GENERAL WORKERS' UNION
Reshaping Our Mobility
Proposals 2025

Contents

Reshaping our Mobility

Objective: to implement a series of proposals aimed to alleviate traffic congestion

1. 24-hour economy: Promoting Off-Peak service provision

Government will lead by example whereby a number of public services will be provided off-peak. These may include waste collection, road cleansing, road markings, driving licensing tests/lessons and landscaping, amongst others.

The Government will engage with the private sector to discuss the planning and implementation of deliveries during off-peak hours, particularly in the retail, manufacturing, hospitality and construction sectors.

Study the feasibility and implementation of additional cargo services to Gozo possibly through the Malta Freeport, Kordin and Valletta.

2. Vehicles: Incentivise citizens to limit the use of passenger vehicles

Surrendering car driving licence.

Convincing youths not to obtain a car driving license.

Incentivizing full-time employees to use their private vehicles during off-peak hours.

Revising the Employee Transportation Deduction Act to encourage businesses to promote car-pooling by reducing by half (to 4 from 8) the threshold of persons required to benefit from this tax deduction instrument.

3. Parking: Alleviate parking shortages and reduce congestion in village cores

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5. Road Works: Improve the coordination of road works

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6. Sustainable Mobility: Towards more sustainable and active modes of transportation

Development of a National Cycling Strategy.

Appointment of an Ambassador for Sustainable Mobility to assist in the development of policy initiatives as well as the implementation of measures within the Strategy who will be supported by an Advisory Committee for Sustainable Mobility.

The initial reaction of the General Workers' Union

The General Workers' Union (GWU) responds positively to the Government's consultation document, recognizing the strong commitment to addressing mobility challenges and building a sustainable, efficient framework. This vision apart from being part of the 2050 Malta Vision also aligns closely with workers' needs for safer, more accessible, and flexible transportation options. A well-structured mobility plan not only fosters economic growth but also substantially benefits society as a whole.

We fully support measures aimed at reducing emissions and promoting cleaner transportation, as these contribute to a healthier environment for all. Additionally, we emphasize the importance of ensuring that all workers, regardless of ability or location, have access to reliable, efficient and cost-effective public transport. This approach supports equity and opens economic opportunities across sectors.

The GWU also highlights the transformative potential of digital innovation in optimizing transport systems. Digital solutions can significantly reduce commuting times, helping workers achieve a better balance between their personal and professional lives.

Safety remains a top priority, as it directly impacts workers' well-being. Improved infrastructure, advanced technologies for accident prevention, and safer road systems are essential components of this initiative.

Addressing traffic issues requires a unified effort. We cannot stress enough the importance of collaboration between public entities and the private sector to deliver affordable, efficient transport solutions that benefit workers with lower commuting costs and enhanced reliability.

The GWU is currently preparing its own proposals and constructive recommendations, aimed at fostering solutions that serve the broader community.

General Workers' Union proposals

24-hour economy: Promoting Off-Peak service provision

The General Workers' Union (GWU) welcomes the Government's initiative to address Malta's ongoing traffic congestion issues through innovative approaches aimed at utilizing road infrastructure on a 24-hour basis. This challenge requires a careful balance between efficiency, sustainability, and the preservation of workers' rights. Our response to the consultation document includes proposals grounded in the GWU's core principles of fairness, social justice, and environmental stewardship, which ensure that the voices and well-being of Malta's workers remain at the forefront of this conversation.

The Government must be the lead driver in this much-needed change. For the Government to take this lead, the GWU is proposing to start providing a range of public services during off-peak hours. Waste collection, deliveries of fuels, road cleansing, road markings, driving licensing tests and lessons, road works and landscaping activities can all be done during off-peak hours. During the MCESD meeting, the Minister responsible for transport stated that our road network is utilised for a maximum of 15 hours. This is an opportunity to fully utilise our road network to its full potential. This initiative will reduce congestion during peak hours and improve overall service efficiency.

The private sector needs to be roped in as well. All deliveries to small, medium and large retail outlets, hotels and residents (for example gas cylinders) can be performed during off-peak hours. The Government needs to engage with social partners and the industry to plan and implement off-peak deliveries. There are already some services that are performed during the night – deliveries to a particular supermarket and delivery of dairy products.

Most of these workers both in the public service and private sector are covered with collective agreements and their working conditions need to be discussed in detail as these changes will have a major impact on their work-life balance. Discussions will need to focus on key sectors such as retail, manufacturing, hospitality, and construction, working hours, shift patterns and payments. These discussions need to also focus on the end users collecting services. This reorganisation of deliveries will help streamline operations and alleviate traffic pressures during regular business hours.

Furthermore, we are in favour in the implementation of additional cargo services to Gozo. It is not logical that containers must cross the whole island to arrive in Gozo when these can be loaded straight from the Malta Freeport, Kordin and Valletta and delivered at the Mġarr harbour. Utilising the existing infrastructure at Malta Freeport, Kordin, and Valletta to support less traffic congestions will free our road network of heavy vehicles. Apart from alleviating traffic this proposal has the potential to enhance connectivity and optimize logistical operations between Malta and Gozo.

The same concept can be utilised between ports on the island from Marsaxlokk to Ċirkewwa and any port in between.

