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# Local public transport in the EU

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## PUBLIC TRANSPORT SECTOR PRIORITIES FOR THE LEGISLATIVE TERM 2024-2029

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FEBRUARY 2024

With the Green Deal, the European Union is fighting climate change and various environmental-related challenges, transforming the European economy, and striving to become the first net zero-emission continent by 2050 with intermediary targets for 2030 and 2040. This gives hope to the next generation and provides a clear strategic and regulatory direction to Europe's industry and businesses. In parallel the EU has fostered digitalisation, the exchange and re-use of data, as well as new technologies. **A lot of new legislation affecting the public transport sector has been passed in 2019-2024 and its implementation requires appropriate funding. The Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy (SSMS) and the EU's Urban Mobility Framework call for modal shift and more sustainable daily mobility. Now it is time for implementation!**

**Let's make high-quality public transport a symbol of modern Europe!**

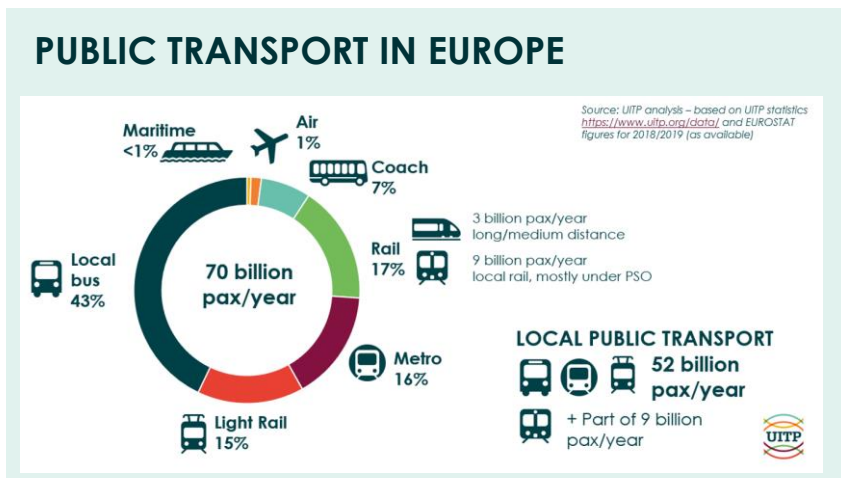


# EUROPE NEEDS MORE HIGH-QUALITY PUBLIC TRANSPORT

**Developing public transport is an opportunity** to provide mobility for all while working towards many other European objectives, such as economic development, jobs, health, environmental protection, societal coherence, etc. **Hardly any sector has so many positive externalities.** If citizens are offered sustainable, efficient, modern, comfortable and reliable mobility options, they will prefer cities filled with life instead of cities filled with cars. Public transport keeps cities and towns moving in an efficient, environmental-friendly way, allowing people to reach their jobs, education, health appointments or leisure activities. Clean buses can reach any destination in a city and region. Complemented by a network of multimodal hubs to facilitate first and last mile connections, regional and suburban rail, metro, tram and urban rail systems and bus rapid transit (BRT) systems are recognised for their high capacity and contribution to land-use development. Automated rail-based systems – and in the future autonomous buses – are not only fast and efficient, but also benefit from a high level of resilience, e.g. during the COVID crisis. New mobility services should be provided as part of the public transport offer and be regulated by local transport authorities to ensure they contribute the city's or region's mobility objectives.

In modern societies, people will use shared mass transit options, because they are fast and efficient, as well as good for the environment. While all mobility modes have their merits, **future daily mobility will have public transport as its backbone**, complemented by active mobility and personalised shared mobility options. This vision is already reflected in the EU's Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy and the Urban Mobility Framework. New legislation passed in 2019-2024 is setting out a clear path for the public transport sector to become even cleaner, more digital, and more modern. **Now it is time for us to make these ambitions a reality and provide more and better public transport across the EU!**

- *Modal shift to public transport and active mobility must become a clear and non-disputable objective of the European Union, as it is supporting many public policy goals such as social cohesion, economic development, sustainability, healthy citizens, etc.*
- *A Declaration in support of public transport should recognize the multiple benefits of the public transport sector and assemble different levels of governance behind the common goal to promote and strengthen the use of public transport across the EU.*
- *Each new legislation in the EU should be assessed as to whether it supports the provision of public transport or makes it more cumbersome, costly or bureaucratic.*
- *Regulatory stability for the public transport sector must be ensured, as well as coherence of the regulatory framework for all modes, avoiding in particular counteracting policies.*



