Mobility of the Future 2025-2030

Purposeful Business Travel

Policymakers should seize the momentum to set mandates to halve business travel emissions and advance measures to enable purposeful travel

1. Quick wins to be gained

Competitiveness

Businesses boost productivity and resilience with the use of virtual connectivity tools, while saving on costs and employees' valuable time by focusing on purposeful travel – enhancing their image, appeal, and overall success. Leaders in sustainable corporate travel will benefit from a level playing field.

Equity

Public opinion supports a bigger share of efforts by wealthy, high-polluting frequent flyers in private jets, business class or first class. Employees have more freedom of choice as to when and how to travel. Communities living near airports find a better balance for quality of air and health, with less pollution.

Sustainability

Business travel is a key opportunity to realise significant short-term reductions in emissions. Rail travel, decentralised meetings and business services, longer-stay trips, virtual collaboration technologies bring economic and job opportunities, and support sustainable business models.

Business travel is a key opportunity to realise short-term reductions in aviation emissions and oil use

2. Window of action

Action is necessary...

▶ Transport, and particularly aviation, is the "problem child" of climate action. Aviation's emissions had more than doubled since 1990 up until the pandemic. Demand for jet fuel in 2022 and 2023 contributed to almost half of the increase in global oil demand – at a time when energy security requires reductions in oil use. Without strong action, flying emissions are projected to double or triple by 2050.

▶ Frequent flyers – less than 1% of the world's population – account for more than 50% of aviation emissions, with business travel being one of the biggest drivers at 25% of air travel. Within a sample of 325 large global companies in Europe, United States and India, just the top 25 flyers represent over a third of emissions (36%).

▶ Clean technology solutions for aviation are currently forecast to reach scale only after 2030. In the short term up until 2030, by keeping business travel emissions at 50% of 2019 levels, up to 15% of aviation emissions could be avoided.

... and feasible

International and European authorities have identified business travel as a key opportunity to realise significant short-term reductions in aviation emissions and oil use.[1] Business travel is now seen as a low-hanging fruit for climate action efforts, and for reducing corporate emissions. Leading global businesses have seized upon lessons from the pandemic, to keep travel emissions low through reducing frequent flying – via combined trips, virtual collaboration tools, and a shift to rail travel where alternatives exist.

Data from the Travel Smart Campaign, launched in 2022, shows that a critical mass of leading businesses have innovated in their travel practices to do business successfully with less flying. In 2022 just under half of some of the world's biggest flyers in our Emissions Tracker sample – 115 out of 235 – were able to keep their emissions levels low, with reductions of 50% or more as compared to 2019.[2] Emerging data for 2023 confirms that leading companies including Swiss Re, AstraZeneca, EY and IKEA have maintained this momentum. However for many other top flyers, emissions are creeping back up again, showing that political action is needed.

Our Rail First analysis has revealed 28 frontrunner companies that have set policies to shift business flying to rail, including ABN AMRO, Publicis, Simon-Kucher and Steelcase. Meanwhile, our poll across 8 countries showed that three-fourths of employees want their company to set targets to reduce flying, while a majority of business travellers are ready to take steps to reduce the impacts of their travel.

Leading businesses are pledging to play their part in climate mitigation, and reducing emissions from travel. Legislators now need to help companies achieve this goal.

1. International Energy Agency Net Zero by 2050 roadmap and 10-point plan to cut oil use; European Commission impact assessment on a 2040 climate target. T&E, How Europe can cut its oil demand by a third by 2030.
2. The Travel Smart campaign goal has been established based upon the rigorous analysis in Transport & Environment's Roadmap to climate neutral aviation showing that a 50% reduction in overall business travel is needed during this decade, in order to keep aviation within a 1.5°C-compatible pathway.

A briefing by **TRANSPORT & ENVIRONMENT**

3. Leading policy examples show the way[3]

Mandates

In the Netherlands, businesses above 100 employees have to report to the government their travel emissions and progress towards the **mandated 50% decrease in domestic mobility emissions** by 2030, from 2016 levels.

In France, the government's energy sobriety plan asks **businesses to reduce energy use for travel by taking the train for trips of 4 hours** or less, instead of the plane. France, Switzerland, the Netherlands and the United States are setting the example with similar requirements and/or emissions reduction targets for government employee travel. The European Commission is leading the way with a commitment to reduce emissions from staff business trips by 50% by 2024, compared to 2019 (and similarly for travel by external experts).

In Europe and the United States, attention is being drawn to reduction efforts in **corporate travel emissions** by **requiring their annual disclosure**. The EU Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive extends requirements to Scope 3 categories which include business travel emissions, for 50,000 companies with operations in the European Union. The United Kingdom and France already require large businesses to report annually on their greenhouse gas emissions, and the UK greenhouse gas reporting conversion factors **account for the full climate impacts of business flying** by including a radiative forcing index factor to account for non-CO2 effects from contrails as well as CO2 emissions. In the United States, California has adopted a groundbreaking Corporate Climate Data Accountability Act making business travel emissions a required element of reporting for over 5,000 large companies operating in the state.

In terms of **target setting**, the new EU Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive contains an obligation for large companies to adopt climate transition plans. The UK Transition Plan Taskforce Disclosure Framework gives more detail, laying the ground for specific targets including for Scope 3 categories, to be integrated into **corporate climate transition plans**.

In France, the government's energy sobriety plan asks businesses to reduce energy use for travel by taking the train for trips of 4 hours or less, instead of the plane.

Enabling framework

Rail

To enable the shift of business trips to more sustainable rail travel, the US Jobs & Infrastructure Act is investing in **improving rail services** serving major cities such as Chicago and Los Angeles.

In Europe, the next European Commission will need to publish the delayed Multimodal Digital Mobility Services legislation to **improve cross-border ticketing**.

Full climate impacts of flying

Businesses should take into account both carbon emissions, as well as other greenhouse gas emissions from airplane contrails. 44 leading global companies including Pfizer, Veritas Technologies and Telefonica are already doing so. For this, emissions data and calculation standards defined by ETS's Monitoring, Review and Verification framework, CountEmissions EU, the EU flight footprint calculator and the UK corporate **emissions factors** should match the global nature of business travel with a **global scope**, and level the playing field by **requiring the use of a radiative forcing index** of minimum 1.7.

Sustainable Aviation Fuels

To reduce future emissions, companies are looking to purchases of SAF, mandated by the ReFuel EU and UK SAF mandates, and encouraged by the US SAF Grand Challenge Roadmap.

To help meet goals for the most sustainable e-fuels made from renewable energy, policymakers should **facilitate avenues for private investment in e-fuels projects and scale-up**.

Conclusion

The best way to control aviation emissions in this decade is to halt the growth in demand, and for this, reducing business travel emissions is key. Mandates to halve business travel emissions and measures for an enabling framework will accelerate the transformational changes underway towards the mobility of the future: purposeful business travel.

'Travel Smart' is a global campaign led by Transport & Environment (T&E) within a coalition of partners across Europe, North America and Asia, aiming to help businesses move towards purposeful travel to reduce corporate and aviation emissions, while accelerating innovation and scale-up of advances in sustainable travel.

A briefing by **TE TRANSPORT & ENVIRONMENT**