

Report of the State comptroller of Israel | January 2024

Ministry of Transport and Road Safety

Planning and Promoting Public Transport – Follow-up Audit

Abstract



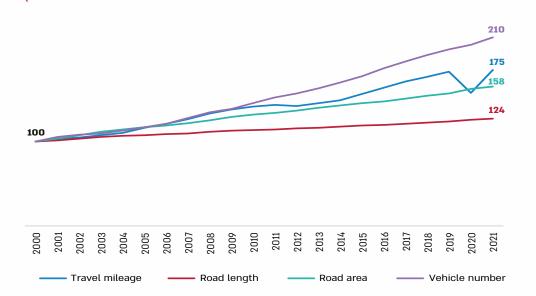
Planning and Promoting Public Transport – Follow-up Audit

Background

The transportation sector is one of the key economic sectors, and its development is essential for the efficient functioning of a modern and growing economy. Transportation systems play a crucial role in economic growth and contribute to economic efficiency and urban and regional development. They also improve the welfare of citizens in the country and narrow economic and social gaps.

Below is a description of the development of the vehicle count, road length, road area, and travel mileage rates in absolute values in Israel from 2000 to 2021. The year 2000 was selected as the base year (index 100) for comparison purposes.

Data on Changes in Vehicle Number and Travel Mileage Compared to the Development of Roads (length and area) in Israel, 2000–2021 (compared to the base values in 2000)



According to the Central Bureau of Statistics, data was processed by the Office of the State Comptroller.



According to the diagram in 2000–2021, the number of vehicles, the road mileage, the area of the roads, and the length of the roads increased by 2.1, 1.75, 1.58, and 1.24, respectively, and therefore, the congestion on the roads is increasing yearly, and the damage due to the congestion is estimated at NIS 31 billion in 2021.

Key Figures

2.1-fold and 1.75-fold

increase in travel mileage and vehicle count, respectively, in 2000–2021

1.58-fold and 1.24-fold

increase in the area of roads and the length of roads, respectively, in 2000–2021

NIS 31 billion

the estimated economic damage in 2021 due to road congestion

21%

decrease rate in the number of jobs and non-permanent work positions in the National Public Transport Authority in 2022 (82) compared to 2017 (104)

12 years

the period in which the status of the National Public Transport Authority as an auxiliary unit was not regulated despite the government's resolution in 2011

24 months

the average time elapsing from the plan submission to the National Committee for Planning and Building of Priority Areas¹ until the validation of the plan

since July **2007**

the approval of the National Outline Plan for Land Transportation Infrastructure – NOP 42 (the date the National Planning and Building Council decided on its preparation) has yet to be completed

31

the number of bus lanes established in the Tel-Aviv-Jaffa metropolis, at about 19.27 km, in 2019–2022, most of them as part of the "Fast to the City" project

In the Promotion of Construction in Priority Housing Areas Law (Temporary Provision) (Amendment No. 7), 2021, the name of the committee was changed from the "National Committee for Planning and Building of Priority Housing Areas" to the "National Committee for Planning and Building of Priority Areas".

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Audit Actions



From August 2022 to February 2023, the State Comptroller Office conducted a follow-up audit of the rectification of deficiencies raised in the chapter on "Planning and Promotion of Public Transport" within a special report on the "Public Transportation Crisis" published in March 2019 (the previous audit). The follow-up audit was conducted at the National Authority and the Transport Planning Department in the Ministry of Transport and Road Safety (MOT). Supplementary examinations were conducted at the Planning Administration in the Ministry of Interior, mainly in the National Committee for Planning and Building of Priority Areas.

Key Findings





Regulating the Status of the National Authority — the previous audit found that although Government Resolution 3988 in 2011 decided that the National Authority would be an auxiliary unit in the MOT, the Civil Service Commission (CSC) and the MOT did not implement this resolution. Furthermore, suppose the MOT's management decides there is no justification to grant the National Authority the status of an auxiliary unit. In that case, it should justify its position and ask the government to amend the resolution from 2011. The follow-up audit found that the deficiency was not rectified. The status of the National Authority was not regulated as an auxiliary unit. Thus, affecting the independence and flexibility of the National Authority.

