



News Release

Investments in urban rail projects: the key to sustainable mobility

Brussels, 27 September – Urban rail solutions are essential in order to improve the quality of life in our cities and to reach the climate goals agreed in the UN COP21 conference. However, massive investments are needed in this respect, using the existing available sources at EU and national level and exploring possible alternatives. This was the main message of Rail Forum Europe’s dinner debate held in Brussels on 26 September and sponsored by UNIFE and UITP.

Laurent Dauby, UITP Director for rail transport, highlighted the fact that EU strategic objectives on energy efficiency, climate change and safety cannot be met without investments aimed at increasing the efficiency of mass public transport. He stated: *“There is no silver bullet to financing high quality sustainable transport in cities. A resilient and robust funding mix comprises government funding, passenger fares and a whole range of levies from so-called indirect beneficiaries”.*

Philippe Citroën, UNIFE Director General, reminded the environmental benefits of tram, metro and light rail solutions at urban level and outlined the need to make best possible use of existing EU instruments. He said: *“UNIFE appreciates the deep involvement of the Parliament on urban mobility and hopes that concrete follow-up actions will be taken in order to implement the measures proposed by the recent reports of Mr Van de Camp and Ms Delli. In particular, in an increasingly urbanized Europe, more EU funds, such as EFSI, should be allocated to sustainable urban transport. The European rail industry is in the frontline to develop technologically advanced and climate friendly products which make urban rail an attractive solution and result in industrial jobs and growth in the EU”.*

Henrik Plougmann Olsen, Copenhagen Metroselskabet CEO, described the benefits in terms of urban regeneration brought about by the construction of two metro lines in Copenhagen. He declared: *“We decided to build a metro because we believed it would bring growth to the city. For example, the value of the land increases by 13% if close to a metro line”.*

Keir Fitch, DG MOVE Head of Unit on Research and Innovative Transport Systems listed a number of initiatives carried out by the Commission in the field of urban mobility, such as the Strategy for low-emission mobility, the Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans and the Connecting Europe Facility. He called for further involvement of urban stakeholders in Shift2Rail and concluded by mentioning the future

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challenges for the rail sector: *“Rail needs to be proactive in order to maintain its current environmental advantages, in light of the upcoming challenges of road electrification and road automated vehicles”*.

During the open discussion, various points were touched upon, such as the challenge of urban rail freight and the needs to ensure system efficiency and make EU funds more user-friendly for European SMEs in the transport sector.

Wim Van de Camp, Member of the European Parliament’s TRAN Committee, stressed the importance of blending EU grants and loans for rail projects. He concluded: *“The rail sector should get out of its comfort zone and explore the possible use of pension funds”*.

RFE Chairman Michael Cramer thanked the participants and concluded the debates: *“There are two main problems with urban mobility, in particular when it comes to rail: meeting citizens’ needs while minimising the environmental and climate impacts and finding adequate financing to ensure an efficient project implementation. One thing is clear: electric and automated cars are not the solution to make our cities a better place to live and move around. Public transport, and in particular rail, is the way forward”*.

About Rail Forum Europe

Founded by Members of the European Parliament from across the parliamentary committees, Rail Forum Europe is an international non-profit making association that aims at bringing together EU decision-makers and the rail sector to achieve a better understanding of rail-related issues.

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