



Dear Ms. Anna Deparnay-Grunenberg,

Cc: Shadow Rapporteurs and TRAN Committee Members of the European Parliament

Brussels, 9 July 2020

The COVID-19 crisis has significantly reshaped European transport in the period that followed the launch of the European Commission proposal to declare 2021 as ‘European Year of Rail’.

Public transport is facing an unprecedented crisis. The cost to the sector has been estimated to be 40 billion EUR this year<sup>1</sup>, owing to a dramatic decrease in passenger numbers while service levels have been largely maintained to support frontline workers. These losses are projected to continue in the medium term, with depressed passenger numbers as a result of lower public transport capacity factors and potential user reluctance.

This challenges not only the daily operation and service provision of public transport but also urban mobility more broadly. A decrease in passenger numbers across the short and medium term will likely result in an increase in congestion, air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions. Indicative evidence from cities in third countries points to this risk, with passenger car purchases and use rising above pre-COVID levels, while public transport utilisation remains lower<sup>2</sup>.

The protection of public transport will require all means at our disposal. The European Year of 2021 is a critical opportunity to support collective mobility and exchange on challenges to safe and comprehensive public services. Activities foreseen under the Commission proposal would be valuable: initiatives and events to promote debate and raise awareness of citizens; information, exhibitions, inspiration, education and awareness-raising campaigns; sharing of experience and good practices of national, regional and local authorities; undertaking studies and innovative actions and; promotion of projects related to the European Year.

In a context where citizens are reluctant to use collective transport, an expansion of scope of the European Year to include public transport (such as urban rail, trams, and metros)

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.uitp.org/sites/default/files/cck-focus-papers-files/PUBLIC%20TRANSPORT%20IS%20CRITICAL%20FOR%20EUROPEAN%20RECOVERY%20-%20FINAL%20VERSION.pdf>

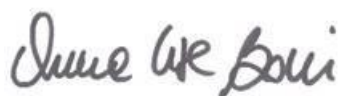
<sup>2</sup> <https://www.itf-oecd.org/sites/default/files/respacing-cities-resilience-covid-19.pdf>

is important to maximise the potential outreach of the proposal. This is a fundamental aspect of securing sustainable end-to-end mobility and sustainable and smart logistics. With the new challenges brought by the COVID-19 crisis, several lessons and objectives are directly applicable to both rail and public transport: promotion of collective modes as safe and sustainable, returning to previous service levels while ensuring the safety of passengers and workers, as well as enhancing their contribution to society and our economies.

The competitiveness of rail and public transport is dependent, in part, on sustainability and modernity, to maintain attractiveness relative to other modes. The European Year of 2021 should build on the framework outlined by the newly proposed Multi-annual Financial Framework (MFF) and recovery instrument Next Generation EU. Additional funds under the InvestEU sustainable infrastructure policy window and the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) are foreseen to support clean fleet renewal and further develop multimodality. Awareness raising and projects to renew, modernise and encourage the use of public transportation fleets should be a focus of the European Year 2021 to complement these proposals and support the achievement of our shared goals for a green and digital transition.

We recommend:

- Expand the scope of the European Year of 2021 to include public transport services, such as urban rail, trams, and metros to support sustainable end-to-end mobility and logistics
- Raise awareness and develop projects to renew, modernise and encourage the use of urban rail services and public transportation fleets



Anna Lisa Boni  
EUROCITIES Secretary General



Thomas Avanzata  
UITP Europe Senior Director