Vehicles: Incentivise citizens to limit the use of passenger vehicles

Incentivizing citizens to limit the use of passenger vehicles is a critical step towards reducing traffic congestion, lowering greenhouse gas emissions, and promoting a more sustainable urban environment. However, such efforts can only succeed if they are accompanied by a robust and efficient mass public transportation system. For individuals to willingly reduce their reliance on private vehicles, they must be able to access convenient, reliable, and affordable alternatives. Without a well-developed public transport network, efforts to curb vehicle usage may not yield the desired outcomes. Therefore, the expansion and improvement of public transportation infrastructure must be a central component of any strategy aimed at reducing the use of passenger vehicles. Only through a comprehensive approach that integrates both incentives and effective mass transit options can we achieve long-term sustainability and improved quality of life for citizens.

Several initiatives can be considered to incentivize citizens to limit the use of passenger vehicles. These initiatives can add to existence initiatives such as free public transport. If we want to reduce our dependency on private vehicles, our transport system needs to be efficient, punctual

and consistent. Apart from the cost, commuters consider efficiency and reliability as top priority. If our public transport system is effective, it can become a more attractive option compared to driving. However, this would require public transport to be reliable, efficient, and accessible, which necessitates significant investment in infrastructure and technology to ensure that citizens have confidence in the system.

In addition to this, the continues promotion of the adoption of green vehicles could play a key role in reducing the environmental impact of transportation. This could be achieved through tax credits or subsidies for the purchase of electric vehicles (EVs) and hybrid cars, with further encouragement to scrap older, polluting ICE vehicles. However, this would need to be complemented by an increase in the investment of a robust charging infrastructure and the use of renewable energy sources to maximize the environmental benefits of EV adoption.

During the pandemic most of the working organisations adopted flexible work arrangements, such as remote work and telework. This measure helped reduce the use of private vehicles drastically. Various studies showed that productivity increased significantly, and employees benefited as they reduced commuting times. Regretfully, after the pandemic, all employees requested to return to their offices and workplaces. On various occasions the General Workers' Uion proposed a robust legislative framework to cover remote working and teleworking and encourage the use of tele/remote working. The current coverage and protection are very minimal by the Telework National Standard Order. S.L.452.104. We believe that in connection with the above proposal, we need to update the current telework legislation and introduce new legislation to cover remote working.

During the same period, the Government introduced remote hubs in various localities. The use of these hubs was very minimal, and the Government closed most of these hubs. We believe such initiatives should be introduced in collaboration with the private sector. We are also proposing that a hybrid system of office/remote working be promoted with employers and encouraged to be taken by employees. A compressed workweek could also contribute significantly to reducing the need for daily commuting. These arrangements would not only alleviate traffic congestion but also offer employees greater work-life balance. However, it is crucial to ensure that such policies are accessible across different sectors and roles, particularly in industries where remote work is not feasible. Clear guidelines/policies and incentives for businesses to adopt such practices would be necessary to ensure widespread adoption.

To further reduce traffic congestion and promote a more sustainable approach to work and commuting, a nationwide proposal to encourage remote and virtual meetings should be adopted. By leveraging modern communication technologies, businesses and Government entities can minimize the need for physical travel, particularly for routine meetings and administrative tasks. This initiative would involve incentivizing organizations to invest in high-quality virtual meeting platforms, providing training for employees to effectively use these tools, and promoting a cultural shift toward embracing remote collaboration. The Government could lead by example, setting targets for the reduction of in-person meetings and offering tax benefits or grants for companies that implement remote working policies. This approach not only alleviates traffic congestion but also enhances productivity, reduces costs, and contributes to Malta's broader environmental and sustainability goals by lowering carbon emissions associated with daily commutes.

Another effective measure could be the implementation of car-free days or designated pedestrian zones in high-traffic areas. These initiatives would provide citizens with cleaner, safer

environments, and encourage a shift away from private car use especially in urban centres. However, to avoid disruptions to businesses, particularly in sectors that rely on daily commuting, it would be important to provide alternatives such as flexible working arrangements or efficient delivery services.

Expanding cycling infrastructure should also be prioritized as part of a broader strategy to encourage sustainable commuting. By providing dedicated cycling lanes, subsidies for bicycles, and secure parking facilities at workplaces, more individuals would be incentivized to consider cycling as a practical mode of transport. However, this approach may be challenging in areas that lack the necessary infrastructure, so ensuring safety and convenience for cyclists is essential to the success of such policies.

Public awareness campaigns to promote carpooling could also prove effective in reducing vehicle use. These campaigns would highlight the environmental and financial benefits of sharing rides and could be paired with the creation of a platform to help individuals find compatible carpool partners. Despite the challenges of cultural attitudes toward carpooling, such initiatives could lead to significant reductions in the number of vehicles on the road, particularly if they are incentivized by tax deductions or rewards.

Public Transport Schedule and Bus Stops

The public transport schedule in Ħal Far Industrial Area urgently needs revision to better serve the growing number of workers. Current schedules are inadequate, leading to overcrowded buses and long wait times, especially during peak hours. Also, workers on a shift system are obliged to use their private car as the bus schedule does not cater to the early hours of the day or during nighttime. Additionally, the limited number of bus stops leaves many workers with lengthy walks to access public transport, reducing the system's efficiency and convenience.

To improve accessibility and meet the needs of the area's population, increasing the number of bus stops and adjusting the schedule to accommodate high-demand periods is essential. This will enhance connectivity, reduce travel times, and promote public transport usage.

The promotion of flexible car rental and car-sharing services could serve as a viable alternative to car ownership. Such services would enable citizens to rent vehicles for short periods when necessary, reducing the overall demand for private car ownership. The success of these services would depend on their convenience, affordability, and integration with public transport systems, ensuring a seamless and accessible mobility solution for all.

These suggestions would need to be carefully integrated with broader policy objectives to ensure they are effective in reducing car usage while promoting sustainable and equitable alternatives. Each measure must be assessed for its feasibility, considering factors such as infrastructure needs, accessibility, and the potential impact on different socio-economic groups.

