



## ► ILO Sectoral Brief

September 2020

# COVID-19 and Urban Passenger Transport Services

Urban passenger transport is vital for people living in and around towns and cities to access their jobs and enterprises. It can improve social cohesion and quality of life,<sup>1</sup> if it can reduce the isolation of deprived neighbourhoods or contribute towards attaining environmental objectives such as noise control, air quality and the reduction of carbon emissions. Efforts to make it more user-friendly can help to broaden the options to those with impaired mobility.<sup>2</sup> And it is predicted that 68 per cent of the world's population will live in urban areas by 2050, which will exacerbate urban mobility challenges, including the dispersal of jobs, traffic congestion and sprawl.<sup>3</sup> So the policy decisions made today will have long-term implications on local jobs and quality of life in the "cities of tomorrow".

Given the importance of urban transport, it is understandable that some cities have experienced significant economic, environmental and social difficulties as a result of the necessary measures imposed on public transport services to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus. Yet such measures have been essential in order to protect operators, workers and the travelling public. This has been particularly important for women, who rely more heavily on public transport to access basic services and perform care responsibilities.<sup>4</sup> This sector's vital role is underlined in a number of the targets under the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.<sup>5</sup>

**But the pandemic has brought unparalleled consequences to this sector, and exceptional financial support will be needed to enable its full recovery.**



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Implementation of enhanced sanitizing measures in Oman

Urban transport is generally one of the most significant local employers in urban areas and staff costs account for a high percentage of overall costs. Financial packages will support operators in balancing their books or continuing to provide services with sustainable levels of debt. In many countries, most transport operators receive subsidies from transport authorities. There is a growing concern, however, that the pandemic could pose an existential threat to some urban passenger transport operators.<sup>6</sup> The sector is now facing financial distress and stimulus packages will have a direct impact

1 ILO, *The Impact of Decentralization and Privatization on Municipal Services: Report for discussion at the joint meeting on the impact of decentralization and privatization on municipal services*, 2001, p. 12.

2 ILO, *The Impact of Decentralization and Privatization*.

3 "68% of the world population projected to live in urban areas by 2050, says UN", *United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs: Population Division: News*, 16 May 2018.

4 OECD Council on SDGs, *Gender equality and sustainable infrastructure: Issues note*, 2019, p. 3.

5 OECD Council on SDGs, notably Targets 3.6, 3.9, 11.2 and 11.6.

6 Leonardo Canon Rubiano and Georges Darido, "Protecting public transport from the coronavirus... and from financial collapse", *World Bank Blogs*, 24 April 2020.

on local jobs, as well as a city's high- or low-carbon development path.<sup>7</sup>

**COVID-19 prevention measures have increased costs and burdens (for example through cleaning and disinfecting), while the plummeting ridership during lockdown and post-lockdown periods has led to a significant decrease in fares revenues.** At the same time, urban transport has had to continue operating

to ensure essential workers get to and from work. In some cases, central/federal governments are providing financial support. Systems that were originally more dependent on fares (as opposed to subsidies/tax revenues) might become bankrupt during or after the pandemic, and informal or lightly regulated transport undertakings now face a catastrophe as a result of the pandemic.<sup>8</sup>

## ► 1. The impact of COVID-19

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**The world of urban passenger transport services has changed as a result of COVID-19.**<sup>9</sup> City authorities have found themselves at the apex of the COVID-19 outbreak. Authorities have deployed crisis management structures, and urban transport operators have been required to implement the protocols and measures issued by competent authorities to combat the spread of the novel coronavirus.<sup>10</sup> Business continuity has been a key objective for a number of transport companies as they maintain operations to transport other essential workers. Operators have been able to maintain services, in many cases with reduced schedules and frequencies,<sup>11</sup> but the pandemic has exposed some of the weaknesses of the sector that will require setting long-term policies and determining the changes to be made overall.<sup>12</sup>

has forced taxi and e-hailing companies in some cities to be creative or re-invent themselves, with many offering food and medicine delivery services.<sup>15</sup> However, this will not be enough to avert a wave of bankruptcies in the industry.<sup>16</sup> Figure 1 includes a summary and comparative examples by date of the transit ridership impact from January 2020 to 30 August 2020 in certain cities.

