

SSAC – South-South Academia Cooperation Knowledge Sharing Platform for African Universities in the Transport Sector

Call for Comparative Research Papers by Early-Career Researchers Technologies for the Informal Public Transport Sector in African Cities

In brief: SSATP with support from PPIAF is inviting teams of early career researchers in Sub-Saharan Africa to propose research papers that identify and discuss digital and physical technologies that can support the improvement and integration of informal public transport operations, with the ultimate aim of strengthening climate resilience, sustainability and private sector participation in this sector. SSATP will provide financial support to selected teams to undertake their research, participate in research exchange visits, prepare their papers and disseminate their findings at an international workshop.

About SSATP and PPIAF

The [Africa Transport Policy Program \(SSATP\)](#) is an international partnership to facilitate policy development and related capacity building in the transport sector in Africa. It is a partnership of 42 African countries, eight Regional Economic Communities, the African Union Commission and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa. Its financing partners include the European Commission, Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO), African Development Bank (AfDB) and the World Bank, the latter of which also hosts SSATP.

The [Public-Private Infrastructure Advisory Facility \(PPIAF\)](#) helps developing-country governments strengthen policies, regulations, and institutions that enable sustainable infrastructure with private-sector participation. As part of these efforts, PPIAF promotes knowledge-transfer by capturing lessons while funding research and tools available on its knowledge platform [the Global Infrastructure Hub](#); builds capacity to scale infrastructure delivery; and assists sub-national entities in accessing financing without sovereign guarantees. PPIAF is supported by donors and administered by the World Bank.

SSAC background

In light of the magnitude of urban mobility problems in African cities and their projected growth rates in the coming decades, the continent will require an increasingly large number of well-trained transport professionals. Universities on the continent must also develop their teaching and research capabilities in this field, which could in turn contribute to training such transport professionals.

To this end, in 2018 SSATP with the World Resources Institute (WRI) and World Conference on Transport Research Society (WCTRS) entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the following institutions:

- University of Nairobi (Kenya)
- University of Dar es Salaam (Tanzania)
- University of Johannesburg (South Africa)
- Polytechnic School of Thiès (Senegal)
- Multinational School of Telecommunications (Senegal)
- National Polytechnic Institute Felix Houphouët-Boigny (Côte d'Ivoire)
- Addis Ababa Institute of Technology (Ethiopia)
- Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (Ghana)
- National Advanced School of Public Works (Cameroon)

SSATP has secured funding from PPIAF to translate the principles of the 2018 MoU into concrete activities, with an emphasis on bringing increased, or improving, private sector participation and investment to address urban mobility challenges in the Sub-Saharan African (SSA) region. A key part of these activities is this SSAC call for comparative research papers, and related capacity building and dissemination.

1. SSAC call for comparative research papers

Through the SSAC program, SSATP is inviting small teams of early career researchers based at Sub-Saharan African universities or research institutes to prepare comparative research papers in English, French or Portuguese. SSATP will provide financial support to selected teams to undertake the research, participate in research exchange visits, prepare their papers and disseminate their findings.

The research and resulting papers should **identify technologies that can support the improvement and integration of informal public transport (IPT, also called paratransit or popular transport) in different SSA cities**. These technologies can be any physical or digital technologies that can support improved and integrated IPT in terms of the following three thematic clusters:

1. Vehicle motive power and related energy systems technologies that promote **decarbonization** (for example: *batteries; renewable energy supply; conversion to electric vehicles; ...*)
2. **Road, vehicle and/or passenger safety** technologies (for example: *vehicle safety equipment; driver monitoring systems; vehicle inspection systems; ...*)
3. **Operations management and/or information systems** technologies (for example: *vehicle tracking; revenue/fare/cost management; passenger information; ...*)

Papers can focus on one, or on more than one, of the above three thematic clusters. Irrespective of which of the above clusters are addressed, the papers should also provide insight into the following **cross-cutting issues**:

- What the positive and negative impacts of the identified technologies are on the technical, financial, operational and institutional effectiveness of the IPT sector.
- The extent to, and ways in, which the identified technologies make positive contributions to: decarbonization; road, vehicle & passenger safety; and/or management & information systems.
- The direct or indirect benefits of the identified technologies to current and potential IPT passengers.
- What role private sector actors can play to make the identified technologies locally available on a large scale, through local development, local production, importation and/or other means, and who these actors are.
- What role private and public sector actors, as well as those from other sectors including direct IPT stakeholders, can play in ensuring that these technologies' impacts and contributions are realized and sustained in the longer term, and who these actors are.
- Challenges faced by private sector actors and by stakeholders within the IPT sector (such as owners, associations, unions) to participate effectively in the provision and uptake of the identified technologies.

Depending on the findings and the research teams' capacity to do so, it is not a requirement but would be desirable to provide insight into the following matters in relation to the above themes and issues:

- Potential funding, financing and/or contracting mechanisms to support provision and uptake of the identified technologies.
- The roles or contributions of regional coordinating or development bodies (e.g. Regional Economic Communities), or other actors such as universities or NGOs.

- Market or implementation failures, and potential policy, legal or fiscal reforms that would be needed to minimize the risk of such failures recurring.

Each paper must report on **research in at least two different SSA countries**, and include comparative discussions of the identified technologies, actors and other important contextual factors and findings across these countries.

Research teams should be available and ready to start their research preparations by the end of 2024, undertake their research and research exchange visits in the first quarter of 2025, and draft and finalize their papers in the course of the second quarter of 2025. This timeline is subject to revision.

2. Research team composition

With the current call, SSATP invites the formation of teams of early-career researchers, with the expectation that each team produces one research paper. A team must meet the following criteria:

- Each team must have three or four members.
- Each team must include at least one female member.
- All team members should be enrolled in a postgraduate degree (master or PhD) at a university or research institute in SSA, or be within five years after graduating from such a degree.
- At least half team of the team should be enrolled for a PhD or be recent PhD graduates.
- Teams must be multidisciplinary, i.e. each team must include researchers from different academic disciplines; preference will be given to teams that include at least one member from the social sciences.
- Teams must include individuals who are affiliated to at least two different universities in two different SSA countries.
- All team members must be based in SSA.
- Each team must designate a team leader, who must be enrolled in a PhD or be within five years of graduating with a PhD.

Academic affiliations must be with any university or research institution that is located in SSA, and that all team members be based in SSA. It is not a requirement that teams or individuals be affiliated to any of the MoU partner institutions listed above.

Senior academics at the institutions mentioned above that are involved in the MoU can be contacted to assist in the formation of teams or give high-level guidance. Teams can also approach senior academics at their own or at another institution to advise in planning their teams, research and writing. However, the research and writing must be undertaken by the team members themselves and as a team effort. Authorship and project responsibility will rest with the team members, and not with such senior advisors.

Teams are **strongly encouraged to collaborate with individuals in the public and private sectors**. In such cases, such non-academic collaborators' involvement should be in addition to, but cannot take the place of, the academic team members, and their involvement will not be remunerated by SSATP.

3. Submission requirements

SSATP invites research teams that meet the above criteria to submit an abstract in English, French or Portuguese that describes their proposed research paper. The abstract should contain the following:

- A concise project title.

- The names of each team member, including for each their email address, institutional affiliation (including their department, center or research unit within such institution), and city and country in which they are based.
- An indication of which one of the listed team members will be the project leader, and a phone number for this person in international dialing format.
- The background and motivation for the research, including a clear statement of the problem, context, target cities/countries and the key challenges that the paper intends to address.
- The objectives of the paper, with a clear indication of the thematic cluster or clusters (set out in Section 1 of this document) as well as the private and public sector actors that will be targeted.
- The proposed research method, that indicates how the targeted actors will be engaged in the research process, e.g. through interviews, focus groups or other means.

The abstract must: fit on one A4 page; be a maximum of 500 words in length; be written in a standard font with a minimum font size of 11pt; and have page margins of at least 2,5cm.

Each team member must also prepare a summary CV of a maximum length of one page.