Decreasing our dependency on the use of private vehicles

Surrendering car driving licenses and convincing youths not to obtain a car driving license are proposals that require a fundamental shift in the cultural mindset of the Maltese population. In Malta, the car is often viewed not just as a means of transportation but as a symbol of status and independence, especially for young people. Owning a car is frequently considered a rite of passage, marking the transition into adulthood. It is often the first significant investment many individuals make, and for many, it provides a sense of freedom and social status. This deeply

ingrained cultural attachment to cars presents a challenge when advocating for reduced private vehicle use. To successfully encourage people to surrender their driving licenses or reconsider obtaining one in the first place, a national cultural transformation is needed.

This cultural shift would involve altering the long-held belief that car ownership is essential for personal mobility and success. Public awareness campaigns, education, and a re-evaluation of values surrounding transportation could help foster a new mindset, where public transport, cycling, and other sustainable forms of mobility are seen as preferable alternatives. However, changing a nation's mindset is no easy task, especially when the car has been such a central part of its identity for decades. This transition cannot be achieved through individual efforts alone; it requires a concerted, nationwide initiative that encourages people to reconsider their transportation choices.

The success of such cultural change hinges on the development and support of a robust public transport system. For citizens to feel comfortable surrendering their driving licenses or opting out of obtaining one, public transport must be perceived as a reliable, efficient, and convenient alternative. It is essential that public transportation is accessible to all, with frequent services, affordable pricing, and well-maintained infrastructure. Without these improvements, efforts to reduce car ownership could fail, as people will be reluctant to give up the convenience and perceived necessity of their vehicles if public transport is not a viable option. In short, a shift away from car dependency requires not only cultural change but also a corresponding investment in a public transport system that can meet the needs of the population. Only then can Malta make meaningful progress towards reducing private car usage and fostering a more sustainable, forward-thinking society.

Revising the Employee Transportation Deduction Act to encourage businesses to promote carpooling is a critical step in fostering a more sustainable and environmentally friendly transportation culture. Currently, the threshold for businesses to benefit from the tax deduction instrument requires at least eight individuals to participate in a carpooling arrangement. Reducing this threshold to just four individuals would not only make it more accessible for a wider range of businesses but also create stronger incentives for both employers and employees to embrace carpooling as a viable alternative to driving alone.

This revision would allow smaller companies and organizations with fewer employees to take advantage of the tax benefits associated with promoting carpooling. By lowering the threshold to four individuals, it would become easier for businesses of various sizes to implement carpooling programs, even in smaller or more localized offices. This could help spread the practice of carpooling across a broader range of sectors, especially in industries or areas where employees are geographically dispersed but still within commuting distance of each other.

Furthermore, this revision would provide a significant economic incentive for businesses to actively encourage carpooling among their workforces. For businesses already offering transportation-related benefits, the tax deduction would serve as a financial motivator to either create or expand existing carpooling programs. This, in turn, could help reduce the number of vehicles on the road, alleviating traffic congestion, lowering emissions, and ultimately contributing to a more sustainable urban environment. It would also offer employees the opportunity to save money on commuting costs, as they could share the expenses of fuel and parking, making carpooling a more attractive option.

To make this initiative effective, businesses would need to be provided with clear guidelines and support on how to establish and manage carpooling programs. This could include the development of a centralized platform or app where employees can easily find carpool partners based on their work schedules, locations, and preferences. Additionally, businesses could offer flexible working hours or telecommuting options to ensure that carpooling remains a feasible option for employees with varying schedules.

Ultimately, revising the Employee Transportation Deduction Act by reducing the carpooling threshold would signal a stronger commitment to promoting sustainable transportation practices and could help drive a nationwide shift towards a more environmentally responsible and efficient commuting culture. This policy revision, combined with other complementary measures, would not only reduce traffic congestion but also contribute to long-term environmental goals and improve overall quality of life for the population.

Parking: Alleviate parking shortages and reduce congestion in village cores

To effectively reduce parking problems, alleviate parking shortages, and decrease congestion in village cores, a multifaceted approach is essential, involving infrastructure improvements, better utilization of existing public spaces, and the integration of digital solutions. One of the most effective strategies is the creation of park-and-ride facilities, particularly in areas near retail and commercial centres. These facilities allow drivers to park their vehicles at the outskirts of busy areas and then take public transportation or walk into the village core, reducing the number of private cars entering congested zones. Park-and-ride facilities should be strategically located along major transport routes or near key hubs, such as shopping malls, business districts, or transport terminals. These facilities would provide not only large parking spaces but also easy access to public transport, such as buses, trams, or trains, and could include charging stations for electric vehicles (EVs) and bicycle parking. The introduction of these facilities would significantly reduce the number of vehicles in the core areas, alleviate congestion, and contribute to improved air quality, while making commuting more convenient and environmentally friendly.

Another solution to alleviate parking shortages involves optimizing the use of existing public spaces, such as those in schools, sports grounds, hospitals, and other public buildings, during off-peak hours. These areas are often underutilized, particularly in the evenings, weekends, or during school holidays. For instance, parking areas at schools could be made available to the public after school hours or on weekends, while sports grounds and community centres could open their parking facilities to visitors during non-event times. Similarly, hospital parking lots, could be better utilized when not in use by medical personnel. As an example, the parking at St. Luke's hospital is closed at night while people in the area search for a parking spot. By making these spaces available to the public, local authorities can significantly increase the availability of parking in high-demand areas, without the need for costly new infrastructure. This also provides a practical way to improve parking access while generating additional revenue that could be reinvested into further transport and parking initiatives.

