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The Tarjeta MI: A System to Advance the Right to Mobility in Mexico City

Mexico City's Tarjeta MI brings nine transport systems together through a common payment platform, showing how technology, institutional coordination and territorial inclusion can create a simpler, more connected and accessible mobility system.





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Hidalgo Station, an interchange between Metro Lines 2 and 3, recorded 3.03 million passenger entries across both lines during the first quarter of 2026.
Image: Official archive of the Secretariat of Mobility (SEMOVI)


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In cities, mobility is usually understood through the lens of infrastructure: new lines, stations, corridors and transport systems. Mexico City's experience adds a complementary and fundamental perspective: improving the daily experience of millions of residents through governance, institutional coordination and technological innovation.

The integration of every public transport mode under a single Integrated Mobility Card, the *Tarjeta MI*, shows how these tools can help build a simpler, more connected and more accessible system for travellers, while strengthening the capacity of institutions to work in coordination.

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The Challenge

Every morning, millions of people in Mexico City use a combination of the Metro, the Metrobús, the Cablebús, the buses of the Passenger Transport Network, the Light Rail, the Trolleybus, Ecobici bicycles, the Interurban Train and the Suburban Train to reach their destination.

Before 2019, these modes of transport were run by separate agencies, each using different ticketing and payment systems. Residents had to queue at different ticket windows or use different cards for each leg of what was, in practice, a single journey—and in the process, accumulated numerous plastic cards.

Fragmented payment, however, was only the most visible aspect of the problem. The city had to address, simultaneously, the technological fragmentation of its transport systems, coordination among the institutions responsible for operating them, and a fundamental public policy question: how to ensure that the benefits of integrated mobility reach residents and areas facing the greatest barriers to getting around.

The first challenge was technological: the city had to integrate an existing network, comprising systems built at different times, with different technologies and uneven capabilities. To do this, it needed a solution that could operate across this diverse network, guarantee secure and reliable transactions on a massive scale and offer flexibility to incorporate new transport modes and new forms of access. The difficulty lay in building a common technological platform without interrupting the daily operation of one of the largest and most complex public transport networks in Latin America.

The second challenge was institutional. Integration required coordinating various agencies—each with its own mandate, management structure and procedures. For the user, a trip might be a single journey; for the administration, this could involve several



The Tarjeta MI carries the Integrated Mobility identity developed under Lance Wyman's creative direction, drawing on the design language of the 1968 Mexico City Olympic Games and the Mexico City Metro.
Image: Official archive of the Secretariat of Mobility (SEMOVI)

institutions. The city had to align criteria on fare collection, data and technological standards, without diminishing the authority of each agency.

The third challenge was territorial justice. Since 2014, Mexico City's Mobility Law has recognised mobility as a right of every person. That right, however, is not exercised under equal conditions across the capital. The challenge was to ensure that the integrated mobility policy would also benefit those who depend most on public transport and travel the greatest distances every day.

Fragmentation was not only administrative; it was also territorial. As in many major cities, the core Metro network is concentrated in central areas, while the most vulnerable and excluded communities live in the periphery, and often need to combine several services to complete their journeys. It was therefore especially important for integration to reach these areas.

The Solution

The response addressed the problem across four interconnected dimensions. Integration ceased to be a decision left to each transport agency and became a citywide project. The 2014 Mobility Law empowered Mexico City's Secretariat of Mobility (SEMOVI) to regulate, standardise and manage the capital's toll and fare collection systems. Under this mandate, SEMOVI led the process through the Integrated Public Transport System Committee (CSITP)—a collegiate body it chairs, which brings together the heads of the public transport agencies.

When integration was extended to concessioned transport services operated by private companies, SEMOVI coordinated the process with the Transport Regulatory Agency, which deployed the system vehicle by vehicle and corridor by corridor. By 2025, more than 300 vehicles along five corridors accepted the Tarjeta MI—reducing cash handling on board and strengthening service safety.



Designed by Pablo Peña, Mexico City's Integrated Mobility map brings the capital's public transport modes into a single visual network under the 2019 "One City, One System" framework.
Image: Official archive of the Secretariat of Mobility (SEMOVI)

To enable technological integration for its public infrastructure to evolve over time, the city adopted an open, royalty-free and interoperable technology standard based on Calypso, which is used by transport systems around the world. By not depending on a single supplier's proprietary technology, the city could bring in different equipment and vendors under one shared standard and also expand the system as the network grew.

Implementation progressively replaced the former access and fare collection mechanisms without interrupting daily operations. New validators, top-up machines and processing systems were installed, and the equipment of each agency was adapted to recognise the same card. On the Metro, modernisation culminated in 2024 with the replacement of magnetic tickets across all 12 lines.

