

STRIVING FOR AN ATTRACTIVE, SOCIALY EQUITABLE AND CLIMATE-NEUTRAL TRANSPORT SYSTEM

List of Recommendations

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When aiming to decarbonise the way we commute and travel, we should take into account the differences in the structural nature of the Polish transport system. Poland's largest metropolitan areas, with their expected drive towards climate neutrality and problems similar to their Western European counterparts, should be treated differently. Medium-sized cities face a different type of difficulty. In spite of significant investments in infrastructure and rolling stock, they struggle to provide adequate pools of public transport services and to reduce significant environmental pollution. Areas affected by transport-related exclusion, whose inhabitants are susceptible to the phenomenon of transport poverty, require separate treatment. Keeping this in mind, it is recommended to:

- **plan the stable development of transport network based on transport analyses** (including sustainable mobility plans) and **creation of strategic timetable assumptions** (including so-called 'vehicle timing') **as well as coordination of the offer;**
- **create the legal framework for the operation of integrated transport systems** that link rail, urban, suburban and regional transport and integrates all of them with active mobility measures – this may require a new Public Transport Act, which has been advocated for years now, or a major amendment;
- **harmonise and simplify statutory concessions** applied to rail, bus and public transport; such a step may encourage transport organisers and transport operators, as well as rail carriers, to work on their fare-and-ticket systems' integration;

- **introduce the obligatory implementation of public transport tasks** by local and regional authorities, including the specification of their minimum involvement in transport services;
- **encourage local government units to establish transport unions** at various levels, including district/municipal and inter-municipal unions; proper selection of transport operators and supervision of accurate performance of their services, as well as the establishment of rules for the sharing of public infrastructure by commercial operators, are important here;
- **extend the content-related oversight of how the financial resources of the Bus Transportation Development Fund are spent;** direct support to local authorities (e.g. in the form of targeted grants);
- **properly manage fare systems and coordination of the system's finances;** the aim should be to increase the proportion of special season tickets, and their use should pay off as quickly as possible; this should not be just about pure financial interest but also for the environment's sake, so to speak, by getting people used to using public transportation;
- **resist the temptation to introduce free public transport;** this temptation, especially in smaller towns and cities, is due to low coverage of public transport operating costs by ticket revenue; however, the following question should be asked: Is the low ticket revenue due to the poor offer of the public transport or to the high prices of tickets? If only prices were a problem, residents would get around on foot or by bicycle, for example, rather than by their private cars. In the authors' opinion, free public transport makes sense in very special cases only (e.g. in tourist destinations);
- **stop the implicit subsidisation of car travel by providing valuable public space for free parking** in the name of a misinterpreted inclusivity; this is a highly ineffective measure resulting in increased air pollution and a continuing shortage of these spaces due to the induced demand to move cars into city centres; at the same time, it is difficult to imagine that residents would enthusiastically accept the proposal to completely abandon driving their own vehicles; consequently, it is **necessary to section off the central areas of cities where parking fees are high, and with peripheral free buffer car parks that are well-connected to the central areas**, and to allow residents to use their individual vehicles in areas with urban planning shortcomings that may hinder the development of an effective public transport network; the latter can be provided, for instance, on the transport-on-demand basis.
- **coordinate the operation of transport nodes and improving the efficiency of park-and-ride (P+R) schemes**, which at present are often a typical infrastructure investment calculated to obtain external funding for the construction of a car park without providing an adequate transport offer. A distinction must be made here between urban and provincial facilities of this type. In urban areas, a public

transport offer that allows fast and convenient transfers between transport lines (preferably within an integrated fare system) is crucial. In non-metropolitan areas, these facilities provide a gateway for residents in areas affected by transport-related exclusion to reach them by car or on the transport-on-demand basis. They should then continue their journey by public transport. Such an action, on the one hand, makes the transport line gain new passengers who reach its stops and leave their vehicles there, while not congesting the cities and taking up the space. At the same time, the illusion of being able to provide an attractive public transport offer for everyone in the country is not created;

- **introduce of a uniform digital standard for the provision of open data on transport connections**, which will allow the creation of a multimodal travel planner integrated with the GTFS (General Transit Feed Specification) system, including information on the actual location of public transport vehicles. The key aspect here is the integration with rail the transport and good cooperation between local authorities and the rail network operator in Poland (PKP Polskie Linie Kolejowe S.A.) – and these objectives have not always been easy to achieve;
- **create uniform standards and ensuring the availability of information for passengers** through direct ownership of the infrastructure or supervision of these systems under external ownership. The information for passengers should present reliable data on vehicle service disruptions; it should also include details on the fares on the vehicle (including the possibility to purchase a default ticket);
- **respect for seniors, people with functional limitations (including those with mobility problems) and digitally excluded individuals.** We can see the tendency to transfer the information for passengers to the Internet; however, in the context of an ageing population and the phenomenon of digital exclusion, this is the wrong thing to do..

Finally, it is worth to point out that **from an environmental and climate perspective, electrification of transport alone is not enough, although it is a step in the right direction. The key is to change transport behaviour** by increasing the share of public transport and active mobility in the so-called modal split. Without a sufficiently good offer, however, this is not possible. An elaboration on this, including the description of the instruments for the decarbonisation of transport in Poland, is presented in the WiseEuropa report „Without A Conductor” available at <https://wise-europa.eu/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Without-a-conductor-ENG.pdf>.

Sustainable Transport is a program with which WiseEuropa wants to join the public debate on such important issues as new mobility or counteracting transport exclusion. The program pays special attention to issues related to the interdisciplinary issue of urban and non-urban mobility. We use a broad spectrum of our own analytical capabilities - seeking, analysing and recommending solutions that contribute to the development of sustainable transportation in Poland and Europe.

Recommended publications:

ON THE ROUTE TO NOWHERE. Transport-related exclusion and climate policy

HAZY GREEN. Are transport projects within the National Recovery Plan an adequate response to the polycrisis reality?

ENERGY POVERTY. The role of energy efficiency in the fight against energy poverty