# GREEN PUBLIC TRANSPORT FOR ZERO-EMISSION MOBILITY

The Green Deal, Europe's sustainable growth strategy, sets out a transformation pathway for the whole European economy – and it must now be implemented. The European public transport operators and authorities stand firmly behind the EU's climate targets, as UITP members committed to become net carbon-neutral themselves by 2050 at the latest. **Several studies recently stated that modal shift towards public transport is needed to reduce Green House Gas (GHG) emissions and pollutant emissions stemming from daily mobility.**<sup>1</sup>

As climate mitigation depends on action not only at the global scale, but also at the level of cities<sup>2</sup>, **public transport is a key lever to help decarbonise cities** and achieve climate-neutral mobility of citizens by offering an energy-efficient, fast, accessible and affordable alternative to the private car. By increasing the offer of public transport and supporting the development of fast and attractive services (e.g. high-capacity regional and urban rail or bus rapid transit systems), emissions related to daily mobility of citizens can be reduced further. Meanwhile, public transport companies in cities and regions are working towards the **decarbonisation of their fleets**;<sup>3</sup> however, without sufficient funding for zero-emission buses, charging stations, the transformation of depots and maintenance shops and newly skilled staff, the process risks getting delayed.

- *To implement and accelerate the energy transition in public transport, the European Union should provide co-funding for zero-emission vehicles and the installation of infrastructure for both road and rail based systems.*
- *The adaptation of transport infrastructure to new hazards and climate change will become necessary. The EU should support adaptation measures with funding.*
- *The external costs of transport should be calculated for each mode according to the Commission's Handbook on external costs of transport<sup>4</sup> and included in the price of transport. Cities should be empowered to apply the internalisation of external costs locally.*

## PUBLIC TRANSPORT – FOR PEOPLE, BY PEOPLE!

### SERVICE EXCELLENCE FOR PASSENGERS

**Passengers are at the centre of public transport operations.** Aiming to provide an excellent and affordable service to all customers, in 2019, UITP and the European Passenger Federation (EPF) published a Passenger Charter<sup>5</sup>, laying down fundamental basic rights of public transport users. In the EU, passengers benefit from harmonised **passenger rights** as well as other measures to

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<sup>1</sup> ITF Transport Outlook (2023); EIT Urban Mobility – Study on costs and benefits of the sustainable urban mobility transition (2021)

<sup>2</sup> Around 74,8% of the European population lives in a city, town or suburb.

<sup>3</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Urban-rural\\_Europe\\_-\\_introduction#Introduction\\_to\\_territorial\\_typologies](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Urban-rural_Europe_-_introduction#Introduction_to_territorial_typologies)

<sup>4</sup> The newly adopted CO2 emission standards stipulate that, as of 2035, any urban bus placed in the EU market as of 2035 must be zero-emission.

<sup>5</sup> <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/9781f65f-8448-11ea-bf12-01aa75ed71a1>

<sup>5</sup> See [UITP-EPF Passenger Charter](#)

improve their comfort (e.g. the possibility to receive multimodal travel information before, during and after their journey, based on EU legislation). The EU's passenger rights legislation is divided by (long-distance) transport mode; **local public transport** is covered by several of these regulations but **is in fact a mode per se**: multimodal by essence, and mostly running under public service obligations, so local public authorities also exercise some quality control over the service. This set-up should be taken into account, and care should be taken **to avoid any requirement putting the economic equilibrium of PSO services at risk**. When legislation is made, it is important that the new **legal obligations are made to fit to the specific context of public transport services**.



Concerning persons with reduced mobility (PRM), public transport operators strive to improve the accessibility of their service, while continuing to move millions of passengers every day in the fastest and most reliable way possible. The **modernisation of infrastructure to meet today's accessibility standards** can be technically difficult and costly, in which case transport operators may offer alternative tailor-made solutions for certain passenger groups.