### Main impacts: the sector

**The impact on the different urban mobility modes is widespread but a common denominator has been the decline of ridership across all modes since early March 2020.**<sup>13</sup> In spite of plummeting revenues and the COVID-19 exposure risks presented to their workforce, operators have responded to these circumstances to service their communities.<sup>14</sup> For example, the outbreak

7 Philip Turner, "The key role of public transport to build back better: Climate", *UITP webinar*, 18 May 2020.

8 Paul Barter, "[Save Manila's \(mostly informal\) public transport!](#)", *Reinventing transport podcast*, 7 May 2020.

9 Mohamed Mezghani, "[COVID-19 and the future of public transport](#)", *All Over the Place*, ITF podcast, 22 April 2020.

10 UITP, [Factsheet: Management of COVID-19: Guidelines for public transport operators](#), 2020, p.1.

11 Mezghani.

12 Alana Dave, "[COVID-19 special - Alana Dave - ITF](#)", *Intelligent Transport podcast*, 29 April 2020.

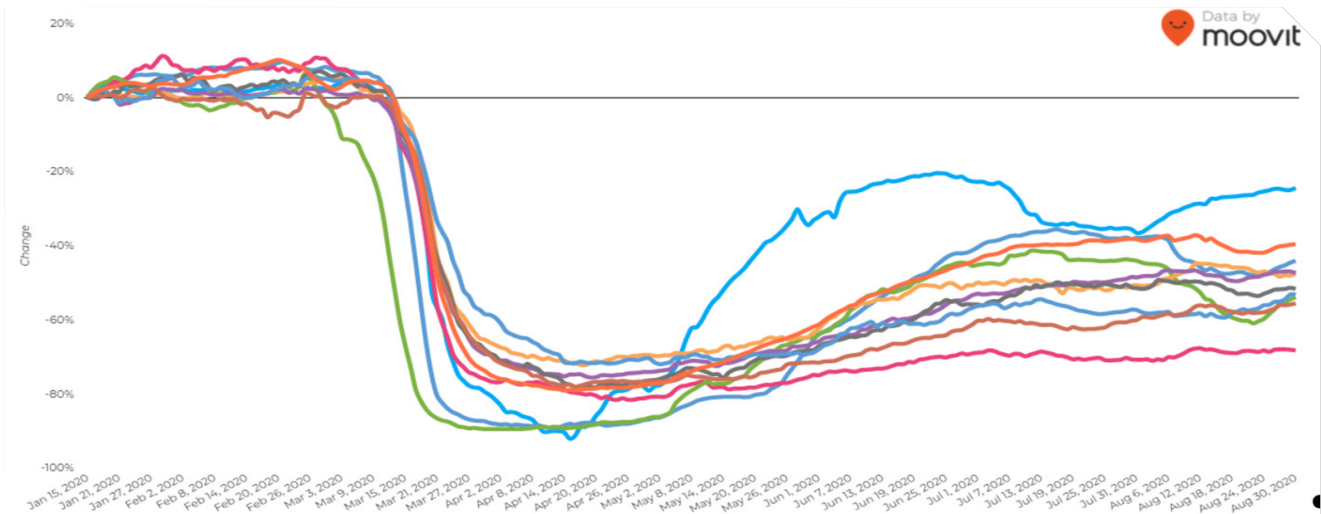
13 Scott Shepard, "[How mobility startups can help authorities fix public transport after the pandemic](#)", *Urban Mobility Daily*, 22 May 2020.

14 Jana Lynott and Mouchka Heller, "[How public transportation provides key lifelines during COVID-19](#)", *World Economic Forum*, 23 April 2020.

15 Rebecca Staudenmaier, "[Coronavirus: Germany's taxi drivers face 'catastrophic' situation](#)", in *Deutsche Welle*, 23 April 2020.

16 Sebastian Ibold et al., [COVID-19 and Sustainable Mobility - Observations and documentation of first developments](#) (Transformative Urban Mobility Initiative and Deutsche Gesellschaft für international Zusammenarbeit, 2020).

Figure 1: Impact of COVID-19 on transit ridership in selected cities



Source: Moovit ([www.moovit.com](http://www.moovit.com)). Note: 107 cities included; the monitoring start date was 15 January 2020.

