

2nd IRU/EU Presidency Road Transport Conference
“Efficient solutions for making road transport greener”
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2nd Panel Discussion

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Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, Dear Colleagues,

In my capacity as President of the IRU Passenger Transport Council, which covers bus, coach and taxi businesses in Europe and around the world, allow me to draw your attention to one single issue, namely, the road transport industry's Smart Move campaign to double the use of collective passenger transport by road in the next 10 to 15 years, as a priority business and policy objective at EU level.

The objective of the Smart Move campaign is simple. It is also clear and ambitious.

Perhaps, this bold industry objective of doubling the use of collective passenger transport by road has scared more than one, including many politicians at EU level.

But by no means all of them.

They have realised that the Smart Move campaign will help to effectively meet the greening objectives of the EU.

Indeed, the Members of the European Parliament were among those courageous and innovative politicians, who echoed this industry proposal in the Grosch report on the future EU transport policy, adopted in November last year, where the objective of doubling the use of public transport services has been established as an official Parliamentary priority.

The same is true for some EU Member States, such as Sweden, where a national public-private initiative was launched to double the use of public transport, including buses, coaches and taxis.

We welcome such examples of policy innovation, and we are ready and willing to work together with any partner, from the public and from the private sectors, so that this objective is recognised, established and achieved in a true public-private partnership.

Allow me, Ladies and Gentlemen; to highlight once again, in front of you all, what are the expected benefits of the Smart Move campaign of doubling our services. Doubling the use of bus and coach transport at EU level would mean:

- reducing CO₂ emissions by at least 50 million tonnes per year,
- reducing road fatalities by more than 3000 per year,
- drastically reducing congestion in cities, as a result of the expected 10-15% reduction of car traffic,
- creating 4 million new, green and stable jobs.

And all this without massive public subsidy, that is to say at the lowest cost for taxpayers and society.

Show me the politician, Ladies and Gentlemen, show me the trade union leader, show me the green movement activist, who would not subscribe to such objectives?

That is the reason why, Ladies and Gentlemen, we are so pleased that our appeal to establish, on the basis of the Smart Move campaign's objectives, a public-private High Level Group at EU level, to work out a dedicated Action Plan with recommendations and a calendar on how to achieve the doubling of the use of collective passenger transport by road in the next 10 to 15 years, has now obtained the support of the European Commission as well. This group will meet for the first time in March this year and will aim at concluding its work on the action plan within 12 months.

Such public-private partnerships, with the participation of the EU political establishment and institutions, on the one side, and the industry, on the other side, is indeed the strongest guarantee that the proposals which will be elaborated will also be adopted and indeed implemented both in policy making and legislation, as well as, indeed, in conducting our daily business.

We, from the bus, coach and taxi industry, have done the first part of our homework: we have worked out a clear strategic vision and made very concrete proposals on how such recommendations might look.

Among the main industry recommendations are:

- to increase the maximum authorised weight for two-axle coaches in international traffic to at least 19.5 tonnes;
- to eliminate shortcomings and barriers related to access of collective passenger transport by road to terminals of other modes;
- to increase the number of dedicated bus lanes in cities and between cities, and allow visiting coaches and taxis to use them;
- to work out and propose a harmonised EU framework for low emission zones (LEZs) in Europe,
- to end the fiscal discrimination between collective passenger transport modes, and harmonise VAT rates for intra-EU and domestic bus and coach transport in the EU at zero level;
- to always consider the sector's specificity when devising/amending legislation, in particular regarding EU social legislation and driving and rest time rules.

This is just to name but a few.

We once again invite our partners from the transport and travel sectors to join us, in this long-term effort to make the Smart Move and create a legislative market and operational environment conducive, to producing a shift in customers' behaviour and achieve inclusive, efficient and sustainable mobility for all European citizens and visitors, at the lowest cost for society.

Thank you very much for your attention.
