$9 Million Global City Challenge Launched to Drive Safe, Inclusive, and Sustainable Innovation in City Mobility

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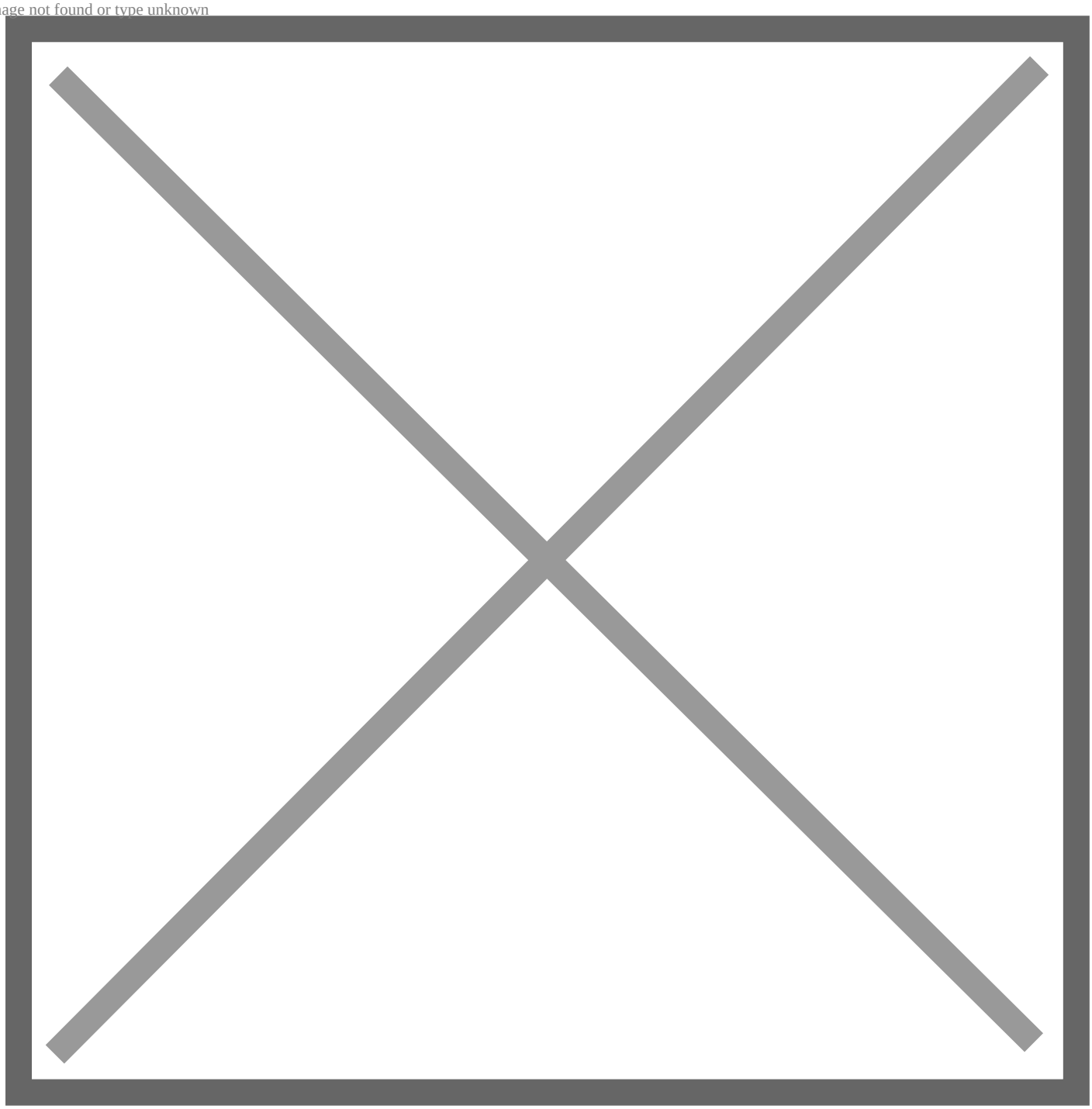

LONDON (June 21, 2023) – The Toyota Mobility Foundation, in partnership with Challenge Works and World Resources Institute, has launched a $9 million global challenge to help cities adapt to the future, with the potential to transform the lives of millions around the world.

As cities grow and evolve, the challenges of moving people and goods in reliable, efficient, and inclusive ways have never been more essential. At the same time, opportunities to apply advances in transport modes, infrastructure design, operations, energy options, and connected data systems have never been more promising.

The Sustainable Cities Challenge aims to improve the lives of people by increasing access to jobs, education and other essential services. It will bring cities and innovators together to implement mobility solutions that could reduce carbon, improve accessibility, and use data to build more resilient transport systems.

“Our experience over the past decade has underscored the importance of local cities’ buy-in and engagement with our activities,” Ryan Klem, director of programs at the Toyota Mobility Foundation, said. “Throughout the Sustainable Cities Challenge, we are looking to work alongside cities to find innovative solutions in the areas they identify as critical to develop a scalable model for the cities of tomorrow.”

Call for Entries

Entry to the first stage of the Challenge is open to city leaders and municipal governments, transport departments and other related local and regional agencies. Entries should be submitted according to one or more of the following three themes:

- Expanding access to safe, affordable, and inclusive modes of transportation
- Harnessing the power of data to create connected and resilient mobility ecosystems
- Reducing environmental impact through low-carbon and renewable energy solutions

Shortlisted cities will be invited to attend a capacity building academy in the U.S. and will receive support developing their challenge design, becoming part of a wider network of other innovative city teams.

In February 2024, three winning cities will be selected to host a City Challenge to attract entries from global innovators. Innovators could be homegrown – living in the city or country chosen – or maybe from anywhere across the globe, but with solutions applicable and adapted to the winning cities.

The winning innovators for each city will be announced in late 2024, and the cities and innovators will share $9 million in funding to test and roll out their solutions.

Increase mobility solutions for a more sustainable future

Many cities are now adapting to new behaviors and lifestyles, as our lives move increasingly online, and patterns of work change. With more than half of the world’s population currently living in cities, the United Nations predicts this will increase to two-thirds by 2050. Additionally, cities are responsible for 70% of global greenhouse gas emissions.

The Sustainable Cities Challenge is funded by the Toyota Mobility Foundation and has been designed in partnership with Challenge Works and World Resources Institute. Challenge Works is an international leader in developing challenge programs to drive new thinking and find creative solutions to problems facing society. World Resources Institute is a global research organization which works with partners to develop practical solutions that improve people’s lives and ensure that nature can thrive.

“Brilliant people all over the world are working hard to create innovative solutions to help mobility systems work better, and with a lower carbon footprint,” Kathy Nothstine, head of future cities at Challenge Works, said. “The Sustainable Cities Challenge will help those innovators interface with cities to test and adapt solutions according to local needs to improve people’s lives. Challenges like this can act as catalysts for change by accelerating innovation in real world settings.”

In addition to helping cities decarbonize, transforming mobility systems will help cities become more inclusive and accessible for the people living in them. Currently, 1.2 billion people living in cities do not have access to one or more core services.

“Cities are in need of innovations to foster sustainable mobility that reduces emissions, improves health, and increases access to jobs and opportunity for all,” Ben Welle, director of integrated transport and innovation at World Resources Institute’s Ross Center for Sustainable Cities, said. “The Sustainable Cities Challenge is an excellent opportunity for cities globally to build capacity and support innovators to work hand in hand with officials.”

To find out more and to enter, visit the Sustainable Cities Challenge website.