11 March 2020	20 April 2020
Israel: -0.8 per cent	Israel: -85.9 per cent
Madrid: 3.2 per cent	Madrid: -87.9 per cent
San Francisco - San Jose: -0.6 per cent	San Francisco - San Jose: -80.5 per cent
Roma and Lazio: -33.5 per cent	Roma and Lazio: -88.3 per cent
Chicago: 1.5 per cent	Chicago: -71.2 per cent
NYC - New Jersey: -2.3 per cent	NYC - New Jersey: -75.5 per cent
Boston: 1.6 per cent	Boston: -78.3 per cent
Washington DC - Baltimore: 3.2 per cent	Washington DC - Baltimore: -71.7 per cent
Toronto: -0.6 per cent	Toronto: -76.8 per cent
Others: 3.1 per cent	Others: -78.5 per cent
1 June 2020	30 August 2020
Israel: -32.3 per cent	Israel: -24.4 per cent
Madrid: -63.9 per cent	Madrid: -44.1 per cent
San Francisco - San Jose: -75 per cent	San Francisco - San Jose: -68.3 per cent
Roma and Lazio: -64 per cent	Roma and Lazio: -53.9 per cent
Chicago: -62.5 per cent	Chicago: -47.5 per cent
NYC - New Jersey: -65.9 per cent	NYC - New Jersey: -47.4 per cent
Boston: -67.2 per cent	Boston: -51.7 per cent
Washington DC - Baltimore: -68 per cent	Washington DC - Baltimore: -53.3 per cent
Toronto: -71.6 per cent	Toronto: -55.6 per cent
Others: -61.3 per cent	Others: -39.6 per cent

Source: Moovit ([www.moovit.com](http://www.moovit.com)). NYC: New York City.

Figure 2: Three main operational measures and COVID-19 consequences for urban transport service provision



Source: Paul Comfort, “Bonus: a global look at the future of transportation”, *Transit Unplugged*, Trapeze Group podcast, 15 July 2020; James Trimble, “Now buses pass us by say Falkirk key workers”, in *The Falkirk Herald*, 2 June 2020; UITP, *COVID-19 impacts on public transport – Kuwait*, 1 July 2020.

A range of different measures have had a profound impact on operators, as authorities have grappled with the effects of the pandemic and a plunge in ridership. The deteriorating macroeconomic environment is affecting, in particular, private and small-scale operators. Figure 2 includes three main operational measures adopted in different cities. For example, in some cities or countries urban transport services have been or were halted for months. In others, a full or limited service has remained available. In some cases, a combination of measures has been applied depending on the particular sanitary circumstances.

## Main impacts: decent work

The pandemic has affected workers in different ways. Although some countries have relaxed working time regulations, for example, it remains crucial that workers do not operate transit vehicles while fatigued.<sup>17</sup> Quarantine measures, self-isolation, workers on sick leave or absenteeism may have led to workforce shortages putting additional stress on business continuity and scheduling procedures. Other cases include a complete halt or shutdown of urban transport operations, with a devastating impact on workers and their wages. In particular, informal workers depend on providing transport services for their livelihoods.<sup>18</sup>

17 Joe Kenny, “Staff management during COVID-19”, *UITP webinar*, 1 April 2020.

18 Anup Ojha, “Bus operators want officials to announce plans to resume public transport”, in *The Kathmandu Post*, 20 June 2020.

**Given the gaps in labour law and social protection, some urban transport workers have not been able to rely on paid sick leave and hazard pay that other essential workers have been offered on account of their work during the pandemic.**<sup>19</sup> The lack of coverage of sickness benefits encourages people to go to work sick or when they should be in self-quarantine, increasing the risk of spreading the virus. In some countries, unions have been actively campaigning for hazard pay or for public transport workers to be recognized as essential and compensated for more than their usual wage (for example, one and a half times).

**Urban transport workers are keeping cities alive in this challenging period, as they serve those who serve: hospital, care and other critical service workers.**<sup>20</sup>

Employment in formal public transport operators accounts for 7.3 million workers globally and public authorities in charge of transit employ around 300,000 workers. In many large cities, mass public transport systems are the backbone of urban mobility and public employment. Yet, the economic shock that has resulted from the pandemic has meant that formal transport operators are quickly trying to shore up their finances. In some instances, this has led to workforce lay-offs or furloughs.

**The closedowns are placing informal workers in an almost impossible dilemma - either they go out to work in dangerous conditions to bring in some earnings or they sit at home with no food on the table.**<sup>21</sup> The informal economy predominates in a number of countries. In some, 40-80 per cent of urban transport services may be provided by informal workers. While in some countries urban transport services have transitioned to formality, in others they still remain largely informal. In the African and Latin American region, informal jobs may represent up to 30-40 per cent of the total number of transport jobs.<sup>22</sup> In some countries, taxi/e-hailing drivers may be engaged in non-standard forms of employment and may not be able to participate in social dialogue or benefit from the protection, including social protection, provided to other workers.