The Organizational Structure of the National Authority – the previous audit found that the National Authority did not staff all the positions stipulated in the regulations to fulfill its roles, and the number of jobs has also decreased significantly as a result of cutbacks and retirement incentive programs carried out since the Authority's establishment. As of the previous audit end (March 2018), the number of jobs in the workforce standard was 92, compared to the planned number of 126. At the audit end, the number of employees in the National Authority was 83, and two additional positions were planned to be cut from the workforce by the end of 2018. The follow-up audit found that the deficiency was rectified to a small extent. The number of employees in the National Authority was 97. Therefore, in 2022, the National Authority staffed 15 non-permanent work positions in excess of the number of positions in its workforce headcount, which was 82 - about 18% of the total number of positions included in its workforce headcount for the same year (2022).



- Establishing Metropolitan Transport Authorities the previous audit found that "despite the recognition of the need to establish metropolitan transport authorities, and despite the State Comptroller's previous comments, recurring attempts to establish them and anchor them in the legislation were unsuccessful. Such authorities can significantly solve disputes between local authorities and promote a comprehensive outlook transportation solutions and efficient responses to local needs. Therefore, the failure to establish them adversely affects the promotion of public transport initiatives in metropolitan areas and the improvement of public transport services". The follow-up audit found that the deficiency was rectified to a small extent. In September 2022, the government resolved (Resolution 1854) to establish regional authorities instead of metropolitan transport authorities, whereby the entire country will be divided into transportation regions. This resolution did not determine the regions and their boundaries, each municipal authority will belong to a regional authority, which will be determined following the government resolution. Furthermore, as of the follow-up audit end (February 2023), representatives of the MOT and the central local authorities, Tel Aviv-Yafo and Jerusalem, discuss the establishment of regional authorities in the metropolitan areas of the Tel Aviv metropolis and Jerusalem, as determined in Resolution 1854 of September 2022. Still, no regional transport authority has been established yet.
- Professional Manpower in the Transportation Planning Division the previous audit found that since 2014, the Transportation Planning Division has been detailing the damages due to the lack of professional workforce in the Division; the main one is the impairment of the representation of the MOT in statutory planning institutions. The MOT did not reinforce the division's professional capabilities nor staff's professional positions. The follow-up audit found that the deficiency was rectified to a small extent. According to the MOT data, from the previous audit end (March 2018) until 2022, the number of positions in the workforce and the number of positions staffed remained almost unchanged (29 positions in the workforce at the previous audit end date, 30 positions in the workforce in 2022). The Transportation Planning Division still suffers from a shortage of professionals due to the extensive scope of its responsibilities, which adversely affects its ongoing work. It was further raised that the MOT finds it challenging to recruit professional employees, primarily due to the employment conditions in the public sector compared to the private sector, and that students staff some of the positions.
- Relying on External Consultants in the Transportation Planning Division the previous audit found that "the use of numerous professional employees who are not civil servants and the transfer of the MOT's core activities weakens its professional knowledge base and undermines the professional authority and responsibility of its personnel on transportation planning, especially in complex and lengthy processes such as statutory planning, where the continuity of handling is often not possible when using external consultants, as the consultant is not involved in the process from start to finish, but only in certain stages. In addition, this leads to a concentration of professional knowledge in

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external entities and a high dependence on the part of the Ministry on them". The follow-up audit found that the deficiency was rectified to a small extent. The Transportation Planning Division relies heavily on external consultants. Its expenses on engagements with external consultants for the operation of "Transportation Planning Administration" and other consulting services increased by about 28% in 2022 compared to 2021 (from about NIS 12.5 million to NIS 16 million).

- National Outline Plan for Land Transportation Infrastructure NOP 42 the previous audit found that as of its end in March 2018, the preparation of the National Outline Plan for Land Transportation Infrastructure (NOP 42) was not completed and was not submitted for the approval of the National Council and the government. The follow-up audit found that the deficiency was rectified to a small extent. The MOT completed the preparation of NOP 42 in 2019, and the National Council for Planning and Building approved it in March 2020. However, NOP 42 was not submitted by the National Council for Planning and Building for government approval due to disputes between the MOT and the Ministry of Finance regarding the indemnity letter and compensation for landowners or right holders affected by NOP 42. Consequently, it was not approved by a governmental resolution and did not come into effect.
- Representation of the MOT in National Planning Institutions, District Committees, and Local Planning and Building Committees - the previous audit found that "MOT's representatives do not participate in some of the district committees' discussions due to a shortage of personnel in the Transportation Planning Division. Usually, MOT representatives participate in more major plan discussions. In some cases, MOT representatives do not participate in early-stage work discussions of the planning process, even though they are invited to do so, but only in submitting and approving the plan". The previous audit further found that due to a shortage of personnel in the Transportation Planning Division, the Division does not send representatives to the local planning and building committees (local committees). The follow-up audit found that the deficiency was rectified to a small extent. The personnel in the Transportation Planning Division at the MOT is insufficient to meet its numerous tasks in various planning committees, thus affecting its ongoing operation. In addition, it may lead to the absence of a "public transport oversight" perspective in different meetings held within planning and building institutions, failing to address public transportation in national committees and planning institutions, and a lack of reference to the planning and promotion of public transportation in general.



