

PRESS RELEASE

JOINT STATEMENT

It's time to be clear: Rail and public transport are the quickest way to reach decarbonisation

The UK COP26 presidency has selected transport as tomorrow's priority theme with "speed up the switch to electric vehicles" as the UK presidency's goal, putting electric cars centre stage as the way to align the future of the land transport sector with the Paris Agreement.

Climate change cannot be stopped without decarbonising transport. Transport emits around 23% of the energy-related CO₂ that feeds global warming. Without immediate action, transport's share of emissions could reach 40% by 2030. Transport emissions have grown faster than those of any other sector – with one mode of transport driving that unsustainable growth in road transport emissions more than any other.

We cannot wait until 2050. Action needs to be taken now to ensure that the necessary changes to mobility are made this decade. Solutions already at hand can halt the rising emissions from transport this decade, but these are too low down on the agenda at the COP26.

We need to rebalance the debate on mobility solutions, especially in our cities. By focusing only on switching to electric cars, there is a real risk that our roads will remain unsafe and congested, with persistent particulate air pollution issues. Cities are better when people can move around them, not when they are stuck behind a steering wheel.

We also need to focus on transport solutions that provide access to safe and inclusive mobility for all. While electric cars are clearly an important part of the solution to the climate crisis, they are not the only solution – especially for the global south.

Urgent solutions are required in order to halt and reverse rising transport emissions by the end of the decade, including finding ways of shifting to the lowest emitting modes. Only by embedding the full range of solutions in transport climate policy will we significantly reduce carbon now and fast-track solutions everywhere for the benefit of all.

With excellent connectivity to the bicycle and pedestrian modes, rail and public transport must be the backbone of this approach. They provide an affordable, efficient, safe and environmentally sustainable means of transport; one that promotes green growth, enables access and reduces inequality while bolstering the fight against air pollution and climate change.

Tomorrow's Transport Day comes against the backdrop of last week's commitment from world leaders to a clear shift from ambition to immediate action, which is why UIC and UITP are sending a clear message to COP26: Let's move people, not cars, for the benefit of people and the planet.

If we really want to make transport faster, cheaper and easier for all, let's first provide people with more and better rail and public transport.