**Informal workers are falling through the cracks of social protection and financial schemes.**<sup>23</sup> In the immediate term, States should prioritize support for those who are particularly vulnerable to the crisis. This includes transport workers in the informal economy by ensuring that their immediate needs are met, including

access to health care and income support through a combination of non-contributory and contributory schemes.<sup>24</sup> The pandemic may, however, present new opportunities to formalize employment, including through strengthened social protection systems, in line with the [Transition from the Informal to the Formal Economy Recommendation, 2015 \(No. 204\)](#). In particular, for small-scale informal transport, social protection demands can constitute a building block to start formalizing workers.<sup>25</sup>

“You realize that in the informal economy in Kenya – and in many parts of East Africa – they live hand to mouth... And the restricted movements mean no livelihoods at all – livelihood has been destructed, because they have nothing to eat by the end of the day. Then, we are looking also at their jobs and we realize that their jobs are at risk! We do not know what the future holds because after the COVID, we are not sure these jobs will still be there.”

► Dan Mihadi, Secretary General, Transport and Allied Workers’ Union, Kenya<sup>26</sup>

**Women are on the sharp end of this pandemic,**<sup>27</sup> as they are often in jobs with low or lower pay or have a low or lower status relative to men, with few, if any, opportunities for career development.<sup>28</sup> The transport sector is still strongly male-dominated and

19 ILO, *Spotlight brief: Sickness benefits during sick leave and quarantine: Country responses and policy considerations in the context of COVID-19, 2020*.

20 Mezghani.

21 Guy Ryder, “ILO chief: Workers in informal economy face ‘utter destitution’”, Al Jazeera, 23 May 2020.

22 UITP, *City economies grow dynamic with public transport: Observatory of Employment in Public Transport*. Report 3, 2012, p. 5.

23 Ryder, “ILO chief”.

24 ILO, *Spotlight brief: Social protection responses to the COVID-19 pandemic in developing countries: Strengthening resilience by building universal social protection*, 2020 and *Spotlight brief: Social protection responses to the COVID-19 crisis: Country responses and policy considerations*, 2020.

25 Dan Mihadi, “The impact of COVID-19 on informal transport workers”, ITF podcast, 10 April 2020. Mihadi.

26 Mihadi.

27 Ryder, “ILO chief”.

28 Tessa Wright, *The impact of the future of work for women in public transport* (ITF, 2019). Also see: FLONE Initiative, *Implications of COVID-19 on women professionals in the Kenyan public transport sector*, 2020.



violence, sexual harassment and the intimidation by men have been identified as main concerns in urban transport operations.<sup>29</sup> Women transport workers are disproportionately affected by the pandemic due to the gender segregated nature of the sector and the over-representation of women in customer service roles and cleaning work. These jobs are often subcontracted, increasing the likelihood that the workers involved may have less access to information on health and safety risks and guidelines, personal protective equipment (PPE) and paid leave benefits.

## Special focus on occupational safety and health

**“The occupational health and safety of those working during this crisis [...] should be assessed and addressed.”**<sup>30</sup> The ILO Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work, 2019, specifically provides that “safe and healthy working conditions are fundamental to decent work.” Workers in at-risk environments should be provided with good quality PPE at no cost.<sup>31</sup> Operators should also provide adequate and timely information to their workers, including their outsourced and subcontracted workforce. No one should feel forced to work in conditions that unnecessarily endanger their health because they fear losing their job or a pay cheque. Workers have the right to remove themselves from the workplace in case of danger, as recognized by the [ILO Occupational Safety and Health Convention \(No. 155\)](#).<sup>32</sup> In some cases, sourcing and purchasing PPE and cleaning or health supplies may be affected by the absence of formal employment relationships. PPE and health supplies have been limited for all transport occupations in the informal economy, including informal owner-operators and transport drivers.

The ILO’s international guidance on physical distancing was published in [A safe and healthy return to work during the COVID-19 pandemic](#).<sup>33</sup> The brief suggests that “physical distancing should be implemented to the greatest extent possible. A distance of 2 metres between workers is suggested as adequate, unless national guidance or the results of risk assessments determine otherwise.” It also mentions that “informal workers may not be able to comply with the precautions mandated by health authorities, such as physical distancing, handwashing or self-isolation,

which increases the risk of contagion. The protection of informal workers must focus on prevention through the timely dissemination of information on and awareness-raising of the transmission of the disease. Basic infection control measures, such as respiratory hygiene, cough etiquette and the use of PPE, are essential when other more sophisticated engineering controls may not be available.”