Digital solutions play a crucial role in improving parking management and easing congestion. One promising approach is the implementation of smart parking systems, which use sensors, cameras, or mobile apps to provide real-time information about parking availability. Drivers can access this information through their smartphones or in-car navigation systems, enabling them to quickly find an available parking space and reducing the time spent circling for a spot. Another

useful digital solution is integrated parking apps, which combine data from on-street parking, off-street parking lots, and park-and-ride facilities into one comprehensive platform.

Moreover, local authorities could harness data-driven parking management, analysing demand patterns to optimize parking policies. This would help identify areas with chronic parking shortages or underutilized spaces, allowing for more targeted interventions such as the introduction of shared parking initiatives. Additionally, virtual parking permits could be introduced to simplify the process of issuing and managing parking permits, making it easier for residents, visitors, or business owners to access parking in restricted areas. This approach would reduce administrative burdens and improve the efficiency of parking management.

To further address parking challenges, shared parking initiatives could be introduced, where businesses or institutions with underused parking spaces offer them to nearby businesses or residents, especially during off-hours. This would reduce the overall demand for new parking facilities and make better use of existing infrastructure. Additionally, the creation of car-free zones in village cores could help reduce the number of vehicles entering congested areas, improving pedestrian access and promoting sustainable transport options. Building vertical parking structures in areas with limited space could also provide a practical solution, allowing for more parking in the same footprint. These multi-story facilities could be integrated with EV charging stations to accommodate the growing number of electric vehicles.

The use of digital traffic management is an essential component in addressing congestion and optimizing traffic flow in urban and village core areas. By leveraging real-time data, advanced analytics, and automated systems, digital traffic management can significantly improve the efficiency of road networks, reduce delays, and enhance overall mobility. Smart traffic signals, which adjust in real-time based on traffic conditions, can minimize waiting times at intersections and help prioritize traffic flow during peak hours. These systems can be integrated with sensors and cameras that monitor traffic volume, vehicle speeds, and congestion levels, providing valuable data that can be used to dynamically manage traffic patterns and reduce bottlenecks. Additionally, digital solutions such as GPS-based navigation apps can guide drivers along the least congested routes, further distributing traffic more evenly across the network. Digital traffic management systems can also provide real-time updates to public transport users, allowing them to plan their journeys more effectively. By using data to continuously optimize traffic operations, digital traffic management can contribute to reducing congestion, improving air quality, and providing a more efficient and seamless transportation experience for all road users.

By combining these strategies—creating park-and-ride facilities, better utilizing public spaces, incorporating digital solutions, and promoting shared and car-free zones—local authorities can effectively address parking shortages, alleviate congestion, and promote a more sustainable transportation system in busy urban and village core areas. These measures, if implemented together, would provide a comprehensive solution to the growing challenges of parking and traffic congestion while improving the overall quality of life for residents and visitors.

Public Transport: improving our service

Transportation has an important role in supporting economic and social development for the welfare of society. Congestion can be recognized through roads filled with cars, trucks, buses and sidewalks filled with pedestrians. It usually relates to an excess of vehicles on a portion of roadway at a particular time resulting in speeds that are slower—sometimes much slower—than normal or "free flow" speeds. Several sources of congestion are traffic-influencing events such

traffic incidents, work zones, and weather; traffic demand that includes special events and fluctuations in normal traffic, and road network features such as traffic control devices and road capacity.

Public transportation is a vital element in solving the congestion problem in our island. A convenient, reliable, consistent public transportation mode to move from one point to another is paramount. If we want to decrease the use of personal vehicles soaring from year to year we need a reliable alternative public transport mode. Various research results show that the improvement of public transportation through comfort, safety, reliability and affordable cost can mitigate the traffic congestion. To improve Malta's public transport system and make it more accessible, efficient, and responsive to the needs of its population, a number of proposals can be implemented, including new bus routes, new bus sizes, a revision of national routes, and the integration of various modes of transportation.

Independent Transport System to Industrial Areas

The GWU has for the past years been the main promoter to the introduction of an independent direct transportation service between different localities and industrial estates in Malta. This proposal was welcomed by both the Government and the private sector. The idea is to pick up employees from one locality and drop them in different factories at the same location. The employees and employers were open for the proposal if this service was efficient and affordable. An action committee was formed between the GWU and five manufacturing industries in Ħal Far where a SWAT analyses was performed and drafted an action plan. Afterwards, we began a serious of discussions with the Government and competent Authorities. These discussions included the GWU, the Ministry for the Environment, Energy and Enterprise, the private sector and Malta Enterprise. The discussion faltered as we could not find a transport operator with the capacity to handle such operation. Another obstacle was the financing of such system. Employees and employers were willing to contribute but we need a Government intervention. This could be a problem due to EU regulations. We believe that this obstacle can be overcome as this service can be organised under the public service obligation regulations.

We strongly believe that such an idea apart from the environmental benefits, will also alleviate parking pressures in industrial zones and be economical beneficial for both employees and employers. We urge all concerned to push forward this idea as apart from reducing the use of private cars, it is also beneficial to the environment.

Businesses could also be encouraged to adopt sustainable transport solutions for their employees. Tax incentives or grants could be offered to companies that invest in electric shuttle services, bike-sharing programs, or carpooling schemes. However, smaller businesses may face challenges in affording such investments, so tailored incentives based on the size and type of business could ensure broader participation.

Urban planning policies that prioritize walkability and access to public transport should be promoted in new developments, as this would reduce the need for car ownership in the long term. However, this requires a long-term vision and substantial investment in infrastructure. Additionally, engaging with local communities during the planning process would help ensure that developments meet their needs and preferences.

