QIC: MaaS is the future

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Originally hatched in Europe, Mobility as a Service (MaaS) is a concept of integrating private and public transportation from bike sharing to the bus to the train through a unified payment service.

“MaaS is a theme that affects transportation infrastructure, requiring investors to think beyond a traditional linear value chain, to understand how their assets can provide utility as part of a more integrated system,” QIC’s head of global infrastructure Ross Israel says.

QIC says MaaS is the “the greatest transformation of the mobility ecosystem since the invention of the motorcar” and calls on infrastructure investors to remain diligent with respect to their future acquisitions and actively manage their existing infrastructure assets to capitalise on the range of opportunities.

For infrastructure investors, “the strategy is to leverage information to draw demand to existing assets, increase patronage and thereby deferring capital expenditure on new assets.”

Existing infrastructure concessions – such as toll roads, car parks and metros – will serve as anchors, resulting in the various forms of transport becoming more integrated into a single MaaS, accessible on demand, according to Israel.

“The concept would be embedded in airports: car parks would be integrated with passenger drop-off and car fleet management, with tailored bus services as well as share riding.”

One motivation would simply be to respond to customers. In a survey conducted by Newgate Research as part of the University of Sydney’s Better Infrastructure Initiative, a third of respondents viewed road operators as customer-focused but 90% considered ride-sharing companies to be customer-focused.

QIC, which has owned 25% of the concession to operate Brisbane Airport since 2007, sees it in the simplest term: “it’s about finding the quickest way to get out of the airport,” says Israel.

On the other side of the world, QIC – which has 50-year concession to operate Ohio State University’s car parks – is piloting a programme to integrate buses and share riding.

More broadly, the widespread adoption of MaaS will require a diverse range of actors to cooperate, from mobility management players, telecoms operators, payment processors, public and private transportation providers, as well as local governments with responsibility for transportation and city planning.

Ultimately, the local governments will be responsible for setting up an integrated transportation planning system with a simple centralised payment system.

“Helsinki has set the blueprint – the aim is that by 2025, the city plans to make it unnecessary for any resident to own a private car,” says Israel.

Helsinki residents have been able to use an app called Whim since 2016 – to plan and pay for all modes of public and private transportation within the city, whether by train, taxi, bus, car share or bike share.

The Finnish capital is not alone, however. Paris, Eindhoven, Gothenburg, Montpellier, Vienna, Hanover, Las Vegas, Los Angeles, Denver, Singapore and Barcelona have all piloted local versions that span the spectrum from modest peer-to-peer (P2P) offerings to integrated public transportation to combined mobility services that include both public and private sector players, according to QIC.

All of which will hinge on data. “The key is to coordinate data – from the bike ride to the car to the rail to ferry,” says Israel.

To that end, “rolling out the next generation of 4G/5G will be critical because most travel arrangements and cashless payments will be made through mobile devices requiring high levels of connectivity,” he said.