**Cooperation between management and workers and/or their representatives within the undertaking shall be an essential element of workplace-related prevention measures.**<sup>34</sup> While in some countries, national public policy and industry agreements prescribe at least 2 metres of physical distancing at all times, others have adopted varying distancing restrictions (for example, no restrictions, 1, 1.5, 1.8 meters (6 feet) or 2 meters). However, in small sized vehicles, it might be simply unfeasible to adequately shield or maintain users at a safe physical distance from the drivers (for example, boda boda).<sup>35</sup> The latest advice of the World Health Organization (WHO) suggests that wearing a non-medical mask can be a “potential benefit for source control” in settings where physical distancing cannot be achieved (such as urban transport settings).<sup>36</sup> Physical distancing and/or other protective requirements (masks, plastic shields, no fare collection) near drivers or other transport workers will mean that authorities and/or operators will have to establish the appropriate enforcement mechanisms to protect workers.

**Urban transport workers may also be confronted with unruly behaviour from passengers, and authorities and operators may seek to engage with public service workers to curb unintended risks.** In some countries an increase in aggressive behaviour (against drivers and non-office-based staff) and vandalism has been observed.<sup>37</sup> “Transit rage” could rise as drivers may ask passengers to pay fares or respect local sanitary rules (such as wearing masks) upon boarding the vehicle. A bus driver from Bayonne, France, for example, was assaulted and died on 10 July after he reportedly asked three passengers on his bus to wear face masks.<sup>38</sup> Police or specialized transit police forces have jurisdiction to intervene in cases of violence and harassment against transit workers. The recently adopted [Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 \(No. 190\)](#) and [Violence](#)

29 Dave Spooner and John Mark Mwanika, “Transforming Transport Unions through Mass Organisation of Informal Workers: A Case Study of the Amalgamated Transport & General Workers’ Union (ATGWU), Uganda”, *Global Labour Journal*, 9 (2), 2017.

30 OHCHR, “COVID-19 Guidance”, n.d. See section on Social and Economic Impacts.

31 [ILO Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 1981 \(No. 155\)](#), Article 21.

32 ILO Convention No. 155, Article 13.

33 Other international guidance includes: WHO, [Considerations for public health and social measures in the workplace in the context of COVID-19 \(Annex to Considerations in adjusting public health and social measures in the context of COVID-19\)](#), 10 May 2020.

34 ILO Convention No. 155, Article 20.

35 Mihadi.

36 WHO, “[Coronavirus disease \(COVID-19\) advice for the public: When and how to use masks](#)”, n.d.

37 Bernetta Harting, “Staff management during COVID-19”, *UITP webinar*, 1 April 2020.

38 “[France: Bus driver dies after ‘attack over face masks’ in Bayonne](#)”, BBC News, 10 July 2020.

[and Harassment Recommendation, 2019 \(No. 206\)](#) apply to all sectors, whether private or public, both in the formal and informal economy.

**Transit workers can find themselves at the forefront of service provision during the pandemic and may be at high risk of severe illness.** It should be taken into consideration that in some high-income countries, the sector has an ageing labour force that might be more vulnerable to the effects of COVID-19. Occupational hazards can include years of exposure to diesel fumes and/or infectious agents or unsafe air quality while stuck in traffic.<sup>39</sup> These occupational hazards may contribute to pre-existing health conditions, making some workers more susceptible to respiratory diseases.<sup>40</sup>

**Workers are often stressed because of their fear of catching the virus, while others will have concerns of passing it on to family and friends.**<sup>41</sup> In particular, in the case of mobile workers (drivers) and other non-office-based staff (for example, yard-based workers), communication, at both the corporate and team levels, remains of vital importance.<sup>42</sup> The pandemic has exacerbated common mental health conditions,

such as anxiety and depression, in particular for front-line workers.<sup>43</sup> Managers need to be prepared to have sensitive and supportive discussions with the workers and find innovative means to communicate, interact and engage with them (such as through text alerts and online communities).<sup>44</sup> Adequate and regular communication between operators and their workers is needed to boost morale, encourage self-care, inspire team spirit, and protect and reassure workers.<sup>45</sup>

**In some cities, the rate of transit worker death from COVID-19 may be pacing that of first responders.**<sup>46</sup> Bus, taxi and e-hail drivers are particularly vulnerable to the novel coronavirus in 2020. During the pandemic the following workers lost their lives: 131 workers in [New York City](#) (as of 27 August), 34 [London](#) bus workers (as of 27 July) ten taxi and limousine drivers servicing [Toronto](#)'s Pearson International Airport (as of 5 May), two bus rapid transit drivers in [Bogota](#) (as of 26 July) and at least 11 in [Mexico City](#) (as of 14 May) and nine transit workers in [Paris](#) (as of 13 May). However, there is scarce or no data to fully gauge the impact of the pandemic on informal, non-unionized, concessioned and contracted services.

