



Speaking up for sustainable transport

UNISON's vision for green and
accessible travel

June 2010

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Introduction

Why UNISON is interested in transport policy

UNISON is committed to contributing to the debate about the future of transport policy. UNISON represents a wide cross section of society and its members work on a broad range of activities in the public services, utilities and the third sector, including public transport services.

In addition, policy-makers are increasingly aware of the need to address the increase in workplace and business-related transport. Commuting and business trips make up 37% of emissions from cars. Workers in the public sector account for the greatest proportion of commuting/business trips when compared with other industries¹. Efforts to reduce congestion and tackle emissions from transport may increasingly affect UNISON members at work.

More generally, transport is key to protecting and improving our environment and society. Securing economic development and employment, addressing regional inequalities, tackling climate change, securing public health and promoting social inclusion all require the availability of decent sustainable transport networks.

However, it is also likely that transport will bear a large share of the spending cuts in the coming period. This is likely to include shaving funding off programmes, cutting “low-value” programmes and postponing new projects. Given that much funding is linked to long-term contracts, particularly for rail, local transport spending may be particularly hard hit.

In this context UNISON can play a significant role in influencing policy to promote the sustainable transport that we all need. We can do this at a local or regional level, by, for example, campaigning for decent bus services, or at a national level, by campaigning for better rail services. We can do this by joining together with other unions and community groups to mount local campaigns, and using our experience and expertise to speak up for our members’ interests in Holyrood, Westminster, Stormont and Cardiff.

To such ends Speaking up for Sustainable Transport aims to provide a useful resource for UNISON members and activists.

The first section sets out the background on UNISON’s transport policies. The second section provides a summary of recent developments that will impact on UNISON members and the union’s policy goals. The third section sets out UNISON’s transport priorities in the period ahead. Appendix 1 provides some guidelines on how we can campaign as a union for sustainable transport.

1 Low Carbon Transport: A Greener Future, DfT, 2009, pp26,29

Developing UNISON's transport policies

Speaking up for Sustainable Transport follows on from previous UNISON policy statements on transport, including Moving Forward published in 1997 and Positively Public Transport published in 2001.

Positively Public Transport set an agenda for UNISON around a number of important themes and policy recommendations:

Environment, health and safety – balancing the desire of people to travel and the need to transport goods with the requirement to protect and enhance the environment, public health and safety.

Social exclusion – ensuring deprived areas have access to low-cost healthy food and health care; tackling the impact in poorer neighbourhoods of high traffic volumes leading to air and noise pollution and higher rates of traffic casualties; and enabling access to employment. Linked with this the union identified a very clear need to improve public transport services; to ensure that rural areas have good public transport; and to tackle the rising price of public transport and ensure that all groups in society (for example women, pensioners and those with disabilities) feel safe and able to access transport.

Airports and air travel – managing the demand for air travel consistent with sustainable development.

An integrated public transport system – establishing more integrated governance for transport at a national, regional and local level with more effective regulation of transport providers.

Rail services – putting in place a more simple, flexible fare structure with lower overall fares, ensuring accessible rail for all groups with access for those with disabilities, staffed stations and bike facilities. In addition the union argued for reopening rail lines and stations, investment in additional rolling stock, shifting more freight on to rail and bringing rail and stations under public control.

Bus services – driving up standards of bus services through the use of quality partnerships / quality contracts, smart card and online information. The document also called for targets for improving punctuality and reliability, staff training to improve standards and funding for school buses.

Inland waterways – restoring waterways to provide opportunities for movement of freight, as well as opportunities for leisure and tourism.

These policies have provided a platform for the union's campaigning and lobbying activity that has helped secure concessionary travel schemes that provide free off-peak bus travel to the over-60s throughout the UK, and new legislation that will make it easier for local authorities to improve local bus services. In addition to the policies set out in Positively Public Transport, UNISON's national delegate conference has debated transport on a number of occasions over recent years.

In 2007, conference recognised the significance of transport to the union's goal of engaging fully in measures necessary to tackle climate change. A motion entitled UNISON's Commitment to the Environment called for revision of the ACAS code of practice so that trade union environmental representatives get facilities time, and for UNISON to:

- produce a step by step guide to greening your workplace
- develop guidance for branches to ensure that steps to prevent climate change do not fall adversely on pay and conditions of members
- develop web resources and an e-network to better support networks of members and representatives with environmental responsibilities in their workplaces
- work with partner trade unions to campaign for sustainable transport policies and examine issues such as quality contracts and comprehensive road pricing schemes in an effort to reduce congestion and emissions.