The Coordination Between the Transportation Planning Division and the National Authority – the previous audit found deficiencies in the coordination between the Transportation Planning Division and the National Authority. In many cases, the Transportation Planning Division representatives raise in the planning institutions' discussions, requirements for allocating space for public transport facilities in the. Still,



they do not have all the relevant information, such as the type of facility required, its preferred location, and the plan required. The lack of coordination between the two units may result in less than optimal transportation decisions by the planning institutions adhering the fulfillment of the operational needs of public transportation. These decisions have a long-term impact on the operation of the public transport services, and they may make it difficult to develop an effective public transport system in the future. **The follow-up audit found that the deficiency was fully rectified.** There has been a significant improvement in the coordination between the Transportation Planning Division and the National Authority, and regular meetings are held between them on a monthly basis at least since the beginning of 2020.

The Update of the Guidelines for the Planning, Promotion, and Operation of Public Transport by the MOT — the previous audit found that "for many years, the MOT's guidelines did not address many essential issues to improve public transport services and use thereof. Guidelines on interfaces between land and transport designations, the outlining principles of the road system, the planning of infrastructure facilities for public transportation, preferential arrangements for public transportation, criteria for planning lanes, and indicators for the level of service were published only recently. Without these guidelines, insufficient emphasis was sometimes placed on public transportation when planning neighborhoods, local authorities, employment centers, and industrial zones". The follow-up audit found that the deficiency was rectified to a great extent. The MOT updated the planning, promotion, and operation guidelines of the public transport system and published the guidelines for the public transport users and the general public.

Land Use Planning in the Vicinity of the Public Transport Facilities – the previous audit found plans without the principle of the correct combination between land designations and public transport facilities, including Priority Housing Plan 1046 for the establishment of a new neighborhood in the southwest of Or Yehuda and Priority Housing Plan 1023 for the establishment of a new neighborhood in the southeast of Ramat Gan. The follow-up audit found that the deficiency was rectified to a great extent. As part of the planning process, the public transport facilities are addressed, and especially the mass transit system within it, if such exists. Regarding the planning of land uses in the vicinity of public transport facilities, a particular reference was made to land planning for the public transportation system in general and a mass transit system in particular. Furthermore, NOP 35 - the integrated national outline plan for construction, development, and preservation, alongside Amendment No. 7 of the Promotion of Construction in Priority Housing Areas Law and the promotion of NOP 70 (a national outline plan that complements the promotion of the plans for the area of the metro system), which refers explicitly to the metro system in the Tel Aviv metropolis – currently enables the various planning bodies in general, and the MOT in particular, to plan public transportation to serve the users of public transport more efficiently, especially when it comes to a mass transit system.

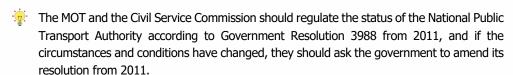
The Assimilation of the Guidelines on Planning, Promotion, and Operation of Public Transportation Among External Entities – in the course of the previous audit, the "Transportation Planning Division stated that usually, when publishing new guidelines, seminars were held to present the main guidelines and their importance, but it cannot provide periodic training and refreshers to relevant entities, on the guidelines." The follow-up audit found that the deficiency was rectified to a great extent. The MOT publishes the guidelines on planning, promotion, and operation of public transportation on its website, and the tender "for a comprehensive training program for all relevant entities among the local authorities, the private market, and the government"

Participation of MOT Representatives in the Various Stages of the Planning Process in the National Committee for Planning and Building of Priority Areas - the previous audit found that "the lack of prior coordination between the National Committee for Planning and Building of Priority Areas and the MOT representatives and the partial involvement of the MOT representatives in formulating the plans make it difficult for the MOT representatives to raise transportation issues for discussion and promote changes in the plans to provide public transportation services. Government officials should participate in the planning process in the committees and coordinate with them throughout the entire planning process. However, often the MOT submits an objection to the plan at the late stage of submitting the objections, even though the main purpose of this stage is to allow the general public to participate in the planning process". The follow-up audit found that the deficiency was rectified to a great **extent.** There has been significant progress in the cooperation between the National Committee for Planning and Building of Priority Areas and the MOT in the various stages of the planning process in the National Committee. However, as of the end of the followup audit (February 2023), there are still gaps between them regarding the extent of their cooperation.

was completed in December 2022.



