

Assessing the impact of mega sporting events on urban mobility in secondary cities:
balancing the short-term demands with long-term needs

by

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Abstract

Mega sporting events are large-scale urban interventions that draw millions of visitors and promote infrastructure development, with transportation being essential, as mobility systems are crucial to event operations and have long-term impacts on accessibility and sustainability. They represent both opportunities and difficulties for host cities, with match days stressing transit networks, causing overcrowding, accessibility issues, and environmental impacts. To manage these demands and comply with bid requirements, hosting cities typically use temporary measures, such as shuttle services and road closures, or implement long-term upgrades, such as metro expansions and pedestrian pathways. While major cities have been extensively analyzed, secondary cities face similar challenges with fewer resources but must still meet event standards.

The study examines how secondary host cities develop transportation strategies for mega sporting events and whether these strategies support long-term urban mobility goals. Using a comparative case-study approach, the research analyzes Kansas City (U.S.), Monterrey (Mexico), Durban (South Africa), and Brisbane (Australia) through document analysis and semi-structured interviews with transportation-planning stakeholders.

The findings show that governance structures significantly influence mobility outcomes. Cities like Brisbane with coordinated frameworks align event planning with long-term transport strategies, while Kansas City relies on short-term, fragmented coordination. Monterrey demonstrates solid planning but unclear implementation, and Durban's mega-event investments tend to exacerbate spatial inequalities.

The research indicates mega-events do not inherently create lasting mobility changes; outcomes rely on governance continuity and alignment with transport systems. These insights are useful for Kansas City and future host cities aiming for sustainable urban mobility.

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Chapter 1 - Introduction

Mega sporting events are major urban interventions framed and restricted by official organizing committees, such as the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) ¹or the International Olympic Committee (IOC). ² In these arrangements, the committee and the chosen host city sign a bid agreement that constrains the city and sets requirements for hosting millions of visitors. This places significant pressure on existing transportation systems and requires substantial urban planning efforts. Despite the promises of economic growth and enhancement of global prestige, the long-term impact varies from one city to another, depending on the investment prior to the mega-events and the vision and legacy pursued.

Secondary cities are urban hubs that are not the primary economic or political capital of a country, yet serve as vital regional, commercial, or industrial engines. Roberts (2014) defines secondary cities as “secondary hubs, spokes and centres in a complex network of production-distribution supply chain and waste-management recovery systems connecting different spatial levels of human settlement at both a national, but increasingly global, system of cities” that perform “important functions in the national and global system of cities”. For instance, while cities such as New York (U.S.) or Casablanca (Morocco) are characterized by dense transit networks and strong global visibility, cities such as Kansas City (U.S.) or Agadir (Morocco) operate with more limited transportation systems and fewer resources, despite playing significant regional roles. Secondary cities that host principal events face the same mobility challenges as major cities without the same investment or exposure as metropolitan cities. These latter also must adapt their infrastructure and services to meet temporary demand while planning for

¹ FIFA is the international governing body for association football, beach soccer, and futsal.

² The IOC is the non-profit organization that owns and governs the Olympic Games.

sustainable post-event utilization (Bunds et al., 2018; Martins et al., 2022). Despite the promises of economic growth and enhancement of global prestige, the long-term impact varies from one city to another, depending on the investment prior to the mega-events and the vision attended. For instance, the 2010 FIFA World Cup, South Africa spent more than US\$3 billion on preparations, required \$3 billion, including \$1.3 billion for transportation alone (Goal, 2023).

The strategies and decisions taken by each city depend on several factors, among which we can include the physical and urban aspects of the region and the governance. The city's ability to balance decision-making, respect the committees' regulations, and sustainable transport solutions, is the key to long-term mobility benefits. Understanding how decision-making structures, either concentrated in a national committee or distributed to local authorities, influence transport outcomes is key to planning robust urban mobility systems (Bastida Alamilla et al., 2023). These perspectives broaden the perspective from mega-host cities to regional systems hosting the mega-event overall.

The research is driven by a strong interest in Kansas City, one of the 11 U.S. cities hosting the FIFA World Cup 2026 (FIFA, 2025).

Along with the 10 metropolitan areas, including Atlanta, Boston, Dallas, Houston, Los Angeles, Miami, New York/New Jersey, Philadelphia, Seattle, and San Francisco, Kansas City is the only secondary city hosting this international tournament in the U.S.

Figure 1.1. FIFA World Cup 2026 host cities in the United States, highlighting Kansas City (map data from FIFA; refined by author in Adobe Illustrator)



The study investigates different transportation planning approaches and opportunities adopted by the city and evaluates how these strategies can be leveraged to support sustainable mobility outcomes during the event.

This is a planning issue that undercovers how secondary host cities can design sustainable, efficient, and integrated stadium transport systems that balance the mega sporting event governing organization's event coordination and requirements with long-term urban mobility needs.

Research Question

Mega sporting events often lead to big transportation investments and policy shifts, providing an opportunity to align short-term event logistics with long-term urban mobility goals. Acknowledging the importance of coordination among governments, international organizations (FIFA/IOC), and cities in selecting host locations and prioritizing mobility solutions is essential for effective event planning. Thus, the thesis aims to answer the principal question:

How do secondary host cities operate mega sporting events to develop sustainable urban mobility approaches? How can Kansas City learn from different cases?

Along with the main question come the following sub-questions:

1. What are the mobility challenges secondary host cities encounter while planning for a mega sporting event, and what are the different solutions undertaken to address them?
2. How do secondary host cities balance short-term event mobility needs with long-term transport infrastructure and sustainability goals?
3. What lessons can Kansas City draw from past and upcoming host cities regarding transport effectiveness, governance, and long-term mobility legacy?

System of Inquiry and Type of Knowledge

To explore how secondary host cities organize mega-sporting events to develop sustainable urban mobility approaches, the research adopts a qualitative, comparative research design. Its intent explains the reasoning and approach behind decision-making on transportation policies for mega-events. The approach is best applied in studying the planning legacies and long-term mobility impacts in secondary cities such as Kansas City (U.S), Brisbane (Australia), Durban (South Africa), and Monterrey (Mexico). Following Yin (2017), the study adopts an explanatory

case study approach, focusing on contemporary events in real-life contexts where the researcher has limited control, thereby ensuring a clear understanding of the complex social and institutional contexts of transportation planning for mega sporting events (p. 9-11).

Statement of Significance

Transportation management at mega-events not only moves fans on match days but also shapes the host city's long-term mobility and its impact on the community. Thus, the outcomes of such an initiative of development and growth may either lead to congestion, pollution, and waste infrastructure investment if poorly planned, or enhance public transit and connectivity, and reduce emissions if well-designed.

The study contributes to the field of urban planning, transport planning, and sustainable mobility in the sports industry and planning by examining how host cities can leverage mega-events to improve long-term mobility outcomes. By drawing lessons from past host cities, future hosts can create better transportation guidelines that guarantee stadium access for visitors and benefit communities' daily life use during and after the tournament.

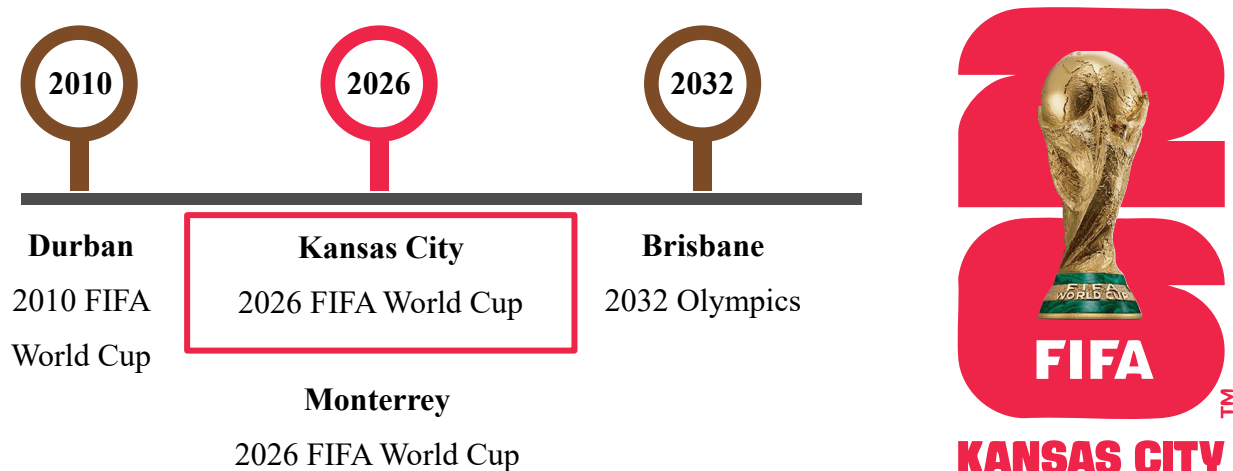
Chapter 2 - Research Strategies and Methods

To answer the research questions and fully understand the reasoning and approach behind decision-making and organizational approaches to transportation policies in the context of mega sporting events, the thesis uses two primary modes of data collection and analysis: comparative case studies and semi-structured interviews.

I. Comparative Case Study

This method facilitates an intensive study of planning processes, governance arrangements, and investment decisions in the selected host cities. It allows the identification of recurring problems and innovations across cases, such as different governance models in Kansas City and Monterrey, the enhancement of transit infrastructure in Brisbane, or legacy planning in Durban. It facilitates different analyses of a range of governance arrangements and planning decisions; however, it requires access to city planning reports and data collection in consistent formats across different countries.

Kansas City serves as the lead case of the study since it is the driving interest of the research. The other three cities, Brisbane, Durban, and Monterrey, serve as comparative cases according to secondary data from academic sources and planning records.



1. Criteria for city selection:

The main criteria for selecting the four case studies are their relevance to the research focus on Kansas City and the need to compare cities with both shared characteristics and distinct planning contexts. All selected cities are classified as secondary cities, providing a consistent basis for comparison. They serve as important regional hubs but do not have the scale or global recognition of major metropolitan areas. At the same time, each case offers a distinct perspective on mega event planning. Durban, which hosted the 2010 FIFA World Cup, is the only case that provides a post-event perspective, allowing for the evaluation of long-term mobility outcomes and legacy impacts. Monterrey, as a host city for the 2026 FIFA World Cup, offers a parallel pre-event case, enabling comparison with Kansas City regarding ongoing planning processes. Brisbane, preparing for the 2032 Olympic Games, represents a future-oriented case characterized by long-term, infrastructure-led planning. Together, these cases enable examination of mobility strategies across different temporal stages: before, during, and after mega-events.

The cases also differ significantly in governance structures. Kansas City operates within a decentralized and fragmented regional system that requires coordination among multiple agencies. Brisbane follows a centralized, state-led governance model with strong institutional alignment. Durban's planning for the 2010 World Cup was largely driven by national government agencies, while Monterrey represents a hybrid model involving coordination across federal, state, and municipal levels.

Finally, all four cities face similar mega-event requirements but differ in their levels of transport planning and in the availability of documentation. This variation allows for a more comprehensive understanding of how governance structures and planning strategies influence mobility outcomes in secondary cities, as shown in the table below.

Table 2.1. Criteria for Selection of the Case Studies

City	Status	Mega-Event	Governance Structure	Transport Documentation
Kansas City (U.S)	Secondary City	Host city for the 2026 FIFA World Cup	Decentralized: Local planning led by the City of Kansas City with coordination from state authorities and FIFA.	Moderate KC Streetcar expansion plans, regional mobility vision documents
Brisbane (Australia)	Secondary City	Host city for the 2032 Summer Olympics	Centralized at the state level: Government leads Olympic infrastructure with support from the federal government and city council coordination.	Extensive Olympic transport strategy, Cross River Rail, Brisbane Metro planning
Durban (South Africa)	Secondary City	Hosted the 2010 FIFA World Cup	National-led: 2010 World Cup planning was driven by national government agencies.	Moderate Transport legacy assessments and academic analyses available
Monterrey (Mexico)	Secondary City	Host city for the 2026 FIFA World Cup	Hybrid: Governance shared between federal, state, and municipal levels.	Moderate Regional mobility plans

II. Policy and Document Analysis

The research involves examining FIFA and other organizational infrastructure guidelines, urban mobility master plans, bidding documents, and evaluation reports from host cities to understand the policy frameworks that direct transport planning for mega sports events. It offers concrete insight into institutional priorities, planning objectives, and responsibilities across government stakeholders and agencies, yet the access to documents and translation (especially for Mexican and South African planning reports) is restrictive.

III. Interviews

Semi-structured interviews with planners and transport officials were undertaken to enrich the study with behind-the-scenes information and planning context not reflected in official documents. This method was chosen because it balances consistency and flexibility; a common set of guiding questions ensures comparability across responses, while the semi-structured format allows participants to discuss context-specific issues and share insights beyond what is recorded in formal sources. These interviews were conducted only for the Kansas City lead study due to logistical and time constraints. They were conducted after an initial phase of data collection, which included reviewing planning documents, policy reports, and publicly available materials related to transportation and event preparation. Due to limited availability during the summer, the interviews were conducted later in the research process. As a result, the interview questions were designed to focus on the gaps identified in the available documents and data collected and reviewed. It clarifies aspects that could not be fully understood through document analysis alone. The questions capture motivations and limitations that influence planning decisions and provide rich insights into coordination challenges.

Two semi-structured interviews were conducted with key stakeholders in Kansas City: one with Jason Waldron, the Transportation Director of Kansas City, Missouri (KCMO), conducted on October 10, 2025, and one with Lindsey Douglas, Chief Operations Officer of the Kansas City 2026 Local Organizing Committee (KC2026 LOC), conducted on September 30, 2025.



**Jason
Waldron** Transportation Director of
Kansas City, Missouri



**Lindsey
Douglas** Chief Operations Officer of
Kansas City 2026 Local
Organizing Committee

Chapter 3 - Literature Review

I. Defining Mega-Events and Their Urban Implications

Mega-Events have attracted the attention of many scholars across economic and urban studies, as well as the planning literature, due to their unique visibility, scale, and impact on communities and environments. While many definitions of a mega-event converge on the idea that it is a large-scale, short-term event that attracts a large number of visitors and generates significant tourism-related economic activity, many scholars differ on the characteristics that distinguish a mega-event from a normal event.

Recent scholarship highlights that the characteristics of mega-events extend beyond physical attendance and tourism demand. Scholars include the mediated, financial, and political dimensions of these events, underscoring their importance to the global economy and international media exposure (Wolfe et al., 2021). According to Müller (2015), ‘mega-events are ambulatory occasions of a fixed duration that attract a large number of visitors, have large mediated reach, come with large costs and have large impacts on the built environment and the population’ (p. 638). This definition, compared with those of Roche (1994), Gold and Gold (2011), Mills and Rosentraub (2013), and others, offers a multidimensional framework that shifts away from single-indicator definitions that privilege tourism demands alone.³

Müller (2015) classifies mega-events according to four dimensions: visitor attractiveness, mediated reach, total cost, and transformative impact. Visitor attractiveness reflects the minimum number of visitors attending the event, measured through primary surveys or ticket sales, while mediated reach focuses on the global exposure achieved during the event through television

³ See appendix C

broadcasting and other forms of media outreach. The third criterion for defining the extent of an event's greatness and classifying it as mega or giga is cost, which includes both direct organizational expenditures and indirect public investments, such as transport infrastructure, security measures, and new projects. Finally, transformative impact refers to whether the money spent on the mega-events has an immediate impact on the community and environment hosting, both on the population and on the built environment, such as stadia, railways, roads, and other facilities upgrade (Müller, 2015). The table below highlights the classification scoring.

Table 3.1. Criteria for Selection of the Case Studies

Visitor Attractiveness	Mediated Reach	Total Cost	Transformative Impact
Low (>500,000 tickets) 1 point	Low (>\$100 million) 1 point	Low (>\$1 billion) 1 point	Present
Extra Large (>1 million tickets) 2 points	Extra Large (>\$1 billion) 2 points	Extra Large (>\$5 billion) 2 points	Present
Extremely Large (>3 million tickets) 3 points	Extremely Large (>\$2 billion) 3 points	Extremely Large (>\$10 billion) 3 points	Present

Based on cumulative scoring across these four dimensions, events are classified as major, mega, or giga events based on their total points. Major events are scored on a scale of 1 to 6 and cause limited urban disruption, such as the Super Bowl or the Rugby World Cup. On the other hand, mega-events are scored between 7 and 10 points and have a significant but more localized

impact, such as the European Football Championship, the Summer Olympic Games, and the FIFA World Cup. Finally, giga-events are scored between 11 and 12 points and represent the highest level of intensity across all dimensions of the Summer Olympic Games and the FIFA World Cup (Müller, 2015).

The difference between mega-events and giga-events is not merely semantic. Giga-events generate planning pressures that affect routine urban governance mechanisms, much as mega-events do, with a slight difference. For instance, the FIFA World Cup 2010 in South Africa, considered a mega-event, scored only XL in 3 of the 4 dimensions. Although its mediated reach was XXL, its total costs and capital investments were at the XL level, approximately 5 to 7.5 billion rather than the XXL \$10 billion plus level (Müller, 2015).

From a planning perspective, these definitions highlight the role of mega-events as catalysts for urban transformation rather than merely temporary celebrations. By examining the dynamics among the four dimensions (visitor attractiveness, mediated reach, total cost, and transformative impact), the literature provides a comprehensive basis for understanding how different events affect host cities, why mega-events often pose challenges or advantages for city legacies, and their profound influence on urban planning and transportation systems, especially in the cases of the Olympic Games and the FIFA World Cup.

II. Mega-Governance Structures in Mega-Events and the “Mega-Event Syndrome”

Mega-event governance is complex and characterized by a multi-level environment that involves international stakeholders such as FIFA and the IOC, national and regional stakeholders, and local municipalities. Governance dynamics explain how the organization is carried out, why decisions differ, and how they influence the planning outcomes of the mega-event (Müller, 2015).

Kassens (2009) highlights that mega-event owners also view governing bodies as “formidable agents of urban change” that exert significant influence over the city’s original master plans, primarily to satisfy the event’s specific mandates (pp. 16-17). In fact, once a city wins a bid to host the Summer Olympics, the FIFA World Cup, or another mega sporting event, it is “locked into” its commitments and promises through a host-city contract (Kassens, 2009). This contract generally freezes urban plans, making any changes or evolution impossible without the organizer’s consent. In fact, hosting a mega sporting event requires not only extensive planning and control but also years of preparation (Lussier & Kimball, 2014). For instance, Olympic preparations take seven years (Kassens, 2009).