In 2008 the union carried a motion that included a call for UNISON to campaign against the imposition of local road pricing in advance of improvements to the provision of public passenger transport and a revision of the road fund license and fuel tax regime.

UNISON also responded in February 2009 to the government's consultation on workplace parking levies. Workplace Parking Levy (WPL) is a charge on employers that provide free or relatively cheap workplace parking and can provide income for local authorities to spend on transport improvements. UNISON argues that such schemes can only be introduced if there is a fair degree of consensus and public support in areas where they are

proposed. Some employers are also either restricting or reducing workplace parking. To achieve a consensus such schemes would need:

- to be introduced alongside efficient public transport networks that serve the needs of people travelling to and from work; and
- operate within a framework that recognises the need for fairness towards essential car users and others who would find it difficult to get to work without a car and for whom parking charges could be difficult to afford.

Local authorities introducing WPLs should have to carry out an Equalities Impact Assessment to ensure that particular groups in society are not unfairly affected.

Given stretched national and local public sector finances, it is likely that new funding streams like WPL will be attractive to local authorities as a way to finance transport improvements.

Overlapping with these discussions within the union, many branches face employer-led green travel initiatives that often include parking charges. As a consequence, such initiatives are often seen as unfair, particularly to essential users and those living or working in areas poorly served by public transport. This situation is made worse by the tendency for newer workplaces to be situated outside of town and city centres.

The union's overall approach can be summarised as – sustainability yes, but within a framework of fairness.

UNISON has produced a document to support branches to strike a fair deal entitled *A Guide to Bargaining for Greener Staff Travel Plans*.

Recent developments in transport policy

As well as continued development of UNISON's positions on transport, there have been a number of changes in transport policy and structures in the last couple of years that have changed the context for UNISON's transport work. These are summarised below.

Local Transport Act

This provides powers for local transport authorities that will make it easier for them to improve local bus services where the market isn't providing by bringing in 'quality contracts' or 'statutory bus partnerships'. It also gives more freedom for local transport authorities to introduce local road user charging schemes. The Act also provides for Passenger Transport Authorities/Executives (PTEs) to be renamed as Integrated Transport Authorities (ITAs), with increased flexibility on their boundaries and a more general power to promote sustainability and community well-being.

Delivering a Sustainable Transport System (DaSTS)

Department for Transport (DfT) has set out its strategic approach to transport in DaSTS, which informs transport planning and delivery at a national, regional and local level. DaSTS includes goals on economic competitiveness and growth, tackling climate change, contributing to better safety, security and health, promoting greater equality of opportunity, improving quality of life. There are currently studies underway to identify priorities for investment at a national and regional level under the DaSTS umbrella and the third round of local transport plans due by the end of March 2011 are to be structured around the five DaSTS goals.

Local Democracy, Economic Regeneration and Construction Act

This piece of legislation signals a move to single regional strategies led by Regional Development Authorities with Leaders' Boards from local authorities, and a move away from regional assemblies/chambers.

It also introduces new models of governance for local authorities to work together, includes provision for ITAs work to be co-ordinated with planning and regeneration

functions in "combined authorities" along with the two pilot "city-regions" in Greater Manchester and Leeds.

Lower Carbon Transport: A Greener Future

The DfT has published its carbon reduction strategy as part of the government's wider response to their commitments under the Climate Change Act to reduce CO2 emissions by 80% by 2050 with five-year carbon budgets. The strategy, Lower Carbon Transport, does emphasise technological solutions, but also looks to the role of local authorities and others in encouraging a shift to less carbon-intensive forms of transport and the promotion of the Department for Transport's smarter choices agenda. The strategy looks to public transport playing its role in reducing emissions, including the development of high-speed rail, a programme of rail electrification and investing in greening the bus fleet. The change of government means the delivery plan for the strategy is currently unclear.

Strengthening Local Democracy consultation

Published in summer 2009, the Strengthening Local Democracy consultation floated the idea of local carbon budgets and more freedoms and flexibilities for local authorities that take stronger action on climate change, including on transport and climate change. This has now been taken forward by the Department for Communities and Local Government with nine areas piloting "local carbon frameworks".