Key Recommendations



- It is recommended that the MOT, the Ministry of Finance, and the Civil Service Commission reexamine the workforce headcount in the National Public Transport Authority and the Transportation Planning Division and adapt them to their current tasks, which have multiplied over the years due to the demand for public transportation and due to the natural increase in the State of Israel's population.
- The MOT should establish the regional transport authorities, as stipulated in Government Resolution 1854, and afterward examine whether they respond to the needs of the promotion of public transportation and its planning.
- It is recommended that the MOT update the relevant guidelines for planning, promoting, and operating public transportation and regularly follow up on their updating and implementation by public transportation users and the general public.
- It is recommended that the MOT and the Ministry of Finance settle the dispute regarding the indemnity letter and, if necessary, turn to the relevant ministers, and even turn to the government, for a decision. Due to the importance and contribution of NOP 42 to the development of public transportation at the national level, it is essential to settle the indemnity letter dispute to enable the National Committee for Planning and Building to submit the plan to the government for its approval.
- It is recommended that the MOT examine the coordination of periodic meetings with the Planning Administration to discuss plans impacting transportation submitted at all planning levels (local, district, and national) to the Planning Administration. Thus, the MOT manpower will be able to respond to transportation plans at known and pre-determined times.

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Summary

The natural increase in the population, economic development, and growth directly affect the transportation sector, including the quality of the services it provides: growth increases the demand for road travel – for trucks, private vehicles, and public transportation – resulting in increased congestion on the roads, aggravated air pollution, and other nuisance.

In 2000–2021, the number of vehicles, the travel mileage, the area of the roads, and the length of the roads increased by 2.1, 1.75, 1.58, and 1.24, respectively, and therefore the congestion on the roads is growing yearly. The congestion damage is estimated at 2% of the gross domestic product and at about NIS 31 billion in 2021.

The MOT is entrusted with the provision of general transportation services and public transportation services in particular. Therefore, it should participate in the statutory planning processes at all levels.

The follow-up audit raised that the MOT rectified half of the deficiencies found in the previous audit report -7 out of 16 deficiencies were significantly rectified, and one more was fully rectified.

The State Comptroller Office commends the MOT and the National Committee for Planning and Building of Priority Areas' for the promotion of public transportation, among other things, through the establishment of new guidelines and criteria, the improvement of cooperation between the MOT and the National Committee for Planning and Building of Priority Areas, and amendment No. 7 to the Promotion of Construction in Priority Housing Areas Law (Temporary Provision), 2021, concerning, among other things, development favoring public transportation in priority plans.

However, the deficiency of regulating the status of the National Authority has not been rectified, and deficiencies related to the organizational structure of the National Authority, the establishment of metropolitan transport authorities, professional personnel in the Transportation Planning Division of the MOT, reliance on external consultants in the work of the Transportation Planning Division, the transfer of the National Outline Plan for Land Transportation Infrastructures – NOP 42 for the approval of the government, and the representation of the MOT in the national planning institutions and the local committees for planning and building – all of these have been rectified to a small extent.

To meet the strategic goals set by the MOT and to implement its policy, it is recommended that the Ministry strengthen the professional units handling the planning and management of public transportation systems, increase its involvement in the statutory planning processes, and become a leading player, and significantly strengthen the Transportation Planning Division – which lacks personnel as of the follow-up audit end, February 2023.

Furthermore, it is recommended that the status, powers, and responsibilities of the National Public Transport Authority be regulated and the government's resolution regarding establishing regional transportation authorities is implemented.

This follow-up audit emphasizes the importance of the development of public transportation from the planning stage to execution and its contribution to the economy's growth and preparation for the increase in Israel's population in the coming years.