Governing bodies play a crucial role in the organization and face many challenges, especially when the governance model is fragmented or multi-level. Jastrzābek et al. (2024) provided two examples of framed models. First, the Paris 2024 Boards of Directors unified representatives from the sporting movement, civil society, and the public sector, led by Société de Livraison des Ouvrages Olympiques (SOLIDEO). This collaboration demonstrates the multi-level nature and the diverse stakeholders involved in delivering the Games. Second, London 2012 relied on the Olympic Delivery Authority (ODA). This shows that both countries relied on a multi-level governance model. It included stakeholders from the private sector, non-governmental organizations, local communities, and other formal and informal actors (Jastrzābek et al., 2024). In both Paris and London, delivery authorities such as SOLIDEO and the Olympic Delivery Authority were designed as temporary entities; however, London demonstrates how governance continuity can be maintained through successor institutions such as the London Legacy Development Corporation, ensuring long-term oversight beyond the event (Fisher, 2024). Although the games went well and were successful, the complexity of this model can

hinder cross-institutional consensus, since many actors are involved and the third party, especially the local communities participating, is not necessarily effective in the decision-making process (Jastrzabek et al., 2024).

Alongside mega-event governance, Müller's (2015) concept of the mega-event syndrome is a set of symptoms that occur together and affect mega-event planning. These include "overpromising benefits, underestimating costs, rewriting urban planning priorities to fit the event, using public resources for private interest, and suspending the regular rule of law" (p. 6). Examining these symptoms together allows planners and host cities to identify problems and thus shift the focus to the causes and drivers of negative outcomes (Müller, 2015):

- 1. Overpromising Benefits:** Host cities often exaggerate the positive effects of mega-events, such as job creation, secure community support and sign the bid. This results in a loss of trust among citizens, as well as a misallocation of the host city's resources.
- 2. Underestimation of Costs:** Host cities suffer from cost overruns, oversized infrastructure, and schedule slips. Müller (2015) gives many examples of this issue, including the 1994 World Cup in the United States, where host cities experienced a net economic loss instead of the predicted gain. He adds that since 1960, the Olympic Games have gone over budget on average by 179%. Moreover, Firgo (2021) demonstrates that, although host cities claim economic growth from organizing mega-events, the long-term Gross Domestic Product (GDP) effects of hosting the Olympic Games are often modest or statistically insignificant.

- 3. Event Takeover:** The requirements of the event displace the long-term needs of the host cities and their urban infrastructure priorities, which often lead to the “white elephant”⁴ syndrome. The most famous example is Rio de Janeiro, which, within 10 years, hosted many mega sporting events, including the FIFA World Cup and the Olympic Games. The master plan and infrastructure changes were mostly driven by these events, thereby neglecting the needs of the population. As Müller (2015) quotes Nuzman (2011), the mayor of Rio, Eduardo Paes, declared: “The Olympic plan is Rio’s plan, and Rio’s plan is the Olympics.” This statement clearly shows the white elephant syndrome. Additionally, Menezes & Souza (2014), in their case study of Recife, Brazil, highlight that the risk of white elephant outcomes in secondary cities is particularly pronounced, as demand levels are insufficient to justify permanent capacity expansion.
- 4. Public Risk Taking:** The public sector takes on risk for private benefits, since it is most of the time forced to cover all budget shortfalls and risks, while private interests and event owners get the benefits. The examples Müller (2015) gives are the 2014 Football World Cup in Brazil and the 2014 Winter Games in Russia, where the host cities expected private investment to make up most of the funding for the event, however in both the tournaments, the public sector was forced to pay more than 95% of the costs.
- 5. Rule of Exception:** This rule comes with the exceptional nature of mega sporting events. In fact, many governments trigger a state of exception in which national or local laws are changed or suspended, affecting taxation, immigration, property rights, urban planning, and freedom of speech. For instance, the FIFA World Cup in Brazil estimated that

⁴ White elephant syndrome is the creation of specialized, high-cost venues (white elephants) that become useless or economically unsustainable after events like the Olympics or FIFA World Cup (Müller, 2015).

exemptions would cost roughly USD \$250 million (BRL 559 million) in foregone tax revenue (Müller, 2015).

6. Elite Capture: Hosting an event tends to privilege the interests of political and business elites in the process of planning. This includes well-connected construction firms, leading to an inequitable distribution of resources. The example Müller (2015) gives is the several well-connected construction firms, the “four sisters”, that monopolized the public contracts for the FIFA 2014 World Cup in Brazil.

7. Event Fix: Müller (2015) describes that governing bodies tend to use mega-events as a “shot of adrenalin” to get the urban projects done. This results in host cities hosting events only to justify or create pressure to fulfill non-sports investments.

Social consequences are an equally important dimension of the mega-event syndrome.

Finally, understanding the governance perspective provides a crucial foundation for examining transportation planning during the organization of mega-events. By situating planning outcomes within broader institutional and political contexts, the literature shows that these outcomes are not merely technical responses to demand but also products of stakeholder negotiations, power relations, and strategic priorities. This literature is relevant for all host cities, including secondary cities, where the consequences of governance failure may be more evident due to limited resources and funding.

III. Transportation, Social Impact, and Legacies in Secondary Cities: Announcement Effects and Spatial Inequalities in Mega-Event Planning

In the literature, the announcement effect is defined as the immediate reaction of the real estate market after a city wins a bid to host a mega sporting event (Hur & Kim, 2022). Hur & Kim (2022) describe real estate as the most important indicator of the future legacy of host cities,

given its socioeconomic impact on the city as investors and residents capitalize on expected improvements in transportation, infrastructure, etc. The authors used London 2012 as an example of this phenomenon, noting that property prices in the region rose by 2.1% after London won the 2012 Olympics bid, and that properties within a 3-mile radius of the main Olympic facilities rose by 5%.

The impact of the mega-events of economics and son on societies is often justified by narratives of urban regeneration and global visibility, and transportation investments associated with mega-events usually prioritize the needs of visitors, athletes, and media personnel at the expense of residents (Maharaj, 2015; Müller, 2015).

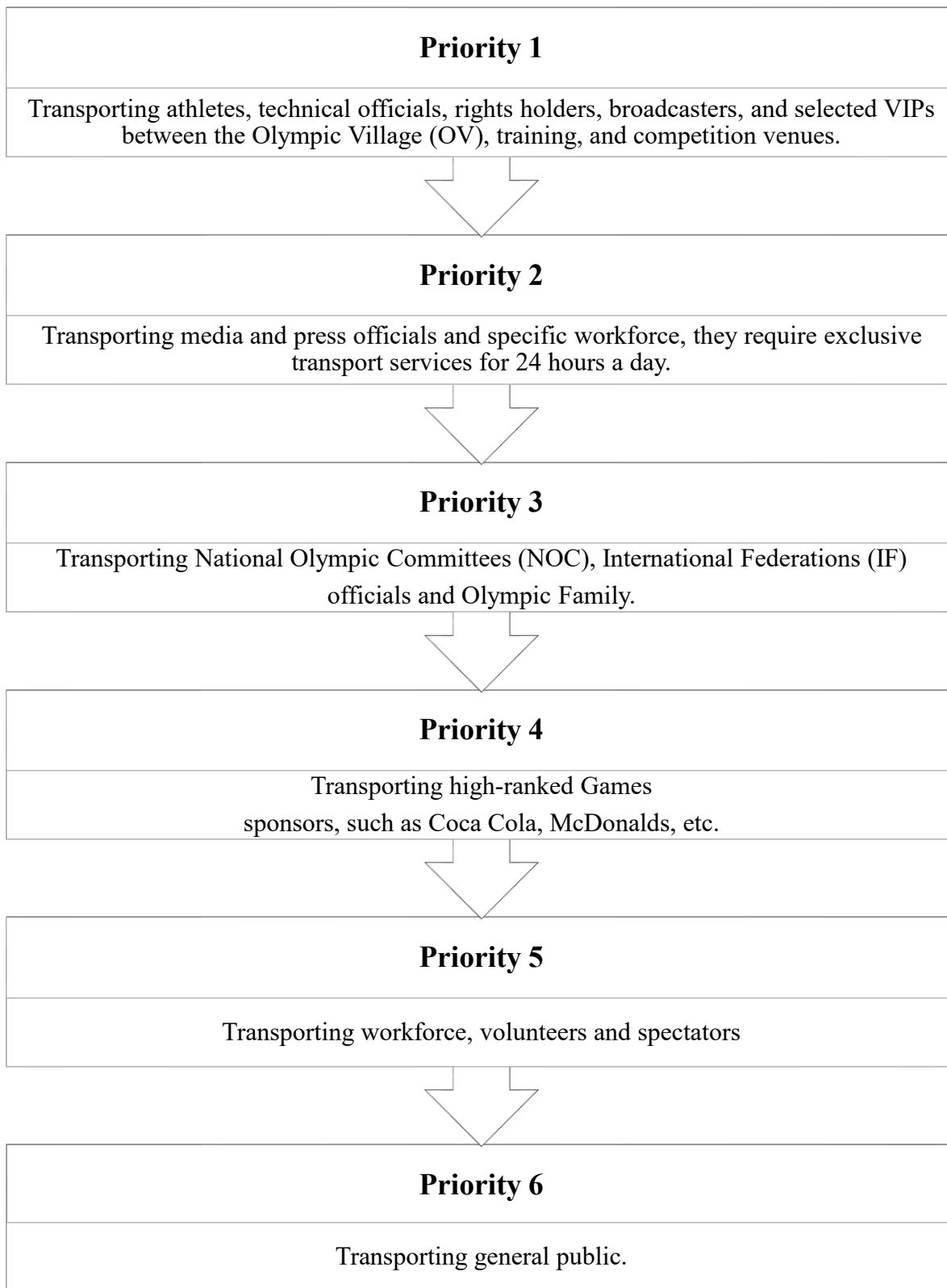
Maharaj (2015) provides in this matter an analysis of the social and economic impacts of mega-events on the Global South, using Delhi, South Africa, and Brazil as examples. The author describes how the 2010 FIFA World Cup governance exacerbated socio-spatial inequality by prioritizing the global image of the events over the needs of marginalized communities. In many host cities, residents experience displacement, restricted access to public space, or increased living costs because of event preparations (Maharaj, 2015). For instance, in Delhi, over 200,000 people were evicted in preparation for the 2010 Commonwealth Games, as well as in Brazil, with 170,000 people in preparation for the 2014 FIFA World Cup and the 2016 Summer Olympics.

A recurring concern in the transportation planning literature is that mega-event transport strategies favor strategically important corridors, such as airport-to-downtown routes or connections between central business districts and event venues. Kassens (2009) confirms the prioritization of elite transport groups. She notes that event organizers establish an implicit

hierarchy in transport services that places athletes, media, and VIPs at the top, followed by visitors, then residents.

For residents whose mobility needs stem from routine activities such as work and education, these arrangements can disrupt established travel patterns and reduce overall accessibility. The figure below illustrates these priorities, as Kassens (2009) outlines them for the Olympic Games:

Table 3.2. Transportation Priorities during the Olympic Games Tournament (adapted from Kassens, 2009)



In secondary cities, these equity considerations are important. Limited real estate capacity and housing markets amplify the consequences of failed investments and of infrastructure planning misaligned with community needs. When combining the announcement and inequity, the hypothesis is that governance decisions can produce or exacerbate socio-spatial divisions. Understanding these dynamics is essential for evaluating whether mega-event transportation projects contribute to inclusive urban development or exacerbate existing inequalities.

Given that transportation plays a central role in the planning and delivery of mega sporting events, the literature also identifies urban mobility as one of the most important determinants of the success or failure of mega-events (Kassens, 2009; Gold & Gold, 2024). In fact, Gold & Gold (2024) highlight that such events promote urban regeneration and revamp transport and service infrastructures.

In secondary cities, governing bodies pursue mega-events as instruments of symbolic repositioning rather than engines of structural economic growth (Díez-Pisonero & Prieto Parrilla, 2024). Since secondary cities lack the global recognition and attention that metropolitan cities enjoy, they often view mega-events as opportunities to enter international tourism and gain visibility. In this context, transportation infrastructure becomes central, as urban mobility systems are the first and most experienced elements of the city for international visitors.

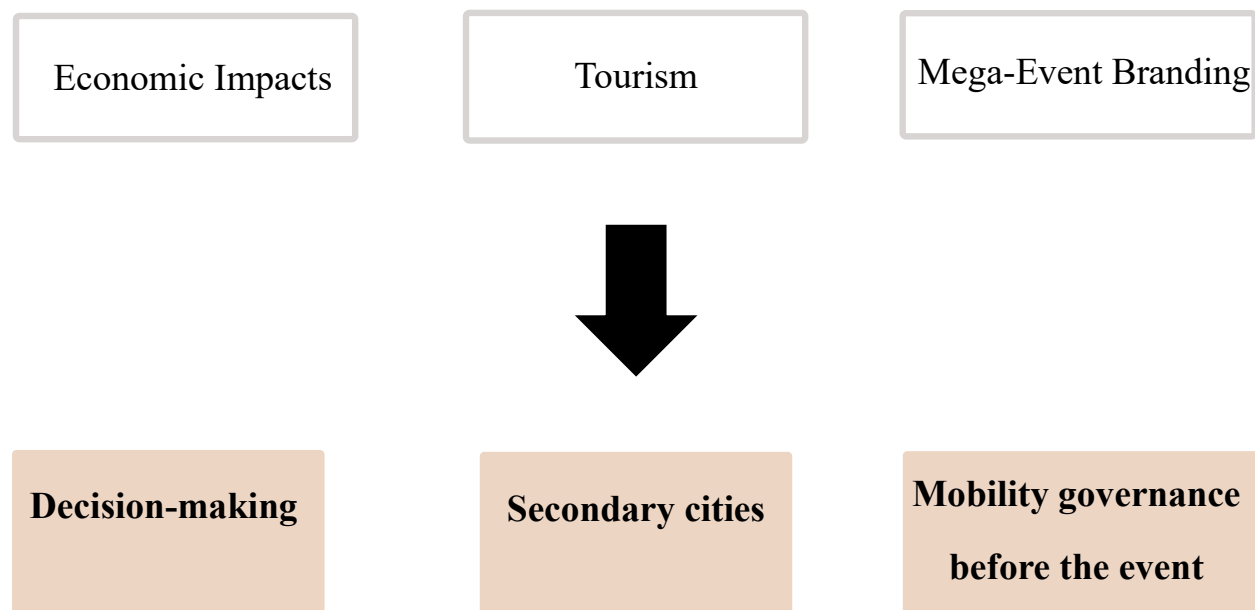
Menezes and Souza (2014), in the case study of Recife, show how mega-event transport planning frequently prioritizes specific corridors connecting airports, tourist districts, and event venues, thereby improving accessibility along these routes but neglecting broader network integration. Such selective investment can generate uneven benefits and reinforce spatial inequalities. It is for this reason that Smith (2012) argues that the most effective approach to planning mega-events is to integrate them into a comprehensive vision that seeks to bring about

lasting improvement to the city. He suggests that “event projects should be used to further existing urban plans” (p. 19).

Overall, literature positions transportation as a central interface between global image and local experience. In secondary cities, transport systems not only determine event functionality but also promote the international image and legacy. When mobility investments align with long-term urban needs, they can reinforce objectives. However, when they prioritize mega-events over long-term needs, they fail both everyday mobility and the gains they seek.

IV. Synthesis and Research Gap

The literature demonstrates that mega sporting events are not only temporary disruptions for host cities but also catalysts for urban interventions that can reshape transportation systems, governance arrangements, and socio-spatial dynamics. Transportation is an important aspect of the event's smooth running, as it can determine the success or failure of mega-events. After all, if athletes, staff, media, and visitors are not moved around the cities during the tournament, then no tournament will happen, with empty stadiums and no athletes to perform.



Despite the extensive literature, important gaps remain. In fact, most existing research on mega-events focuses primarily on economic impacts, tourism development, and city branding. Comparative analyses of secondary cities are limited, and many transport studies focus on outcomes rather than decision-making processes. Far less attention has been given to governance structures, decision-making processes, and mobility planning before the event, particularly in the context of secondary cities. The thesis addresses these gaps through a comparative analysis of secondary cities, examining how transportation decisions are shaped by governance contexts, event requirements, and long-term urban priorities across different temporal stages, before, during, and after mega-events.

Chapter 4 - Findings

The chapter highlights the main case study, Kansas City, as well as the three comparative case studies, Monterrey, Durban, and Brisbane.

For Kansas city, the data is extracted from different planning organizations, agencies, and entities working directly or indirectly on the FIFA Cup 2026, among which we can cite Kansas City 2026 Local Organizing Committee (KC2026 LOC), Kansas City, Missouri (KCMO), Mid-America Regional Council (MARC) Transportation Planning Division, VisitKC, Kansas Tourism (State of Kansas), Kansas City Area Transportation Authority (KCATA), Missouri Department of Transportation (MoDOT), Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT), Kansas City Streetcar (KC Streetcar), Unified Government Transit (UGT), Kansas City Chiefs (KC Chiefs). This secondary data collection primarily comes from KC2026 planning slides, strategic and operational plans, comprehensive plans, and reports. Additionally, two semi-structured interviews were conducted with Jason Waldron, Transportation Director of KCMO, and Lindsey Douglas, Chief Operations Officer of KC2026.

For Monterrey, the information is drawn from various local public administrations, planning agencies, and governance bodies involved in organizing the FIFA WC 2026, including the city government ⁵, IMPLAN - Official Urban Planning Agency⁶, United Bid Committee 2026, and academic research.

⁵ Gobierno Municipal de Monterrey, which translates to municipal government of Monterrey, is the local government agency responsible for policy direction, budgets, and municipal affairs. Through its Plan Municipal de Desarrollo (PMD) 2024–2027-Monterrey, Monterrey provides many insights into its vision for the upcoming FIFA World Cup.

⁶ IMPLAN-Instituto Municipal de Planeación Urbana y Convivencia, which translates to Municipal Institute of Urban Planning and Community Development, is the official urban planning agency of the city of Monterrey, in charge of urban design guidelines, transportation planning, demographic analysis, etc.

For Durban, the findings come from the Comprehensive Integrated Transport Plan 2024-2029, GIS-based accessibility research, municipal policy documents, and academic analyses of Durban's transport system and event legacies for the FIFA World Cup 2010.