The consultation also suggested further changes to governance at city-region level, including the possibility of leaders or elected executive mayors giving greater lead on issues like transport at a city-region level. There is unlikely to be change on this until changes resulting from the Local Democracy Act have been tried and the city-region pilots set up.

Changing approach to congestion and urban transport

The failure of the Manchester vote on local congestion charging and investment through the Department for Transport's Transport Innovation Fund means that road

user pricing is off the agenda for the time being. The recession has resulted in a fall in congestion levels. Coupled with this, the Prime Minister's Strategy Unit report on urban transport has set a new agenda and detailed the costs of poor health from inactivity and poor air quality. The costs of congestion resulting from lack of good alternatives to motor vehicles and the need for greater co-ordination on planning, highways and transport has resulted in the new proposed urban challenge fund from Department for Transport. The new coalition government's approach to the fund remains to be seen at time of publication.

New approaches to transport funding and likely reductions in public spending on transport

There is every likelihood that cuts in public spending after the spending review will impact on transport, particularly for local transport spending. This is likely to result in central government and local authorities looking for new sources of revenue, for instance through developer levies and contributions (such as the community infrastructure levy or section 106 agreements), workplace parking levies or contributions from those departments or agencies whose funding is protected (such as health spending to encourage walking and cycling). In addition, approaches like the Total Place initiative, aimed at joining up services and public sector budgets at a local level, may be used to encourage more effective use of resources by pooling finances. This, combined with other flexibilities for local councils, may, in some areas, mean more spending on transport or may result in less transport spending where transport is not seen as a priority.

The implications of the developments set out above are set out below. A forward agenda rooted in the views of UNISON members is set out in chapter 3.

Devolution

Devolution has resulted in Scotland and Wales being able to determine their own transport policies. Key developments since devolution have included the establishment of Transport Scotland as an agency of the Scottish Government in 2006. Transport Scotland works in partnership with the private sector transport operators,

local authorities and regional transport partnerships. It has responsibility for rail, road and concessionary travel. In Wales the Assembly Government has established the Wales Transport Strategy, one of the key aims of which is to achieve a more sustainable transport system.

The impact of recent developments

In summary, there are likely to be four main drivers of transport policy and delivery:

- spending cuts, particularly for local transport (eg bus services) but with an emphasis on low-cost measures
- support and promotion for greener choices within and between modes
- emphasis on localism and devolving decisions (if not funding or the ability to raise finance) down to a more local level
- how transport can contribute to wider goals, such as:
 - physical activity through walking and cycling
 - access to jobs and opportunities
 - creation of jobs in transport
 - supporting community life;
 - and, influenced by spending cuts, how transport spending could be drawn from other sources.

For those working in particular modes (eg buses) or in PTEs or other transport authorities, spending cuts will be a particularly challenging driver of change, with potential job cuts in many areas. Cuts in the provision and development of sustainable transport options and jobs will be opposed by UNISON at every turn.

UNISON's transport priorities

UNISON members from the transport, water and environment service groups took part in a discussion on transport at their branches seminar in Glasgow during autumn 2009. This involved taking stock and evaluating campaign goals in the context of the developments outlined in the previous chapters. These have been used to identify the following priorities:

Government commitment towards a modern, efficient and affordable UK public transport system

Governments in England and the devolved nations should set out a strategic agenda to ensure that public transport can compete in terms of its price, convenience and safety and enable reductions in overall traffic levels.

As such, government should review rail fare regulation to simplify and reduce the price of fares and support stronger powers for city-region or city-wide transport authorities to shape local transport provision in their areas.

Acceptance of the need for more intervention in our transport networks where markets fail

Rail privatisation and bus deregulation, as well as changes to regional and local governance, have left in their wake confused responsibilities, market failures (as with the east coast mainline) and complex financial relationships between government and operators that do not necessarily meet the needs of users.

For the railway network, the Westminster government should keep the east coast mainline in the public sector as a benchmark, and ensure that the needs of passengers are put first in future franchise agreements rather than prioritising premium payments from franchisees to the Treasury.

For buses, local authorities need to be supported to implement quality contracts for the provision of bus services in an area, and to implement either statutory or voluntary quality bus partnerships. The current Competition Commission inquiry, which draws on the Office of Fair Trading's report that identified failures in local bus markets, should focus on encouraging franchising of bus services by local authorities through quality contracts rather than on-road competition.