New Direct Bus Routes for Industrial Estates

If the above proposal is not accepted another proposal could be the introduction of new direct bus routes to and from industrial estates. Many industrial zones in Malta, such as those in Hal Far, Marsa, and Bulebel, are home to a significant number of employees who rely on private cars for their daily commute. By creating direct, efficient bus routes to these areas, the Government can reduce traffic congestion, lower emissions, and provide workers with a sustainable and convenient alternative to driving. These new routes could operate during peak hours and be designed to connect industrial estates to key residential areas, transport hubs, and major commercial centres, allowing employees to easily access their workplaces via public transport.

Circular Buses for Large Localities

Another proposal is the implementation of circular bus routes for large localities, such as St. Julian's, Birkirkara, and Sliema. These circular routes would allow for a more efficient and flexible service within densely populated areas, ensuring that residents and visitors can easily travel to different parts of the locality without the need to transfer between multiple buses. The circular routes would also reduce the number of buses traveling through congested central roads, helping to alleviate traffic while providing residents with convenient and frequent access to essential services, shops, and transport connections. These routes could be designed to operate on a loop, with strategically placed stops that cover key residential, commercial, and transport areas.

Apart from circular buses could be used in large localities, this proposal could also be used to connect small villages together or to a larger locality. This could reduce the dependency on private vehicles and make public transport more attractive and efficient to use.

Direct Buses from Park and Ride Locations

To further support the reduction of private car use and alleviate congestion, new direct buses should be introduced from Park and Ride facilities, such as the one at Floriana, Valletta, Marsa and Pembroke, to major destinations such as Valletta, Mater Dei Hospital, Paola Hub, the University of Malta, and the ferry terminals and major ports. These buses would provide a seamless and convenient connection for commuters who choose to park their vehicles at peripheral locations and use public transport for the rest of their journey. The introduction of these direct routes would ensure that individuals can quickly reach important destinations without having to navigate the traffic or search for parking in congested areas. In addition, these routes could be timed to coincide with peak working hours, providing a reliable alternative for commuters who typically rely on private vehicles.

Direct transport to MCAST and the University of Malta

We propose the introduction of direct transport options, such as shuttle buses, from park-and-ride locations across Malta to MCAST and other large educational institutions during peak hours. This initiative would ease traffic congestion, reduce the carbon footprint, and provide students and staff with a more efficient and reliable way to commute. By offering a seamless connection between park-and-ride facilities and educational institutions, we can encourage the use of public transport, alleviate parking issues on campuses, and contribute to a more sustainable transportation system. This proposal supports both environmental goals and the convenience of the academic community.

National Route Revision

To reshape Malta's national mobility, a comprehensive revision of the national bus routes is essential. Public transport routes should be updated to reflect the changing demographics and commuting patterns of the Maltese population. Since the introduction of the current bus routes, population densities have shifted, and new residential, commercial, and industrial developments have emerged, altering the demand for transport services. By revising the frequency of bus services and adjusting routes to align with current demand, public transport can become more efficient and responsive. It is crucial that bus services are reviewed regularly to ensure they meet the needs of the public and are not overcrowded or underutilized. Frequency should be adjusted based on real-time usage data, ensuring that routes with higher demand receive more frequent services, while less popular routes may have reduced frequencies to optimize resources.

Accountability of the service provider is also a key consideration. The public transport operator must be proactive in responding to these demands and be held accountable for meeting service standards. If the current service provider cannot guarantee these improvements, a call for tender should be issued, allowing for a more competitive and dynamic approach to providing public transport services. This ensures that the provider has the ability to offer a high-quality, reliable service to all passengers.

Incorporating Ferry Services into the National Transport System

Another important proposal is the incorporation of the successful ferry services into the broader public transport network. Malta's ferry services have proven effective in providing efficient and alternative routes for commuters travelling between Sliema and three cities and Valletta. The integration of ferry services into the public transport system would create a more seamless, multi-modal network, allowing passengers to easily switch between buses, ferries, and other forms of transport. Due to the increase in demand for the use of ferry services parking facilities should be created. We also propose the introduction of different ferry services, to other localities such various points around the harbour area. Another step would be to increase the service outside the harbour area to other costal localities. It is imperative that in parallel to such introduction a digital information system needs to be integrated informing uses of a cancellations and suggesting different modes of transport.

If we could provide around the island, mass transport maritime system this can be further integrated into the Malta public transport system creating a multi-type of public transport system.

Multi-Type Public Transport System

The adoption of a multi-modal public transport system is a forward-thinking approach that can enhance the efficiency, convenience, and sustainability of public transportation. A multi-type of system integrates various modes of transport, including buses, ferries, and passengers carrying vans, into a seamless network that caters to the diverse needs of commuters. Countries such as Switzerland, the Netherlands, and Germany have successfully implemented such systems, where different modes of transport are interconnected through a single ticketing system, real-time information platforms, and well-coordinated timetables. For example, in the Swiss city of Zurich, the integration of buses, trams, and trains provides commuters with the flexibility to use different modes of transport on a single journey. A similar model could be applied in Malta, where various types of public transport would work together, providing a more convenient and comprehensive solution for commuters. This approach could also be supported by a single,

unified ticketing system, making it easier for passengers to plan and pay for their journeys, regardless of the transport mode they use.

