

DECLARATION FROM MINISTERS ON TRANSPORT INNOVATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: RESHAPING MOBILITY IN THE WAKE OF COVID-19

27 May 2021

Preamble

Transport and mobility are undergoing profound structural changes shaped by digitalisation, automation, and the need to radically reduce greenhouse gas emissions globally. Innovation is transforming the sector at an unprecedented pace, removing barriers to the movement of people and goods and changing our way of living and working.

Measures to contain the Covid-19 pandemic have limited the spread of the virus, but they have also severely affected transport and mobility operations. The recovery from this pandemic offers new opportunities to reshape transport systems and shift to more resilient, efficient, sustainable and equitable mobility. Innovation, along with behavioural change, will continue to be essential to support the transition to these long-term objectives.

Transport can provide for both access to opportunities for all individuals and the smooth and efficient flow of passengers and freight, thereby contributing to the Sustainable Development Goals and Targets of the 2030 United Nations Agenda for Sustainable Transport.

Strong political leadership is key to realise this vision and to *build back better* from Covid-19. We must now focus on the opportunity the pandemic provides to harness innovation in the sector to help reshape transport for a safer, more inclusive and sustainable pathway to the future.

We, the Ministers responsible for transport in the Member countries of the International Transport Forum, have assembled under the Presidency of Ireland to seek mutual understanding of, and orient our response to these challenges.

Restoring connectivity and building resilient transport networks

We:

affirm that connected and resilient transport networks are essential to mitigate the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic and deliver a strong, fair and sustainable recovery that puts us on the path to a net-zero emissions world;

embrace the opportunity to *build back better*, while maintaining and repurposing existing transport infrastructure;

underline that recovery measures should address the transport system as a whole to ensure innovation and benefits can be shared among modes;

develop policies and initiatives that strengthen the overall quality of passenger and freight transport within and across borders by fostering - among others - automation, digitalisation and data innovation, as well as by promoting intermodality, developing interoperability and improving safety and security.

Fostering inclusive transport for all

We:

recognise the particularly significant mobility impacts of Covid-19 on segments of the population often underserved by transport services and low-income transport users; in this context:

support policies that ensure that application of innovative technologies and new forms of mobility foster equitable access for all individuals, including across urban, rural and geographically-remote, low-density areas;

promote initiatives that aim to redesign urban mobility by building on recent increased demand for use of more active modes of travel (e.g. walking and cycling), which can help accelerate the transition towards more accessible and resilient urban transport networks;

encourage training and education to prepare the transport labour force for the future, while ensuring more equitable working conditions and promoting a more inclusive and fair workplace for all transport workers.

Taking the lead to encourage environmentally sustainable transport

We:

recognise that innovation in transport plays an important role in achieving the goals set out in the Paris Agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change;

commit to show ambition, leadership and continued investment in the transition to greener and more efficient transport solutions for both goods and people; against this backdrop:

foster policies and initiatives that encourage use of public transport, promote active modes of mobility to reduce urban congestion and noise, improve air quality and support the health and well-being of all citizens;

promote innovation in transport technologies, such as electrification, low- and zero-carbon fuels, hydrogen fuel cells, and new-generation batteries, thereby contributing to a lasting shift towards greener transport;

support further research into ground-breaking technologies to improve energy efficiency with a view to reduce or eliminate transport-related GHG emissions.

Improving governance and financing framework

We:

foster green and inclusive innovation as a part of economic stimulus and recovery plans;

underline that innovative transport and mobility solutions may necessitate adjustments to regulatory frameworks to enable new business models to emerge; this may require coordination and cooperation with other relevant public authorities;

support and **facilitate**, as appropriate, new approaches to private-public collaboration, and cooperation of the transport sector with other sectors, such as energy, and telecommunications, to access and share relevant data for transport operations and planning management;

promote strategic investment in research and development, including in pilot projects aimed at the deployment of innovation and sharing of best practices.