Renaissance in local bus services to tackle emissions and congestion and promote social inclusion

Bus services in many areas have improved through investment from central and local government and new powers brought in for local authorities. But the improvements have not been universal with too many areas continuing to see a decline in bus usage and not enough areas putting in place bus priority measures on their road network.

To raise standards across the UK and build on those areas that have improved their bus service, government must maintain financial support for bus services, particularly to support less viable services such as those in rural areas or outside the core rush hour. As part of this, bus service operators grant (BSOG) should be maintained and government should explore whether devolving BSOG to local transport authorities would better deliver support for bus services by enabling more strategic and locally responsive support. The concessionary travel scheme should remain in place despite spending pressures.

Government should also continue Kickstart funding to establish new services and continue to support future rounds of the green bus fund to support Britain as world leader in green bus technology. For rural areas, giving local authorities greater flexibility over BSOG could support more demand-responsive transport, and central government should spread good practice in this area.

'Passenger Focus' (the public transport passengers' watchdog) new role for bus passengers should be expanded to provide more transparent information for passengers to drive up standards of service through benchmarking local performance.

Integrated travel, underpinned by modern ticketing and information systems

The complicated and confusing mix of national government responsibilities, regional bodies and differing levels of local government combine with competing private operators to deliver a system that is difficult to integrate effectively for the benefit of passengers. However, government should work with local authorities on a number of measures that can help unblock barriers to end to end journeys.

As mentioned above, bus partnerships should help deliver more integrated services, but government should ensure that competition legislation (and the actions of the Competition Commission) is not a barrier to agreements between operators to allow joint ticketing.

The government should also roll out the smart-ticketing strategy making integrated ticketing a condition of rail franchises and through-ticketing a requirement for receiving a reformed bus service operators grant.

The government should also work with ITAs and other local transport authorities to deliver improved information, including at stations, bus stops and online, such as through disseminating best practice, including ways of funding improvements (eg promoting levies on operators to pay for improved information).

The government should also play a stronger role in rolling out smarter choices initiatives, as recommended by the Committee on Climate Change, such as ensuring that projects supported through the proposed Urban Challenge Fund include smarter choices, and that the fund is adequately resourced. The government should also pilot a rural smarter choices pilot.

Decent terms and conditions for all transport workers

Pressure on public finances and all layers of the public sector should not mean a reduction in the terms and conditions for transport workers. Quality contracts and rail franchises, as well as changes to ITAs, should be used to ensure decent terms and conditions for transport workers in UNISON and sister unions.

A fair approach to sustainable travel

UNISON recognises that the introduction of green travel plans and all kinds of other work and related travel measures will have increasing importance for our negotiators and members in the years ahead. These will impact on fairness, social inclusion and the disposable income of many already on modest pay. The recent introduction of parking charges, workplace parking levies and restricted or reduced workplace parking in the context of wage freezes are just two examples that illustrate the need to think through the implications of well-meaning initiatives on the less well off. UNISON believes that dialogue is needed between trade unions and managements to establish a framework for fairness

via a Green Transport Plan, which we believe is necessary to achieve the necessary consensus and acceptance necessary for successful transition to sustainable transport.

A million voices: speaking up for sustainable transport

UNISON has the structures and expertise to enable the union to make sure that the voices of members are heard at Westminster and in the devolved administrations. This includes working with Labour Link to pursue policy goals within the Labour Party's internal policy-making machinery, lobbying MPs, MSPs, MLAs (members of the Northern Ireland Legislative Assembly) and AMs (Welsh Assembly Members), and organising campaigns with the financial support of UNISON's General Political Fund. All of these methods will be pursued in the coming period to campaign for UNISON's transport priorities.

Just as important, however, is the work that members and branches can undertake at a local level to push for sustainable transport solutions.

Appendix 1 sets out some generic guidance on campaigning, which branches can use to campaign for sustainable transport solutions at a local level.

Appendix 1: Local campaigning guide

These guidelines can be used to campaign for better local bus services, or against the imposition of workplace parking levies that do not provide for the needs of essential car users and workers poorly served by public transport.

Objectives are necessary

Objectives are the focus for any campaign, around which everything else is built (eg better local bus services with reasonable fares and frequency and routes that enable people to travel to and from work by bus).

