

Sample 2: IELTS Writing Task 2 (Discussion Essay)

You should spend about 40 minutes on this task.

Write about the following topic:

Some people think that governments should invest more money in improving public transportation, while others believe that building more roads is a better solution to traffic congestion. Discuss both views and give your own opinion.

Give reasons for your answer and include any relevant examples from your own knowledge or experience. Write at least 250 words.

Answer for Score Band 7 Level

Traffic congestion is a growing problem in cities around the world, and governments must decide how best to address it. Some argue that investing in public transportation is the most effective solution, while others favour expanding road infrastructure. This essay will discuss both perspectives before presenting my own view.

Supporters of public transport investment argue that it offers a sustainable, long-term solution. When cities provide reliable buses, trains, and metros, many commuters are encouraged to leave their cars at home, directly reducing the number of vehicles on the road. London's Congestion Charge, combined with an extensive underground network, is often cited as a successful model that significantly reduced inner-city traffic levels over time.

On the other hand, proponents of road expansion contend that in many regions, particularly rural or developing areas, public transport is simply not a viable alternative. Building new roads or widening existing ones can provide immediate relief to congested corridors and stimulate economic activity by improving freight movement and connectivity. However, critics rightly point out that new roads tend to attract additional traffic over time, a phenomenon known as induced demand, which can negate any short-term benefits.

In conclusion, while road construction has its merits in specific contexts, I believe that investing in public transportation offers a more sustainable and effective response to congestion. Governments should prioritise transport systems that reduce overall vehicle numbers rather than simply accommodating more of them.

Answer for Score Band 8 Level

As urban populations swell and private vehicle ownership rises sharply, traffic congestion has become one of the most pressing infrastructure challenges of our time. Governments are broadly divided between two camps: those who advocate expanding road networks and those who champion investment in public transport. Both positions have genuine merit, yet I contend that public transport investment represents the more strategically sound and environmentally responsible path forward.

The case for road expansion rests on immediacy and inclusivity. In rapidly urbanising nations such as India and Nigeria, where public transport networks are underdeveloped, new roads can deliver swift connectivity gains for both passengers and freight. Road infrastructure also serves dispersed rural populations for whom mass transit is economically unfeasible. That said, urban planners have long documented the phenomenon of induced demand, whereby new road capacity generates proportionally greater traffic volumes — essentially ensuring that today's solution becomes tomorrow's bottleneck.

Public transport investment, by contrast, addresses the root cause of congestion: the sheer number of private vehicles competing for finite road space. Cities like Singapore and Tokyo demonstrate that well-funded, integrated transit networks can move millions of people efficiently while simultaneously reducing emissions and urban sprawl. Crucially, every commuter who switches from a car to a train removes a vehicle from the network — a compounding benefit that road construction simply cannot replicate.

In conclusion, while road construction retains value in under-connected regions, governments grappling with urban congestion would be better served by investing decisively in public transportation — the only solution capable of fundamentally reducing demand on road space rather than merely expanding its supply.

Answer for Score Band 9 Level

The debate over whether governments should channel resources into public transport or road construction reveals a deeper philosophical divide about how cities should grow. Road advocates prioritise immediate, tangible relief; transport advocates argue for systemic, behavioural change. I would contend that this is ultimately a false choice in most urban contexts — and that framing it as one leads policymakers toward the less transformative option.

The intuitive appeal of road expansion lies in its visibility: a new motorway or widened arterial road signals decisive governmental action. In low-density or economically developing regions, this logic holds — roads unlock access, stimulate commerce, and serve populations for whom rail or bus infrastructure is demographically unviable. Yet in dense urban environments, road expansion operates as a self-defeating intervention. Decades of transport research, most notably the work of urban economist Anthony Downs, have established that new road capacity induces equivalent new demand, restoring congestion to prior levels within years.

Public transport investment, by contrast, operates on a different logic entirely: it does not accommodate car travel — it displaces it. Tokyo's rail network, serving over eight million daily passengers, has made private car ownership largely redundant for commuting, compressing journey times while shrinking the city's carbon footprint. The mechanism is structural rather than merely additive; each passenger shifted to rail does not merely free up road space — they permanently alter their commuting identity, generating durable, compounding returns on public investment.

Congestion is not a shortage of road space — it is an excess of private vehicles. Governments that recognise this distinction will invest in systems that change how people move, not merely where they can drive. Public transport is not the most idealistic option; it is the more rational one.