In conclusion, reshaping Malta's public transport system requires a comprehensive, flexible approach that includes new direct bus routes, circular buses for large localities, and a revision of national routes based on current demographics and usage patterns. The integration of ferry services into the public transport system and the adoption of a multi-type of transport model would ensure a more sustainable, efficient, and interconnected transport network that caters to the needs of all passengers. By incorporating these proposals, Malta can create a robust, reliable, and forward-looking public transport system that supports a shift away from private vehicle dependency while enhancing the overall mobility and quality of life for its citizens.

A Robust, 24-Hour Public Transport System

Public transport must become the backbone of Malta's mobility strategy. For this reason, we advocate for a significant investment in a reliable, 24-hour public transport system. Extended service hours for buses, ferries, and other transit modes would cater to shift workers and residents with non-traditional schedules. Express routes linking key residential areas with industrial and commercial hubs could cut travel times significantly, making public transport a more attractive alternative to private car use.

Protecting Workers' Wellbeing

As Malta transitions to a 24-hour mobility model, it is imperative that the rights and wellbeing of workers are safeguarded. Staggered shifts and night-time work must comply with labour regulations to ensure that workers are provided adequate rest periods and fair compensation for non-standard hours. Additional allowances for night shifts or irregular schedules should be mandatory, recognizing the added strain such roles may impose on employees. The GWU strongly emphasizes that while addressing traffic issues is critical, it must not come at the expense of workers' health, safety, or quality of life. Measures should be implemented to protect both physical and mental wellbeing during this transition.

Traffic Demand Management (TDM) Strategies

To further optimize road usage, the Government should explore traffic demand management strategies. These could include financial rewards for carpooling and shared mobility options. For example, implementing a robust incentive program for carpooling—such as dedicated parking spots or subsidies—can make shared commuting a more attractive option. These measures would not only reduce vehicle numbers but also foster a culture of shared responsibility for Malta's mobility challenges.

Road Works: Improve the coordination of road works

To minimize inconvenience to citizens and ensure a smoother execution of public projects, improving coordination between relevant entities is essential. The creation of a centralized coordination body responsible for overseeing all infrastructure projects would streamline communication among Government departments, local councils, private contractors, and National public entities like Infrastructure Malta, Transport Malta, Water Service Corporation, EneMalta and other transport or related authorities. This body would manage scheduling, planning, and timelines for projects, ensuring that different entities collaborate effectively to avoid overlaps and disruptions in the same areas. Early joint planning meetings between local councils, project managers, and transport authorities could help anticipate and address

potential impacts on local communities, such as the adjustment of public transport routes when roadworks are planned. By maintaining a clear, structured timeline and facilitating collaboration, this coordination body would ensure fewer disruptions and a more efficient process for executing public projects.

Equally important is keeping local councils and residents well-informed throughout the lifecycle of a project. Regular consultation sessions should be held at the beginning of any project, allowing residents to express concerns, provide feedback, and stay updated on project developments. A comprehensive communication plan, including different modes of communication should ensure that information is consistently disseminated. Additionally, a dedicated website or app for major projects would allow the public to track progress in real-time and receive timely alerts about upcoming disruptions or changes to regular routes. Direct channels for resident feedback would further enhance communication and enable quicker responses to concerns, reducing public frustration during project execution.

Adopting Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for public projects would formalize processes, ensuring consistency and efficiency. SOPs would establish clear protocols for project announcement, impact assessments, communication channels, and mitigation strategies. For instance, a defined process for notifying the public about upcoming projects and their impacts would ensure that all stakeholders are informed in a timely and transparent manner. Impact assessments would identify potential disruptions and offer measures to minimize inconvenience, such as providing alternative routes or temporary services. SOPs would also include contingency plans, ensuring that adjustments can be made swiftly when issues arise, thus reducing the duration and severity of disruptions.

A Citizens' Rights Charter should be developed to outline the rights of residents and businesses impacted by public projects. This charter would guarantee transparency, communication, and fair compensation for any inconvenience caused by disruptions. It could include rights such as access to timely information, continued access to properties and essential services, and the right to seek compensation if disruptions are prolonged or severe. Public hearings or consultations could also be integrated into the charter, allowing citizens to voice concerns and project planners to address potential issues before and during project execution. Legal protections must be put in place to ensure public entities are held accountable for non-compliance with these rights, with clear processes for reporting issues and seeking resolution.

Effective communication is critical to ensuring that residents and commuters can adapt to disruptions, especially when alternative routes are needed. Real-time updates through mobile apps, SMS alerts, social media, and signage would keep the public informed about changes to traffic patterns, road closures, or delays. Collaboration with transport authorities would be vital in identifying and communicating alternative routes, while interactive maps detailing current disruptions and alternative paths could help residents plan their journeys. By providing comprehensive, real-time information and clear guidance on alternative routes, public authorities would ensure that citizens can navigate through disruptions with minimal inconvenience.

In conclusion, improving coordination, communication, and the adoption of SOPs, a Citizens' Rights Charter, and legal protections would significantly enhance the management of public projects. These proposals would not only reduce disruptions but also ensure that the rights of citizens are respected, while providing them with the necessary information and support to navigate changes. The implementation of these strategies would foster a more efficient and

responsive approach to public projects, prioritizing the well-being of residents and ensuring that the public is well-informed and prepared for any disruptions that may arise.

Sustainable Mobility: Towards more sustainable and active modes of transportation

The development of a National Cycling Strategy is a critical step toward promoting sustainable mobility and reducing reliance on private vehicles. Such a strategy should aim to integrate cycling into Malta's broader transport system while addressing the current challenges that hinder its adoption. The strategy should prioritize the development of safe and interconnected cycling infrastructure, including dedicated bike lanes that are separated from vehicular traffic, bicycle parking facilities in key areas, and secure storage options at transit hubs. It must also focus on improving accessibility to cycling routes, particularly in urban and suburban areas, to encourage more citizens to choose cycling as a viable mode of transport. Educational campaigns to promote cycling safety, benefits, and environmental impact should be launched, targeting schools, workplaces, and the wider community. Additionally, the strategy must address the cultural and logistical barriers to cycling by offering incentives such as subsidies for bicycle purchases or tax deductions for businesses that provide cycling facilities for employees.

