiba, Union, and Dubai International Airport Terminal 3. These upgrades have strengthened transportation networks and provided residents with safe and convenient access to public transport.



## DTC Master plan for marine transport development

Much like its vibrant land transport routes, the city's waterways are also an integral component of its transport network. In an attempt to better integrate digital transformation in this sector, the RTA has announced a number of novel advancements in the last few years.

In 2020, the agency upgraded the iconic wooden abras (traditional boats) to enhance safety and accessibility for commuters and tourists cruising Dubai's waterways. The new abras are now equipped with modern amenities, including onboard cameras, GPS navigation, wheelchair-accessible spots, and Nol card payment systems. On top of that, these modernised abras have upgraded sound and lighting equipment and engines that produce more than twice the horsepower of their predecessors.

### Autonomous electric abras

Fast forward to 2023, Dubai made another leap towards sustainable and advanced transport with the introduction of the first self-driving 3D-printed electric abras. Manufactured at the RTA's Al Garhoud Marine Maintenance Center, this state-of-the-art vessel will help realise the city's ambitious goal of achieving 25% of all journeys using autonomous transport by 2030.

RTA's Director-General Mattar Al Tayer also pointed out the features of the self-driving vessels. These include two electric motors, an autonomous control system, zero-carbon emissions, 30% lower operating and maintenance costs, as well as noise elimination compared to diesel-powered models.





## Dubai-based aviation giants soar

It's no news that Dubai is also home to two major airline corporations: flydubai and Emirates. These companies have recently surpassed its previous milestones, which subsequently lifts the city's economy and international connectivity higher.

### The phenomenal rise of flydubai

flydubai, a government-owned airline company, persistently serves an essential function in propelling its aviation sector to new heights. In 2023, the airline reported a record-breaking 75% YoY increase in revenue, with a profit of AED 2.1 billion. flydubai's total annual valuation rose by 23% to AED 11.2 billion.

H.H. Sheikh Ahmed bin Saeed Al Maktoum, the Chairman of flydubai, lauded the airline's outstanding full-year results for 2023, stating, "Its solid business model has enabled the carrier to grow exponentially even during challenging times, doubling its operating fleet and expanding its network since the pandemic."

Also, H.H. Sheikh Ahmed attributed this success to the UAE's visionary leaders and the progressive policies of H.H. Sheikh Mohammed.

### Emirates Group's financial rebound and global recognition

As flydubai celebrates its record-breaking year, the Emirates Group likewise made phenomenal success. In 2022, the conglomerate produced AED 10.9 billion in annual profit, with Emirates Airline contributing AED 10.6 billion. This turnaround follows a challenging period marked by consecutive losses due to the pandemic's impact on global travel. It should be noted that the data mentioned above were released in May 2023.

In addition to its financial success, Emirates recently won the "Best Inflight Entertainment Award" at the 2024 Airline Excellence Awards. The airline's inflight entertainment system offers an extensive library of over 6,500 channels, including movies, television shows, podcasts, and music.

Sky-high success and advancements: flydubai's 23% YoY rise and 3D-printed electric abras



Read the accompanying article for more information.

## Part II

# Shared mobility services in Dubai





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Dubai is keen to overhaul its transportation networks, and shared mobility services have performed a major part in that effort. These services have changed the way residents and tourists navigate the city in offering efficient, convenient, and environmentally friendly alternatives to traditional private car ownership.

The RTA's Bus On-Demand is one such service that stands out. Launched in 2020, it is a ride-pooling initiative that allows residents to navigate specific community areas seamlessly. Users can communicate with drivers via the app to pinpoint the nearest pick-up and drop-off points, filling the gaps where traditional public transport falls short. Ride-hailing services, such as (but not limited to) Careem, Hala, and Yango, have also gained traction in improving human transport efficiency in Dubai.

Careem is a multi-service app that provides more than 20 services across the UAE and operates in 70 cities across 10 countries. It was acquired by Uber in 2020 and received an AED 1.46 billion investment from e& by etisalat.

Similarly, Hala is an e-hailing taxi service in Dubai that envisions improving customer experiences and keeping Dubai seamlessly connected. It's worth highlighting that Hala partnered with Dubai Taxi Corporation to

dedicate 600 cars exclusively to Hala users during evening peak hours.

On the other end, Yango — a ride-hailing service provider owned by the Russian tech giant Yandex NV — officially announced its plans to establish a global operational office in Dubai Internet City in 2023. The purpose of this move was to consolidate its last-mile delivery and ride-hailing activities within the city. Overall, these shared mobility services collectively represent Dubai's focus on incorporating technological solutions into its mode of transport. They consequently guarantee maximum efficiency, convenience, and connectivity.

Transportation and mobility landscape in Dubai: A look at revenue, expansion, and innovation



Read the accompanying article for more information.

## Part III

# Exploring sustainable urban mobility





As discussed throughout this e-book, the city is actively adopting new transportation solutions to become a premier smart city. A key part of this effort is the emphasis on sustainable urban development in the sector.

