The Portuguese capital Lisbon has taken significant steps to improve urban mobility in the last decade.

If someone were to arrive in Lisbon with no knowledge of the city, from looking at the current urban mobility landscape, they would find few signs that the city had recently faced unprecedented financial hardship. Today Lisbon is a very different city from what it was a decade ago, with it being an increasingly attractive city with increased media exposure, as the host city of events such as the
Web Summit.

A clear sign of the city’s increased visibility, recognising its transformation, was the awarding of the European Commission’s European Green Capital Award for 2020. Lisbon was dubbed “an inspiration and role-model for cities across the EU, demonstrating clearly that sustainability and economic growth go hand in hand.”

City representatives do not wish to rest on their laurels, but rather see this recognition as additional motivation, to keep pushing for sustainability. At the core of Lisbon’s success is the premise that the city needs to be given back to its residents, by implementing a mobility strategy that increases sustainable travel. In fact, for Miguel Gaspar, Lisbon’s Deputy Mayor for Mobility and Safety, “one of the biggest challenges we face is our commitment to hitting carbon emissions targets by 2030”.

In that sense, Lisbon’s municipal transport company, Carris, is working to increase the number of electric vehicles in the public transport system. A €252 million investment is foreseen to increase the fleet with 420 electric buses and 25 trams by 2023, to contribute to shifting 150,000 motorists to more sustainable modes of travel by the end of the decade.

In parallel, Lisbon has embraced micromobility as a last-mile solution, with 9 companies operating over 12,000 e-scooters in the Portuguese capital. To address the constraints and unregulated parking created by the swarm of e-scooters, specific city districts have introduced fines for companies whose rented scooters litter pavements and public spaces. However, Lisbon’s approach is to liaise closely with private operators to find the best solutions to integrate their products into the wider mobility offering of the city, whilst not jeopardising safety and the quality of public space.

The city does not shy away from borrowing inspiration from innovation and successful methods from cities, such as Porto, Barcelona, Copenhagen, London, and Los Angeles. “I think cities need to get together in global networks to deal with global challenges”, Gaspar says. Lisbon has been particularly inspired by Los Angeles, becoming the first European city to adopt the Mobility Data Specification (MDS), establishing a template so that dockless bike shares, e-scooters and other shared mobility providers are able to share data to inform public transport planning and management.

Lisbon is grounded in the present, yet looks to the future, having signed the Corporate Mobility Pact (CMP) with several leading companies, which commits signatories to implementing over 200 mobility actions for more sustainable mobility.

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