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The Rectification Extent of the Key Deficiencies Noted in the Previous Report

		The Deficiency/			xtent of the De Follow-up Aud	
The Audit Chapter	The Audited Body	Recommendation in the Previous Audit Report	Not Rectified	Slightly Rectified	Significantly Rectified	Fully Rectified
The status of the National Public Transport Authority	The MOT and the Civil Service Commission (CSC)	Even though the government's resolution from 2011 determined that the National Authority would be an auxiliary unit in the MOT, the MOT and the Civil Service Commission did not implement this resolution.				
The organizational structure of the National Public Transport Authority	The MOT, the Civil Service Commission, and the Ministry of Finance	The National Authority did not staff all the positions stipulated in the workforce headcount standard to fulfill its duties, and the number of positions in the workforce headcount standard also decreased considerably due to cutbacks and retirement incentive programs carried out since the Authority was established.				

		The Deficiency/ Recommendation in the Previous Audit Report			ctent of the De Follow-up Aud	
The Audit Chapter	The Audited Body		Not Rectified	Slightly Rectified	Significantly Rectified	Fully Rectified
Establishment of metropolitan transportation authorities	The MOT	The previous audit found that "despite the recognition of the need to establish metropolitan transport authorities, and despite the State Comptroller's past criticism, recurring attempts to establish them and incorporate them in the legislation were unsuccessful."				

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		The Deficiency/			xtent of the De Follow-up Aud	
The Audit Chapter	The Audited Body	Recommendation in the Previous Audit Report	Not Rectified	Slightly Rectified	Significantly Rectified	Fully Rectified
The coordination between the Transportation Planning Division and the National Authority	The MOT	Deficiencies were found in the coordination between the Transportation Planning Division and the National Authority. In many cases, the Transportation Planning Division representatives raise in the planning institutions' discussions requirements for allocating space for public transport facilities. Still, they do not have all the relevant information, such as the type of facility required, its preferred location, and the plan required for it. The lack of coordination between the two units may result in the planning institutions making less thanoptimal transportation decisions, preventing the fulfillment of the operational needs of public transportation.				



		The Deficiency/			ktent of the De Follow-up Aud	-
The Audit Chapter		Recommendation in the Previous Audit Report	Not Rectified	Slightly Rectified	Significantly Rectified	Fully Rectified
Professional workforce in the Transportation Planning Division	The MOT	It was found that since 2014, the Transportation Planning Division has detailed the damages caused by the lack of professional workforce in the division, the main one being the impact on the representation of the MOT in statutory planning institutions.		<u> </u>		
Reliance on external consultants in the work of the Transportation Planning Division	The MOT, the Ministry of Finance, and the Civil Service Commission	The previous audit found that "the use of numerous professional employees who are not civil servants and the transferring of core activities of the Ministry weakens the professional knowledge base at the Ministry and undermines the professional authority and responsibility of the ministry personnel regarding transportation planning."				

		The Deficiency/	The Rectification Extent of the Deficiency Noted in the Follow-up Audit			
The Audit Chapter	The Audited Body	Recommendation in the Previous Audit Report	Not Rectified	Slightly Rectified	Significantly Rectified	Fully Rectified
The update of the guidelines for planning, promotion, and operation of public transport by the MOT	The MOT	The previous audit found that "for many years, the MOT's guidelines did not address many essential issues to improve public transport services and use thereof. Guidelines on interfaces between land and transport designations, the principles for outlining the road system, the planning of infrastructure facilities for public transportation, preferential arrangements for public transportation, criteria for planning lanes, and indicators for the level of service were published only recently."				
The assimilation of the guidelines on planning, promotion, and operation of public transportation among external entities	The MOT	The previous audit found that during the audit, the "Transportation Planning Division stated that usually, when it publishes new guidelines, it holds a seminar presenting the guidelines and importance, but it cannot provide them periodic training and refreshers on the guidelines."				

		The Deficiency/			xtent of the De Follow-up Aud	
The Audit Chapter	The Audited Body	Recommendation in the Previous Audit Report	Not Rectified	Slightly Rectified	Significantly Rectified	Fully Rectified
The manual for preparing a transport impact assessment	The MOT	the previous audit report found that the "Manual for the Preparation of a Transport Impact Assessment" was based as a policy document on the "National Master Plan for Land Transportation" prepared by the MOT in 1999. In 2008, the MOT updated the plan and published a new document titled "National Master Plan for Land Transportation — the Land Transportation — the Land Transportation Development Policy in the State of Israel."				
The National Outline Plan for Land Transportation Infrastructure – NOP 42	The MOT and the Ministry of Finance	The previous audit found that as of its end date in March 2018, the preparation of the National Outline Plan for Land Transportation Infrastructure (NOP 42) was not completed and was not submitted for the approval of the National Council and the government.				