For Brisbane, the evidence are drawn from Queensland Government agencies, including the Department of Transport and Main Roads, the Cross River Rail Delivery Authority, as well as Brisbane City Council, the Brisbane 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games delivery bodies Olympic Coordination Authority(OCA) and Organizing Committee of the Olympic Games (OCOG), and IOC Future Host Commission documentation, and academic research.

The information collected is divided into four main themes closely related to the main case study, Kansas City, and the three comparative case studies. It focuses on the host cities' management of past mega sporting events, such as the FIFA World Cup 2010, and upcoming events, such as the FIFA World Cup 2026 and the Olympics 2032.

These themes were identified through a process that integrated insights from the literature review and observations made during document analysis and interviews. Common topics such as governance structures, infrastructure strategies, sustainability concerns, and economic impacts were grouped into thematic categories to facilitate cross-case comparison and align with the research questions.

The four main themes are: **governance and decision-making; infrastructure scalability and legacy; sustainability and cultural transformation; economic impact and tourism.**

LEAD CASE STUDY - Kansas City

Standing on the Missouri-Kansas state line, Kansas City is the largest city in the U.S. state of Missouri in terms of population and area (City of Kansas City, Missouri, 2024). It is a vibrant metro in the heart of the U.S., known as the “KC Heartland.”

Figure 4.1. Location of Kansas City within the United States, Missouri, and Kansas (map data from ArcGIS Pro; refined by author in Adobe Illustrator)



The region is known for its red-hot sports culture, which is embraced year-round, as evidenced by the Kansas City Chiefs, Kansas City Royals, Major League Soccer's Sporting Kansas City, and the National Women's Soccer League's Kansas City Current (KC2026 Local Organizing Committee, 2024).

Kansas City has been considered among 17 other candidate host cities in the United States to host matches for the FIFA World Cup 2026. The city won the bid in 2022, making it the only Midwest U.S. city to host (Fox, 2020; KC2026 Local Organizing Committee, 2024). Kansas City is ideally located in the heart of North America to welcome the world, and the bid's vision is to unite the Midwest region around this once-in-a-lifetime occasion. It is an opportunity to showcase the area as a thriving destination with strong soccer support as the city takes the next step toward bringing the World Cup to the Midwest (Fox, 2020).

I. Governance and Decision-Making

The governance of the FIFA World Cup 2026 organization in Kansas City is complex due to the city's unique metropolitan characteristics and its governance model. As mentioned earlier, the city is spread across different states and is home to multiple counties and several transportation agencies. The documents and interviews demonstrate which entities and governance models were designed to address existing challenges and FIFA's global requirements.

1. KC2026: A Central Governance Entity for the FIFA World Cup 2026 Organization

Kansas City is the smallest U.S. host city in the tournament; therefore, a standalone organization was necessary to handle the scale of planning. The region established KC2026, a 501(c)(4) non-profit entity responsible for fundraising, safety and security requirements, transportation needs, hosting the fan festival, communications, marketing, and all aspects of

planning and delivering Host City Requirements (KC2026 Local Organizing Committee; Douglas, 2025). This organizational structure was chosen to manage the scale, speed, and complexity of World Cup preparation independently from the City of Kansas City's government structure. Lindsey Douglas (2025), chief operations officer of KC2026, explains that KC2026 is a significant entity in the tournament's decision-making. She states that all the requirements for the host cities have been transferred from Kansas City, MO, to the KC2026 organization. From safety and security requirements to transportation requirements, to hosting a fan festival, to communications and marketing, KC2026 is responsible for managing and organizing them. Since the charge of work is important, KC2026 is partnering with other law enforcement organizations and transportation providers in the region (Douglas, 2025).

One key strength of KC2026 is its leadership structure. KC2026 is governed by a Board of Directors composed of elected and appointed officials, representatives from local professional sports teams, and key community leaders (KC2026 Local Organizing Committee, 2024). The group's goal is to maximize the positive momentum generated by FIFA World Cup 26 and to unite, strengthen, and elevate the region while advancing Kansas City to new heights nationally and internationally. This hybrid model combines political authority, civic representation, and sports-sector expertise.

2. Responsible Regional Agencies

Given Kansas City's metropolitan diversity, its governance relies heavily on multi-jurisdictional cooperation. Lindsey Douglas (2025), in the KC 2026 World Cup Update presentation, lists a working group of agencies and experts that meet monthly, which includes:

- City of Kansas City, MO.
- KCATA.

- MDoT.
- KDoT.
- Johnson County Transit.
- Unified Government Transit.
- Jackson County.
- KC Streetcar.
- MidAmerica Regional Council.
- City of Independence, MO.
- KC Scout.
- Kansas City Chiefs.

Douglas (2025) describes KC2026's role as a "convener" that brings all the stakeholders to the table and facilitates the conversations. Every jurisdiction gathers, problem-solves, and works together toward a jurisdiction-agnostic solution. The goal is to ensure visitors have the best experience without knowing which service is provided, so that the experience is regional rather than limited to the county or state.

Douglas (2025) noted that KC2026 is prioritizing the visitor experience in transportation. Their main goal is to move people between different areas without them knowing which jurisdiction they are in (Douglas,2025).

Jason Waldron, the Transportation Director for Kansas City, provides further insight from a public-sector perspective. He states that early collaboration between KCATA, KC Streetcar, Kansas City Public Works, and other members of KC2026 began immediately after the host city announcement. He mentioned that stakeholders started meeting on their own as soon as FIFA announced Kansas City as a host (Waldron, 2025).

Although Kansas City has a complex regional governance structure, all officials and representatives share the same goal: to leverage the 2026 FIFA World Cup opportunity to create a positive, lasting impact for the entire region. After all, Waldron notes that overall, Kansas City area residents see themselves as Kansas City residents, whether they live on the Kansas side or the Missouri side.

3. FIFA as Governance Actor and Funding

FIFA's role is to supervise all the entities mentioned earlier, including KC2026, across all disciplines, ensuring they approve KC2026 plans, provide feedback, and explain the international organization's charts and brands. In terms of transportation, FIFA is responsible for VIP transportation for commercial partners and dignitaries, as well as related matters for players and FIFA officials (Douglas, 2025).

In terms of funding, FIFA does not fund the tournament as many would think. Douglas (2025) states that the city gets no support or funding from FIFA. ⁷The main challenge the city faces is the lack of a regional transportation funding mechanism, as each jurisdiction must decide for itself how to fund its transportation (Douglas, 2025). Both states, Kansas and Missouri, are supporting the upcoming event, as are Johnson County and Jackson County, home of Arrowhead Stadium, which will host matches during the FIFA World Cup 2026. KC2026 is trying to raise as much private funding as possible, but the vast majority of funding right now comes from public partners (Douglas, 2025). These findings reinforce a governance model in which FIFA serves as an approver and supervisor, while KC2026 and regional entities serve as implementers and funders.

⁷ "FIFA is not providing a single dime." (Douglas,2025)

4. Challenges and Strengths of Kansas City Governance

Both interviewees, Douglas and Waldron, declare that regional fragmentation is the primary governance challenge. Douglas (2025) states that different jurisdictions pose a challenge, and Waldron (2025) supports this, noting that the more people involved in the agreement process, the more challenging it becomes. However, both interviewees are optimistic about the current collaboration and the event's organization. In this manner, Douglas (2025) voices a significant strength: “We are big enough to do it and small enough to care.” This statement reflects Kansas City officials' proud identity and their urge to succeed in this event. Similarly, Waldron (2025) affirms that the city of Kansas City will do whatever it needs to handle the tournament.

II. Infrastructure Scalability and Legacy

Kansas City is pursuing different solutions and transformations in preparation for the FIFA World Cup 2026, which requires modifying its existing transportation and operational systems to accommodate the temporary mega-event mobility network. With an estimated 650,000 visitors expected during the FIFA World Cup 2026, transportation stakeholders and KC2026 are developing new solutions to move all fans between the central locations, as it is one of the most demanding aspects of Kansas City's host city responsibilities. (KC2026 Local Organizing Committee, 2025; Douglas, 2025). In this case, the city must not only provide safe, efficient event-day operations but also leverage these changes to support long-term mobility improvements throughout the region and create a sustainable legacy.

Figure 4.1 shows the spatial relationship and public transportation links between downtown Kansas City and Arrowhead Stadium, emphasizing the physical distance and existing transit options. The choices between these two key locations are limited, with bus travel times

exceeding 1 hour, low service frequency, and walking times of more than 20 minutes to reach the venue. This restricts accessibility and increases dependence on private vehicles.

Figure 4.2. Public Transportation and Spatial Relationship Between Downtown Kansas City and Arrowhead Stadium (map data from Google Maps; refined by author in Adobe Illustrator)



1. Stadium Transformation and Operationalization of Public Space

The findings and interviews showcase the substantial transformation required at Arrowhead Stadium. According to both interviewees, many changes have been made to the stadium, among which two stand out: a reduction in seating capacity and the shutdown of 40% of the parking lot.

The Arrowhead Stadium seating capacity is expected to be reduced by 10–15% after renovations to meet FIFA pitch-size requirements (KC2026 Local Organizing Committee, 2024,

p. 3). This reduction is explained by the fact that FIFA's overlay consumes a significant portion of the stadium's parking footprint, which eliminates large areas that are usually available during NFL games. Regarding parking, Jason Waldron (2025) describes this operational shift as a security necessity. In fact, half of the parking lot will be used for security, communication, or by the FIFA organization.

This reduction puts considerable pressure on transportation planning and the existing culture, especially since the Arrowhead Stadium parking lot is used for tailgating and because the car-dependent culture influences local expectations. In this regard, Douglas (2025) highlights the importance of communicating this aspect to people and the differences between the FIFA tournament and an NFL game. She adds that there will be a cultural shift, as the tournament introduces a new transportation system, and parking will be limited.

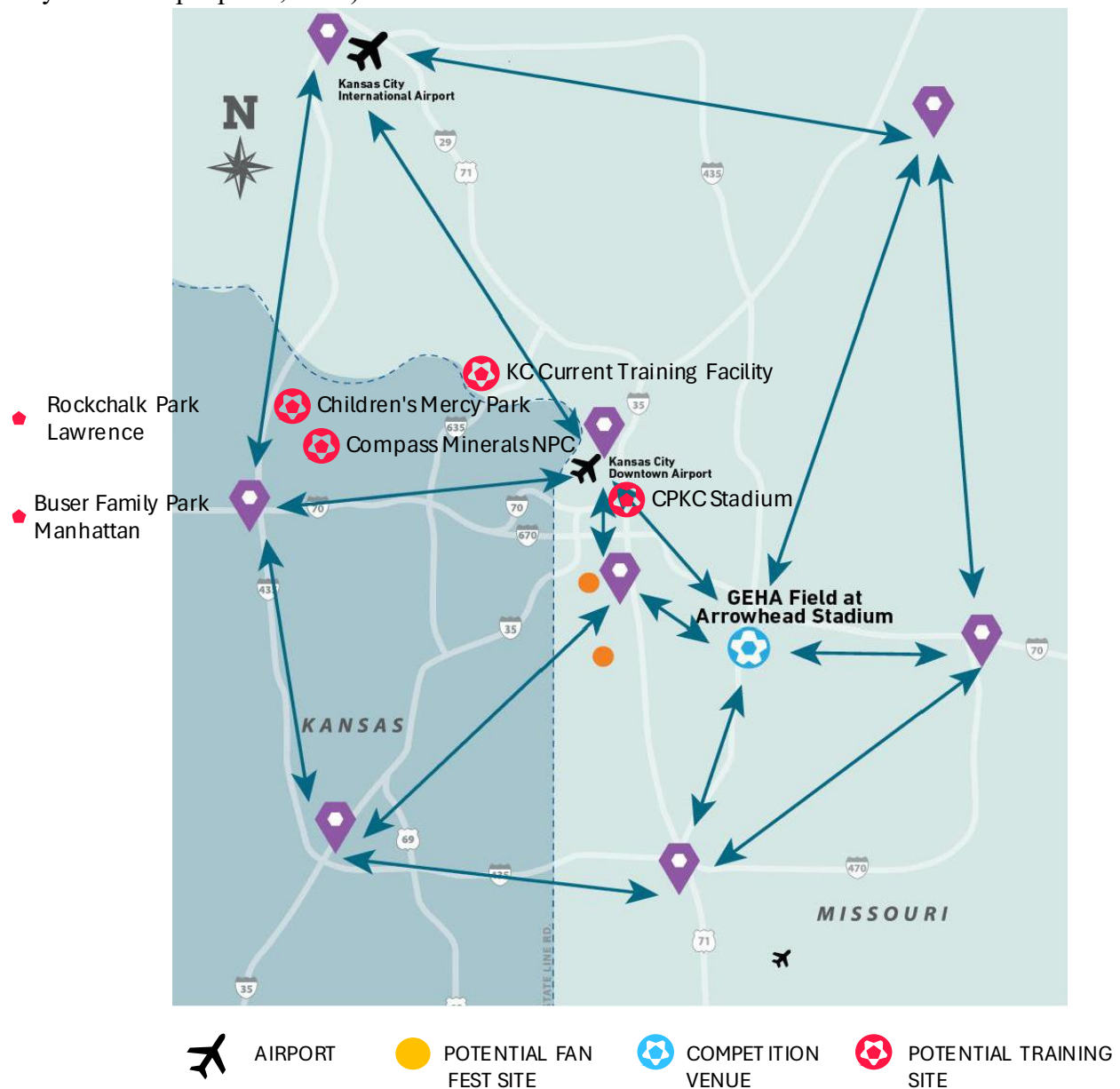
Since visitors will not follow the typical "Chiefs game patterns," Waldron states that the city needs to reconsider how to transport residents and visitors to the main sporting venues. It involves about 40,000 more people at the stadium, who usually get there by car (Waldron, 2025). This change requires a temporary system that is much larger than Kansas City usually uses for local events.

2. Temporary Regional Solutions for the FIFA World Cup 2026 Tournament

With limited parking, visitors from around the world attend the tournament, and some rely on public transit. To address these and other challenges, KC2026 has decided to construct a temporary bus-based transportation system, also called a park-and-ride system, for the first time in the region's history. (KC2026 Local Organizing Committee, 2025) The studied documents confirm that Kansas City must provide transportation from the airport to the city center, from the

city center to Fan Fest, from the airport to the stadium, and to other FIFA-required locations, such as Fan zones (Waldron, 2025).

Figure 4.3. Key activation sites for the 2026 FIFA World Cup in the Kansas City region, including competition venues, potential training sites, fan festival locations, and airports (Kansas City World Cup Update, 2024)



KC2026's action included leasing a large bus fleet. Waldron explains that the first thing KC 2026 did was to procure 200 charter buses and emphasizes that this temporary approach is a

test to gauge residents' support for public transit. He hopes to secure funding if this proves to be a successful investment (Waldron, 2025).

The bus system must move tens of thousands of spectators from various main locations, such as airports, fan festivals, and stadiums, to designated Park-and-Ride points (KC2026 Local Organizing Committee, 2024). Waldron notes that the organizers evaluate several operational scenarios, including “how many vehicles will go in each gate” and develop “Plan B” contingencies (Waldron, 2025). In fact, Kansas City, along with Dallas, is particularly challenging because there is no public transit that takes you directly to the stadium (Waldron, 2025). More specifically, this could help secure future funding from local, state, or federal sources. If it works well, stakeholders can use its success to push for ongoing investment in public transportation, turning this short-term solution into a lasting transportation plan.

In terms of benchmarking and learning from other recent host cities. Douglas (2025) notes that attempts to reach either Qatar or Russia, the two closest hosting cities, were unsuccessful. The data used for the summer tournament in Kansas City is primarily local and is supervised by well-trained FIFA officials, who help KC2026 understand and learn from previous experience. Douglas (2025) adds that Qatar was helpful, as it made the city aware that using the school bus as a transportation solution was not a great experience for visitors.

3. Multimodal Access and Ride-Share Management

Kansas City plans to integrate walking, biking, and ridesharing into the event-day plan (Waldron, 2025). Waldron describes three main strategies:

1. Buses are considered the core of transportation during the one month of the tournament.

2. Ride-share: coordinated with the officials, which requires the companies to follow a plan rather than go wherever they want (Waldron,2025).

3. Alternative mobility: walking and cycling, depending on the cultural norms of visiting fanbases.

This statement illustrates the importance of understanding each society's cultural mobility patterns in the planning process and of creating culturally responsive infrastructure or solutions.

Whether it is Fan marches, such as Wydad AC's fan march to the Lincoln Stadium in Philadelphia, U.S, for the World Club Cup 2025, or other international behaviors related to soccer culture, Waldron (2025) also outlines a unique challenge. It is important to be ready to manage unpredictable yet culturally meaningful behaviors, which is part of the event-day planning and management process.

Additionally, Kansas City is implementing new operational technologies. As Waldron highlights, the organizers plan to assign the gates and the parking lot where visitors are supposed to park. This will be very helpful for balancing traffic, representing a more controlled and data-driven strategy that is more advanced than typical NFL operations. Similar to what was used during the last FIFA World Cup Tournament, apps are expected to support navigation and fan movement. Waldron ensures that, through these new technologies, the experience is “as seamless as possible with apps,” aligning with FIFA's global mega-event standards (Waldron, 2025).