## ► 2. Responses by constituents and partners

Tripartite dialogue and responses, involving workers, employers and governments, as well as collective bargaining between employers' and workers' organizations are key to addressing the implications of the pandemic. The action taken by ILO constituents has generally focused on three immediate goals: protecting workers in the workplace; supporting companies and providing financial support; and, in the case of Governments, various measures to mitigate the impact on this vital sector.

### International sectoral responses and resources

From an urban transport perspective, some of the most relevant international guidance documents and databases include:

#### *United Nations bodies:*

- The ILO and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe have issued a report entitled [Jobs in Green and Healthy Transport](#).
- The United Nations Human Settlements Programme has issued a [key messages](#) document and a [COVID-19 response plan](#) that recommend supporting local governments to manage safe urban mobility and transport, with a focus on those serving communities in informal settlements, while observing any transit and physical distancing restrictions.

#### *Other intergovernmental organizations:*

- The International Transport Forum at the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development has published a brief entitled [Re-spacing our Cities for Resilience](#).

39 Laura Bliss, "[Hit Hard by Covid-19, Transit Workers Call for Shutdowns](#)", *Bloomberg Citylab*, 13 April 2020.

40 Bliss.

41 Kenny.

42 Kenny.

43 Kenny.

44 Kenny.

45 Kenny.

46 "[ATU's International President Costa on why transit workers need more COVID-19 protection](#)", *Spectrum News* (Youtube), 2020.

## Calls for action: sectoral social partners

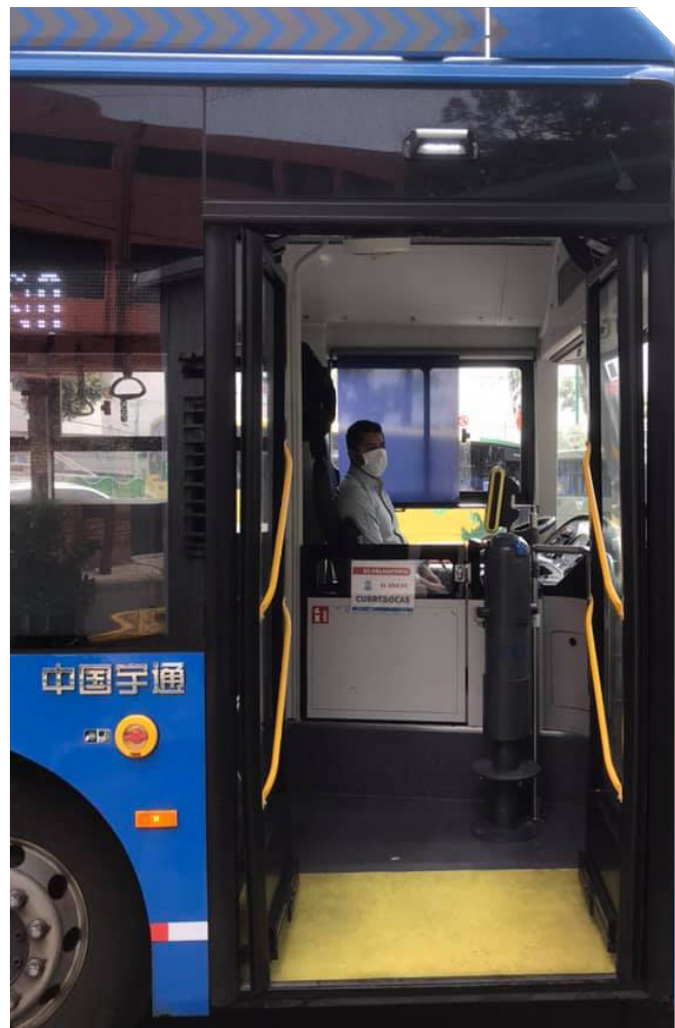
International sectoral employers' and workers' organizations have worked together using social dialogue to address COVID-19 issues efficiently and effectively. The International Association of Public Transport (UITP), the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF), the International Union of Railways and United Cities and Local Governments issued a [joint statement](#) that provides policy guidance and best practices on how to tackle the pandemic. The statement stresses that "ensuring continuity of public transport and local mobility services is essential for society and the economy." It also highlights the need for financial support and the need to guarantee a supply of appropriate protective equipment and products to public transport and local mobility operators and their workers.

