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Dear readers,

This issue of Public Transport International (PTI) celebrates waterborne transport and provides an interesting overview of developments currently affecting what has sometimes been an overlooked transport mode.

Waterborne transport is one of the earliest forms of public transport, which is of course logical, as cities developed along waterways. Originally, waterways were the veins and arteries of cities. They allowed goods and people to be transported and trade to take place, both within and between cities. Consequently, waterborne transport was often far more developed than land-based transport in many countries.

However, following the development of rail and road links, waterborne transport started to be overlooked. This was also a result of the decline in the shipping industry, which in itself saw waterfront areas fall out of use. This caused many cities to turn their backs on their waterways and waterfront areas. However, this general trend did not apply everywhere and in certain places waterborne transport never disappeared completely as it remained the only way to travel out to archipelagos or to cross waterways dividing the city itself. Places such as Venice, Istanbul and Hong Kong and certain Scandinavian regions never abandoned ferries and boats.

And waterways and waterfronts are once again the focus of attention. As land transport becomes more congested and urban space grows increasingly scarce, cities are taking a fresh look at their waterfronts and waterways and seeing them as a vital asset. Thanks to urban regeneration efforts, waterfronts in many cities are being redeveloped and in many cases these areas are now seen as the most desirable for residential and business needs alike. With this waterfront revival comes a logical need for transport. UITP’s Waterborne Transport Committee is working hard to raise the profile of this special mode, which is a vital part of the public transport chain. As you will read in the article on page 4, waterborne transport can offer very good levels of connectivity and accessibility, a pleasant journey experience and an interesting business model. All of these assets put waterborne transport in a strong position to make a unique contribution to our PTx2 strategy.