



European Social Partners in Urban Public Transport

Joint Recommendations on the future Multiannual Financial Framework 2028-2034

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The European Social Partners in the Urban Public Transport sector, representing the operators and the workers of public transport across all EU Member States, support the European Commission's commitment to modernise the next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) 2028-2034. With a total envelope of nearly €1.8 trillion, a strengthened climate earmark of 35%, and reinforced transport allocations, the proposal reflects the EU's ambition to remain a global leader in climate action, competitiveness, and social cohesion.

The European Social Partners affirm that a robust supply of high-quality public transport is essential to securing Europe's future, grounded in sustainable economic growth and the wellbeing of its citizens:

- Public transport keeps cities functioning efficiently, accounting for nearly 60 billion passenger journeys per year in Europe, with ridership continuing to increase.
- Public transport is a cornerstone of a green and just recovery; current structural challenges across the EU cannot be addressed effectively unless public transport is clearly prioritised as a vital pillar of economic, social, and environmental recovery in both the short and long term.
- Investment in high quality urban, suburban and regional public transport will create more local jobs and deliver strong value for money. Approximately 2 million people are employed in the public transport sector at local level in the EU, representing 20% of the 10 million workers in the wider transport industry, and these are secure local jobs that cannot be relocated abroad.

The European Social Partners are concerned about the absence of explicit recognition of urban, suburban, regional mobility in the proposal. In this context, we strongly demand the introduction of dedicated urban, suburban, regional mobility envelopes within funding frameworks such as the National and Regional Partnership Plans, the European Competitiveness Fund and the Connecting Europe Facility-Transport, to secure sustained investment in public transport systems in the years to come.

Key Recommendations

Introduce dedicated budget lines for public transport projects in NRP Plans and CEF III, ensuring eligibility for various urban, suburban and regional transport infrastructures: Currently, the proposed National and Regional Partnership Plans (NRPPs) do not foresee any guaranteed minimum to be spent on local and regional passenger mobility. This stands in stark contrast with the European Structural and Investment Funds under the current EU Cohesion Policy that these plans will partially replace, and which have foreseen an entire Policy Objective (PO3) dedicated to improving mobility during the MFF 2021-2027. European Social partners therefore call on the co-legislators to explicitly include the development, renewal, and modernisation of public transport among the objectives of the NRPPs, so as to ensure that these essential investments are not overlooked by the partnerships responsible for drafting the plans. Furthermore, European Social Partners request that spending on public transport be assigned a social coefficient in the performance framework, to recognise its importance for social inclusion and include it under the minimum 14% earmark for social spending.



Support for urban nodes is crucial in scope of CEF-Transport: Despite a substantial increase in budget, the scope of the CEF-T is reduced largely to funding military mobility and large-scale cross-border and international connections. This would be at the expense of other vital projects previously supported by CEF-T, not least of which support urban nodes along the TEN-T network. Support for urban nodes is crucial to integrate the TEN-T with urban, local and regional transport systems, improving their overall effectiveness. Shifting CEF funding exclusively to large, high-profile projects signals a worrying change in political priorities within the Commission.

Military mobility and resilience should also cover protection and resilience of public transport infrastructure: Considering the geopolitical situation, it is not surprising that the proposed MFF has focused more on security – see the massive increase in funding for military mobility. However, this vision of security is rather narrower than what is required. Urban mobility is a critical element of secure and resilient societies. Public transport has played a key role in keeping Ukrainians safe, from the use of metro stations as refuges to the need to adapt quickly to keep cities moving. Moreover, the climate crisis also represents a serious geopolitical threat. Increased climate risks, such as flash flooding, also require significant investments in infrastructure and workforce so that public transport systems are able to keep users safe, respond resiliently to shocks and ensure continuity of high-quality services.

Cities and regions are critical for the success of those framework programs: The draft NRRP framework, which seems to include the majority of funding for urban, suburban and regional mobility, is designed to be heavily dependent on the actions and priorities of national governments. Under such a governance approach, cities and regions face high risk of being locked out of decisions impacting their access to critical European funds. It is particularly worrying that national governments will be at will to decide if, where and how to assign funding under the NRRPs with only a bare minimum of consultations foreseen with sub-national governments, social partners and other stakeholders. Similarly, the “money for reforms” aspect of the NRRPs risks that cities and regions will be cut off from vital EU funds due to (political) actions of their national governments being outside of their control.

Conclusion: The European Social Partners, UITP and ETF, urge all relevant EU decision-makers to prioritise local public transport in the upcoming MFF provisions to achieve climate, competitiveness, and social equity goals, advocating for direct investment and strategic support for urban, suburban and regional mobility initiatives. Through a plethora of well-documented external benefits, the value for money of public transport-related investment is unquestionable and should be recognized much more prominently in the forthcoming EU budget.

The European Transport Workers' Federation (ETF) is a pan-European trade union organisation which embraces over 200 transport trade unions from across Europe. ETF is a recognised social partner in eight European Sectoral Social Dialogue Committees and represents the interests of more than 5 million transport workers from 38 European countries. In urban public transport, ETF brings together unions organising workers in all public transport companies, whether public or privately-owned, and in all modes: bus, tram, metro, light rail, trolley bus, and taxi.

UITP is the international association representing public transport stakeholders. In the European Union, UITP brings together more than 500 urban, suburban and regional public transport operators and authorities from all Member States. We represent the perspective of short distance passenger transport services by all sustainable modes: bus, regional and suburban rail, metro, light rail, tram and waterborne. The UITP EU Committee has the quality of employer in order to ensure the European social dialogue with ETF.