

February 2016

## **A position paper on public transportation in Arab communities submitted to the Knesset subcommittee on public transportation**

By the Sikkuy Equality Policy Department

In 2012 Sikkuy published the fifth “barriers to equality” policy paper, which focused on public transportation in Arab communities (the study appears on the Sikkuy website in [Hebrew](#) and Arabic). The study revealed a disturbing picture of the low level of public transportation in these communities. As of 2011 there was almost no internal public transportation in Arab communities. In a community like Kafr Qasem, with over 20,000 inhabitants, the first bus entered in 2012. Today the community has two public transportation lines, but the need is far greater. Unfortunately, although it is a large city in the center of the country, this is the rule rather than the exception for Arab towns and cities.

In the study we used Sikkuy's [“From Barriers to Opportunities”](#) model, analyzed the deep-seated barriers to the introduction of public transportation into Arab communities, and brought concrete political recommendations for dealing with them. **We therefore see the discussion in the Knesset subcommittee for public transportation as an opportunity for advancing such transportation in these communities, with an emphasis on the following points:**

### **1. Conducting a nationwide survey of community needs**

In order to assess the needs of the population in the Arab communities and to allocate public transportation accordingly, a comprehensive survey should be conducted as soon as possible for all the communities - which will enable the introduction of well-planned service based the needs of the residents. We would like to know the timetables and when the survey is expected to be ready.

### **2. Adapting infrastructure for public transportation in the Arab communities**

In many of the communities there is poor infrastructure that prevents the introduction of public transportation services to the community. For example, the absence of traffic bays to enable passengers to board and alight or proper traffic circles and speed bumps prevent buses from entering the community.

Because minibuses are not commonly used, the lack of infrastructure for full – size bus public transportation is delaying the launching of such service.

This requires coordination and strengthening of the interface between the local authority and the Ministry of Transport (MOT) and acceleration of plans for public transportation arrangements. Until the infrastructure is upgraded and adapted, we recommend the use minibuses. In addition, there is a need to budget additional manpower in the MOT infrastructure division so that it will be able to push for an improvement in infrastructure in the Arab local authorities, and to give priority to budgeting infrastructure for public transportation rather than for private vehicles.

**The recent government decision #922 which states that: "The Ministry of Transport and Road Safety will continue to implement government decision # 2365 regarding the budgeting of 40 percent of the total additional public transportation services, or 100 million shekels annually, whichever is more, for the benefit of public transportation in minority communities, until the level of transportation provided is equalized." At the same time government decision 922 advocates the adoption "of the declaration of the Ministry of Transport and Road Safety, to the effect that beginning in 2016 at least 40 percent of the total investment in infrastructure in local councils (that are not cities) should be allocated for developing road infrastructure in the minority communities. In addition, in 2016 this percentage will effectively be 45 percent," an allocation whose implementation must be monitored.**

### **3. The appointment and budgeting of a designated person in every local council to handle public transportation in the community**

After we discussed the need for a liaison person in the local council to be in charge of public transportation in the community and work with the MOT, we were happy to learn **that last year a course was opened for supervisors of public transportation in the local councils**. About 20 people from the Arab local councils participated in the course in the north of the country. We are requesting that this continue, along with an additional course. In meetings with the local council heads the need for a course in the area of the Triangle was mentioned.

In terms of part of the budgeting we haven't succeeded as yet. In the past decade the government started to transfer an increasing number of budgets to the Arab local councils, all of which require the efforts of the community's engineering department. In the Arab local councils the engineering departments are very small and sometimes suffer from problems related to professionalism. **In order to ensure that the budgets transferred to the Arab local councils are utilized, additional work slots must be added to**

**the Arab communities until the gap is closed, and there must be continued investment in training the engineering crews in the communities.**

#### **4. Increased manpower (within the MOT) tasked with advancing public transportation in the Arab communities**

The government must bridge a gap of over 60 years of discrimination in providing public transportation services to Arab local councils. In order to close such a significant gap quickly manpower must be allocated for that purpose. To the best of our knowledge the team that is working to advance public transportation in the Arab communities is very small, and despite its considerable efforts in recent years it is incapable of closing the gap within a reasonable period of time.

#### **5. Making information about bus service available in Arabic as well as Hebrew**

Stationary signage - In 2015 new stationary signs were posted in bus stations all over the country. The signs were posted everywhere in Hebrew only, including in the Arab communities. As a result of intensive work with the MOT, we were told that there is a plan to add signs in Arabic at 5,000 bus stops (out of a total of about 30,000) by June 2016. We are asking the MOT to post stationary signs in Arabic everywhere in the country, since Sikkuy believes that Arabic should appear at all the country's bus stops and not only in Arab communities.

#### **6. Determining criteria for the funding and expansion of public transportation services in the communities**

Objective criteria will enable the MOT to provide public transportation services to the communities that are most in need of them. The ministry formed a committee to determine criteria, but this committee has been working for a very long time and its activity is not transparent to the public. To the best of our knowledge objective criteria for funding and expansion have yet to be determined. In the absence of clear criteria, the local councils are unsure to what they are entitled or what is required of them if they want bus service. This has created a situation in which the stronger the local council and the better organized its residents, the more likely it is to have better public transportation.