### UITP

The [UITP Guidelines on the management of COVID-19 for public transport operators](#) have been published in eight languages and provide recommendations on preparedness, personal protection, reduction of contact and reduced services. The UITP has also published a knowledge brief, [COVID-19 pandemic: resuming public transport services post-lockdown](#), and developed a [knowledge page](#) that includes factsheets and discussion exchanges. Its Human Resources Committee analyses and produces briefs related to workforce issues for its members. It has also launched a campaign called "[Guardians of Mobility](#)", to shed light, through a number of stories, on how urban transport workers are an integral part of front-line workers. A [list of major challenges ahead](#) has been published in the UITP's website newsroom. Together with the European Parliament's Committee on Transport and Tourism, the UITP has also published a [joint sustainable transport declaration on supporting the local public transport sector](#). In addition, another campaign was launched in August 2020 called "[Back to Better Mobility](#)", which aims at "bringing our cities back to people".

### ITF

The ITF has emphasized that existing international labour standards and protection of labour rights are crucial to efforts to contain COVID-19. Broad cross-sectoral responses include the [COVID-19 information hub](#) and a call for action: [Covid-19: ITF global demands for governments and employers](#). The ITF has published a [global charter of demands](#) to keep urban transport workers safe, which focuses on six issues:



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Trolleybus driver in Mexico City

- Adequate and appropriate PPE
- Working conditions that minimize transmission and facilitate social distancing
- Access to health measures that protect the vulnerable and sick
- Recognition of the key role of public transport workers
- Regular information and reporting on workplace risks and workforce health
- Trade union rights

Specific to the urban transport sector, the ITF has published a paper entitled [Urban transport workers: Key to COVID response and recovery](#) and regularly updates an [information hub](#). In addition, the ITF has issued [demands on COVID-19 and access to sanitation facilities for transport workers](#), which include a checklist. A document detailing the differential impacts of the pandemic on women has been issued as [a statement on women workers' rights](#)



and COVID-19. In addition, an ITF [informal workers charter](#) outlines the basic rights of informal workers, including health and safety.

## Countries in action: National responses

Most governments have declared some or all urban transport modes as an essential service.<sup>47</sup> Governments at both the municipal and federal levels have taken various measures to mitigate the financial impact of COVID-19 on the well-being, livelihoods and working conditions of workers in urban passenger transport services. Measures to support workers focus on workspace or operational improvements, or alternative work arrangements (including revised schedules or teleworking when possible). Further financial support for informal workers and operators will be needed but should be tailored to take special consideration of the particular circumstances of informal workers (who may not, for example, have internet connections or bank accounts). Some of the specific actions relating to operational and workplace improvements in urban passenger transit include:

- Worker protection measures including PPE, cleaning/disinfecting supplies, dividers, physical barriers or cordoning-off driver areas, cleaning and disinfection of “touch points” on vehicles, and closing of ticketing and information booths.
- Vehicle and operational measures, including cleaning protocols, e-ticketing or no fare (middle or back door boarding only), reduction in services, ventilation systems, static teams.
- Some of the key city/country financial responses in urban passenger transit include financial packages, postponement of credits, suspension of payments on loans, subsidies, hazard pay, one time hero payment bonus and death benefits. In a number of cities/countries, decision makers, employers and trade unions have come together to draw attention to the urgent need for government financing for the sector.
- The establishment of sectoral/national occupational safety and health committees to guarantee safe work for key workers.

## ► 3. ILO tools and responses

### International labour standards and tools

International labour standards offer a tried and trusted basis for policy responses and a sustainable and equitable recovery.<sup>48</sup> International labour standards and the ILO Decent Work Agenda with its four pillars of employment, social protection, social dialogue and rights at work, are important cornerstones of the 2030 Agenda.<sup>49</sup> A range of occupational safety and health and other ILO standards have already been referenced above. The following paragraphs include additional resources.

