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### **Call to action for the continuity and survival of private passenger transport services**

The private passenger road transport industry provides vital services to society and contributes to economic growth. It adds to the success of numerous sectors, most notably, but not limited to the tourism industry, and is essential to business and leisure travel. However, as the COVID-19 pandemic containment measures are forcing millions of people to stay at home, passenger transport operators have also been facing a de facto lockdown unlike any other in the industry's history.

IRU represents private passenger operators, namely the bus, coach and taxi sectors, whose services are crucial to everyday social and economic life. Taxis and bus operators are essential to meeting local and urban mobility needs, while coach operators provide school transport, intercity and long-distance connections, and tourism services. Together, they are the greatest providers of collective mobility in the world.

Bus, coach and taxi companies are playing their part in fighting the spread of COVID-19 and mitigating its impact on the economy and the well-being of people around the globe. **Ensuring the basic continuity of these passenger transport services is essential for society and the economy**, especially for the citizens who depend on a well-functioning collective transport system and must travel to or for work in order to perform their daily duties. Maintaining passenger services is therefore vital to keeping key workers, students and even public authorities moving.

COVID-19 has seen passenger numbers drop and routes and trips cancelled. Road passenger transport activity has declined steeply, and in some countries, ceased to function at all. The box below highlights the overall reduction in activity per segment of the road passenger transport sector:

**Tourist coach: 100%**

**Long-distance international lines: 100%**

**Long-distance national lines: 90%**

**School, kindergarten etc. transports: 100%**

**Taxi: 80%**

**Special transports for municipalities (sick, elderly etc.): 90%**

**City buses: 70%**

Based on available data from China, France, Italy, Spain, and the United States amongst others, we know that the passenger transport sector's ecosystem will be heavily affected in multiple ways. This includes not only the private operators in the bus, coach and taxi segments, but also public transport operators along with many other stakeholders who are directly or indirectly dependent on the continuity and survival of the passenger transport sector. The impact relates not only to the decrease in revenues and the additional costs needed to implement social distancing measures in transport vehicles and infrastructure, but also to the reduction in industrial and service production, with potentially dire consequences on employment in the passenger transport sector.

In order to limit these social, economic and financial consequences, **exceptional measures must urgently be adopted by governments. These measures, including financial support, need to be deployed very rapidly** to private 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. Postponing repayments of overdraft facilities, bank advances, loans, mortgages and leasing operations in particular should be done without delay. The provision of special funds is also urgently required. Last but not least financial assistance should be provided to enable transport operators to access scarce protection and cleaning supplies to ensure that drivers and passengers alike are kept safe. We must bear in mind that urban and intercity transport and coach tourism are all vital to the economy and these measures would not only benefit the sector in question but also the whole of society.

Also, in order to ensure the continuity of services, **the competent authorities must guarantee the availability of the relevant sanitary equipment and products to transport operators to protect the health and safety of their employees, as well as their passengers.** In these challenging times, both public transport authorities and private bus, coach and taxi operators remain committed to complying with the latest health and safety recommendations and requirements set by their respective national authorities and WHO.

All public and private transport mobility stakeholders have put in place a comprehensive set of preventive measures and are continuously sharing information in order to keep

mobility networks running. IRU similarly continues to optimise the exchange of good practices and strengthen expertise within the mobility provider community.

**Some good practice measures include:**

- Ensuring that all staff members receive the latest and most accurate **information about COVID-19 measures including ways to prevent the spread of the virus**
- **Providing staff, especially drivers, with sanitizer products and other** appropriate means to limit the spread of the virus, taking into account the availability of the local facilities.
- **Ensuring the regular deep cleaning and disinfection of transport vehicles and assets touched by transport users (such as ticketing devices, poles, seats etc.)**
- **Limiting the interactions of drivers with passengers (for example, no cash ticket sales onboard, allowing rear-door boarding only)**
- Implementing appropriate guidelines for luggage handling
- Providing dedicated services to health-care personnel and any other category of personnel falling under essential services
- Adapting the level of service according to the reduction of travel demand in line with regular business procedures and with decisions taken by public authorities
- Temporarily releasing staff members with a higher risk of infection (e.g. older staff members over 60, people with chronic health conditions, etc.) from active service

We **SALUTE** all transport personnel who are our heroes of the road for professionally fulfilling their duties despite whatever fears or concerns they may have.

Yours sincerely,



Radu Dinescu  
IRU President



Umberto de Pretto  
IRU Secretary General