

# TRANSPORT SECURITY FORCE BACK ON GOVERNMENT'S AGENDA

The commitment to establish a Transport Security Force, as outlined in the Programme for Government earlier this year, followed by a reaffirmation by the Minister for Transport, has been widely welcomed by SIPTU. The union has launched an online survey to get public feedback of anti-social behaviour experiences across bus, train and tram networks as part of the next stage of its 'Respect Transport Workers' campaign.

The commitment was reaffirmed by Transport Minister Darragh O'Brien, at a meeting of the Public Transport Safety Working Group, held by the Department of Transport.

This was the third meeting of the Public Transport Safety Working Group, established in 2024 to identify measures to improve passenger and staff safety across the public transport network.

The group includes public sector representatives including the unions, the National Transport Authority (NTA), An Garda Síochána, the Department of Justice, in addition to passenger representative groups.

Transport Minister Darragh O'Brien discussed the important issue of safety on public transport directly with the group at the meeting on 25 March, and he reaffirmed the



*SIPTU is surveying passengers' experiences of anti-social behaviour and abuse on board the LUAS and across the transport network.*



*An increased Garda presence across key routes of the Dublin Bus network and certain city is part of the 'Garda Days of Action' initiative.*

Government's commitment to tackling the issue of anti-social behaviour across the network.

Creating a Transport Security Force under the NTA is a strong commitment under the Programme for Government. It is envisaged that the new force would operate in a similar manner, and have similar powers, to both airport police and customs officers.

While there has been a significant increase in investment in safety measures on public transport in recent years, it remains a serious issue. "It is the people who regularly use and work within our public transport network who are most directly affected by any safety or security incidents on the network.

“The establishment of the Transport Security Force will play a central role in helping to tackle this important issue,” the Minister noted. He confirmed that his department has already started work “to identify the necessary legislative proposals and alterations to enable the establishment of the Transport Security Force”.

He said it remains “a high priority for Government” and highlighted the important role that the group will play in the planning and implementation of this commitment.

**‘RESPECT TRANSPORT WORKERS’**

SIPTU’s transport security police proposal was included in the new Programme for Government in January 2025. Seeking a swift delivery of this undertaking by the government is now the focus of the trade union’s ‘Respect Transport Workers’ campaign.

SIPTU Sector Organiser, John Murphy, said: “The Programme for Government contains a clear commitment to establish a new transport police service with powers of arrest and under the control of the National Transport Authority, which is in line with the union’s ‘Travel Safe’ policy document published last year.

“The creation of a new transport policing service was the central aim of the SIPTU Respect Transport Workers campaign, and that the Government has committed to creating such a service modelled on the airport police is a step in the right direction.”



*Irish Rail’s Travel Safe Policy details how a transport policing service can be created in Ireland.*

**‘GARDA DAYS OF ACTION’ CAMPAIGN**

Dublin Bus has reiterated its call for dedicate transport security force, with a sharp increase in the number of reported incidents of anti-social behaviour aboard Dublin Bus services in recent years. From 2019 to 2024, incidents more than doubled from 494 to 1,053 per year.



*Pictured at the launch of the ‘Respect Transport Workers’ campaign in Dublin’s Liberty Hall in February 2024 (l-r): Adrian Kane, SIPTU Transport, Energy, Aviation and Construction Divisional Organiser, Dublin Bus driver Suzanne Armstrong and SIPTU Transport Sector Organiser, John Murphy (Pic: SIPTU)*

To address this growing problem, a new initiative ‘Garda Days of Action’ will see an increased Garda presence across key routes of the Dublin Bus network and certain areas of the city throughout 2025, a series of Garda Days of Action across the Dublin Bus network over the coming weeks.

The initiative is part of a joint commitment by Dublin Bus, An Garda Síochána and the Department of Transport to improve safety and visibility on public transport, to deter anti-social behaviour, support and protect both the drivers and the travelling public across the city and Greater Dublin Area.

Minister Darragh O’Brien and Dublin Bus Chief Executive Billy Hann met with members of the ‘Safer Journeys Team’ and An Garda Síochána to promote the operations.

This includes rolling out dedicated Garda Days of Action, which will see increased Garda presence across key routes and areas of the city, throughout 2025 at locations and times identified by data and frontline feedback.

The Dublin Bus chief said: “The safety of our customers and employees is our top priority. The Garda Days of Action reflect our strong and ongoing partnership with An Garda Síochána, and we welcome their continued support in ensuring a safe and respectful environment on board our services.”

Minister O’Brien added that a reliable and safe public transport network, which is fundamental to a functioning city, means visibility, presence and co-operation. The Minister commended Dublin Bus for the proactive way it has approached safety through initiatives like the Safer Journeys Team. “This is what joined-up public service delivery looks like – practical, responsive and focused on people,” he added.

These actions form part of a broader safety and security strategy which Dublin Bus has developed in conjunction with the Department of Transport, including active support for the proposed establishment of a dedicated public transport policing unit.

### IRISH RAIL’S TRAVEL SAFE POLICY

Irish Rail worker and SIPTU National Executive Council member, Tommy Wynne noted that the issue of anti-social behaviour and violence on the public transport network has intensified since the pandemic.

He said that Irish Rail’s Travel Safe policy has outlined the international best practice in terms of policing public transport, detailing how a transport policing service can be created in Ireland. “We are pleased that the Government has taken this advice on board.

“Making a transport police service a reality must now be the key aim of all stakeholders in the public transport sector. SIPTU representatives are prepared to work closely and quickly with all bodies to make this much-needed service an effective force for dealing with anti-social activity on our public transport network,” Wynne added.

“We will be calling on the Government to include our proposal for Public Transport Assistance Units within the

new service. These are specifically trained social care intervention officers to deal with those causing a public disturbance on the public transport network.

“However, they’re more applicable for intervention in relation to underlying social care issues, such as substance abuse and homelessness, rather than within a purely legal framework.”

### SIPTU SURVEYS IMPACT OF ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

**An online public survey concerning bus, train and tram users’ experiences of anti-social behaviour on the public transport network was launched on May Day as the next stage of SIPTU’s ‘Respect Transport Workers’ campaign.**

SIPTU Transport Sector Organiser, John Murphy, said that the union wants to hear from passengers concerning their experiences of anti-social behaviour and abuse when travelling on the public transport network.

“The survey is just six simple questions and should take people less than a minute to complete, he noted, adding that the campaign has been “very successful in highlighting the worsening epidemic of anti-social behaviour and abuse that our members employed on the public transport network face on a daily basis”.

Despite SIPTU’s campaign having secured a commitment in the Programme for Government concerning the establishment of a dedicated transport policing service, Murphy added that nothing concrete has changed for union members employed on the public transport network, as “many continue to be subjected to anti-social behaviour and abuse on a daily basis”.

SIPTU National Executive Council member and Dublin Bus worker, Stephen Millane, said: “Last year we surveyed our members working on the public transport network. We knew we had a problem with anti-social behaviour and abuse but the extent of it which was revealed in the results of our survey were, to put it mildly, shocking.

“This year we have decided to expand our campaign to find out what is the travelling public’s experience and their favoured solutions to make our public transport network a safer and more welcoming environment.”



For details visit [www.siptu.ie/RTWpublicsurvey](http://www.siptu.ie/RTWpublicsurvey)