



INTERNATIONAL UNION
OF RAILWAYS



PRESS RELEASE

JOINT STATEMENT

Covid-19 pandemic: The continuity of passenger transport services is crucial

During this Covid-19 crisis, ensuring continuity of public transport and local mobility services is essential for society and the economy, especially for the many individuals who depend on a well-functioning transport system and must travel to execute their essential daily functions. This will ensure that the health crisis does not turn into a social one.

The public transport sector is impressive by its strength of community, and during times of crisis we must all stand together to advocate for sustainable urban mobility. Involving trade unions at an early stage in preparations and decision-making contributes to a greater understanding and collaboration with the workforce. Trade unions are an important source of knowledge and information. Similarly, local staff have a vital role to play by their tireless work at the frontline to ensure the functioning of public services.

Transport and local mobility service is vital in order to keep key workers moving, and should be arranged so that public transport workers and passengers can travel safely. It is equally vital to maintain connection with intercity services within stations.

In order to ensure the continuity of services, it is vital that the competent authorities guarantee the supply of appropriate protective equipment and products to public transport and local mobility operators - and that employers ensure provision to their employees to protect the health and safety of their employees, as well as their passengers.

In these unprecedented times, public transport authorities, operators and local mobility providers are committed to complying with the health and safety recommendations and requirements set by their national authorities and the WHO, including measures that adhere to social distancing standards. Health and safety measures should apply regardless of workers' contractual status and be responsive to different genders and migration statuses.

Most public transport and local mobility stakeholders have already put in place a comprehensive set of preventive measures, in some cases negotiated with trade unions, and are continuously sharing information in order to keep transit systems running.

We are committed to optimise the exchange of good practices, and jointly build expertise within the community of mobility providers and in social dialogue with trade unions.

No one is quite able to determine what the next steps will look like in terms of assessing the social, economic and financial impact of the pandemic on the urban and metropolitan mobility sector. Public transport employees who are the guardians of mobility should be protected.

Based on the first available data, from China, Italy, Spain, France and the USA, for example, we can be sure that the passenger transport sector's ecosystem will be heavily affected in multiple ways. This includes local public transport authorities, public transport operators, subcontractors, new mobility providers and the supply industry. The impact relates not only to the decrease in farebox revenues (in some cities the reduction in patronage overpasses 90%) and the additional costs needed to disinfect and implement social distancing measures in public transport vehicles and infrastructure, but also to the reduction in industrial and service production and decrease in turnover of the supply industry, with potential consequences on preserving employment in a sector which is in many cases one of the main, if not the first, employers in cities.

In order to limit these social, economic and financial consequences, exceptional measures will need to be adopted by Governments. These measures, including financial support, need to be deployed very rapidly to public transport networks in order to ensure the continuity of services during the crisis and to swiftly resume regular operations once Covid-19 is under control. In countries where public transport operators solely rely on passenger revenues, their sheer survival in the short term is at stake. This financial support must also be targeted towards the preservation of jobs and workers' terms and conditions of employment. Similar measures are needed to support the public transport supply industry get through the crisis, restore production, and make sure citizens keep public transport in their mobility habits.

We must keep in mind that passenger transport systems, and the workforce which keep these systems running, are vital to the regular functioning of the economy, these measures would not just support the sector in question but the whole of society.

During these exceptional times, our members are committed, with the support of the national competent authorities, to ensure continuity of services and limit the social, economic and financial consequences for the various stakeholders in the passenger transport sector.

Some examples of good practice measures include:

- Ensure that all workers receive the latest and most accurate information about COVID-19, including ways to limit/avoid transmission;
- Provide staff, in all occupational groups, with adequate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), including gloves, masks and hand sanitising products and other appropriate means to limit the spread of the virus, taking into account the availability of the local facilities.
- Regular deep cleaning and disinfection of public transport vehicles/workplaces/stations and assets touched by public transport users (such as ticketing devices, poles, seats etc.) and make available disinfectant dispensers for passengers;
- Limit the interactions of drivers and other occupations with passengers (for example no cash ticket sales onboard, allowing rear-door boarding only) in line with social distancing standards
- Adapt the level of service according to the reduction of travel demand to ensure service continuity and to comply with decisions taken by public authorities (e.g. night services and school services are suspended in some cities, some networks are following weekend or school holidays timetables as agreed with trade unions);
- Provide dedicated services to healthcare personnel and any other category of personnel falling under essential services.

We thank all of the public transport workers, who are our Guardians of Mobility, for professionally fulfilling their duties and providing a public service. Public transport workers must be able to carry out their jobs safely while minimising the risk to themselves and passengers.

Bearing in mind that passenger transport systems are vital to the regular functioning of the economy, these measures would not just support the sector in question but the whole of society. Public transport is also crucial to keep the global climate agenda on track.

It's important that we all remain committed to advocating for public transport as a vital public service during these unprecedented times.

Yours sincerely,

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