

# This month

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## UITP steps up its bold growth programme

**T**HE International Association of Public Transport (UITP) unveiled two initiatives on November 9 with the highly-laudable aims of boosting public transport ridership and providing innovative ideas for operators and cities to fund transit projects.

*Grow with Public Transport* is a communications campaign designed to support UITP's PTx2 project, which was launched in 2009 with the objective of doubling public transport ridership by 2025. "We want to develop more and better public transport," says UITP secretary general Mr Alain Flausch. "With the changing times we face today, it is high time to act."

The campaign is designed to challenge negative perceptions of public transport and instead make it the preferred choice for passenger journeys. UITP is keen to put legislators on the side of public transport, convince investors to take it seriously, provide better support to its members and raise public awareness.

*Grow with Public Transport* has 10 themes, which is far too many for one campaign so cities would be well advised to focus on promoting only one or two messages at a time and spread the campaign over several months. Fortunately the design of the campaign lends itself to this approach. The UITP has used neutral images which portray passengers in positive situations when using public transport, but cities can adapt them to give the campaign a local feel.

The overall objective is to put public transport at the heart of urban life, for example by emphasising how it can help to boost a city's economy - 80% of world economic output is already generated in cities. The UITP says achieving PTx2 will enable the European Union (EU) to meet its target of reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 20% between 1990 and 2020, and the campaign brings home this point.

Another theme is public transport's ability to reduce traffic congestion, which costs about €200bn a year within the EU, and reduce road deaths by getting people out of their cars and onto trains or

halted or even started to decline. It is too early to be certain why this is happening, and whether the change is permanent, but there are probably a variety of causes such as congestion and the increasing cost of motoring, a trend towards teleworking and improvements to public transport.

Conversely the UITP believes that there will continue to be strong growth in mobility in developing countries for the next 20 years because of rising populations, strong economic growth, and the continuing move from non-motorised to motorised transport.

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buses. The UITP estimates that implementing PTx2 could save 180,000 lives, but as 80% of road traffic fatalities occur in developing countries the campaign needs to target these cities.

The UITP is keen to drive innovation amongst its members. "Public transport is seen as the old lady, but it is not," says Flausch. "We want operators to develop such things as smart cards, WiFi, and other new systems."

There are currently two distinct and opposing trends in public transport. Its market share is increasing in developed countries and for the first time since cars took to the streets in the early 20th century the seemingly inexorable rise in car use has

This means there really needs to be two distinct campaigns. In developed countries it needs to build on the success already achieved by for example praising people for choosing public transport, while in developing countries the message needs to be more forceful if it is to have any hope of getting people to think seriously about public transport rather than inflicting more congestion and pollution on their cities.

A dedicated website [www.growpublictransport.org](http://www.growpublictransport.org) has been launched, and this will incorporate the second initiative: a financial toolbox. This is designed to provide UITP members and local authorities with guidance on how to identify and develop

alternative sources of funding to build new revenue streams and attract capital investment.

"The cost of public transport is increasing due to the rise in passengers, and higher unit costs for energy and labour which have been rising faster than the rate of inflation for the last 10 years," says Mr Jérôme Pourbaix, the UITP's senior transport economist. "At the same time, people have higher expectations, but it is increasingly difficult for municipalities to fund projects. It is not the role of the UITP to say what the best solution is, but to help cities make well-informed decisions."

The proportion of costs covered by fares varies widely, from only 30% in Paris and Warsaw, to 40% in Madrid and 43% in Berlin. While the difference is made up in various ways, the UITP believes there is considerable potential to increase farebox revenue. The big obstacle is politicians who often fear losing votes if they are seen to increase fares, with the result that fares in many cities have fallen in real terms. The UITP believes the solution lies in offering higher quality services which people will then be willing to pay for.

In the end, it is all about sharing ideas, trying new things, and being flexible, while it is up to cities and operators to rise to the challenge.

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