In 2015, the Conference adopted the [Transition from the Informal to the Formal Economy Recommendation, 2015 \(No. 204\)](#), much of which applies to employment in urban passenger transport services. In addition, the [Social Protection Floors Recommendation, 2012 \(No. 202\)](#), and the [Social Security \(Minimum Standards\) Convention, 1952 \(No. 102\)](#) provide guidance for the establishment

and maintenance of comprehensive social protection systems, including social protection floors, in order to prevent crises, enable recovery and build resilience.

The ILO has identified [eight “fundamental” Conventions](#), covering issues considered to be fundamental principles and rights at work. These are freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining; the elimination of all forms of forced or compulsory labour; the effective abolition of child labour; and the elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation. In addition, the ILO published its [Standards and COVID-19 note](#), compiling answers to most frequently asked questions related to international labour standards.

The [Employment and Decent Work for Peace and Resilience Recommendation, 2017 \(No. 205\)](#) applies to all sectors and recognizes the role of accessible and quality public services in economic recovery. The ILO has issued guidance and a range of technical

<sup>47</sup> Philippines, Malaysia, Viet Nam and Thailand stopped taxi services, as these were not deemed essential. Jaspal Singh, “[UITP Contribution](#)”, *What Are Transportation Regulators Doing to Respond to COVID-19? Webinar of the International Association of Transport Regulators*, 30 April 2020.

<sup>48</sup> ILO, “[Why International Labour Standards matter in a public health crisis](#)” (video), 27 March 2020.

<sup>49</sup> United Nations Press Release, [President Stresses Central Role of Decent Work in Fighting Poverty, Inequality, as General Assembly Marks International Labour Organization Centenary](#), 10 April 2019. Scroll down to read Guy Ryder’s contribution.

and sectoral notes on the COVID-19 pandemic, based on four key pillars. The ILO's brief, [A policy framework for tackling the economic and social impact of the COVID-19 crisis](#), provides further guidance and understanding on these four pillars.

The [Conclusions concerning the promotion of sustainable enterprises \(2007\)](#) include guidance on the enabling environment for sustainable enterprises. It comprises a set of conditions considered to be essential, interconnected and mutually reinforcing to foster "investment, entrepreneurship, workers' rights and the creation, growth and maintenance of sustainable enterprises by balancing the needs and interests of enterprise with the aspiration of society for a path of development that respects the values and principles of decent work, human dignity and environmental sustainability."

The [Safe return to work: Guide for employers on COVID-19 prevention](#) was developed by the ILO Bureau for Employers' Activities. It contains recommendations for health and safety practices and approaches to COVID-19 prevention. The publication aims to provide general guidance and information to employers on how to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in the workplace in order to enable workers to return to work safely while keeping the risk of contamination as low as possible. It also presents ideas on how to protect workers' mental health and well-being during the pandemic.

## ILO sectoral resources

While the ILO has no dedicated standards for all modes in the urban transport sector, all transport workers are covered by the fundamental principles and rights at work and, where ratified, by many additional ILO Conventions addressing important issues, such as occupational safety and health, working time and social security, among others. States have a duty to ensure that the fundamental principles and rights at work and ratified international labour Conventions protect and apply to all workers.

A number of ILO committees and meetings have discussed matters and issued guidance on the labour conditions of urban road transport drivers that are relevant to efforts towards their protection in the context of COVID-19.<sup>50</sup> The main sectoral instruments for the industry include:

- The [Hours of Work and Rest Periods \(Road Transport\) Convention, 1979 \(No. 153\)](#), and the [Hours of Work and Rest Periods \(Road Transport\) Recommendation, 1979 \(No. 161\)](#), which establish reference standards for working and driving time in the road transport sector.
- The [Labour Inspection \(Mining and Transport\) Recommendation, 1947 \(No. 82\)](#), which calls on governments to apply to transport undertakings appropriate systems of labour inspection to ensure the enforcement of legal provisions relating to conditions of work and the protection of workers while engaged in their work.

A [Technical meeting on the future of decent and sustainable work in urban transport services](#) is planned for February 2021.<sup>51</sup>

## Further information

The ILO webpage, [COVID-19 and the world of work: Sectoral impact, responses and recommendations](#), provides links to key resources, including:

- [ILO sectoral tools and instruments](#)
- [Joint statements and calls for action to fight COVID-19](#)
- [ILO partnerships to fight COVID-19 sector by sector](#)

<sup>50</sup> ILO, [The road to social dialogue: A compendium of the ILO's work in the road transport sector \(1938-2015\)](#), 2019.

<sup>51</sup> Pending ILO Governing Body decision.

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