4. Long-Term Legacy Investments in Mobility Infrastructure

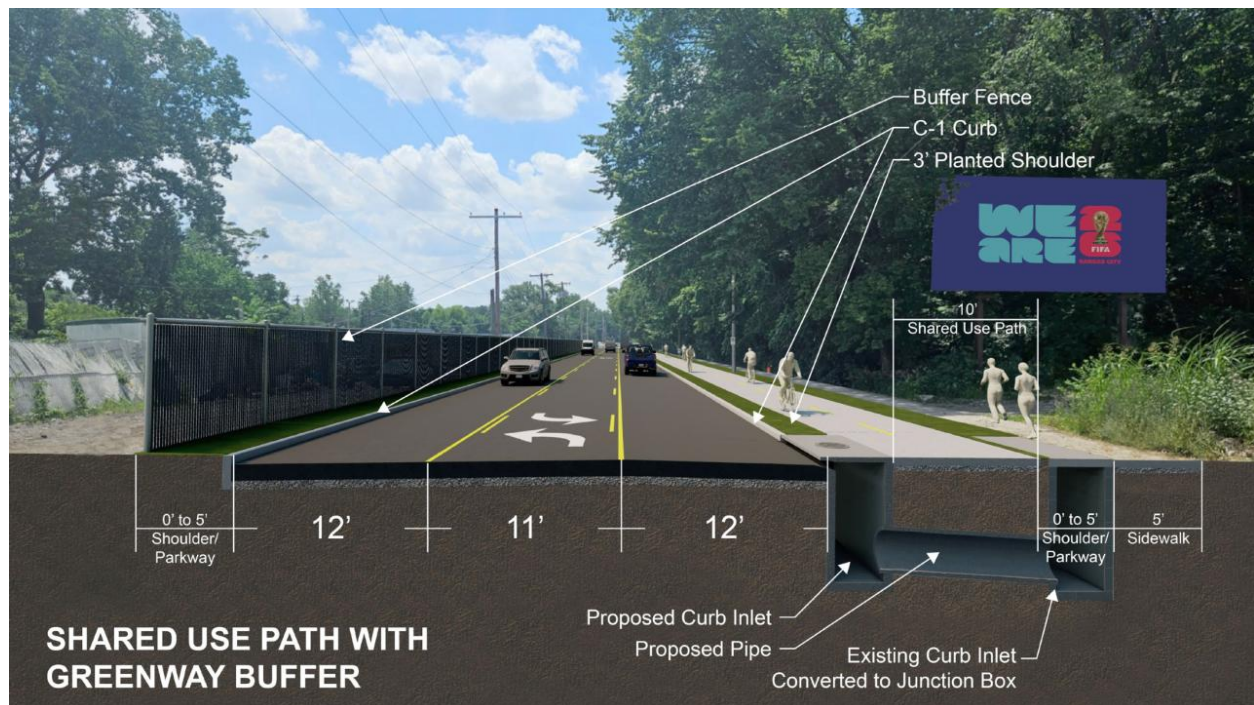
One of the biggest challenges and opportunities of urban mobility for the FIFA World Cup in Kansas City is aligning World Cup requirements with long-term mobility enhancements and legacy. Many projects were in progress and aligned perfectly with the upcoming event transit needs.

Examples cited by Waldron and included in the planning documents are:

- The \$350 million streetcar extension: this project started its construction in 2022 and was inaugurated in 2025; it was planned, though, way back in 2017 (KC Streetcar Authority, 2020, p. 6). It is identified as a key transit investment already underway.
- The new bike-pedestrian bridge: this bridge connects the River Market to the Riverfront (Waldron, 2025).
- The Stadium Boulevard streetscape renewal, which improves walkability near Arrowhead (Waldron, 2025).

The development of Yvonne Wilson Park connections: Situated in a Dunbar neighborhood, along Stadium Drive. Yvonne Wilson Park is an iconic historic park significant to the Dunbar community. It has been envisioned as a fan march corridor or a fan zone for visitors (Waldron, 2025).

Figure 4.4. Proposed shared-use path and greenway buffer improvements along Stadium Drive in Kansas City ahead of the 2026 FIFA World Cup (image from KSHB, 2024)



These investments show how the World Cup accelerates projects already requested by local communities, with the Dunbar neighborhood as a case in point. By including Yvonne Wilson Park as a potential fan zone and marches corridor, and by improving Stadium Drive with aesthetic fencing and bike infrastructure, the community is expected to benefit from the FIFA World Cup 2026 in the long term.

III. Sustainability and Cultural Transformation

KC2026 is not only focusing on the temporary nature of the mega sporting events and their smooth flow, but also on sustainability and cultural transformation as central parts of the legacy the city envisions leaving, as reflected in planning documents and interviews.

Sustainability in the context of the FIFA World Cup 2026 extends beyond environmental considerations to encompass social inclusion, public engagement, and community identity. The World Cup is considered not only a major sporting event but also a unique opportunity to influence community values and leave a lasting legacy.

1. Integrating Human Rights and Sustainability Principles

Lindsey Douglas (2025), in the safety and security planning presentation, highlights six central themes of the host committee's FIFA requirements, among which human rights and sustainability focus on four main components:

- Safeguarding and Inclusion.
- Sustainable Procurement.
- Environmental Protection.
- Workers' Rights and Access to Remedy.

Douglas (2025) confirms that these areas are a critical part of her leadership responsibilities; in fact, the KC2026 must integrate all safety and security requirements and transportation requirements into the planning process (Douglas, 2025).

2. Long-Term Community Engagement and Cultural Shift

The primary purpose of the city during the FIFA World Cup 2026 is to maximize the positive impact of the tournament through three goals (Lindsey Douglas, 2025, p. 7):

A. Deliver Kansas City magic: planning “to create a safe, seamless, best-in-class experience for the fans, players, and media to encourage visitors to return to the city.”

B. Rise on the world stage: highlighting internationally “the vitality of the city’s economy, the richness of the culture, and most importantly, the welcoming character of the community.” Being in the heart of the Midwest, the people are known for their hospitality.

C. Leave a lasting legacy: generating “sustained and long-term cultural and economic impacts in our region’s infrastructure, businesses, institutions, and brand, while building our people’s capability and confidence to take on the opportunities and challenges of the future.”

For that, the city is known for its community engagement, and public participation is another pillar of its governance. MARC created a 2020 document, Connected KC 2050, to develop a regional transportation plan. The document includes community engagement and reports around 9 pop-up engagements, 4 public meetings, and 1,700+ valid survey responses (MARC, 2025), which underscore an engaging approach to urban mobility, making it a policy and transportation strategy that later intersects with World Cup mobility planning goals. In fact, KC2026 also conducted community engagement activities primarily with residents in Jackson County in the stadium area. Douglas (2025) notes extensive resident engagement, including

surveys near the stadium and outreach around the Fan Festival footprint (Douglas, 2025). She describes the communication efforts as an essential component of the planning process because residents often assume the World Cup will operate “just like an NFL,” which is not the case (Douglas, 2025). Waldron confirms this approach, explaining that KC2026 is leading public outreach in neighborhoods around the Arrowhead Stadium to know their needs, especially regarding traffic restrictions, parking, and access passes (Waldron, 2025).

IV. Economic Impact and Tourism

The FIFA World Cup 2026 will accelerate economic and tourism development in Kansas City. Reports and documents analyzed indicate that the scale of this mega sporting event, along with the international audience present during the tournament, will have significant effects across several sectors, including hospitality, transportation, business development, and public engagement.

1. The Economic Impact of the 2026 World Cup on Kansas City

According to KC2026, the region is expecting to generate \$653 million in direct event impact, \$179 million in direct personal income, and employ 73,592 individuals across full-time and part-time positions (Douglas, 2025, p. 6). Douglas (2025) also highlights an estimated 6,746 annualized full-time equivalents (FTEs).

KC2026 prioritizes small business integration by creating a Vendor Directory with more than 1,000 local and small businesses. (Lindsey Douglas, 2025, p. 15) This shows that the FIFA World Cup economy is inclusive and aligns with the sustainability and community goals identified in earlier themes. The World Cup is not only a short-term economic opportunity but also a chance to expand long-term business capacity.

2. Strategic Tourism Promotion and Regional Branding

Tourism and branding are the significant pillars of Kansas City's strategy. KC2026 is working to "promote the region to the world" through several campaigns that integrate Kansas attractions into FIFA's global media (Douglas,2025). Douglas (2025) elaborates that Kansas City's marketing territory includes six states, significantly extending the reach of promotional initiatives. This includes the West region: Omaha, Nebraska, Lincoln, Nebraska, Wichita, Kansas, Lawrence, Kansas, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, Tulsa, Oklahoma. In the East Region, we can cite: Bentonville, Arkansas, Columbia, Missouri, Springfield, Missouri, Des Moines, Iowa, Kansas City Metro, St. Louis Metro.

Figure 4.5. Geographic extent of the Kansas City 2026 FIFA World Cup marketing rights territory, divided into western and eastern regional markets (Kansas City World Cup Update, 2024)

WEST REGION

- Omaha, Nebraska
- Lincoln, Nebraska
- Wichita, Kansas
- Lawrence, Kansas
- Oklahoma City, Oklahoma
- Tulsa, Oklahoma



EAST REGION

- Bentonville, Arkansas
- Columbia, Missouri
- Springfield, Missouri
- Des Moines, Iowa
- Kansas City Metro
- St. Louis Metro

Another feature of the FIFA branding, tourism, and economic impact is the Fan Festival. It will be hosted at the National WWI Museum and Memorial, which functions as both a tourism

anchor and an economic accelerator. KC2026 chose this location because Kansas City had successfully operated at the venue during the NFL Draft and major concerts (Douglas, 2025).

According to KC2026, the Fan Festival is expected to:

- Attract hundreds of thousands of visitors.
- Activate Kansas City's cultural district.
- Generate local vendor and hospitality revenue.
- Provide a global broadcast for Kansas City.

KC2026 employs an extended activation strategy structured around three principles:

Expand the timeframe, expand the territory, expand the engagement (Lindsey Douglas, 2024, p. 30). For that, KC2026 planned several initiatives, among which we can cite:

- Final Draw Watch Party.
- Team Welcome Events.
- Regional Festivals.
- Countdown Clock community gatherings.

SUMMARY

I. THEME 01: Governance & Decision-Making

- KC2026 is the Central Organizer of the upcoming FIFA World Cup 2026. It is a standalone 501(c)(4) organization created to manage all FIFA host city requirements.
- Kansas City is based on a multi-jurisdictional coordination. KC2026 convenes over a dozen agencies (KCATA, MoDOT, KDOT, counties, Chiefs, MARC) to overcome Kansas City's fragmented regional governance.
- FIFA is a supervisor, not a funder. In fact, FIFA approves plans but provides no financial support, forcing the region to rely on state, county, and local funding sources.

I. THEME 02: Infrastructure Scalability & Legacy

- Arrowhead Transformation: Reduced seating by 10–15% and the shutdown of 40% of the parking lot for security, communication, and the FIFA organization operations.
- Temporary Transit System: Kansas City is deploying its largest-ever bus-based mobility network. Two hundred charter buses will connect the airport, downtown, fan zones, and stadium, encouraging the park-and-ride culture.
- Accelerated Long-Term Projects: The World Cup boosts existing mobility improvements such as the downtown streetcar extension, bike/pedestrian bridges, and Stadium Boulevard upgrades.

II. THEME 03: Sustainability & Cultural Transformation

- Human Rights & Sustainability Integration: KC2026 incorporates safeguarding, environmental protection, worker rights, and sustainable procurement into planning.
- Shifting Car Culture: Public outreach highlights that World Cup operations differ from NFL games by promoting transit use, walking, and multimodal access. KC2026 and

Kansas City engage with the community around Arrowhead Stadium to understand their needs and prepare them for the upcoming shift in their daily lives.

- Legacy Goals: The city aims to deliver a welcoming experience, elevate regional identity, and build long-term community capacity beyond the event. Their goal is also to have a good public transportation experience that will encourage regional funding.

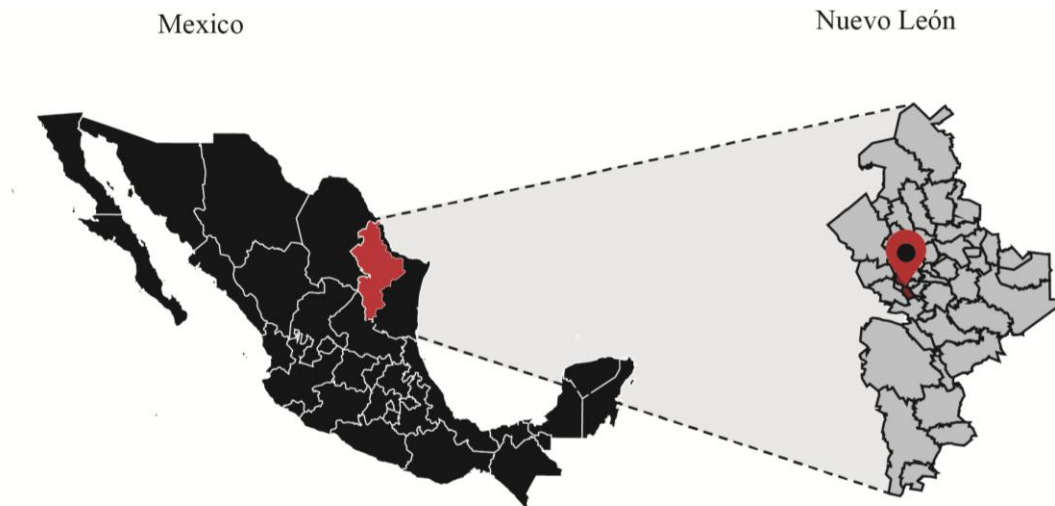
III. THEME 04: Economic Impact & Tourism

- Economic Boost: The event is projected to generate over \$650 million in direct economic impact and thousands of full/part-time jobs.
- Regional Tourism Strategy: Kansas City markets itself across six states, using the World Cup to amplify regional visibility and attract visitors.
- Inclusive Local Benefits: A directory of 1,000+ small businesses and the Fan Festival at the WWI Museum aim to ensure widespread economic and cultural activation.

CASE STUDY 01 - Monterrey

Capital of the state of Nuevo León, northeastern Mexico, Monterrey is the second-largest city in Mexico, and one of the secondary cities hosting the FIFA World Cup 2026, along with the main case study, Kansas City. The metropolitan area of Monterrey comprises 12 municipalities and has shifted from a regional commercial hub to Mexico's industrial capital (United Bid Committee (Canada, Mexico, United States), 2018, p. 72).

Figure 4.6. Location of Monterrey within Mexico, highlighting the state of Nuevo León and the metropolitan context (map data from ArcGIS Pro; refined by author in Adobe Illustrator)



As Mexico's industrial hub, Monterrey has become a busy business center with increasing social diversity, where sports, especially soccer, play a key role in social activities that unite people regardless of their income, social class, gender, or background. In 1945, C.F. Monterrey, Monterrey's first professional soccer team, was founded, making soccer an integral part of Monterrey's culture; the city became home to two of Mexico's most prominent teams and fan bases. The 1970 FIFA World Cup, hosted in Mexico, along with C.F. Monterrey's improved performance in subsequent years, helped turn soccer into a social phenomenon by 1973 (Canada, Mexico, United States), 2018, p. 72).

Figure 4.8. Metropolitan Structure of Monterrey and Surrounding Suburbs (map data from Wikimedia Commons; refined by author in Adobe Illustrator)

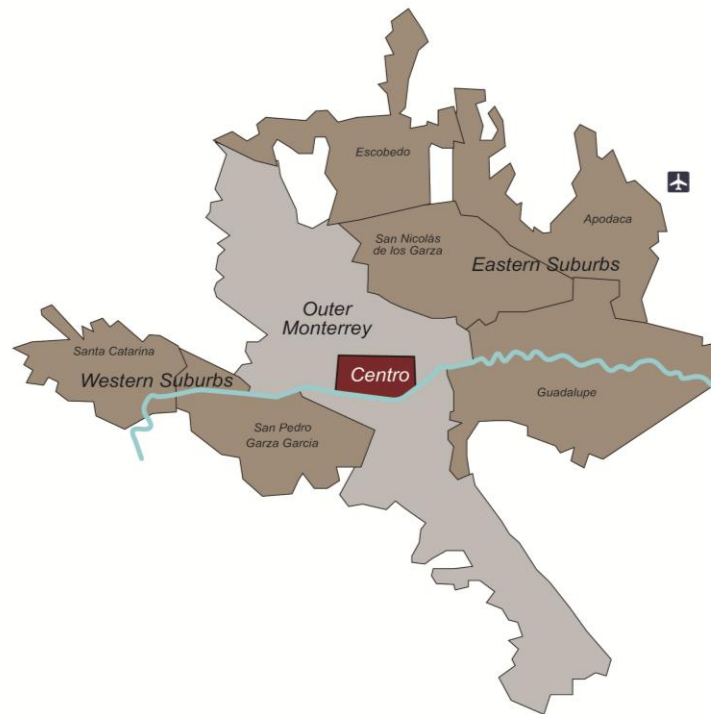
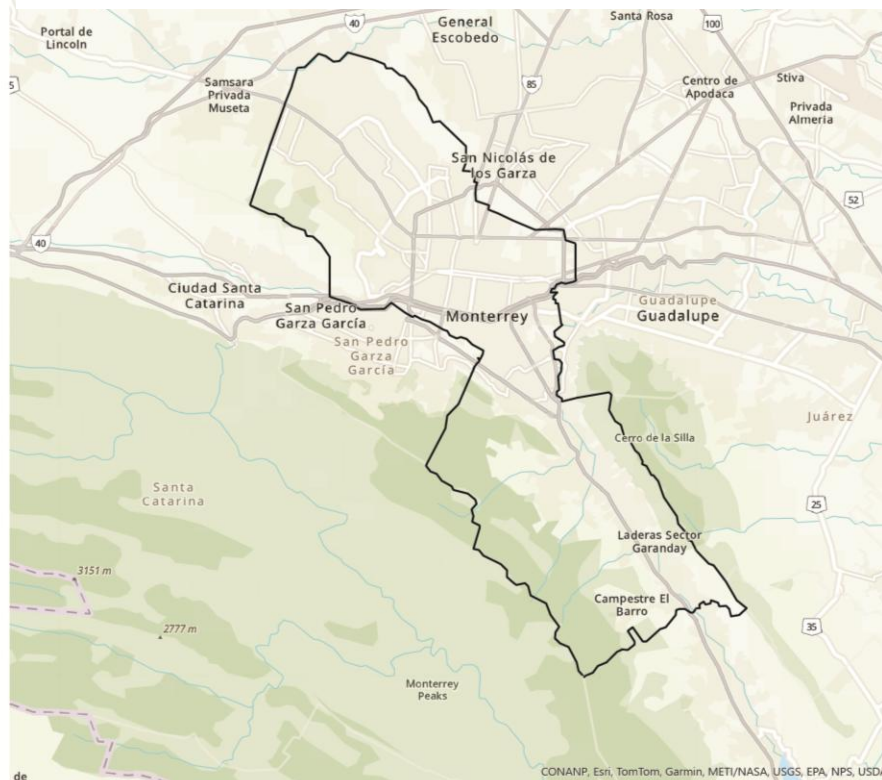


Figure 4.7. Urban Area of Monterrey and Municipal Boundaries (map data from ArcGIS Pro; refined by author in Adobe Illustrator)



For the upcoming FIFA World Cup, its third in history, Mexico has a unified yet unique vision for each city. Among the three hosting cities, Monterrey's vision as a Candidate Host City is to be united and show the world that there are no boundaries when it comes to soccer. Monterrey plans to project soccer as a uniting element among nations, regardless of political or social boundaries. (Canada, Mexico, United States), 2018, p. 72).

