

# Oil Crisis Demonstrates Urgent Need for Better Public Transport

The conflict in the Middle East is creating the largest energy shock in history. Even if the Strait of Hormuz reopens soon, it is expected that oil supplies will be impacted for much longer. The International Energy Agency (IEA) therefore [published a report identifying 10 measures](#) that governments, businesses and households can implement quickly in order to mitigate the shock. The IEA estimates that road transport fuels make up 2/3rds of oil use in many countries in Europe, with 60% of this energy use stemming from private passenger cars.

The IEA notes that in some countries, short trips of less than 30km within cities can account for up to 50% of oil consumption by private vehicles. In the third recommendation of the report, the IEA therefore encourages governments to incentivise residents to shift from private cars to public transport, as well as active mobility like cycling and walking.

This crisis underlines the absolute necessity of reducing oil consumption in general and especially for private mobility. Europe is lucky to have some of the most extensive, efficient, and electrified public transport systems in the world. However, recent [Eurostat data](#) shows that 50.6% of EU citizens never used public transport in 2024, needing to rely instead on private cars. These citizens, concentrated in rural, peripheral and suburban areas where public transport is lacking or insufficient, now face rapidly rising petrol and diesel prices. Mobility allows people to access essential services, work, healthcare, education, and social life. Therefore, when fuel becomes too expensive and alternatives are not available, the consequences can be catastrophic.

As organisations including mobility stakeholders, social, climate, and environmental civil society, workers' representatives, and cities, we call on European and national policymakers to urgently implement IEA Recommendation 3 to encourage public transport and active mobility.

- ▶ **Public transport must be available and reliable**, meaning services must actually exist and run with sufficient frequency to be useful to citizens' day-to-day lives, not just at peak hours. Similarly, safe active mobility infrastructure, such as accessible footpaths and a continuous cycle network, must be the foundation of urban mobility systems, enabling safe, direct, and inclusive access to essential services and opportunities, while supporting the effective functioning and accessibility of public transport through reliable first- and last-mile connections.
- ▶ **Public transport must be accessible to all**, including in terms of vehicles, stops, and first- and last-mile infrastructure. People with disabilities and reduced mobility cannot be excluded from public transport systems. Organisational aspects such as distances between stops must take into account the needs of all users to reach their destinations within a reasonable amount of time.
- ▶ **Public transport must be attractive**, with minimum standards of reliability, safety, security,

quality of infrastructure and vehicles, comfort, speediness, and convenience. Similarly, walking and cycling infrastructure must provide users with a pleasant and safe experience.

- ▶ **Public transport must be affordable**, while still ensuring its financial sustainability. Public transport is an essential public service, and no one should be barred from using it due to their economic situation. However, revenue from users represents a vital source of funding for public transport systems, and should not be jeopardised. Measures to ensure affordability should be carefully targeted to people particularly at risk of transport poverty, balancing the fundamental right to mobility with the need for reliable, long-term funding.

However, public transport authorities and operators across Europe face budget cuts and rising costs. Urgently needed expansion of networks is being postponed, and critical maintenance is being neglected. Glaring and persistent staff shortages are already leading to regular service cancellations and gaps in timetables. In some rural, peripheral and suburban areas public transport simply does not exist. All these problems leave many citizens with no other alternative to private cars, forced to pay rapidly increasing fuel prices or forgo mobility all together.

Public transport policies must also systematically consider gender aspects. Women are more frequent users of public transport, more likely to depend on public and active mobility. At the same time, women often face higher concerns related to safety, security, and accessibility. Ensuring that public transport systems are planned and operated with a gender-sensitive approach is therefore essential to provide inclusive, safe, and effective mobility solutions that respond to the needs of all users.

This crisis must be a wake-up call for European policymakers to prioritise public transport as a means to ensure mobility for all, advance Europe's energy independence, and transition to a low-carbon future. Public transport must be treated as a strategic public service, with adequate funding, proper planning and quality employment

We call on European policymakers at every level to urgently act upon IEA Recommendation 3 and promote public transport and active mobility based on the following principles:

- 1) Ensuring stable, long-term funding at EU, national, regional and local level for public transport and active mobility. Adequate and predictable long-term funding must cover day-to-day operations, required maintenance, as well as investments in zero-emission vehicles and infrastructure, including accessible last-mile infrastructure.
- 2) Reliable integrated transport services across all cities and regions that are accessible and attractive to all residents. Improving public transport coverage outside urban centres is absolutely critical. There should be no barriers to clean and reliable mobility no matter location, gender, age, physical ability, or socio-economic situation. Vehicles, stops, infrastructure, and routes to and from public transport must be accessible to all. Safety is particularly key, both for passengers and public transport workers.
- 3) Sufficient staff and fair working conditions for public transport and mobility workers to ensure stable, attractive and reliable public transport systems. Attractive working conditions are indispensable for ensuring sufficient staff to run high-quality services and be able to expand the public transport offer. Social dialogue and investment is needed in the public transport workforce to deal with problems such as overwork, aggression and

burnout, which are undermining the attractiveness of the sector - especially for young people and women.

- 4) Continued support for the green and digital transition in public transport to ensure higher quality, greener mobility services to all. There should be meaningful involvement of all stakeholders in the design, implementation, and monitoring of mobility policies to ensure that the transition works for everyone.
- 5) Consistent support to promote active mobility, including walking and cycling, to complement and enhance public transport through investment in safer infrastructure.

### Signatories:



Clean Cities



Climate Action Network (CAN) Europe



Eurocities



European Environmental Bureau



European Metropolitan Transport Authorities



European Passenger Federation



European Network on Independent Living



European Transport Safety Council



European Transport Workers' Federation



Friends of the Earth Europe



International Federation of Pedestrians



International Association of Public Transport (UITP) Europe



POLIS



SOLIDAR



Youth and Environment Europe