Objectives also make it possible to review the campaign. Are we achieving what we set out to achieve? Make sure everyone knows the issues around the campaign and the line of march. Encourage member activity in support of the campaign. The campaign can also have the added benefit of building organisation within the branch and raising the profile of UNISON in the wider community.

You need to know where you're going, so you know when you've got there... and when to stop!

Planning is essential

Creating a flexible plan with a timetable and with responsibilities identified means that everyone is aware of the intended progress of the campaign and can prepare for events. It also makes it possible to identify shortfalls in resources.

Make sure you know about relevant dates and opportunities to get your campaign on track. For example, are there certain meetings your branch might want to attend or lobby (eg council meetings about the local transport plan)? Are there regional UNISON events you could attend to get support from other members or branches? Is there a local event that could provide a useful 'hook' for your campaign?

Who does the planning?

Obviously it is up to the branch activists and committee to agree to a campaign plan. But it may be easier to form a sub-committee or working party to focus primarily on

drawing up the plan. They could then take it to the rest of the branch for discussion and agreement.

Drawing up a document that lists key dates, proposed activities, resources and responsibilities would be impossible to do from scratch in a full committee or branch meeting. A small group allows flexibility to meet as and when necessary. The group can continue to meet as events progress, adapting the plan or co-opting others as and when necessary. They can also review each phase as it happens and report back to the rest of the branch.

Of course this may not be appropriate for your particular branch. Or you may wish to work with other branches on this basis. Choose whatever suits everyone best. Some branches agree to free up specific individuals in these situations, sharing out their work so they have more time to concentrate on the campaign. Don't forget to involve regional staff. Are there organising staff who can help you? They may also have experience of working on campaigns.

Communications – how to get your message across

It is important to think about who your target audience is and what you want to communicate. Communications may be viewed as 'internal' ie within UNISON (either the branch, the region, or nationally) or 'external' ie outside UNISON (eg the employers, local or national media, trades councils, other trade unions, etc), or a combination of both.

You may want to think about using some of the following materials:

Press releases – to tell the media about specific events in your campaign or a compelling story in your branch. Don't forget that journalists are interested in anything that will make a story, so think carefully about what interests their readers.

Briefing meetings – for activists and members. Do you want to invite a guest speaker along? What issues do you want to tell people about?

Photo opportunities – could you create any photo opportunities to attract the attention of the press and public but also to provide your branch with stock photographs to be used in your publicity?

Newsletters – and other media such as circulars, email, noticeboards, word-of-mouth, workplace meetings, pre-printed envelopes, social events, posters, leaflets, advertising.

What do you want to communicate?

Think about:

- the aims of your campaign
- back up information which can fill gaps
- key dates in the campaign timetable
- who is responsible for what
- how the campaign aids recruitment and retention
- messages of support from outside the branch
- appeals for financial support.

The importance of recruitment

No UNISON campaign can neglect the importance of recruitment and retention of members. Running a well-planned and high-profile campaign in itself demonstrates that UNISON is worth joining. UNISON campaigns should show members that their concerns are being addressed and hence aid retention. Recruitment opportunities need to be identified in your planning and also picked up on as they arise in the course of your activity.

See: unison.org.uk/communicating/recruitment.asp

Evaluation of your campaign

The importance of reviewing cannot be overstressed. There's no point reinventing the wheel, so ensure that you learn from yours and others experiences. At every stage your plan needs to be looked at and the activities reviewed. We can all learn from successes and mistakes. Reviewing –think about how you might review activities. For example, did you run a recruitment stall but nobody turned up? Ask:

- where did you situate it?
- what time was it there?
- how did you publicise it?
- where did you publicise it?

Successes – don't forget that successes need to be shared with others. Don't assume that you were the last to think of an idea. Get your rep to report it to your regional service group committee or the regional recruitment and organisation committee. And don't forget to tell the communications unit of UNISON who may be able to more widely publicise your campaign and learning.

To join UNISON online
visit unison.org.uk/join
or call 0845 355 0845



If we want prosperity, a better environment and a society that we can all participate in we need a sustainable transport system. With thousands of members working in transport, and many more who rely on the public transport system, UNISON is committed to campaigning for sustainable transport policies

This document, produced in partnership with the Campaign for Better Transport, sets out UNISON's transport policy and campaign priorities.



a million
voices
for
public
services

add
your
voice

UNISON campaigning
for a fairer society
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the public service union