I. Governance and Decision-Making

The municipal government of Monterrey adopts a multi-level coordination and participatory governance, reflected in the Plan Municipal de Desarrollo (PMD) 2024–2027⁸, the Plan Municipal de Desarrollo Urbano (PMDU) 2040⁹, and the United Bid Committee documentation (2018). This model has two primary dimensions: participatory municipal governance and multi-level coordination.

1. Participatory Municipal Governance

Monterrey's municipal government places significant importance on public input in the early diagnosis of transportation problems and in policy prioritization. Through the Plan Municipal de Desarrollo (PMD) 2024–2027, 80% of residents complained from insecurity, roadway deterioration, insufficient public transportation, poor maintenance of parks and plazas, inadequate public services, and environmental concerns related to air quality (Gobierno Municipal de Monterrey, 2024, p. 16).

The Plan Municipal de Desarrollo Urbano (PMDU) 2040 by IMPLAN aligns with the PMD 2024–2027, as it collected over 25,000 public opinions on the Monterrey metropolitan area (IMPLAN Monterrey, 2023, p. 20). The city uses a participatory model to ensure that the visions

⁸ The Municipal Development Plan (PMD) 2024–2027

⁹ The Municipal Urban Development Plan (PMDU) 2040

for Monterrey in 2026 and 2040 are grounded in the community's needs and concerns, especially regarding mobility, equity, safety, and quality of life.

2. Multi-Level Collaboration

Broad-based coordination among different local, regional, and national institutions lies at the heart of Monterrey's World Cup governance structure. Mexico's three host cities, Monterrey, Guadalajara, and Mexico City, have been accentuated by The United Bid Committee (2018) to have developed a joint planning that is administered by both the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and a team of expert advisors, reflecting a cooperative approach (United Bid Committee, 2018, p. 39). In fact, the three cities are coordinating their proposals through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. They engaged a team of human rights experts to assess risk, opportunities, and legacy. Moreover, they identified priorities and considerations unique to each city, resulting in three proposals that shared much in common, yet each contained unique points (United Bid Committee (Canada, Mexico, United States), 2018, p. 39).

II. Infrastructure Scalability and Legacy

The preparation phase for the FIFA World Cup 2026 Infrastructure uncovered existing system deficiencies, especially safety-related issues, and the lack of direct transit to the sporting venues hosting the three group-stage matches and one Round of 32 fixture (FIFA, 2025).

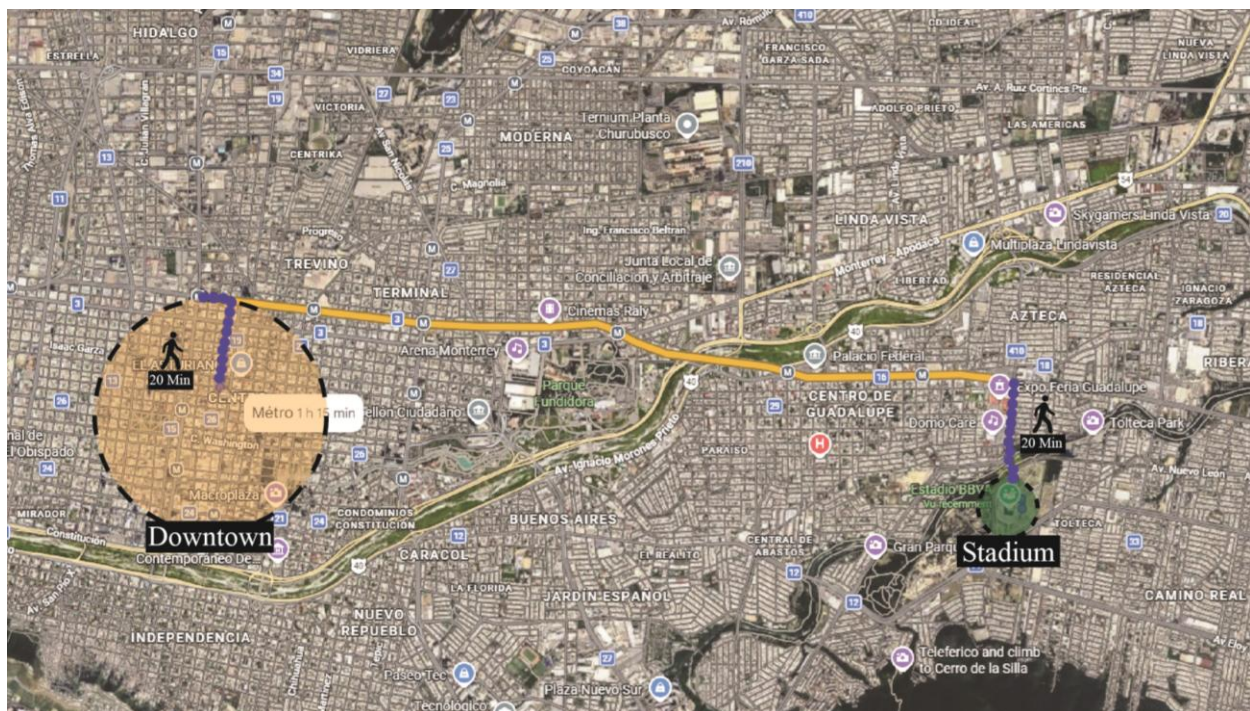
The World Cup, then, functions as a benchmark for existing systems and a catalyst for long-term enhancements that are consistent with the PMD 2024–2027 and PMDU 2040 visions. Monterrey's infrastructure vision has two essential dimensions presented in what follows:

1. Existing Urban Mobility Services

Monterrey's urban transit systems depend heavily on automobiles, making it a car-dependent city. In fact, the Gobierno Municipal de Monterrey, 2024 (p. 116) highlights that more

than half of workers (51.71%) make use of their private cars for work. The city benefits from a combined transport system that serves up to 450,000 weekday passengers, including over 500 local bus routes, the Ecovía BRT (30+ km), and the Metro system (32+ km) (United Bid Committee, 2018, p. 358). This infrastructure is important for the visitors to travel around the city; however, there is no direct transit that drops directly at the stadium. The closest transit option is metro line 01, but a 20-minute walk is required; bus line R223 is a 13-minute walk. Walking as a means of transportation during the FIFA World Cup is not permitted, as it can harm the health of fans and visitors. With the hot weather in summer, visitors could be victims of thermal stress, including heat exhaustion, heat stroke, hyperthermia, and exertional heat illness, risks that are further intensified by warming temperatures with a changing climate (Craig & Karabas, 2024).

Figure 4.9. Public Transportation Connectivity and Spatial Relationship Between Downtown Monterrey and Estadio BBVA (map data from Google Maps; refined by author in Adobe Illustrator)



To date, there is no public notice or documents detailing the model to be used for the transportation of the FIFA World Cup. The main speculation is that visitors could use existing transit, and the organizer could add a bus line that goes directly to the stadium or introduce park-and-ride. All these speculations will align with the Plan Municipal de Desarrollo (PMD) 2024–2027, which introduces strategic initiatives that directly support World Cup mobility by building safe, accessible stops, expanding pedestrian infrastructure, and redesigning intersections (Gobierno Municipal de Monterrey, 2024, p. 131).

2. Long-Term Legacy and Structural Urban Transformation

Monterrey’s vision is to share the world the existing passion for soccer in Monterrey, especially the way it is intertwined with the people and families living in the city. Monterrey is aiming to improve living conditions as it learns from the three co-hosting countries’ best practices in preparation for this great event (United Bid Committee (Canada, Mexico, United States), 2018, p. 20)

The World Cup preparatory activities in Monterrey represent a good opportunity to plan the new city’s mobility, which consists of integrated public transport, pedestrian priority, and sustainability, moving toward a multifaceted approach and reducing car dependency (IMPLAN Monterrey, 2023, p. 234).

III. Sustainability and Cultural Transformation

Environmental sustainability is one of the main goals of the PMDU 2040 to achieve long-term urban transformation. It contributes to the improvement of air quality and to the expansion of green infrastructure by modifying the current mass transit and the land-use structures (IMPLAN Monterrey, 2023, p. 234).

Added to that, the PMDU 2040 further points out that there are existing inequalities related to the residents' use of transportation and public space, whether along gender or accessibility lines. According to Gobierno Municipal de Monterrey (2024), Infrastructure barriers remain high for people with disabilities. In fact, in Monterrey, structural factors hinder the full inclusion of people with disabilities, including inaccessible infrastructure, transportation, and public spaces, along with obstacles in education and employment (Gobierno Municipal de Monterrey, 2024, p. 75).

To overcome these challenges, a cultural change should be implemented in the planning process, where daily mobility is improved and adequately adapted to accommodate international visitors with diverse needs during the World Cup 2026, and where accessibility to transit services becomes a standard rather than a luxury for all users, whether they are international visitors or residents.

IV. Economic Impact and Tourism

Monterrey's municipal government explicitly sees the World Cup as a catalyst for its economy and tourism (Gobierno Municipal de Monterrey, 2024, p. 165). The 2026 FIFA World Cup is considered one of the most significant economic developments and tourism opportunities in Monterrey's contemporary history. The latter will be the principal cultural hearth, attracting tourists from all destinations. This is strongly defended in the Gobierno Municipal de Monterrey (2024), stating that the city will build a Monterrey that stands out globally and shines on the international stage. It aims to become a benchmark in economic growth, tourism, and innovation. With the FIFA World Cup 2026 as a catalyst, the city plans to amplify its cultural richness, hospitality, and the pride of all its people. (Gobierno Municipal de Monterrey, 2024, p. 151)

To make this vision concrete, the Plan Maestro Monterrey FIFA 2026 was created by the PMD. Public agencies, private stakeholders, cultural promoters, and sports organizations all work cooperatively to supervise the preparation of cultural activities, transportation systems, and other services. The above vision can easily be true, simply because Mexico has an important soccer history, being the only country to have hosted the FIFA World Cup three times. Mexico's aim behind the 2026 FIFA World Cup is to inspire people to go beyond their limits, using its history and its soccer to show future generations that everything is possible. Soccer is an integral part of Monterrey's history and culture, showing everyone that Mexico contributes to the world while emphasizing each city's culture. Being part of the United Bid, the first bid in the history of FIFA, the country is celebrating the friendship and unity with the two great neighboring countries (United Bid Committee (Canada, Mexico, United States), 2018).

SUMMARY

I. THEME 01: Governance & Decision-Making

- Monterrey uses participatory governance for planning. The PMD 2024–2027 and PMDU 2040 integrate primary public input (80% resident dissatisfaction; 25,000+ opinions), grounding World Cup preparation in community mobility, equity, and safety needs.
- The city has a multi-level collaboration coordinated nationally by Mexico's Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It involves Monterrey, Guadalajara, and Mexico City, which jointly develop planning proposals supported by a team of human-rights experts assessing risks, opportunities, and legacy (United Bid Committee, 2018).
- Governance aligns short-term World Cup needs with long-term strategies, using PMD 2024–2027 and PMDU 2040 to ensure the event accelerates the planned reforms in mobility, safety, and public space accessibility.

II. THEME 02: Infrastructure Scalability & Legacy

- Monterrey's mobility system shows significant structural gaps. The city is car-dependent (51.71% commute by private car), and there is no direct transit that reaches the stadium, with walking deemed unsafe for fans due to heat-related health risks (risk of heat stroke, hyperthermia).
- To date, there is no transport model publicly released for FIFA 2026, and no official park-and-ride plan, shuttle service, or direct-event bus line has been confirmed. All solutions are still speculative but need to align with PMD initiatives focused on creating a safer transportation system, enhancing pedestrian infrastructure, and redesigning intersections.
- The event forces Monterrey to use a multi-modal legacy approach supporting long-term goals of public transport, pedestrian priority, and reduced car dependency (IMPLAN, PMD, PMDU), such as:
 - Use of existing Metro/BRT/bus systems.
 - Addition of a direct World Cup bus line.
 - Possible park-and-ride operations.

I. THEME 03: Sustainability & Cultural Transformation

- Sustainability goals in PMDU 2040 place mobility reform at the center of improving air quality, green infrastructure, and land-use patterns. The World Cup is a catalyst for this environmental urban transformation.
- Monterrey acknowledges significant inequities in accessibility: people with disabilities face structural barriers in transit and public space, and gender-based inequalities persist.

Preparations for 2026 require mobility to be adequately adapted to accommodate international visitors with diverse needs.

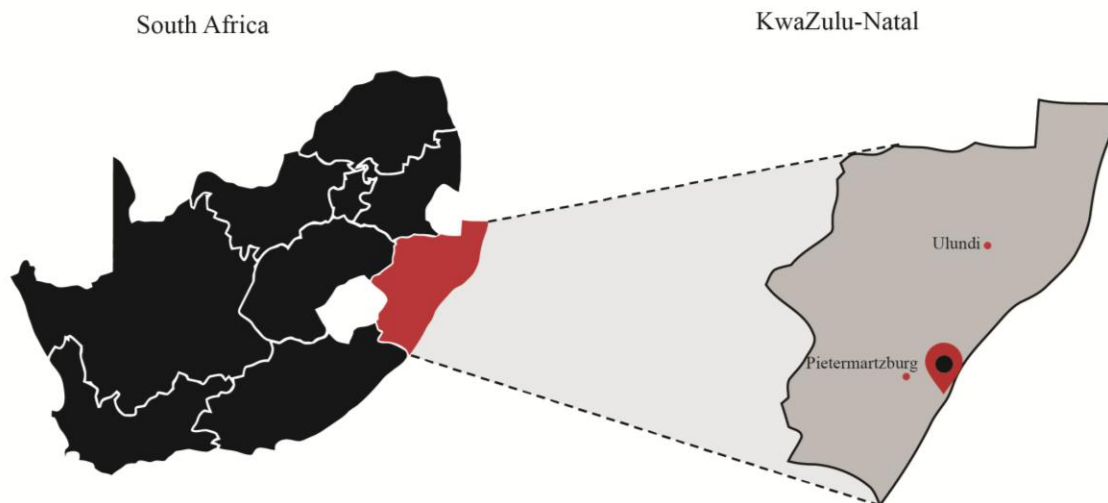
II. THEME 04: Economic Impact & Tourism

- The municipal government frames FIFA 2026 as one of the most significant economic and tourism opportunities in Monterrey's modern history.
- As part of the United Bid, Monterrey leverages Mexico's soccer legacy to strengthen international visibility and position itself as a benchmark city for innovation, hospitality, and global tourism.

CASE STUDY 02 - Durban

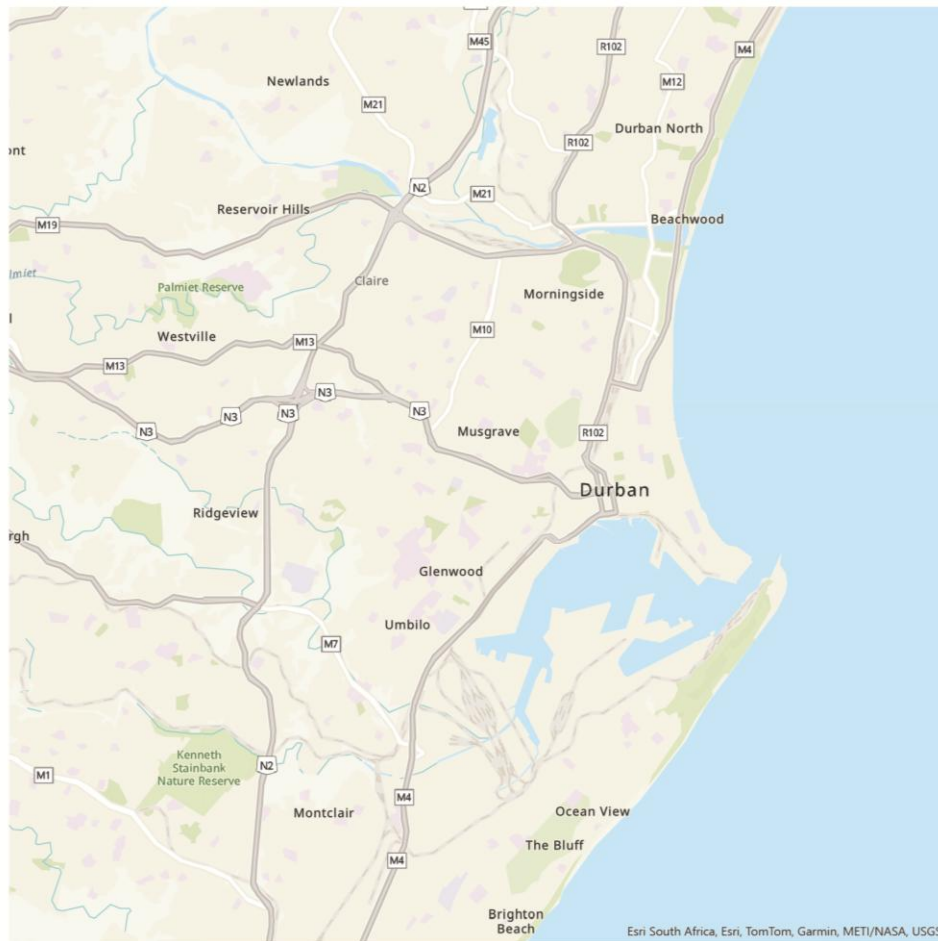
Durban is a secondary city on South Africa's eastern coast, within the eThekweni Municipality, that hosted the 2010 FIFA World Cup. It is one of the country's largest metropolitan areas. Durban's metropolitan region, from Tongaat in the north to Umkomaas in the south, is home to more than 4 million residents and serves as South Africa's primary port city and a strategic industrial and logistics hub (Comprehensive Integrated Transport Plan 2024-2029).

Figure 4.10. Location of Durban within South Africa and KwaZulu-Natal Province (map data from ArcGIS Pro; refined by author in Adobe Illustrator)



The city has historically experienced apartheid-era spatial fragmentation, which has resulted in Durban's transport challenges that reflect deep socio-spatial inequalities. Soccer is a significant event that has played a strong cultural and economic role in Durban, since the city became the first African nation to host the FIFA World Cup, with several matches in 2010 at the iconic Moses Mabhida Stadium. The World Cup was a catalyst for important investments in road upgrades, beachfront redevelopment, waterfront and tourism corridors. However, it did not uniformly benefit peripheral townships.