- *To ensure a continuity of high-quality mass transit services and to avoid putting too much burden on local public transport operators, any forthcoming EU legislation must be "fit for public transport services", appropriate, and reasonable.*
- *Any discussion regarding passenger rights on public transport shall involve all relevant stakeholders and be mindful of local conditions and local solutions.*

## **PUBLIC TRANSPORT STAFF**

**The European public transport sector employs directly 1.3 million people.**<sup>6</sup> In many cities, public transport operators are amongst the **largest employers**. About two thirds of the public transport staff are drivers. In recent years the sector is experiencing a serious shortage of staff, for example concerning engineering and technical professions, maintenance staff, but also drivers. The **drivers' shortage is already leading to cancellations of bus and/or rail services** – at a time when shared mass transit should be expanded to become the preferred choice of citizens!<sup>7</sup> The need for qualified personnel is set to deteriorate further due to the expected retirement wave of the "baby boomer" generation over the next years and the difficulty to attract young people to the public transport sector. **UITP expects this shortage to become a major obstacle for the sector in the coming years – in all Member States.**

- *The EU should review the rules for the accession to the bus and train driving profession so the sector is able to attract more young people and people looking for a career change.*

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<sup>6</sup> [Indirect employment includes 650.000 jobs in the European Rail Supply Industry.](#)

<sup>7</sup> Germany, the Netherlands, and the Scandinavian countries are amongst those countries where this trend is particularly strong. In cities like Amsterdam, the public transport company is preparing to replace over 40% of its staff due to retirement over the next 5-10 years.

## PUBLIC TRANSPORT NEEDS SUFFICIENT FUNDING!

Conventional public transport services rely heavily on well-maintained infrastructure and assets (rail and roads, vehicles, stations, etc.) and are characterised by a large number of staff and a high consumption of energy. **All these expenses are on the rise, while revenues have been negatively affected** e.g. by the pandemic, the increase in working from home, and political pressure on fares. This leads to an **economic imbalance** of the sector.

While significant financial contributions are already made from the EU's budget and the European Investment Bank (EIB) to the transport sector as a whole, to implement a push for public transport, as outlined above, and to have *more* public transport in the future, Member States and European policymakers must **unlock more European investments into urban and local public transport** assets, infrastructure, and services.

- *UITP asks for the EU to keep supporting the development of local public transport throughout the next post-2027 Multi-annual Financial Framework (MFF) with increased funding and simplified access requirements.*
- *Set up a new EU grant scheme for local public transport to accelerate the greening of the vehicle fleet (bus, tram, metro, suburban and regional rail) and related infrastructure, the extension of networks and improvement of the offer (higher capacity, new services, etc.), while enabling local and regional authorities to access this fund directly.*
- *The polluter-pays and beneficiary-pays principles should be fully implemented in the EU for all transport modes, including the aviation sector which competes with railways.*
- *Whenever possible, new revenue (e.g. from road charges, polluter pays mechanisms, the Emission Trading System (ETS), etc.) should be earmarked fully or partially for the development of the public transport offer.*



## PUBLIC TRANSPORT IN THE DIGITAL ERA

**The public transport sector will become increasingly digitalised** – just like its customers. However, this brings new challenges (e.g. cybersecurity) and requires investments which not all transport companies are able to make. The digitalisation of some areas (e.g. of tariffs to participate in Mobility as a Service (MaaS) platforms) is desired but does not bring any direct return to the provider. The European Union can accelerate the digitalisation of societally desired aspects of public transport services by providing funding or co-funding in these areas.

Public transport operators and authorities participate actively in **data-sharing** with third parties, both voluntarily and based on European legislation (for instance, the ITS Directive and the delegated regulation on MMTIS, or the Open Data Directive). Data has a value to any data holder, and data management comes with a cost. Therefore, the public transport companies and authorities should be able to manage the data they hold **based on fair principles**, including **reciprocity and compensation**, and should not be required to provide their data to third parties for free. When it comes to the **data automatically generated in vehicles (incl. buses)**, this data must be accessible to the operators/owners of the vehicle.

