



SIPTU submission to the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Transport and Communications concerning SIPTU’s “RESPECT TRANSPORT WORKERS” Campaign.

17th April 2024

INTRODUCTION

Chairman, members of the Committee, SIPTU is the largest Trade Union in Ireland and the largest Trade Union within the Public Transport Services Sector. We organise and represent 6000 employees across all the various operators who hold Public Transport Contracts with the National Transport Authority (NTA).

SIPTU, recently launched a campaign entitled “Respect Public Transport Workers” and its aim was to draw attention to and seek ways to deal with the ever-increasing reports of various types of anti-social behaviour that are taking place across all modes of Public Transport.

While such types of behaviour are not a new phenomenon and SIPTU has highlighted and campaigned on similar issues over many years, we have seen a significant increase in reports from members over recent times. Owing to this, SIPTU conducted an initial survey of our Public Transport members and on the basis of the results received we launched our campaign.

Survey Results

The initial survey conducted asked questions under the general heading of anti-social behaviour and the frequency members experienced such while carrying out their duties across the public transport network. We received over 600 responses from members employed in Aircoach, Bus Eireann, Dublin Bus, Go-Ahead Ireland, Irish Rail and the Luas. The feedback disclosed within the survey was deeply concerning for SIPTU and we felt action must be taken immediately.

In the survey responses, 21% of respondents stated they faced anti-social behaviour daily while 30% stated it was a weekly occurrence. Over 80% of respondents stated they have experienced abuse at work and many frontline staff have suffered physical abuse. Furthermore, minority community staff stated they believed abuse at work was a greater issue for them. Over 55% of respondents stated anti-social behaviour had worsened in the past 12 months. When asked what solutions Public Transport workers would like to see, 70% stated increased police focus on public transport was needed.

In feedback from the comments section of the survey and from subsequent reports from members, SIPTU has commenced a second survey on the issues of drug dealing/taking on Public Transport and racial abuse suffered by staff. We will appraise members of the committee on this survey results during the hearing.

Campaign Aims

SIPTU has highlighted these types of issues on Public Transport many times previously. We have consistently called for the establishment of a dedicated policing unit for public transport but unfortunately, our calls have never been acted on by the NTA, the Department of Transport, the Department of Justice or the Commissioner of an Garda Siochana.

The aims of this campaign are threefold: Firstly, we still hold the view that to adequately tackle all forms of anti-social behaviour then a dedicated policing unit, operating across all modes of Public Transport needs to be established. Ideally this would be under the remit and responsibility of An Garda Siochana, but if such is not under their remit, then the policing unit established must be centralised under one body and not under the responsibility of individual Public Transport Service Operators as is currently the position in Irish Rail and Transdev (LUAS).

A dedicated uniform policing unit for Public Transport would act as a significant deterrent and must be provided with powers of detention and the necessary tools to ensure perpetrators are prosecuted to the full extent of the law.

Secondly, SIPTU is calling for the immediate establishment of a National Transport Authority Advisory Council. Such a council was to be established under the Dublin Transport Act of 2008. This Act detailed the various stakeholders who should be represented on the council and had the right to make recommendations to the NTA on matters related to Public Transport. This council was never established, despite SIPTU lobbying successive Ministers to have this requirement acted on. We see such a council as the appropriate vehicle to tackle safety and security on Public Transport.

Lastly, SIPTU believes that a Transport Charter must be introduced which would outline what is and is not acceptable behaviour towards Public Transport staff. The Transport Charter could and should be used to highlight the problems experienced by staff (and indeed passengers) and help to educate everyone on the acceptable standards that must apply in Public Transport.

CONCLUSION

SIPTU wishes to thank the committee for inviting us to present to you today. The above submission is just a short overview of SIPTU's Respect Transport Workers campaign, the issues faced by our members and what we want to see established to help tackle the problems that exist.

We are happy to discuss any aspect of our campaign and it's aims and we would welcome any support and assistance this committee can give to the workers who provide a vital service in every community across Ireland.