The EcoCore Project
Green Transition in Small Cities along Transport Corridors

CASE STUDY

ALBA IULIA – SMART MOVES IN A SMALL CITY

Pioneering Sustainable Urban Mobility in Romania

Background

Alba Iulia, a city of just under 75,000 residents in central Romania, is often recognized for its historical significance - but it is also emerging as a modern leader in sustainable urban mobility. Despite its modest size, the city has implemented forward-thinking mobility infrastructure and digital innovation that position it as a replicable model for small and mid-sized cities across Europe.

Alba Iulia, a key member of the EcoCore network has aligned its mobility initiatives with broader green transition goals. The city is also a signatory of six Local Green Deals (LGDs), including two focused on mobility, with an emphasis on behavioural change, stakeholder data sharing, and system integration.

The Smart Mobility Strategy

The city launched a suite of sustainable mobility interventions between 2007 and 2025, funded largely through EU programs. Key elements included:

- 300 smart bikes provided as part of a public bike-sharing system.
- 40 electric buses integrated into the public transport fleet.
- 18 km of dedicated bus lanes developed to support reliable transit.
- 95 surveillance cameras to monitor traffic safety and flow.
- 45 upgraded bus stations with modern amenities.
- A centralized Smart Traffic Management Centre for dynamic route management, congestion monitoring, and public safety oversight.
- 3 intelligent solutions dedicated to payments in public transport, real-time info-panels, and an upgraded e-ticketing solution.

URBACT

Co-funded by the European Union
Interreg

ALBA IULIA IS AMONG THE FIRST ROMANIAN CITIES TO ADOPT ELECTRIC PUBLIC BUSES ON A BROAD SCALE.

Innovation in practice

Outcomes and Benefits

- Improved air quality and reduced GHG emissions through fleet electrification and modal shift incentives.
- Enhanced public transport reliability and attractiveness, leading to a projected increase in ridership.
- Increased safety and user trust through smart surveillance and traffic control.
- Recognition as a national pioneer in smart mobility, aligned with the city's broader branding as Romania's first smart city.

Key Enablers

- Strong leadership by the municipality under the Alba Iulia Smart City program.
- Access to and effective use of EU funding, including cohesion and recovery programs.
- Participation in international networks such as URBACT's EcoCore and CityLogo.
- Engagement with local universities and business stakeholders for technical input and co-creation.

Lessons for Other Cities

- Small size is not a limitation. With vision and strategic funding, compact cities can be innovation leaders.
- Integration matters, mobility, data, energy, and citizen behaviour must be aligned.
- Pilot projects can scale, start with manageable components like smart bikes or targeted bus routes.