The abstract and CVs should be compiled into one pdf document, with a maximum total length of five pages. The compiled pdf must be submitted by email to herrie@mtracs.net, with a short cover email and the text "SSAC: submission" in the subject line.

The submission deadline is **Monday, December 2, 2024, at 17:00 (UTC+1)**. SSATP reserves the right not to consider submissions that are received after this time or that are incomplete.

4. Selection process and criteria

SSATP will convene a Scientific Committee (SC) that will adjudicate all submissions that meet the criteria set out in this call. Depending on the number, content and quality of submissions received, SSATP may after the submission deadline enter into exchanges with certain research teams to ask them to revise their proposal content, team structure or other components of their submissions so as to meet the aims and expectations of the SSAC program and of SSATP and PPIAF. This includes attention to geographic, thematic and team diversity.

The SC will select teams based on the following criteria:

- **Relevance to the thematic clusters** outlined in the call.
- **Methodological rigor** and feasibility of the proposed research.
- **Team composition** (see criteria above).
- **Engagement of private and public sector actors** in the research.
- **Potential impact** of the foreseen findings on policy development, safety and urban mobility.
- **Clarity and quality of writing**: proposals must be clearly written, free of errors, and structured with coherent, logical arguments.

SSATP foresees that four to six teams will be selected but may adjust the number of teams selected or make no selection depending on the submissions that are received. Research teams should wait to hear back from SSATP on the SC's decision on their submission.

5. Financial support to research teams

Each member of the selected research teams will receive a **paid consultancy contract** from SSATP/The World Bank to develop their paper. Remuneration will be based on standard World Bank rates and depend on the level of qualification and location of team members. Payments will be made to

team member in their individual capacity subject to satisfactory participation in and progress on the research and paper writing. In case of non-performance, SSATP reserves the right to reduce or not pay this remuneration.

SSATP will also make available support for research team members to undertake **a research exchange visit** between their institutions or cities. The purpose of these exchanges is to enable teams to meet in person to undertake detailed planning of research and papers, and/or to undertake research activities together in one of the studied cities. For research teams comprising four members, up to three members may be supported to visit the city or institution of the fourth member, and for teams of three, up to two members may be supported.

SSATP will also support the research teams who make satisfactory progress to **attend an international dissemination workshop** to present their research findings (see the next section).

6. Dissemination

SSATP will arrange **a multi-sectoral international workshop** at which teams will present and discuss their research findings, interact with other invitees across sectoral and country boundaries to explore the identified technologies' further application in SSA, and to spur discussions on potential future collaboration activities. SSATP will support the attendance of all research teams at this event, subject to satisfactory participation in the research. The workshop is envisaged for the second quarter of 2025. PPIAF and SSATP's network will also act as a bridge between sector ministries in charge of urban transport and universities to promote findings.

After the workshop, the teams will prepare their research papers to formally document their findings, taking account of presentations made, and input received at, the dissemination workshop. The complete draft papers will then be sent for review to the SC and peers, on the basis of which the teams will then finalize the papers. It is envisaged that paper will be finalized at the end of the second quarter of 2025. SSATP will assist teams whose finalized research papers are of sufficient quality to find suitable **publication** channels.

SSATP will furthermore lead the preparation of a **synthesis paper**. This paper is intended amongst others to capture the proceedings of the workshop, the findings of all the teams' research papers, as well as the structure, experience and impact of the SSAC program. The synthesis paper will be circulated in the public domain through SSATP and partner organizations.

7. Correspondence

SSATP will aim to respond to prospective teams' queries related to this call, including questions on thematic focus, target cities or countries, or team structure.

Such queries must be sent to herrie@mtracs.net before Friday, November 22, 2024 at 17:00 (UTC+1). The text "SSAC: questions and answers" must be used in the email subject line.

SSATP will post its responses to queries on its website and may not necessarily provide individual responses by email. Queries that are already addressed by the contents of this call document will not receive responses.

SSATP does not undertake to review or provide detailed comment on draft abstracts or CVs prior to the proposal submission deadline.

8. Frequently Asked Questions