



CONCLUDING REMARKS

Graham Smith, CEO Heyfordian Travel (UK) and Vice President of the IRU

Ladies and Gentlemen, Dear Colleagues,

Instead of summarizing this morning's debate, which is a task nearing to impossible, allow me rather to stress some core industry messages, which I would like to share with you today.

Firstly, allow me to stress once again the importance of the IRU proposal for a wide public-private partnership to achieve a doubling of the use of collective transport by bus and coach in the next 10-15 years. I am myself an operator and I believe buses and coaches offer a first-rate product to our society and customers, in line with society's overwhelming preference for a safe and green mobility for all. And I can assure you that the bus and coach industry is capable of delivering on that proposal, provided an appropriate legislative framework and incentives are put in place.

Without any doubt, this is a very ambitious objective; but at the same time it is an extremely mobilizing objective, both for politicians and businesses. Our initial calculations show that doubling the use of buses and coaches in the European Union alone may result in:

- A reduction in CO2 by at least 50 million tonnes per year,
- A reduction in fatalities on EU roads and streets by more than 3000 per year,
- Practically, a disappearance of congestion in cities, without any single taxpayer EURO spent, since the expected 10-15% reduction in car traffic will be a genuine traffic revolution;
- Creation of 4 million new quality jobs in Europe alone.

Importantly, we believe that this objective is realistic. To give you an example, in my neighbouring region of Cambridgeshire in the UK, thanks to the efficient partnership between operators and local authorities, bus use has actually doubled in just seven years.

Indeed, there are many reserves in policy-making to help make this shift happen, such as bus and coach-friendly park & ride policies and parking areas, priority lanes for buses and visiting coaches, a much fairer tax regime, public transport-friendly land use planning, including support for bus and coach terminals, support for school transport – in short, a supportive regulatory framework.

That is why, although we have recently seen some positive signs, such as the policies adopted in Bremen, Berlin, Stockholm, we are very sad to see that anti-coach policies persist across Europe and, sometimes, even worsen. In many cases, the visiting coach and its passengers, who are not voters in that particular city, are the easiest target to help fill in empty municipal budgets, in particular in some cities in the South of Europe.

A similar situation prevails regarding low emission zones, which are constantly spreading all across Europe, and where every city tends to invent its own rules, limitations, certificates. At this rate, we may arrive at a situation where only part of the fleet is able to visit Paris, another part just London, and yet another part is confined to German and Italian cities, carrying on board a set of individual certificates, each with differing criteria.

Hopefully this is a nightmare scenario which will never come to pass, but it demonstrates the absurdity of the situation if it continues without any framework guidelines from the European authorities.

Regarding the future legislation on passenger rights, allow me to make clear our position from the outset. We welcome reasonable passenger rights' rules, which are adapted to the industry structure and specificity, and which place the customer at the centre of policy and business care.

This is important to understand in the light of our proposal to work towards doubling the use of public transport by buses and coaches. This also shows that the bus and coach industry is ready and willing to shoulder its responsibilities towards its customers, including customers with disabilities.

On the other hand, it is equally important that EU policies and rules, which are expected to ultimately improve the quality of our services, must at the same time guarantee a level playing field between passenger transport modes, in particular in the field of taxation. They should also promote the role and place of bus and coach travel as a safe, environmentally-friendly, comfortable and, indeed, affordable means of transport for all.

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In conclusion, allow me, on your behalf as well, to warmly thank our speakers today and our partners from ECTAA, ETOA and FBAA, not forgetting the host of our event today, Busworld, who have kindly offered us a 1-hour guided visit of the exhibition, even before the official opening.

The visit will start at 14:00 sharp from this room.

Thank you very much and enjoy your meal.

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