Figure 4.11. Durban metropolitan area and surrounding transport network (map data from ArcGIS Pro; refined by author in Adobe Illustrator)



I. Governance and Decision-Making

Durban's governance and decision-making model varies between the FIFA World Cup preparation and the post-event period. In fact, long-term transportation reform differs from mega sporting event planning in two distinct governance eras: a centralized, FIFA-driven, and nationally directed governance during the World Cup period, and a collaborative, multilevel stakeholder governance during the post-event phase through the Go! Durban initiative. It is essential to understand the dynamic between these two models and the reasons behind Durban's shift, as well as analyze how these decisions shaped both the infrastructure and the long-term legacy.

1. Governance During the FIFA World Cup 2010 Preparation Period

The governance model during the FIFA World Cup 2010 preparation period was highly centralized, a mega-event model that restricted the city's local autonomy. FIFA, the National Government, and the Local Organizing Committee (LOC) were driving decisions on where to invest, what to build, and how to plan transportation infrastructure for the international event. The municipality and Durban were responding to FIFA pre-requisites, event protocols, and international infrastructure standards, resulting in the city having only an operational role.

Haferburg (2011) provides significant evidence of this restricted governance environment. He explains that FIFA's demands dominated event-driven planning. He demonstrates that the municipality did not hold full decision-making authority because Durban is a host city. The host cities prefer to "play it safe" and follow the FIFA requirements rather than lose the opportunity to organize such a famous mega sporting event as famous as the FIFA World Cup (Haferburg, 2011, p. 344).

The model created a spatially uneven infrastructure investment since it concentrated the resources only in the internationally visible, affluent, and tourist-oriented regions, especially the coastal areas, neglecting the communities and minorities that are underserved and not well connected to the main attractions of the city by good urban mobility infrastructures. In fact, the Moses Mabhida Stadium is located in the coastal belt, adjacent to Durban North, Umhlanga, and Morningside, three wealthy neighborhoods (Maennig & du Plessis, 2009, p. 68).

2. Governance After the FIFA World Cup 2010

After the FIFA World Cup, Durban changed its governance model from a centralized, nationally controlled, and FIFA-driven model to a more collaborative, reform-focused approach

through the implementation of the Go! Durban Integrated Rapid Public Transport Network (IRPTN). This new model emphasizes community organizations and long-term mobility reforms instead of short-term event compliance.

Go!Durban required mandatory cooperation between the municipality (eThekweni Transport Authority), the public-private partnership, the inter-governmental partnership, and parastatals¹⁰ (SANRAL¹¹, PRASA¹², Transnet¹³, etc.) (Pillay Sashank, 2019, p. 97). This collaboration was lacking during preparations for the 2010 FIFA World Cup.

II. Infrastructure Scalability and Legacy

Durban urban mobility is based on two approaches: one for the FIFA World Cup 2010 and another, adapted after the event, to build on the legacy of the mega sporting event. Some of the legacy has been positive and valued, such as corridor development, airport and rail upgrades, and other investments, especially those in the stadium surroundings or local urban mobility. However, these investments faced some challenges.

During the FIFA World Cup, Durban did a major reconstruction and expansion of its transportation facilities, Bason et al. (2015) highlight that Durban completed a new stadium rail station that was designed for both the event and for long-term urban mobility, saying that a new R140 million train station was opened in 2010 prior to the World Cup. It was used not only for the events that are held at Moses Mabhida, but also better to integrate the stadium with the rest of

¹⁰ Parastatal is used to describe a company or organization which is owned by a country's government and often has some political power: The intention of the Government is for all parastatal companies to be privatized. (Cambridge Dictionary, 2025).

¹¹ South African National Roads Agency Limited

¹² Passenger Rail Agency of South Africa

¹³ Transnet is the largest parastatal involved because Durban hosts Africa's largest port. It involves Transnet National Ports Authority, Freight Rail, and Pipelines.

the city (Bason et al., 2015, p. 54). This investment shows that the city is attempting to create new urban mobility for the mega sporting events, but is willing to integrate it into the long-term vision. The mobility in the city did not just focus on upgrading the road system surrounding the stadium, but also concentrated on the broader transport system. In fact, Durban replaced its former airport with King Shaka International Airport, which was an entirely new facility completed shortly before the World Cup. This demonstrates how the World Cup served as an accelerator for essential city projects, as the city still uses these infrastructures nowadays. Although the city is connected to the region and is internationally accessed through airports and railroads, the infrastructural legacy is not uniformly positive.

The urban mobility infrastructure in the stadium area shows tension between the FIFA event requirements and the community's long-term needs. The design was directed by FIFA and mainly integrated into the beachfront precinct. The GIS-based assessment of public transport access in Durban conducted by Ifeanyi Washington et al. reveals that many areas remain highly underserved. Washington et al. (2021) report that areas more than 15 km distant are highly inaccessible, requiring more than 4 hours to reach a node (p. 185). In fact, most of the city's suburbs and activity areas are located between 0.31 mi and 9.32 mi from the public transport network. (Washington et al., 2021, p. 185). Moreover, some areas located in the inner-city area and central business district have relatively higher accessibility to public road transportation (Washington et al., 2021, p. 185).

This insight shows that, despite significant investments, the transportation system still reflects historical inequalities, with townships and peri-urban communities lacking access to public transit. This highlights that during World Cup preparation, the city invested solely in transportation and high-profile waterfront areas, including tourist districts and the main stadium

are located, rather than developing a comprehensive, sustainable system for the entire city, as explained by Maennig & du Plessis (2009).

Friedrich (2019) further underscores that apartheid spatial planning, initially implemented from 1948 to 1994, continues to shape transport inequality, with low-quality and low-coverage services, especially in the disadvantaged townships. The same concerns and problems that were highlighted in 2010 still persist, suggesting that the South African government's use of the FIFA World Cup as a catalyst failed. This failure is essentially due to the disproportionate transport investments that concentrated more on affluent, coastal, tourist-oriented areas than township communities that were largely excluded from the infrastructure legacy.

III. Sustainability and Cultural Transformation

The host city agreement for the World Cup considered sustainable development and commitment before the tournament. In fact, the host city agreement stipulates that the event should be an opportunity to advance environmental protection and long-term green legacy. Roberts and Diederichs (2007) state that the Host City undertakes to fulfill its obligations in a manner that embraces the concept of sustainable development. This early adoption of sustainability principles shows that Durban viewed the World Cup not only as an infrastructural burden but also as an opportunity to reorient city policy toward ecological resilience. One of the programs that was highlighted before the World Cup was the Greening of 2010 FIFA World Cup Events in Durban, drafted three years before the mega sporting event. This program identifies transport as a central aspect of intervention and aims to expand public and non-motorized mobility to reduce carbon emissions. Its priorities are to maximize the availability, accessibility, and efficiency of public transport systems, as well as to reduce carbon emissions (Roberts & Diederichs, 2007).

The Greening plan sought to promote long-term cultural transformation through behavioral changes toward sustainable mobility. By recommending reducing car-dependency and offering incentives for public transport during the event, the city is attempting to reshape Durban's mobility culture, which has long been dominated by private vehicles and legacy minibus taxi systems. While the Greening of the 2010 FIFA World Cup outlined ambitious sustainability and transportation goals (Roberts & Diederichs, 2007), there is limited evidence showing its long-term success. Existing studies indicate that many sustainability initiatives were put in place during the event, but their continuation and integration into long-term urban mobility plans are unclear. This highlights a broader challenge in mega-event planning, where sustainability commitments are strongly emphasized during the planning stage but are less assessed afterward.

Furthermore, Bason et al. (2015) state that Durban residents were supportive of the upcoming event, as 66% of respondents in Durban believed that the Moses Mabhida stadium could be viewed as a positive outcome (p. 52). This suggests that the community's acceptance of mega-event and mobility projects was part of Durban's broader societal transformation hope.

After the tournament, Durban still suffered from the same problems and inequalities that were supposed to be solved by the FIFA World Cup. As mentioned earlier in the subchapter related to the Infrastructure Scalability and Legacy, Friedrich (2019) pointed out how the legacy of segregation created inequitable mobility structures. Go!Durban explicitly targets to address these structural injustices by providing high-quality and accessible public transport. Pillay (2019) emphasizes this goal, explaining that the government's plan for the IRPTN aimed to reduce travel times, promote spatial transformation, and address apartheid geography (Pillay, 2019, p.

97). The CITP 2024-2029 ¹⁴formalized the long-term sustainability planning, which focuses on sustainability as a central aspect of Durban's transport governance and operations. It emphasizes the need for a cultural shift within the government.

IV. Economic Impact and Tourism

Durban benefited from the 2010 FIFA World Cup, especially economically and in terms of tourism. The event marked an improvement in the city's international image. Bason et al. (2015) note that hosting World Cup matches helped turn around the city's image, while investment in infrastructure contributed to an uplift in the city's image (p. 53). Such images are well documented internationally and open the door for new tourism flows, investment, and city marketing advantages. Durban used this effect through the strategic branding of Moses Mabhida Stadium, which Bason et al. (2015) describe as an iconic tourism landmark, stating that the building of new stadiums can trigger urban redevelopment within a city and boost tourism, and Durban's Moses Mabhida, with its iconic arch, is no exception (p. 53). The stadium's signature arch, sky ride, and beachfront integration were intentionally designed to support year-round tourism rather than episodic sporting events; it is now an iconic landscape. This was emphasized by Maennig (2009), who recognized how the Moses Mabhida stadium was being designed as an iconic building (Bason et al., 2015, p. 53).

Durban's post-event tourism landscape continues to leverage the Moses Mabhida precinct, beachfront amenities, and improved connectivity. Interviews conducted by Bason et al. with KwaZulu-Natal Tourism officials highlight that global media attention shaped tourism narratives. Bason et al. (2015) point out that interviews with management at Tourism KwaZulu-Natal highlighted the significance of the World Cup for a city like Durban, and that international

¹⁴ Comprehensive Integrated Transport Plan 2024-2029

newspapers such as the Washington Post published articles that began with a similar opening line (p. 52). Furthermore, airport improvements enhance accessibility and the city's international and national welcome. The modernization of King Shaka International Airport and the introduction of a new stadium rail station helped both for the World Cup and future tourists (Bason et al., 2015).

Despite these tourism advantages, the stadium's long-term economic sustainability remains problematic. Since Durban is a secondary city hosting global events, it faces the challenge of balancing oversized infrastructure with a limited domestic sports market. Bason et al. (2015) mention that both stadiums in Cape Town and Durban have suffered from the same issue: the lack of need. In fact, since the two stadiums have a capacity of over 54,000, domestic sports leagues that average fewer than 10,000 spectators don't meet the demand-to-supply ratio (p. 51). Even if the city integrates tourism, the existing mismatch creates ongoing operational costs that are difficult to offset through only event revenue. This challenges the economic legacy that mega-event promoters promised.

SUMMARY

I. THEME 01: Governance & Decision-Making

- Durban's governance followed a top-down model where FIFA, the National Government, and the Local Organizing Committee (LOC) made major decisions about transport investments, timelines, and standards, limiting the eThekweni Municipality to a mostly operational role.
- After the event, Durban shifted toward a collaborative, multi-level governance model through Go!Durban, involving ETA, SANRAL, PRASA, Transnet, and PPPs to pursue long-term mobility reform.

II. THEME 02: Infrastructure Scalability & Legacy

- The World Cup accelerated major infrastructure, such as the R140 million Moses Mabhida rail station and King Shaka International Airport.
- Public transport accessibility remained inequitable, with many peripheral areas between 0.31 mi and 9.32 mi from transit nodes and some requiring over four hours of walking.

I. THEME 03: Sustainability & Cultural Transformation

- Durban adopted sustainability early with the Greening 2010 Program, which aimed to cut emissions by encouraging public transport and non-motorized mobility during the event. However, improvements in public transport did not lead to increased citywide usage.
- Post-event frameworks such as Go!Durban and the CITP 2024–2029 embedded sustainability as a structural cultural shift within government, focusing on equitable access and long-term spatial transformation.

II. THEME 04: Economic Impact & Tourism

- The World Cup improved Durban's international image, with Moses Mabhida Stadium becoming an iconic tourism landmark.
- The new airport, beachfront redevelopment, and transport links strengthened Durban's tourism.
- Long-term economic sustainability remains challenging because the stadiums' 54,000+ capacities exceed local sports demand.

CASE STUDY 03 - Brisbane

Brisbane is a port city and the capital of Queensland, Australia, making it the country's third-largest city. It sits on the Brisbane River on the southern slopes of the Taylor Range, about 12 miles (19 km) upstream from the river's mouth at Moreton Bay (Britannica, 2025). Brisbane serves as the hub for many rail lines and highways that transport produce from a large agricultural area extending west to the Eastern Highlands, the Darling Downs, and beyond (Britannica, 2025).

Figure 4.12. Location of Brisbane within Australia and the state of Queensland, highlighting the Greater Brisbane metropolitan region (map data from ArcGIS Pro; refined by author in Adobe Illustrator)

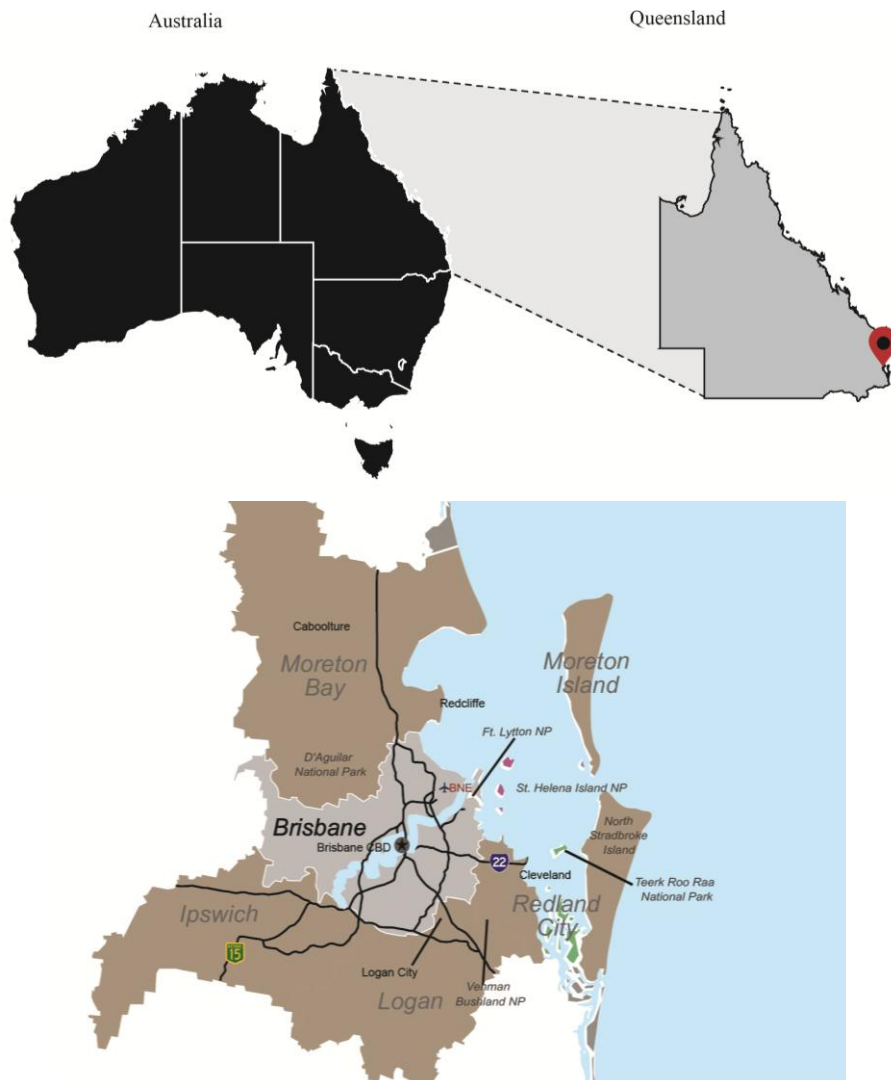
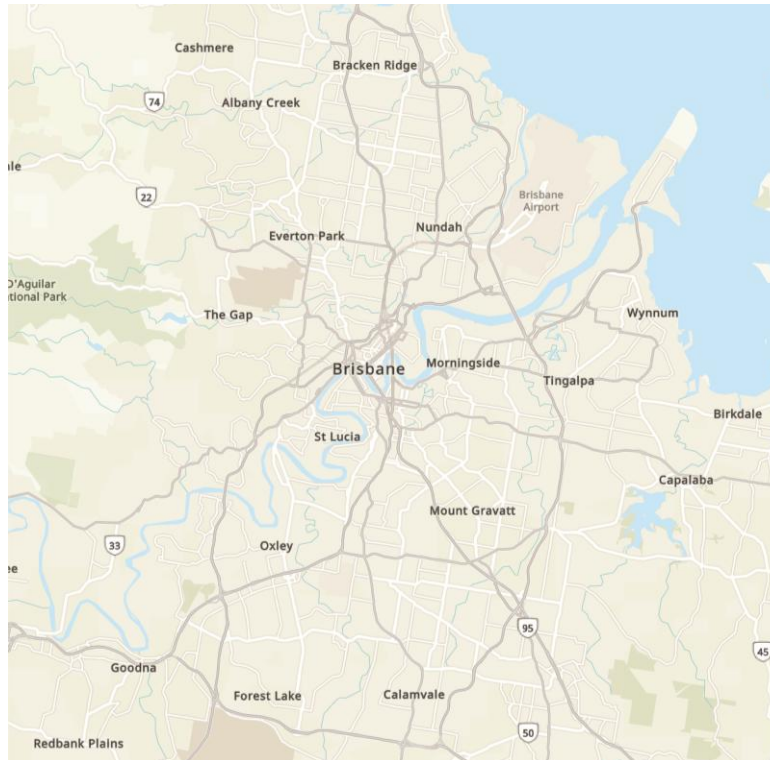


Figure 4.13. Brisbane metropolitan area and primary urban transport network (map data from ArcGIS Pro; refined by author in Adobe Illustrator)



The International Olympic Committee (IOC) identifies Brisbane as the preferred host of the 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games. The state's strong sporting and transportation infrastructure, along with its hosting of major events such as the Gold Coast 2018 Commonwealth Games, supported the IOC's decision (KPMG, 2021). The idea of the 2032 Olympic Games was initiated in 2019; however, the COVID-19 pandemic has had significant impacts across nearly every sector and region, creating local and global challenges. The Queensland Government developed its Unite and Recover Economic Recovery Plan, a stimulus package and recovery strategy, and later, the opportunity presented by the Games aligns with the six key focus areas of the city's Economic Recovery Plan (KPMG, 2021). Given the Queensland Government's bid for the 2032 Games and Brisbane's selection as the host, it is important to

evaluate the potential benefits of the 2032 Games in the context of the current and future economic landscape, and to assess how the city is planning to adapt or shape its urban mobility.