### **RTA's five innovation labs**

The Roads and Transport Authority has been proactive in fostering new inventions through the Mobility Research and Innovation Centre at the University of Birmingham in Dubai. Just last year, it organised five innovation labs that focus on fundamental areas.

The Traffic and Roads Agency lab highlighted the need to improve traffic safety for e-scooter, bicycle, and motorcycle users. On the other hand, The Rail Agency focused on using AI technology to maintain assets, streamline operations, and modernise metro station services.

Similarly, the Corporate Administrative Support Services Sector underscored RTA's sustainability initiatives, including reducing carbon emissions and recycling. Meanwhile, the Public Transport Agency's lab aimed to brainstorm solutions for challenges like bus

bus schedules and asset management.

Finally, the Corporate Technology Support Services Sector sought to digitalise "noI" card services by integrating tech advancements in its ticketing, payments, and digital banking features.

### **The new '360 Services' policy**

Further bringing to note RTA's exhaustive efforts, it has successfully rolled out phase one of its integrated services under the '360 Services' policy. This forward-thinking policy seeks to offer proactive, seamless, and automated services accessible remotely. Over a meticulous three-year plan spanning 2023-2025, RTA has revamped service channels across various domains, from traffic and marine transport to infrastructure and bus services.

This comprehensive initiative has, by far, simplified and digitalised the operations of RTA's service delivery. It has significantly reduced the need for physical visits, with over 90% of processes now accessible online. On top of that, the inclusion of digital payment methods across 46 sub-services, as well as cooperation with both the public and private sectors, have further streamlined service delivery.



### Future of Mobility Forum at WGS24

In a similar manner, Mattar Al Tayer noted Dubai’s leadership in embracing modern technologies and fostering innovation across various fields, particularly transportation. Inaugurating the ‘Future of Mobility Forum’ at the World Governments Summit (WGS) 2024, Al Tayer stressed Dubai’s focus on attaining sustainable solutions. The forum sought to influence upcoming policies and tactics for the transportation sector in line with worldwide trends toward sustainability.

The forum also brought to notice the city’s goal of achieving zero carbon emissions by 2050. This would be made possible by expanding the use of electric and hydrogen vehicles in the public transport fleet. Importantly, RTA created strategic collaborations with Talabat and Careem to introduce new self-driving delivery services. Needless to say, the Government of Dubai is cementing the foundation for an enhanced transportation system by spearheading meaningful dialogues, groundbreaking projects, and forward-thinking endeavours. Notably, H.H. Sheikh Mohammed attended Day Zero of the WGS 2024, as well as top delegates from the International Monetary Fund and the World Economic Forum.

A glimpse into Dubai’s initiatives to drive digital transformation in its public transportation network



Read the accompanying article for more information.



## Part IV

# Enroute towards a future-ready Dubai





“The future of cities is intertwined with the future of mobility.” This was delivered by Mattar Al Tayer during WGS 2024. Indeed, if Dubai wants to establish a technology-driven transportation system, it must apply environmentally friendly rules.

To achieve this goal, the city laid out a plethora of forward-thinking endeavours to fortify its sustainable transportation ecosystem during the 2024 World Government Summit. One of the most notable improvements revealed at the summit was the specialised Advanced Aerial Mobility (AAM) pavilion. The pavilion exhibited a broad range of aerial transportation solutions, including Urban Air Mobility (UAM) systems, drones, unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), and electric Vertical Take-Off and Landing (eVTOLs).

The forthcoming operations of aerial taxis in 2026 could cut greenhouse gas emissions by up to 80%.

Concurrently, the initial network of vertiports is designed to connect four major locations of Dubai: Downtown Dubai, Dubai International Airport, Dubai Marina, and Palm Jumeirah. Once the new infrastructure is complete, it will make Dubai the world's first metropolis with a fully established network of vertiports.

### **Collaborative partnerships driving tech-driven shifts**

In addition to aerial taxis, Dubai is driving ground transportation innovations through strategic joint ventures. Its Roads and Transport Authority has notably signed two memoranda of understanding (MoUs) with Urban-Mass Company and RAIL BUS Inc. Both firms specialise in the development and manufacture of transportation systems.

The first MoU intends to explore the feasibility of creating the Floc Duo Rail system, which is a double-track, driverless, electric-powered system. It is designed to adjust to varying demands by employing short units during low-peak periods and long units during high-peak periods. Complementing this, the second MoU probes the idea of developing a rail bus system that operates on solar energy acquired through equipped bridges.

These collaborative partnerships exemplify Dubai's strategic approach to urban development, where innovation and sustainability go hand in hand.

Dubai's transportation sector booms as commuters surge to 702 million in 2023



Read the accompanying article for more information.



## Dubai — The icon of cutting-edge transportation system

H.H. Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum once said, “In the race for excellence, there is no finish line.” Whether it’s the expansion of its world-class metro system or pioneering unprecedented advancements in marine and aerial mobility, Dubai inarguably pushes the limits of what’s possible in modern urban transportation. The effective combination of progressive leadership, purposeful government measures, and international collaborations ensures that Dubai remains a global hub for tourism, business, and sustainable urban living.

### Additional information and resources



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