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The Audit Chapter	The Audited Body	Recommendation in the Previous Audit Report	Not Rectified	Slightly Rectified	Significantly Rectified	Fully Rectified
Representation of the MOT in the local committees	The MOT	The previous audit found that due to a shortage of personnel in the Transportation Planning Division, "the Division does not send representatives to participate in the local committees with an advisory opinion, thus waiving the opportunity to comment on the plans and ensure that they are in line with its policy, and in particular that the infrastructure planning will be adjusted to provide public transportation services."				

		The Deficiency/			xtent of the De Follow-up Aud	
The Audit Chapter	The Audited Body	Recommendation in the Previous Audit Report	Not Rectified	Slightly Rectified	Significantly Rectified	Fully Rectified
Representation of the MOT in the national planning institutions	The MOT, the Ministry of Finance, and the Civil Service Commission	As of the previous audit end, March 2018, four employees were employed in the Transportation Planning Division, whose main task was to represent the Minister of Transport in the various planning institutions, and six other employees occasionally represented the Minister in the planning institutions, but this was not their main task. They performed it in addition to their different roles. The consultants employed by the Israel Transportation Planning Administration (Matal) assist, among other things, the Transportation Planning Division in examining transportation aspects in the plans submitted for approval by the planning institutions.				

		The Deficiency/			ktent of the De Follow-up Aud	
The Audit Chapter	The Audited Body	Recommendation in the Previous Audit Report	Not Rectified	Slightly Rectified	Significantly Rectified	Fully Rectified
Participation of MOT representatives in the various stages of the planning process in the National Committee for Planning and Building of Priority Areas	The MOT	The previous audit found that "The MOT representatives often raise their objections regarding plans only as part of submitting objections after the planning committee has deposited the plan. For example, in 2017, the MOT submitted an objection to a Plan for Priority Housing No. 1046² for establishing a neighborhood in Or Yehuda. In 2018, it submitted an objection to a Plan for Priority Housing No. 1045 for establishing a neighborhood in Bnei Brak. Their objections often concern fundamental issues, which should have been addressed earlier in the planning process."				

A plan for a priority housing area that was discussed in the National Committee for Planning and Building of Priority Areas.

The Audit Chapter	The Audited Body	The Deficiency/ Recommendation in the Previous Audit Report	The Rectification Extent of the Deficiency Noted in the Follow-up Audit			
			Not Rectified	Slightly Rectified	Significantly Rectified	Fully Rectified
Considering the positions of the MOT in the planning discussions at the Committee for Planning and Building of Priority Areas	The MOT and the National Committee for Planning and Building of Priority Areas	In the previous audit report, "the State Comptroller Office found cases in which representatives of the MOT made comments regarding the submitted plans during the deposition discussion stage, and disparities were found between the representatives of the MOT and the representatives of the plan submitters or the Committee's transportation consultant. Among other things, the MOT representatives requested to carry out more comprehensive examinations of the effects of the plans, to increase the areas allocated for the establishment of public transport facilities, to coordinate with the MOT and relevant parties, and to add stages and conditions to the plan requiring the provision of transportation solutions as a condition for the promotion of the construction plans.				

The Audit Chapter	The Audited Body	The Deficiency/ Recommendation in the Previous Audit Report	The Rectification Extent of the Deficiency Noted in the Follow-up Audit			
			Not Rectified	Slightly Rectified	Significantly Rectified	Fully Rectified
Land use planning in the vicinity of public transport facilities	The MOT and the National Committee for Planning and Building of Priority Areas	The previous audit found plans without the principle of the correct combination between land designations and public transport facilities, including Priority Housing Plan 1046 for the establishment of a new neighborhood in the southwest of Or Yehuda and Priority Housing Plan 1023 for the establishment of a new neighborhood in the southeast of Ramat Gan.				
Synchronization between the implementation of construction plans and the implementation of transportation projects	The MOT	The previous audit found cases where the implementation of transportation projects was not promoted at the same time as the building plans were promoted. The problems caused to the residents of Rosh Ha'Ain, and Harish were due to the lack of synchronization between the implementation of the building plans and the transportation projects that are essential to serve the residents.				