I. Governance and Decision-Making

Brisbane governance for the upcoming 2032 Olympics is based on a multi-layered, coordinated model that integrates the continuation of the existing state and regional planning system and the games' specialized bodies. Five stakeholder groups perform the partnerships that will develop and deliver game transport:

1. The Olympic Coordination Authority (OCA) Transport Division

The OCA Transport Division is a partner that coordinates and develops the Olympic and Paralympic Transport Plan while monitoring and assuring its implementation. This coordination includes several aspects, notably ensuring spectator and workforce transport, traffic overlays, GRN¹⁵, and park-and-ride facilities, and accounting for travel demand management (Brisbane 2032 Bid Partners, 2021, p. 82).

2. The Transport Division of the Organizing Committee (OCOG)

The OCOG Transport Division is responsible for planning and delivering all Games Family transport services, including Funding, planning, and the delivery of Games Family transport systems (buses, fleets, depots, etc.). It also oversees venue transport inside secure perimeters, ensuring funding, planning, and delivery. The division serves as an essential interface with the IOC¹⁶, IFS¹⁷, Marketing Partners, NOC¹⁸s, and OBS¹⁹, while providing subsidies for

¹⁵ Games Route Network

¹⁶ International Olympic Committee

¹⁷ International Federations

¹⁸ National Olympic Committees

¹⁹ Olympic Broadcasting Services

public transport to support spectators, the workforce, and accredited clients (Brisbane 2032 Bid Partners, 2021, p. 82).

3. The Department of Transport and Main Roads (TMR), the existing transport authority of Queensland

The TMR is responsible for funding, planning, and delivering essential Games transport operations and infrastructure. Its role includes developing the Games transport model, funding and delivering the Games Route Network (GRN), and planning and delivering transport for spectators and the workforce. TMR also oversees the Transport Coordination Centre, park-and-ride facilities, traffic management on State roads, and travel-demand management in partnership with local councils (Brisbane 2032 Bid Partners, 2021, p. 82).

4. The transport units of the three major Councils hosting venues: Brisbane City Council (BCC), City of Gold Coast (CGC), Sunshine Coast Council (SCC)

The Brisbane City Council (BCC), the City of Gold Coast (CGC), the Sunshine Coast Council (SCC), and other local governments hosting venues play a role in delivering the Olympic and Paralympic Transport Plan, where responsibility does not reside with TMR. Their duties include funding Council-level transport infrastructure and systems, funding and planning, and delivering local area transport and traffic plans outside secure perimeters. Councils are also responsible for the operational planning of traffic management on Council roads, and they co-fund, plan, and deliver travel-demand management in partnership with TMR, alongside co-funding, planning, and delivering active transport arrangements (Brisbane 2032 Bid Partners, 2021, p. 82).

5. Existing transport agencies/operators (Queensland Rail, Transurban, bus operators)

Transport delivery agencies and operators are responsible for Operational planning in accordance with the Olympic and Paralympic Transport Plan requirements. Their role includes delivering transport services, including rail, bus, and road operations, to ensure reliable mobility for all Games stakeholders (Brisbane 2032 Bid Partners, 2021, p. 82).

II. Infrastructure Scalability and Legacy

Brisbane's infrastructure vision for the 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games is intertwined with long-term regional planning. Unlike many past Olympic hosts that relied heavily on new urban mobility infrastructures, Brisbane positions the Games as a catalyst to accelerate the planned infrastructure, notably rail, active transport, urban renewal, and precinct development. A fundamental component of scalability and legacy in Brisbane is the Cross River Rail (CRR) program. This multibillion-dollar initiative is central to the Games' mobility and urban transformation. The CRR Business Case highlights how the project serves not only the sport infrastructures but also major public and private health facilities in the city (Building Queensland, 2017, p. 118).

CRR's station precincts, such as Woolloongabba, Albert Street, Roma Street, Boggo Road, and Exhibition, are essential to Brisbane's legacy strategy. The Cross River Rail Precincts Delivery Strategy calls these locations "city-changing" opportunities that will link transportation investment with mixed-use urban renewal. This strategy states that it is a blueprint to help shape future development in and around the five new station precincts, which provide urban renewal opportunities, and unlock new economic growth (Cross River Rail Precincts Delivery Strategy).

Moreover, the CRR demonstrates how Brisbane is willing to integrate legacy with long-term infrastructure planning by making it more affordable and by optimizing station locations to

align them with community needs (Building Queensland, 2017, p. 20). For instance, the Woolloongabba Precinct, which will serve the Gabba Stadium, is planned as a significant change that connects rail, busway, and active modes, as shown in the Building Queensland (2017) document, which highlights that the station will take rail to one of Australia's most iconic sporting venues with pedestrian pathways along all major roads (p.16).

The CRR will play a significant role in the Brisbane 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games. Indeed, it will provide a direct rail connection to the upgraded Gabba Stadium. As well as improving connectivity to Brisbane Suncorp Stadium, Exhibition Station can also serve different events (Building Queensland, 2017, p. 16).

Alongside the CRR, the Southeast Queensland (SEQ) rail system provides a long-term rail roadmap for the Games readiness. This includes new rolling stock, station upgrades, faster rail corridors such as Logan and Gold Coast Faster Rail, expanded park-and-ride capacity, smart ticketing, and accessibility improvements. The roadmap states that the "SEQ Rail Connect will deliver a redesigned rail network that will increase service capacity to support high volume movements of athletes, officials, media, spectators, and workforce between venues, and other destinations" (Queensland Government and Department of Transport and Main Roads, 2021, p. 22).

Ultimately, the Questionnaire Response document consistently emphasizes the compatibility of Games delivery with the city and regional vision. In fact, the Brisbane 2032 Bid Partners state that the alignment of the Games with national, state and regional plans is foundational (Brisbane 2032 Bid Partners, 2021).

III. Sustainability and Cultural Transformation

Brisbane 2032 considers sustainability as a fundamental principle of Olympic planning, with governance structures designed to integrate sustainability across all levels of decision-making. In fact, the OCA will remain active post-Games to coordinate and monitor ongoing legacy initiatives, ensuring accountability (Brisbane 2032 Bid Partners, 2021, p. 86).

The host city plans to deliver one of the most environmentally ambitious Olympics ever attempted: a Climate Positive Games, which requires minimizing emissions and shifting transportation to more sustainable modes through prioritizing public and active transport, reducing car dependency, and creating regional mobility improvements aligned with legacy plans (Brisbane 2032 Bid Partners, 2021, p. 69). Furthermore, Brisbane's long-term measurement focuses on different cultural transformations, including disability inclusion and community engagement in decision-making.

1. Disability inclusion

This strategy adopts a community-wide disability inclusion model that positions the Paralympic Games as a catalyst for equitable access and improved public attitudes. Some of the key initiatives are the universal accessibility standards for transportation, anti-bias training for more than 300,000 workers, and Paralympic athlete ambassador programs (Brisbane 2032 Bid Partners, 2021) .

2. Community engagement in decision-making

Community engagement is a central component of Brisbane 2032's governance for sustainability and cultural transformation. The Sustainability Programme states that proactive stakeholder engagement is an intrinsic element of the Brisbane 2032 Sustainability Programme and critical to its success (Brisbane 2032 Bid Partners, 2021). This engagement occurs between

government, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), First Nations groups, universities, and community organizations to co-design sustainability policies and legacy initiatives. Project partners “engage with a range of NGOs and community groups to identify issues of the local community and proactively address them” (Brisbane 2032 Bid Partners, 2021, p. 59). In fact, Brisbane commits to having an ongoing dialogue with host and non-host communities as part of decision-making and legacy delivery. This ensures that community voices inform environmental goals and cultural programs, and that full community engagement is achieved (Brisbane 2032 Bid Partners, 2021).

IV. Economic Impact and Tourism

Brisbane’s expected economic impact model is legacy-led. Instead of projecting short-term profit from the event itself, the bid documents highlight long-term economic goals driven by accelerated infrastructure, increased global visibility, and improved regional mobility. The IOC Questionnaire (2021) outlines that the Brisbane 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games proposal is based on a clear and unqualified purpose to accelerate delivery of long-term plans needed for sustainable growth across Queensland.

The Olympic Games are projected to create substantial jobs across Queensland and Australia. The official economic analysis estimates the creation of approximately 91,600 Full-time equivalent (FTE) job years in Queensland and 122,900 in Australia (Brisbane 2032 Bid Partners, 2021, p. 93). Additionally, the Workforce Strategy commits the OCOG to align with national training standards and human rights principles; in fact, the working conditions and opportunities offered to employees, volunteers, and contractors should reflect the values and aspirations of the IOC, the International Paralympic Committee (IPC), and Australia (Brisbane 2032 Bid Partners, 2021, p. 67).

In terms of Tourism, the Olympic Games represent one of the most significant projected economic gains from Brisbane 2032. The bid documents showcase significant increases in visits, global exposure, and brand value for Queensland as a lifestyle and events destination. The economic analysis highlights an uplift of over USD 15.3 billion, including accessible tourism (Brisbane 2032 Bid Partners, 2021, p. 92).

Brisbane's strategy integrates tourism with transport modernization and urban renewal, ensuring world-class mobility for visitors. Infrastructure projects such as Cross River Rail, Gold Coast Faster Rail, and smart ticketing create seamless mobility experiences that enhance tourists' perceptions and encourage long-term return visits (Queensland Government and Department of Transport and Main Roads, 2021).

SUMMARY

I. THEME 01: Governance & Decision-Making

- Brisbane uses a shared, intergovernmental model involving the OCA Transport Division, OCOG, TMR, local councils, and transport operators, each with clearly defined mandates to ensure consistency between Games-time and long-term mobility planning.
- The model allocates responsibilities among stakeholders:
 - OCA: Olympic Transport Plan and oversight
 - OCOG: Games family and venue transport
 - TMR: GRN, state roads, modeling, park-and-ride, traffic management
 - Councils: local-area traffic plans, and active transport
 - Operators: service delivery

I. THEME 02: Infrastructure Scalability & Legacy

- Brisbane does not depend on a temporary mega-event buildout; instead, the Games advance existing priorities, such as rail upgrades, active transportation, and district renewal.
- The CRR adds new underground stations and enhances connectivity to health, education, and sports districts. It facilitates development at Woolloongabba, Roma Street, Albert Street, Boggo Road, and Exhibition.
- The SEQ transport system focuses on multimodal integration, which supports investments benefiting both Olympic operations and long-term regional mobility.

II. THEME 03: Sustainability & Cultural Transformation

- Brisbane launches community-wide accessibility initiatives, including universal design standards, anti-bias workforce training, and Paralympic ambassador programs.

- The Sustainability Programme centers community voices in decision-making and involves ongoing dialogue with NGOs, First Nations groups, universities, and local communities to co-design legacy projects.

III. THEME 04: Economic Impact & Tourism

- Economic modeling estimates 91,600 FTE job years in Queensland and 122,900 nationwide. It is supported by workforce strategies that emphasize training, equity, and alignment with IOC/IPC human rights standards.
- • Queensland anticipates over USD 15.3 billion in tourism growth, driven by improved transport systems (CRR, Faster Rail, smart ticketing).

CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter covers Kansas City, Monterrey, Durban, and Brisbane through four main themes: governance, infrastructure scalability and legacy, sustainability and cultural transformation, and economic impact and tourism.

In terms of governance, the case studies show different coordination structures. Kansas City operates through a standalone host entity that helps the city manage the region's complex, fragmented nature. Monterrey, on the other hand, relies on multi-level coordination through national guidance while attempting to integrate public participation. Durban's 2010 governance operated under a top-down model dominated by FIFA, the National Government, and the LOC. Finally, Brisbane uses a shared intergovernmental model with defined institutional mandates.

In terms of infrastructure scalability and legacy, Kansas City aims to use temporary transport systems to promote public transportation and park-and-ride culture. Monterrey is accused of using a park-and-ride approach, but this has not been confirmed yet; however, it supports event planning in line with long-term PMD/PMDU mobility reforms. Durban completed major event-driven infrastructure but retained inequitable access patterns; however, the after-game approach seeks to correct past mistakes and create greater connectivity. Ultimately, Brisbane uses the Olympic Games to advance pre-existing rail, multimodal, and precinct-renewal investments.

In terms of sustainability and cultural transformation, Kansas City includes human rights, community engagement, and multimodal promotion through volunteering and community events. In another vein, Monterrey relies on the event to meet environmental goals and improve accessibility reforms. Durban's Greening 2010 Program outcomes are uncertain; however, the

after-game Go!Durban initiatives embed sustainability into long-term mobility strategies. Lastly, Brisbane integrates universal design, with the community co-designing and inclusion measures.

In terms of economic impact and tourism, Kansas City anticipates significant regional economic gains and works on its global image to leverage itself on the international stage. Monterrey has a similar goal as Kansas City regarding tourism growth and international visibility; its position as a FIFA 2026 host is a key opportunity. Durban experienced an improved image and expanded tourism infrastructure; however, it didn't benefit as much from the stadium renovation due to its oversize. Finally, Brisbane projects aim to deliver employment and tourism benefits aligned with transport modernization.

Overall, each case study illustrates how secondary cities prepare for mega sporting events and integrate mobility planning to showcase their existing governance systems, infrastructure, sustainability, and economic strategies. While these cities often adopt similar strategies, such as park-and-ride systems, others differ in terms of arrangements and goals. These variations reflect the institutional structures, cultural contexts, and local priorities of each city, offering insight into how national and urban contexts shape transportation planning.

Chapter 5 - Discussion

Building on a comparative analysis of Kansas City, Monterrey, Durban, and Brisbane, this chapter advances the findings from the previous chapter by discussing the differences among the host cities studied. Instead of analyzing each case individually, the discussion groups decisions and solutions under the same four themes previously examined: governance and decision-making; infrastructure scalability and legacy; sustainability and cultural transformation; and economic impact and tourism. This thematic approach integrates literature review and findings. Next, the chapter presents policy recommendations for Kansas City and similar secondary cities, along with the study's limitations, before concluding the research.

I. Discussion

All four cities faced similar FIFA or IOC requirements; however, their responses to the planning process for urban mobility varied, reflecting differences in politics, culture, and economics.

1. Governance: Coordination and the Limits of Participation

The Kansas City case confirms the literature showing that mega sporting event planning is challenged by fragmented, multi-actor governance models, especially when responsibility is dispersed across numerous entities (Jastrzabek et al., 2024). The hybrid governance of Kansas City stems from the city's geographic location (see page 36), which led it to create a new standalone entity, KC2026, to coordinate and oversee operations before, during, and after the tournaments. Yet this entity will dissolve at the end of the tournament, given its temporary nature. This structure allows the region to meet FIFA's requirements while convening multiple jurisdictions and agencies.

Moreover, the interview with Lindsey Douglas confirms Müller's (2015) ideas about the public risk-taking symptom of mega-events syndrome. Indeed, FIFA didn't finance the actual preparation for the 2026 FIFA World Cup in Kansas City, leaving the public sector and some private sponsors to bear the entire budget.

Monterrey contrasts with Kansas City in terms of governance, as it is primarily centralized, led by the state (Nuevo León), with coordination among the city's authorities. The city is including FIFA 2026 planning in its PMD 2024–2027 and PMDU 2040 visions; however, the absence of a publicly articulated World Cup transport model indicates a gap between the planning process for the FIFA World Cup and the participatory vision they include in their PMD and PMDU. Durban's governance during the 2010 FIFA World Cup was dominated by FIFA and the national government, leaving the municipality with limited decision-making power. The city shifted toward the Go!Durban after the tournament, although this initiative started before the event happened. This project's freeze confirms what Kassens (2009) says about how the bidding process between host cities and organizing committees obliges the host city to fulfill all responsibilities, even if it forces the city to freeze planned urban development. Müller (2015) also highlighted this point, considering it one of the 7 symptoms of the mega-events syndrome, known as the takeover syndrome.

Unlike Kansas City, Durban, and Monterrey, which adopt temporary planning mechanisms only for the mega sporting event, Brisbane sees the Olympics as an extension of its routine capacity to host large-scale sporting events. It uses the Games to accelerate infrastructure and objectives already in place.

2. Infrastructure Scalability and Legacy: Temporary Fixes or Structural Change

The findings affirm Gold and Gold's (2024) statement that host cities view mega sporting events, such as the Olympic Games, as strategic opportunities to modernize their infrastructure. In this context, Kansas City renovated its main street network, including Stadium Drive. The Stadium Dr. project includes pedestrian and bike paths that will be used not only during the tournament but also by adjacent neighborhoods, such as the Dunbar neighborhood. Durban also invested in major projects, such as the Moses Mabhida rail station and King Shaka International Airport, that continue to serve the city. Brisbane joins Kansas City and Durban in modernizing and expanding its infrastructure. In fact, Brisbane uses the Olympics to accelerate projects planned in long-term regional planning frameworks, such as the Cross River Rail. Brisbane aligns with Smith's (2012) argument that event-led development is most effective when it aligns with long-term urban policy objectives rather than short-term events.

Monterrey's existing infrastructure does not serve the venue directly, and the lack of transparency and transportation details²⁰ highlights a contradiction between the long-term vision that states a participative approach and the ongoing approach that keeps crucial information confidential. Sharing information could at least encourage fans and visitors to plan a visit to the city for the World Cup, rather than planning once the tournament starts. The World Cup functions as a catalyst for reform, but the extent of this reform remains speculative.

Regarding legacy, the three cases: Kansas City, Monterrey, and Brisbane, remain speculative. One could say that the outcome of the Games will leave a positive, transformative

²⁰ Monterrey's solutions for the FIFA World Cup 2026 in terms of urban mobility remain unknown as of October 31. There is no official document from the city or FIFA that outlines their approach. The assumption is that it will be temporary and based on park-and-ride or bus shuttles.

legacy, yet that judgment is made only after the Games end or, in Durban's case, a decade later. In this context, Durban teaches two lessons: first, mega sporting events can leave a positive legacy either materially (airport and rail improvements) or immaterially (world exposure and global attraction to tourists); second, these same mega sporting events can amplify existing inequalities and thus leave an unachieved legacy, failing to deliver the one the city was planning to achieve before the tournament. This finding confirms the ideas of Menezes and Souza (2014) and Kassens (2009) regarding the reinforcement of spatial inequalities. In fact, the 2010 FIFA World Cup in Durban favored tourist and venue corridors at the expense of residents' daily transportation systems.