For users, the change meant they no longer needed a different ticket or card for each system. A single balance covers the entire journey and can be topped up at more than 380 Metro ticket offices, 400 vending machines, more than 12,000 neighbourhood shops—with a strong presence in the outlying boroughs—and through the CDMX App.

The technological architecture also required an institutional architecture. Having a single card required SEMOVI and the operating agencies to agree on matters that each had previously managed independently: how to record transactions, share data and compensate each operator. In 2020, CSITP agreements established a set of rules. Each agency retained its own fares and the operation of its service, while the means of access, transaction records and revenue settlement became shared practices. Governance thus became the condition for interoperability to work in practice.

Integration continued to expand. In 2024, the Mexico City–Toluca Interurban Train and new route-based transport services were progressively incorporated into the Tarjeta MI ecosystem, extending interoperability beyond the capital's own systems.

Under the current Mexico City administration, this expansion also acquired a digital dimension. In December 2025, the Virtual Tarjeta MI was integrated into the CDMX App, allowing users to access the network with their phones using Near Field Communication (NFC) technology. At its launch, SEMOVI reported that more than 60,000 virtual cards had been issued; by February 2026, they were enabled for use on all 1,800 validators across the Metro's 12 lines. Digitalisation was conceived as an expansion of options, with the physical card remaining available to users without a compatible phone or who prefer to continue using it.

In April 2026, the current administration extended integration to a metropolitan scale by making Tarjeta MI a means of payment on the Suburban Train. As this federal-run rail service connects Mexico City with the State of Mexico—the neighbouring state with which it forms a single metropolitan area—and with Felipe Ángeles International Airport, this shared mobility experience marks a new policy milestone for the millions of people who travel within the metropolitan region every day.

Today, a single card—the Tarjeta MI—grants access to all nine transport systems. The solution was not a single intervention but the combination of four dimensions. The Tarjeta MI directly integrated payment and technology: one medium and one balance for all systems, built on a common standard. Institutional coordination was the condition for achieving this, and the expansion of the network towards the periphery formed part of a broader transformation of the city's mobility, for which the card provided a common gateway. Together, they turned a single card into a new way of exercising the right to mobility and of experiencing the city.



Constitución de 1917 Station on Cablebús Line 2 opened in August 2021. The line carries up to 75,000 trips per day and cuts travel time in half to just 40 minutes along its 10.6 km route, contributing to more dignified and inclusive mobility in Mexico City.
Image: Official archive of the Secretariat of Mobility (SEMOVI)

The Results

By its sixth anniversary in October 2025, the Tarjeta MI had recorded more than 11.9 billion trips, with over 33 million cards issued and an average of more than nine million trips per day. The Metro alone accounts for approximately 4.5 million of these daily trips.

The scale of this transformation has been recognised internationally. The Tarjeta MI received the Calypso Award in 2022, was a finalist at the Transport Ticketing Awards in 2023 and earned an honourable mention at the 2025 Sustainable Transport Awards. In 2024, the city's progress in transport and digital transformation was among the reasons for which Mexico City was awarded the Lee Kuan Yew World City Prize.

On the ground, the Cablebús transport system, launched in 2021, delivered the most visible effects in the steep, peripheral territories, which historically had fewer transport alternatives and where combining several services was part of daily travel routines. A 2024 evaluation by ITDP Mexico and the Inter-American Development Bank found that the Cablebús—which incorporated the Tarjeta MI from its first line—reduced users' travel times by almost 45% and the average cost per trip by almost 10%. Furthermore, it doubled—and in some cases, even tripled—access to employment, health and education opportunities reachable within an hour's travel.

On its newest line, which has a capacity of 34,000 passengers per day, travel time fell from 40 to 21 minutes, according to Mexico City's Electric Transport Service. These benefits derive from the expansion of the network, while the Tarjeta MI ensures new segments are easily integrated through a common means of payment.

Challenges remain. The first is metropolitan: millions of people travel daily between Mexico City and the State of Mexico, and the integration of these journeys depends, above all, on agreements between governments and operators

that are still under discussion. The second is to complete the incorporation of concessioned transport and the digital option roll-out across all services. These are the next steps for a policy that seeks to recognise mobility as a right and to respond to the way people actually live and move across the capital's metropolitan territory.

The evolution of the Tarjeta MI reveals the reach of this vision: an initiative that had set out to simplify access to transport ended up bringing together decisions on governance and coordination around one central goal—to improve the everyday experience of those who rely on the network. Advancing the right to mobility for all means carrying that perspective beyond both the card itself and the boundaries of a single city—ultimately, better transport conditions will translate into better opportunities for living, working, studying and enjoying the city.

[1] Lee Kuan Yew World City Prize, "2024 Prize Laureate — Mexico City", leekuanyewworldcityprize.gov.sg

[2] ITDP México and Banco Interamericano de Desarrollo (BID), "Lecciones aprendidas en la implementación del Cablebús", mexico.itdp.org, September 2024.

