Light rail (also known as the tram, tramway, streetcar, light rapid transit, and LRT) occupies a special niche in the public transportation sector. After World War II, many tram systems either became obsolete or were removed as the automobile culture gained prominence. However, over the last decade, these systems have made an impressive comeback with superior technology, improved operations and higher benefit-cost ratios. As cities plagued with traffic congestion, high pollution levels, and soaring fuel prices explore alternatives for environmentally-sustainable, inclusive and cost-effective mass transit solutions, light rail is emerging as a viable option.

Well-planned tramways enhance the reputation, ambience and competitiveness of any city - small, medium or large. The service quality, reliability and futuristic image of the modern tram boost ridership. Policy makers and urban planners prefer light rail because of its accessibility (low-floor design), quiet and emission-free operations, flexible capacity due to modular design, positive impact on property values, lower costs compared to heavy rail, ability to share track with mainline railways, smooth connectivity with other modes of transport, and commercial real estate development opportunities.

Globally, about 400 light rail systems are operational. Europe has the highest density with about 170 systems in operation, over 60 systems under construction, and over 100 systems planned. In North America, Middle East & Africa and Asia, new systems have been launched in the last decade and more are underway. Having gained acceptance and funding support, light rail projects are offering exciting business opportunities and fostering development of vibrant markets. As passenger demand grows, there is need for expansion of the light rail system. As existing systems grow older, upgrade and renewal is required for safe, reliable and comfortable operations.

The Global Light Rail Projects Report provides updated information on the world's top 111 light rail projects that present significant capital investment opportunities. The report covers 40 countries. It presents the key information required to assess investment opportunities in the development of new systems, extension and upgrade of existing systems, rolling stock procurement and renewal, power and communication systems upgrades, and fare collection automation. Key contacts for the project developers, operators and relevant industry players are also provided.

The report is available in PDF format and has about 375 pages.

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Sources and Methodology

Global Mass Transit Research’s industry analysts have utilised primary and secondary research sources in preparing this report. Primary sources include information obtained through telephone interviews and emails from public transport authorities, operators and regulators. Secondary sources include, but are not limited to, project websites and status reports; websites, annual reports, capital programmes and financial reports of transport authorities and operators; documentation provided by relevant financing institutions; investor presentations; analyst reports; government plans and documents; websites of ministries and regulators; websites of industry associations; internal and external proprietary databases; news articles; and press releases. Wherever applicable, research sources are cited within the report.

Our analysts and researchers have combined the information from these primary and secondary sources with their industry expertise to synthesise the qualitative and quantitative analyses presented in this report. In cases where data was not available, we have used the estimates from authentic published reports or press releases.

Great care has been taken to ensure that all analyses are supported by facts. In situations where facts were not available and assumptions were made to conduct analyses, we have explained our assumptions and our methods of estimation.

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