The appointment of an Ambassador for Sustainable Mobility is an innovative proposal that could bring significant momentum to the implementation of sustainable transport policies. This ambassador would act as a visible and vocal advocate for sustainable mobility, engaging with stakeholders, especially with the Authority of Climate Change, local councils, private entities, and the public. The ambassador's role would include coordinating efforts across different sectors, raising awareness about the benefits of sustainable mobility, and ensuring that the measures within the National Cycling Strategy and other sustainable transport initiatives are effectively implemented. This position should be backed by a clear mandate and the authority to influence policy decisions, ensuring the ambassador's recommendations are taken seriously and translated into tangible outcomes.

However, some critical considerations and potential criticisms must be addressed to ensure the success of these proposals. First, the strategy must be adequately funded, as the lack of financial resources could hinder the development of necessary infrastructure and programs. Furthermore, the effectiveness of the ambassador will depend on their independence and authority; they must not be reduced to symbolic roles without real influence. Clear performance indicators should be established to measure the impact of their initiatives and ensure accountability.

In addition to these measures, the strategy could include pilot projects to test innovative cycling solutions and other sustainable solutions. These initiatives could take the form of a Public Private Partnership to promote cycling and sustainable transport to work. Cross-sector collaboration, particularly with schools and businesses, could help embed cycling into daily routines. Public engagement campaigns that showcase the health, environmental, and economic benefits of cycling would further support cultural change toward sustainable mobility.

A National Cycling Strategy, supported by the appointment of an Ambassador for Sustainable Mobility and an Advisory Committee, has the potential to transform Malta's transport system. However, success will require robust infrastructure development, consistent funding, and genuine political and institutional commitment to integrating cycling and sustainable mobility into Malta's long-term transport vision.

Additional GWU Proposals

Tourism

The rising number of tourists visiting Malta places significant strain on the country's road infrastructure and public transport system, needing targeted measures to address these challenges. A key proposal is the development of a dedicated tourist transport network that operates separately from the national public transport system, particularly during peak seasons. This network could include shuttle buses and express routes connecting popular tourist attractions, hotels, and major transport hubs such as the airport and ferry terminals. To further alleviate pressure on public transport, collaboration with the tourism industry is essential, encouraging hotels and tour operators to provide private transport services for their guests. Expanding and enhancing the **Park-and-Ride system** to include key tourist hotspots would also reduce congestion in busy areas by offering convenient and efficient transport options. Additionally, integrating the waterborne transport system as suggested above as part of a multimodal system could offer a sustainable alternative for moving tourists between coastal areas and islands. Investing in digital solutions like mobile apps for route planning, real-time updates, and ticket purchases tailored for tourists would improve their experience while promoting efficient use of the transport network. Lastly, promoting off-peak travel incentives could help distribute demand more evenly, reducing the burden on the transport system during busy times. These measures would ensure that Malta stays an attractive destination while maintaining a functional and sustainable transport system for both residents and visitors.

Noise and Air Pollution

To address the pressing issues of noise and air pollution, we are proposing a comprehensive set of measures aimed at creating a cleaner and healthier environment for all. While we applaud the Government for the shore to ship system, we are proposing the following to enhance further our commitment to cleaner air. Firstly, implementing stricter emission standards for industries and vehicles will significantly reduce air pollution. Encouraging the adoption of renewable energy sources, electrifying all public transport vehicles, promoting more the use of public transportation and the adoption of fully electric private vehicles will further contribute to lowering emissions.

Apart from the current subsidies we are proposing an increase in subsidies, especially for fully electric vehicles. We are also proposing an increase in charging points.

The Green Deal

We welcome the Government's decision to introduce a new Authority to monitor the impact of climate change and mitigate its impact. In addition, the European Green Deal calls for a 90% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions from transport, in order for the EU to become a climate-neutral economy by 2050, while also working towards a zero-pollution ambition. To achieve this systemic change, we need to make all transport modes more sustainable, make sustainable alternatives widely available in a multimodal transport system and put in place the right incentives to drive the transition. These are the three pillars of our future actions on the green deal.

This implies that all policy levers must be pulled to measures to significantly reduce the current

dependence on fossil fuels (by replacing existing fleets with low- and zero-emission vehicles and boosting the use of renewable and low-carbon fuels); decisive action to shift more activity towards more sustainable transport modes (notably increasing the number of passengers travelling by public transport and active modes, as well as shifting a substantial amount of freight onto short sea shipping.

Although it is growing rapidly, the proportion of low- and zero-emission vehicles in the vehicle fleet is far too low today. Standards on CO2, air pollutant emissions, and public procurement rules, such as those in the Clean Vehicle Directive, must be key policy-drivers in our transition towards zero-emission mobility in road transport and through the increased supply of zero-emission vehicles, will make sustainable mobility more affordable for all.

Free School Transport

Some years ago, the Government introduced free school transport with the aim to reduce private car usage, particularly during peak hours, thereby alleviating traffic congestion and contributing to a more sustainable transport system. However, despite the potential benefits, recent data indicates that the uptake of this service stands at a mere 33%, which is significantly below expectations. This low participation rate suggests underlying concerns or barriers that discourage parents from opting for the service. Therefore, we propose that the Government engage in comprehensive consultations with parents and key stakeholders to identify and address the reasons for the poor uptake. This could involve addressing issues such as route coverage, service reliability, travel time, and safety concerns. By understanding and resolving these challenges, the Government can enhance the appeal of free school transport, increase participation, and make a meaningful impact on reducing traffic congestion and emissions during school commuting hours.