- *The EU can accelerate the digitalisation of the public transport sector by providing funding or co-funding opportunities for desired outcomes.*
- *The exchange of data in the transport sector should be based on fair common principles and should not require any operator to provide data to third parties for free. Any future legislation and the European Mobility Data Space (EMDS) shall respect these principles.*
- *The forthcoming legislation on in-vehicle data should ensure that the legitimate interests of bus operators/fleet owners are respected, e.g. when it comes to data needed to improve the operation and/or maintenance of these vehicles.*

### FUTURE TICKETING – WHY PLATFORMISATION IS NOT THE SOLUTION

The **integration of public transport services and fares** must always happen under the responsibility of a competent local or regional public authority, which ensures that public policy goals are met. Many public transport systems already provide citizens access to all services with one pass or ticket. If this is the case, cities and regions usually adopt an integrated fare policy. **Digital ticketing** (a smart card, a mobile ticket, etc.) can be a facilitator, making the acquisition of tickets easier. A variety of ticketing solutions exist, and companies will choose what is best suited to their local situation. A stronger European focus on **enabling ticket sales via digital platforms (MDMS)** will certainly bring benefits to persons travelling to unfamiliar places (e.g. on a business trip or during holidays), but less to daily commuters who know where to go and how to get their tickets.

- *When regulating ticket sales via platforms (MDMS), the EU should adopt a stepwise approach and start with the integration of single and touristic tickets, focusing on long-distance and cross-border transport, where such harmonization has most benefits.*
- *Any legislation should respect the role of local and regional public authorities to manage mobility in their area, including through pricing and the provision of local MaaS services.*

# PUBLIC TRANSPORT BENEFITS AT A GLANCE

## 1. BUSTLING CITIES



Public transport keeps cities moving. Up to 2020, the sector counted almost 60 billion passenger journeys per year in Europe, with numbers on the rise. Imagine the traffic if all those trips were made in cars! Congestion already costs the European economy 1% of its GDP, €100 billion per year. Public transport is essential to reduce congestion and as such, it benefits those not using public transport, as their roads are emptier.

Once autonomous vehicles (AV) will be widely available, traffic will likely increase. On the other hand, if AVs become part of the public transport offer and complement mass transit in the city, it will be possible to take every citizen to their destination while getting rid of 80% of cars!

## 2. CLEAN AIR



Air pollution affects people's health and can lead to decreased respiratory health, pneumonia, cancer, and other diseases.

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), some 40 million people in the 115 largest cities in the EU are exposed to air exceeding WHO air quality guideline values.

Thanks to public transport, air quality can be improved, as it produces far fewer quantities of air pollutant per passenger kilometre than individual motorised mobility. As buses become increasingly zero-emission, this will further improve air quality in European cities.

It is in everyone's interest to promote public transport: the cleaner air resulting from a stronger use of public transport would benefit every single person in the entire region, not just those who use it.

## 3. SAVING THE PLANET



Public transport is the most climate-friendly way of traveling besides walking and cycling, as it uses less energy and emits less CO<sub>2</sub> per passenger-kilometre than private vehicles. According to the European Environmental Agency, public transport by bus is twice as efficient and by rail four times more efficient than cars\*. It is not enough to decarbonise cars, as technological change takes time. For citizens' daily mobility, a modal shift to collective public transport and active mobility is needed and can be achieved over a shorter period. The objectives of the European Green Deal for transport will not be met without more public transport.

## 4. BOOSTING THE ECONOMY



Public transport entails economic benefits that are around five times higher than the money invested in it. Every €1 of value created from public transport is linked to a further value creation of €4 in the total economy. How? For example, by connecting people to their jobs, training and leisure activities, enabling the clustering of activities and business development, supporting tourism, increasing land and property value, stabilising property values, and helping to regenerate cities or deprived areas through transport connections. Investment in public transport creates 25% more jobs in the wider economy than the same level of investment in roads or highways would produce.

Annual public investment in local public transport accounts for €40 billion. And public transport companies make huge investments themselves! Urban and local public transport services in Europe contribute between €130-150 billion per year to the economy. This equals 1.0-1.2 percent of GDP.

Many sectors such as the construction industry, the supply industry, manufacturing, and IT services are recipients of these investments.

Very often, public transport investments benefit local or regional companies, including SMEs, hence boosting economic development in the region.

## 5. LOCAL JOBS



The public transport sector is amongst the largest employers at local level, employing in total 1.3 million people in the EU. Importantly, public transport provides secure local jobs, which cannot be delocalised abroad. Moreover, every direct job in public transport is linked to four jobs in other sectors of the economy.

