



COVID-19 TRANSPORT BRIEF

Transport Policy Responses to the Coronavirus Crisis

6 April 2020

Which transport-related policies and measures help to maintain essential mobility for people and the transport of critical goods during Covid-19 pandemic while avoiding to further spread the Coronavirus? We provide a first non-exhaustive compilation.

☀ **Protect transport workers**

Keeping transport personnel safe is critical for maintaining essential services. Teleworking is not an option for most transport workers. National and international authorities are providing detailed guidance on the use of personal protective equipment, hygiene best practices, social distancing measures, the handling of (suspected) Covid-19 cases, samples or human remains. Lessons learned in regions hit early in the pandemic are highly pertinent. Some include tracking of transport workers' journeys and contacts, the (video) monitoring of adherence to measures, providing training in correct sanitation practices, implementing social distancing also in communal staff spaces such as canteens, creating employee assistance and counseling programmes to ensure practical help and strengthen mental resilience.

☀ **Relax restrictions on operation of heavy goods vehicles**

A major concern in the Covid-19 crisis has been assuring the distribution of essential commodities. With trucks delivering the vast majority of goods, many governments have relaxed restrictions on operating lorries. Limits on operation during weekends and public holidays have been suspended, restrictions on driving/rest times relaxed, and the validity of licenses and certificates extended. In some countries and cities, night-time bans on lorries have also been relaxed.

☀ **Keep borders open for freight with "Green Lanes"**

With many frontiers closed to contain the spread of the coronavirus, border crossings have become critical points for the movement of essential goods. Waiting times due to tight border controls have reached unprecedented levels. Designating "green lane" border crossing points helps keep supply chains intact. In the European Union, controls

on “green lane” inland border crossings should not exceed 15 minutes including health screening of transport workers. For transiting freight trucks, some countries are using a convoy system. For rail freight, trains and drivers are changed at some borders.

- ☀ **Exempt transport workers in international freight transport from entry prohibitions**

Truck drivers, seafarers, and air crews need to continue to cross borders in order to keep supply chains intact. Healthy transport personnel engaged in the transport of goods are mostly excluded from entry prohibitions, but not always. Some countries ban foreign trucks from high-risk countries. In others, foreign trucks must unload cargo at the border and return immediately. In others still, foreign trucks can deliver freight but must leave the country within 24 hours. For transiting freight trucks, some countries are using a convoy system. Restrictions apply to embarking or disembarking seafarers and air crews, including the requirement to avoid stop-overs and to self-isolate during lay-overs. To facilitate travel to duty stations, the European Union has introduced a template certificate for international transport workers.

- ☀ **Channel cross-border travel via dedicated entry points**

To enforce the entry restrictions for international travelers, many countries are redirecting incoming international flights to dedicated airports where they have concentrated capacity for carrying out border and health checks, while also limiting the exposure of personnel and the public to contagion. The same approach is applicable to ports and inland border crossing points. Capacity to handle passenger volumes while ensuring minimum contact among arriving travelers is critical.

- ☀ **Reduce crowding in public transport and pivot to supporting critical functions**

Public transport implies proximity and therefore risk of contagion. It also provides essential mobility for critical workers. Measures thus aim to dissuade non-essential travel while ensuring safe use and maximum support for health and other essential workers. Many operators have reduced service by 50% or more. Enhanced hygiene protocols have been implemented. Maximum occupancy levels have been reduced. Barriers between drivers and passengers are common. Boarding is often only via rear door of busses or trams. Online ticket sales and ticket validation on board have been suspended. Servicing all stops by default avoids the need for pressing signal buttons. Health workers can use public transport for free in many cities. Some have created special shuttle service for them.

- ☀ **Activate capabilities of the transport sector in non-traditional areas and ways**

When the transport sector is hindered from using its full resources to provide mobility, the slack can be harnessed in creative ways for the combat against Covid-19. Rail operators have converted trains into rolling hospitals to distribute patients more evenly across a country, for instance. Automotive and aircraft manufacturers are reconfiguring

production lines to manufacture urgently needed medical equipment, sometimes in unconventional partnerships. Grounded airline staff with first responder qualifications have been slated to take over support roles in the health system.

☀ **Leverage innovative forms of mobility**

Emerging transport innovations can be useful in the current health crisis, even if not yet mainstream. Among the technology with most potential in era of Covid-19 are automated vehicles and drones. These are already used, if on a small scale, for delivering supplies to high-risk groups or transporting infected persons. Drones can spray disinfectants, monitor social distancing behaviour and make public service announcements. Easing regulations to quickly scale up or allow the most targeted use of transport innovations is worth considering.

☀ **Use transport operator data to inform policy responses**

App-based mobility companies and other data-driven businesses such as map and route planning services collect mobility data and have analytical capabilities that can support government decision-making. Such collaboration exists in a number of countries.

☀ **Weigh the benefits of cycling and walking in a pandemic against the risks**

Different approaches exist with regard to active mobility, notably cycling, in the Covid-19 pandemic. Some authorities consider cycling non-essential and cyclists may face fines. Others encourage cycling as an alternative to sharing vehicles where the risk of contagion is high. Some cities have closed streets for cars and dedicated them to walking and cycling in order to provide adequate space for social distancing. Some bike-sharing systems offer free rides to medical and other essential workers, with some deploying additional bicycles and others offering free e-bikes. In some cases, free service extends beyond critical workers. Cycling also helps to keep citizens healthy while under mobility restrictions. A sedentary lifestyle increases negative health effects and cycling-related measures should be balanced for the best outcome.

☀ **Ensure the short-term financial viability of the transport sector**

The drop in travel demand presents an economic challenge to operators across all modes. Most aircraft are grounded, many airports have come to a standstill. In cities, operators have reduced or discontinued service. Saving jobs and easing disruptions requires quick financial relief. Fiscal packages support hard-hit sectors, usually also transport, in many countries. Others provide sector-specific support, e.g. for airlines and urban transport. State guarantees for bank loans, employee salary grants, cash payments, and waived fees and payments all help. Subsidies need to be well-targeted and should not discriminate among operators. Services to regions struggling to maintain transport lifeline need attention.