Car-free Zones

We propose transforming core villages into car-free zones to enhance local quality of life and environmental sustainability. By restricting vehicle access, these areas can become safer and more pleasant for pedestrians, promoting healthier lifestyles and vibrant community interactions. Implementing dedicated pedestrian pathways, bike lanes, and improved public transport options will support this transition, reducing traffic congestion and air pollution. Additionally, introducing car-free zones can boost local businesses by increasing foot traffic and creating a more attractive shopping environment. This initiative will not only preserve the charm of core villages but also foster a more sustainable and connected community.

Investment in road Infrastructure

We recognize the significant investment in our road network. By improving transportation networks, we reduce congestion, enhance accessibility, and promote sustainable mobility options, contributing to a greener and more connected society. We are also proposing the continuity of the current level of investment. A comprehensive investment in our road infrastructure will not only foster further economic growth but will also improve the quality of life for all citizens.

Road Discipline

Enhancing road discipline and enforcing traffic regulations are critical steps to reducing congestion and ensuring the smooth flow of traffic. Irresponsible behaviours, such as double

parking, parking at corners, or blocking roads, particularly by platform taxi service providers stopping inappropriately, significantly contribute to traffic disruptions and delays. To address this, clear and enforceable guidelines must be established, particularly for taxi service providers, to designate appropriate stopping areas for picking up or dropping off passengers without obstructing traffic. Penalties for violations such as double parking or blocking traffic flow should be significantly increased to deter such behaviour, with consistent enforcement to ensure compliance. Furthermore, harsh penalties must be imposed on construction contractors who block roads without the necessary permits, as these unauthorized disruptions exacerbate traffic congestion and inconvenience road users. Dedicated enforcement officers or technology such as traffic cameras should be utilized to monitor and address these violations in real-time. A public awareness campaign emphasizing the impact of irresponsible parking, road obstructions, and unauthorized blockages on traffic flow and public transport efficiency would complement these measures, fostering a culture of accountability and road discipline.

Education and Public Awareness

Behavioural change is central to the success of any mobility reform. Therefore, a nationwide educational campaign should be launched to inform the public about the benefits of reshaped mobility practices. This campaign should highlight the environmental, economic, and social advantages of reduced car dependency, greater use of public transport, and active mobility options. Engaging citizens through workshops, social media, and community outreach programs will ensure higher levels of acceptance and compliance. By creating a shared vision of a less congested and more sustainable Malta, the Government can foster public ownership of this initiative.

Malta Vision 2050

Recently, the Maltese Government launched the Malta Vision 2050, a plan that will shape the country's future over the next 25 years. The goal is to improve the quality of life for everyone, focusing on important areas like digital innovation, infrastructure, education, healthcare, sustainability, and jobs. As such these proposals and reforms must form an integral part of the Malta Vision 2050, reflecting the nation's commitment to creating a sustainable, efficient, and equitable transport system. By addressing pressing challenges such as traffic congestion, road discipline, and the strain on public infrastructure, these measures aim to enhance the daily lives of residents and visitors alike. Prioritizing sustainable mobility, effective enforcement, and innovative solutions not only aligns with Malta's long-term environmental and economic goals but also ensures a more liveable and accessible environment for future generations. Incorporating these initiatives into the national vision underscores the importance of transport as a cornerstone of quality of life, fostering a healthier, more connected, and resilient Malta by 2050.

Final Considerations

To implement these proposals effectively, ongoing collaboration between the Government, workers, employers, and social partners is essential. Trade Unions must have a seat at the table during planning and implementation phases to ensure that measures are practical and equitable. Furthermore, any mobility strategy must align with Malta's sustainability commitments, prioritizing reductions in carbon emissions and the promotion of green technologies. It is equally important to ensure accessibility for all citizens, particularly individuals with disabilities, elderly residents, and low-income groups, ensuring no one is left behind.

Conclusions

In conclusion, addressing Malta's transport challenges requires a holistic and forward-looking approach that prioritizes sustainable mobility, efficient infrastructure, and the well-being of both residents and visitors. The proposals outlined in this report—ranging from revising public transport routes, improving road discipline, and enhancing coordination during infrastructure projects to promoting cycling, carpooling, and digital traffic solutions—form a comprehensive framework to alleviate congestion and improve accessibility. These measures are essential to managing the increasing pressures on our road network and public transport system, driven by population growth and rising tourist numbers.

By fostering a cultural shift towards alternative and sustainable modes of transportation, supported by robust public policies and enforcement mechanisms, Malta can reduce its reliance on private vehicles and create a more efficient and environmentally friendly transport system. The integration of initiatives such as park-and-ride facilities, waterborne transport, and a dedicated tourist transport network will further enhance mobility while minimizing disruption to everyday life.

These reforms, coupled with the adoption of a Citizens' Rights Charter, stringent enforcement of road regulations, and active public engagement, must be aligned with the Malta Vision 2050. This vision serves as a guiding framework for a sustainable, inclusive, and resilient future, where transport not only facilitates movement but also enhances the overall quality of life. Achieving this ambitious vision will require strong political will, collaborative efforts across all sectors, and continuous commitment to innovation and excellence in transport planning and management. Together, these efforts will pave the way for a more connected, sustainable, and prosperous Malta.