3. Sustainability and Cultural Transformation

For FIFA or the IOC, sustainability and culture are crucial aspects that host cities must consider in planning the tournament and in the post-tournament period. The findings show that each city has different approaches. While Kansas City integrates sustainability through community outreach and efforts to shift car-oriented behavior, Monterrey focuses on people with disabilities and vulnerable populations, trying to use the FIFA World Cup 2026 as a tool to lower the inequalities, and Brisbane positions the Games as climate-positive and implements community co-design (Brisbane 2032 Bid Partners, 2021; Queensland Government, 2024).

Durban is the only case study with clear before-and-after sustainability goals, allowing comparison of whether the goals were achieved. Before the tournament, the city adopted an ambitious greening program with climate and transport goals; after the World Cup, post-event results, being uncertain, showed partial achievements, yet the core goals were met mainly, including carbon neutrality (Diederichs & Roberts, 2015).

4. Economic Impact and Tourism

The literature and findings present two opposing views on the economic impact. While the findings indicate that Kansas City, Monterrey, and Brisbane are expected to achieve significant economic and tourism gains, supported by strong branding strategies and regional activation. However, FIFA's "heavy-handed interventions"²¹ redirected many projects away from the bid's original objectives, limiting cities like Durban's ability to use the event to benefit disadvantaged populations and confirming the underestimation of costs suggested by Müller (2015) in his articles on mega-events syndrome.

II. Assessing Kansas City's Mobility Planning Approach

While this study draws on multiple case studies, it is important to assess how Kansas City is currently positioning itself regarding planning strategies and governance approaches. Since the FIFA World Cup 2026 has not yet occurred, this assessment is based on available planning documents, stakeholder interviews, and publicly communicated strategies.

Kansas City demonstrates a strong capacity for short-term operational coordination, thanks to the establishment of the KC2026 Local Organizing Committee, which facilitates collaboration across multiple jurisdictions and agencies. This temporary governance structure helps the city to respond effectively to the complex requirements of the event, including transportation planning, event operations, and stakeholder coordination.

However, this coordination remains largely event-specific and temporary. While temporary governance structures are common in mega-events, the London 2012 example shows how such institutions can develop into long-term governance arrangements. In fact, their responsibilities shifted from the Olympic Delivery Authority (ODA) to the London Legacy

²¹ Drawing on Cornelissen (2007)

Development Corporation (LLDC) (see literature review). Unlike these more institutionalized governance transitions seen in cases like London, Kansas City has not yet shown any intention to create a permanent structure to ensure continuity beyond the event.

The temporary solutions implemented by Kansas City are pragmatic; however, some are not the most optimal choices in my view. In the context of public transportation, Kansas City's reliance on temporary mobility solutions, such as park-and-ride systems and shuttle operations, can be considered a pragmatic, context-sensitive approach. In fact, given the uncertainty surrounding the future location of Arrowhead Stadium, large-scale permanent investments, such as rail infrastructure dedicated to the stadium, may present a risk of the white elephant effect. Temporary solutions, therefore, allow the city to respond effectively to event demands while avoiding long-term infrastructure commitments that may not align with future urban development scenarios.

On the other hand, at a more local scale, some infrastructure interventions follow a mainly functional approach that might miss chances for placemaking and community connection. For example, along the Stadium Drive corridor, using temporary elements like buffer fences offers quick safety and operational benefits but doesn't reflect the history, identity, or character of the nearby neighborhoods. This points to a limitation in current planning strategies, in which short-term functionality is valued over inclusive, context-aware design solutions that could enhance long-term urban quality and community involvement.

Adding to the cultural aspect, the event restrictions, such as the prohibition of tailgating, while justified by security and operational concerns, may overlook an important cultural dimension of the stadium experience in the United States. Tailgating is a key social and cultural tradition linked to American football events, and its exclusion from event planning could limit

opportunities to showcase local identity to an international audience. This raises the question of whether alternative strategies could be considered to incorporate such cultural practices into secure, controlled environments, balancing safety needs with cultural expression.

Overall, Kansas City takes a pragmatic approach to mega-event mobility, balancing immediate needs with long-term plans. Its reliance on temporary solutions highlights the importance of institutionalizing coordination and ensuring investments result in sustainable urban mobility.

III. Policy Recommendations for Kansas City and Similar Secondary Cities

Based on findings across Kansas City, Monterrey, Durban, and Brisbane, recommendations for upcoming host cities planning mega sporting events can be made. These recommendations are particularly relevant for secondary or midsized cities with fragmented governance and car-dependent mobility systems and can also be relevant for any host city dealing with similar challenges.

1. Institutionalize Post-Event Governance:

Post-event governance should be institutionalized rather than dissolved after the event concludes. For instance, the standalone organization created for the FIFA World Cup 2026, KC 2026, is a good model for Kansas City to look to as a united regional organization to ensure continuity in oversight, funding, and accountability for mobility investment. This model does not need to replicate FIFA's required structure; however, its concept is rooted in it.

2. Engage Communities:

Community engagement must be embedded early in the planning process, not added after key decisions are made. Accessibility, affordability, and residents' needs, especially for marginalized groups, should be criteria in event mobility planning. Sometimes great ideas come

out of simple conversations. The Brisbane case demonstrates how early and extended timelines can support deeper and more inclusive engagement processes. Since the Olympic bid was initiated in 2019, the city has had sufficient time to involve a wide range of stakeholders, including universities, research institutions, and community organizations, in shaping mobility strategies. In contrast, Kansas City faced a significantly shorter timeline after the 2022 World Cup bid, making it challenging to incorporate every demand into the planning process.

3. Align Event Mobility with Long-Term Transport Plans:

Aligning event mobility with long-term planning is a complex and context-dependent process, but it is not impossible. When effectively implemented, mega-events can accelerate existing transportation plans rather than create isolated or temporary systems.

Kansas City's approach reflects a particular alignment. Given uncertainties such as the future location of the Chiefs' stadium, the city has avoided committing to large-scale, event-driven infrastructure that may not align with long-term needs. In this case, not overbuilding can also be understood as a strategic decision that prevents the creation of redundant or useless infrastructure.

4. Avoid Corridor-Only Investment:

Distribute investment equitably, not only in high-visibility event zones. The Durban case demonstrates how concentrating investments around stadium corridors can reinforce existing spatial inequalities and limit broader accessibility benefits. While such investments may enhance visibility and event experience, they often fail to produce inclusive long-term outcomes.

In Kansas City, for example, improvements along Stadium Drive represent a positive step in upgrading infrastructure; however, the focus remains largely functional. Enhancements such

as incorporating public art instead of buffer fences or design features that reflect neighborhood identity could strengthen the connection between infrastructure and community.

IV. Study Limitations and Areas for Future Research

The study encountered several limitations, including timing, data, and resource constraints.

Ongoing Planning	Limited Interviews & Time	No Post-Event Evaluation Yet	Confidential Data
Kansas City & Monterrey are still in pre-event phases. External political and economic factors; national policy changes and cross-border dynamics.	Only 2 semi-structured interviews were conducted. Data collection was stopped on October 31 st , 2025.	Post-event performance was assessed only for Durban.	Some planning documents are inaccessible due to confidentiality.

First, the ongoing planning in Kansas City, Monterrey, and Brisbane is a key limitation. The cities remain in the pre-event phase, which means that long-term mobility outcomes and legacy impacts cannot yet be fully assessed. Additionally, these planning processes are still evolving beyond the data collection period, which ended on October 31, 2025. As a result, recent decisions, strategies, and governance adjustments are not included in the research. Moreover,

external political and economic factors, such as national policy shifts and international dynamics, may influence implementation in ways that are difficult to predict at this stage.

Second, the study is limited by the scope and timing of the interviews conducted. Only two semi-structured interviews were completed due to time and access restrictions, which limits the number of perspectives included in the research. While these interviews offered valuable insights, a broader group of stakeholders, such as Ervin “Jason” Sims, Operations Program Director at the Kansas City Area Transportation Authority (KCATA) and Transportation Director for KC2026, and Kayla Savage, Director of Community Engagement at the Kansas Department of Commerce, could have enhanced the diversity of the findings.

Third, the study is limited regarding the evaluation of post-event outcomes across 3 cases. While Durban provides a post-event perspective from the 2010 FIFA World Cup, Kansas City and Monterrey are still in the planning phase, and Brisbane is in early preparation for the 2032 Olympic Games.

Finally, access to data was restricted by confidentiality and availability issues. Some planning documents and internal discussions were not publicly accessible, and interview participants suggested that more detailed information could only be shared after the conclusion of the FIFA World Cup 2026.

Future research could expand on this study by examining post-event implementation and legacy outcomes in Kansas City and Monterrey after the 2026 FIFA World Cup. Additionally, further research could explore community perspectives to better understand how residents experience both the disruptions and long-term benefits of mega-event mobility planning, and the use of data-driven approaches in real-world event operations, including GPS tracking, real-time monitoring systems, and mobility simulation tools used during match days.

Conclusion

The research examined how secondary host cities operate mega-sporting events to develop sustainable urban mobility strategies that answer both the population's needs and the organizers' requirements, with a focus on lessons applicable to Kansas City. Through the comparative study of Kansas City, Monterrey, Durban, and Brisbane, the research showed that transportation planning for mega-events is influenced not only by infrastructure capacity but also by governance structures and institutional coordination.

The findings reveal that secondary cities face serious mobility challenges, including limited transport infrastructure, fragmented governance systems, and the need to accommodate large numbers of visitors within constrained urban networks in a short timeframe. To address these issues, cities implement various strategies, from temporary mobility solutions such as shuttles and park-and-ride systems to longer-term investments in public transit, pedestrian infrastructure, and corridor enhancements. However, the success of these strategies depends on their integration into broader urban planning frameworks.

A key point of this study is that balancing short-term and long-term planning is important for sustainable mobility. While temporary solutions are often necessary to meet immediate event demands, cities that successfully integrate mega-events for long-term benefits, such as Brisbane, show strong institutional coordination and alignment with existing transportation strategies. On the other hand, cases like Durban illustrate how event-driven investments can sometimes exacerbate spatial inequalities when not supported by inclusive, sustained planning approaches.

For Kansas City, the analysis indicates that current planning efforts show solid short-term coordination and practical responses to event-related demands. However, the city's reliance on

temporary governance structures and event-specific transport solutions raises concerns about long-term sustainability and legacy.

Overall, the research provides insight into mega-event mobility planning by shifting the focus from global cities to secondary urban contexts and emphasizing the importance of governance and decision-making processes in transportation planning.

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Appendix A - Interview Questions with Lindsey Douglas

Section 1: Role and Planning Context

1. Could you introduce yourself and your background briefly?
2. Can you describe your current role at KC2026 and your responsibilities in preparing for the FIFA 2026 World Cup?
3. What are the main transportation and mobility planning goals KC2026 is trying to achieve for the 2026 FIFA World Cup in Kansas City? What is the current stage of it?
4. How does your department coordinate with FIFA, Kansas City, and the two states?

Section 2: Governance and Inter-Agency Coordination

5. Within which governance structure does Kansas City operate? How has that influenced coordination with local, state, and federal partners?
What are the strengths and weaknesses of that model?
6. How are transportation planning decisions made for the FIFA 2026 events? What agencies or stakeholders are involved?
What role has FIFA played in the transportation planning process?
7. What governance challenges have you encountered in coordinating across local, state, and international levels?
8. How is public feedback or community engagement being integrated into the transport plans?

Section 3: Planning for Legacy and Long-Term Impact

9. What are the main infrastructure investments being made for FIFA 2026? How is KC2026 integrating the World Cup planning into Kansas City's long-term mobility and sustainability goals?
10. Can you speak to how you have balanced short-term event needs with long-term public transit benefits?
11. In your view, what makes Kansas City's context (size, governance, infrastructure) uniquely challenging or advantageous for hosting an event of this scale?

Section 3: Urban Mobility Challenges & Event-Day Pressures

12. What are the biggest transportation challenges Kansas City faces on match days? What emergency or short-term operational strategies are needed for it?
13. Do you believe Kansas City is moving toward transport sustainability through FIFA 2026 planning? If yes, how?
14. Which real-time data or predictive modeling tools are you using in planning for transit or traffic flow?

Section 4: Comparative Learning from Other Cities

15. My other case studies are secondary cities such as Durban (2010), Monterrey (2026), or Brisbane (2032 Olympics). Has KC2026 studied the approaches of previous or current host cities to mega-event mobility? If others, what are they?
16. What key practices or lessons from those cities have influenced your approach in Kansas City?

Section 5: Personal Insight and Strategic Reflection

17. With your background in both rail transport and state-level program delivery, how do you see the World Cup accelerating or transforming Kansas City's transportation system?

Section 6: Closing

18. Is there anything else you'd like to share about Kansas City's approach to urban mobility, sustainability, or intergovernmental collaboration in preparation for 2026?

Appendix B - Interview Questions with Jason Waldron

Section 1: Role and Planning Context

1. Could you introduce yourself and your background briefly? And describe your current role at the City of Kansas City and your responsibilities in preparing for the 2026 FIFA World Cup?
2. What are the main transportation and mobility planning goals the City of Kansas City is trying to achieve for the 2026 FIFA World Cup? What is the current stage of it?
4. How does your department coordinate with KC2026, KCATA, MoDOT, and regional partners to deliver transportation projects for the 2026 World Cup?
5. What specific street, transit, or pedestrian infrastructure upgrades are being led by the City to prepare for FIFA 2026?

Section 2: Governance and Inter-Agency Coordination

6. How does Kansas City's governance and regional structure influence coordination across agencies such as KCATA, MARC, and MoDOT?
7. What challenges have you faced in aligning city priorities with regional and event-level (KC2026/FIFA) transportation goals?
6. How are transportation planning decisions made for the FIFA 2026 events? What agencies or stakeholders are involved?
8. How is the City incorporating public input into World Cup-related mobility or street improvement projects?
9. How are transportation investments for FIFA 2026 funded and prioritized within the City's capital improvement program?
Community engagement?
Funding? How did the city manage?

Section 3: Planning for Legacy and Long-Term Impact

What are the main infrastructure investments being made for FIFA 2026? How is the City integrating the World Cup planning into Kansas City's long-term mobility and sustainability goals?

Can you speak to how you have balanced short-term event needs with long-term public transit benefits?

In your view, what makes Kansas City's context (size, governance, infrastructure) uniquely challenging, or advantageous, for hosting an event of this scale?

Are there any new technologies you are planning to use?

12. How is Kansas City ensuring that investments made for the World Cup align with other long-term mobility initiatives, such as Vision Zero, 11th & 12th Complete Streets, or Smart Moves

3.0?

Section 4: Urban Mobility Challenges & Event-Day Operations

13. What operational challenges or constraints do you anticipate during match days, and how is the City preparing for those?

What are the challenges you encountered?

12. What are the biggest transportation challenges Kansas City faces on match days? What emergency or short-term operational strategies are needed for it?

14. How is the City using FIFA 2026 as an opportunity to advance sustainable and multimodal transportation initiatives?

14. Which real-time data or predictive modeling tools are you using in planning for transit or traffic flow?

Section 5: Comparative Learning from Other Cities

My other case studies are secondary cities such as Durban (2010), Monterrey (2026), or Brisbane (2032 Olympics). Has Kansas City studied previous or current host cities' approaches to mega-event mobility? If others, what are they?

What key practices or lessons from those cities have influenced your approach in Kansas City?

Section 6: Personal Insight and Strategic Reflection

17. With your background in multimodal transport planning, how do you see the World Cup accelerating or transforming Kansas City's transportation network?

18. What metrics or outcomes will you use to define success for the city's transportation efforts during and after the event?

What legacy does the city want to keep from FIFA?

How are the plans going so far, and if you could do something different?

Section 7: Closing

Is there anything else you'd like to share about Kansas City's approach to urban mobility, sustainability, or intergovernmental collaboration in preparation for 2026?

Appendix C - Mega Sporting Event Definitions (Müller, 2015)

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Table 1. Definitions of mega-events.

Source	Definition	Tourist attraction	Mediated reach	Cost	Trans-formation
Ritchie and Yangzhou (1987, p. 20; from Ritchie, 1984, p. 2)	Major one-time or recurring events of limited duration, which serve to enhance the <i>awareness, appeal and profitability of a tourism destination</i> in the short and/or long terms. Such events rely for their success on uniqueness, status, or timely significance to create interest and <i>attract attention</i>	+	–	–	–
Roche (1994, pp. 1–2)	Mega-events ... are short-term events with <i>long-term consequences for the cities</i> that stage them. They are associated with the creation of infrastructure and event facilities often carrying <i>long-term debts</i> and always requiring long-term use-programming. ... [T]hey project a new (or renewed) and perhaps persistent and positive image and identity for the host city through <i>national and international media</i> , particularly TV, coverage	–	+	+	+
Jago and Shaw (1998, p. 29)	A one-time major event that is generally of an <i>international scale</i> . [A major event is] a large-scale special event that is <i>high in status or prestige and attracts a large crowd and wide media attention</i> They are <i>expensive to stage</i> , attract funds to the region, lead to demand for associated services, and leave behind legacies	+	+	+	o
Roche (2000, p. 1)	Large-scale, cultural (including commercial and sporting) events, which have a dramatic character, <i>mass popular appeal and international significance</i>	o	+	–	–
Hiller (2000b, pp. 182–183)	A short-term, one-time, high profile event. ... The <i>mass media carries the event to the world</i> , ... it has a significant and/or permanent <i>urban effect</i>	o	+	–	+
Horne (2007, pp. 81–82)	Have <i>significant consequences for the host city, region or nation</i> ... [and] attract <i>considerable media coverage</i>	–	+	–	+
Gold and Gold (2011, p. 1)	Cultural and sporting festivals that achieve sufficient size and scope to <i>affect whole economies</i> and to receive <i>sustained global media attention</i>	–	+	–	+
Mills and Rosentraub (2013, p. 239)	Significant national or global competitions that produce extensive levels of participation and <i>media coverage</i> and that often require <i>large public investments</i> into both <i>event infrastructure, for example stadiums to hold the events, and general infrastructure, such as roadways, housing, or mass transit systems</i>	–	+	+	+
This paper	Mega-events are ambulatory occasions of a fixed duration that (a) <i>attract a large number of visitors</i> , (b) <i>have large mediated reach</i> , (c) <i>come with large costs</i> and (d) <i>have large impacts on the built environment and the population</i>	+	+	+	+

Note: + = strongly present in definition; o = somewhat present in definition; – = hardly or not at all present in definition.