Diversity is key: public transport companies provide many different types of jobs, from less qualified to highly qualified profiles, and employ staff with very diverse backgrounds. Most companies offer vocational training positions to huge numbers of young people.

## 6. ACCESSIBILITY AND AFFORDABILITY



Public transport offers equal opportunities to all citizens, independent of their social standing. It provides access to the most essential functions of the city (schools, hospitals, offices, shops, etc.) and costs 1/16 of what people pay for owning a personal car. A good territorial coverage and the long-term availability of the service is guaranteed by the public authority; there is no risk that the service stops operating from one week to the next. Politically determined fares and social tariffs ensure affordability for all groups of the society.

Public transport, particularly networks reaching out to suburbs and rural areas, contributes to territorial cohesion, while also reducing traffic congestion by commuters. For rural areas, a basic

public transport offer – including transport on demand – can ensure access to economic and social opportunities for the region's inhabitants and local businesses.

## 7. QUALITY OF URBAN LIFE



Public transport systems are much more efficient than individual motorised mobility in terms of using public space efficiently. At the normal 1.3 persons occupancy rates of cars, a full standard bus can take more than 40 cars off the road, a full metro 600 cars and highspeed metro (like RER in Paris) can replace 1,500 cars. Take this in, while considering that you can see up to 30 metros per hour going one way.

Have you ever dreamt of more green spaces in the city, more safe places for people to meet and kids to play? During the Covid-19 lockdown, some European cities experimented with shutting down road lanes and increasing space for pedestrians and cyclists. More public transport and fewer cars would free up public space that is currently dedicated to cars (driving and parking) and could be returned to citizens. Imagine what cities could be like!

## 8. HEALTHY, ACTIVE LIFESTYLE



Public transport encourages an active lifestyle, as most journeys involve walking or cycling to, from and within public transport stations. The health benefits associated with active travel include positive impacts on diabetes, mental health, dementia, obesity and a decreased risk of cardiovascular disease and different types of cancers. Promoting the combination of walking, cycling and public transport can be a useful tool for public health services and positively impact citizens' health!



## 9. NUMBER ONE IN SAFETY



Public transport is the safest way to travel the city and the continent. Europe still registers 120,000 seriously injured people due to road accidents and more than 20,000 road fatalities every year, around 47% of which occur in cars and taxis, 17% on motorcycles and mopeds, and 8% on bicycles, compared to around 0% in buses and coaches. Railways are even safer and appear as the safest mode of land transport in the EU. So if you want to achieve "vision zero": support public transport!

## 10. INNOVATION



Few sectors have developed and applied as many new technologies as public transport did over the years! Public transport companies provided e-mobility long before we discussed electric cars, and fully autonomous metros have been operating in European cities for over 35 years. For the customers, digitalisation and the use of smart phones makes the planning of journeys and the use of collective transport easier and more fun. Currently, the sector is engaged in new research and development, including the use of hydrogen, artificial intelligence, cross-border digital ticketing, and autonomous road vehicles.

... And since you don't need to drive, you can use your time spent on public transport to come

up with the new inventions of tomorrow. Are you ready?

## 11. NOISE REDUCTION



Road traffic remains the biggest source of noise pollution in Europe, which can lead to sleep disturbances, hypertension, and premature death. If more people took public transport, traffic volumes would decrease, and so would citizens' exposure to noise. People living in city centres that have been turned into pedestrian areas accessible only for buses or trams, notice the difference. Good news is that electric buses will reduce noise emissions even further!

## 12. CONNECTING PEOPLE



At times of increasing inequality and social division, it is ever more important to strengthen the social fabric across Europe, and public transport can contribute. Public transport is a place of encounter. It is a place for people with different backgrounds to meet and interact with each other through a smile, a helping gesture, or a discussion. At major events like concerts or soccer games, it's part of the fun to travel together with other fans. Some people have even made new friends or found the love of their life on public transport!



This is an official policy paper prepared by UITP EU Committee. UITP is the international association representing public transport stakeholders. In the European Union, UITP brings together more than 450 urban, suburban and regional public transport operators and authorities from all Member States. We represent the perspective of short distance passenger transport services by all sustainable modes: bus, regional and suburban rail, metro, light rail, tram and waterborne. Visit our website: [uitp.eu](http://uitp.eu)