

MALTA'S NATIONAL TRANSPORT STRATEGY, 2050, AND TRANSPORT MASTER PLAN, 2025

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Case Studies contain preliminary research, analysis, findings, and recommendations on previous long-term planning exercises. They are circulated to stimulate timely discussion and critical feedback and to influence ongoing debate on emerging issues.

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BACKGROUND

In recent years, the Mediterranean island state of Malta has experienced unprecedented economic growth, largely stemming from the robust performance of the services sector, particularly in tourism, remote gaming, and financial services. Decoupling economic prosperity from transport activity since the 1990s has, however, proved challenging for successive government administrations. Today, the unchecked traffic growth resulting from an insatiable desire for motorized personal mobility and high expectations for timely deliveries of freight is exerting enormous pressure on the transport system.

Public discourse in the national parliament, academia, the media, and social media clearly indicated that society was beginning to recognize that a "business-as-usual" approach to transport policy and planning, particularly in the land transport sector, was not producing the desired effects. The saturation of Malta's transport system meant that small changes in demand were resulting in significant increases in traffic congestion. It was clear that short-term policy cycles, based on the classic supply-led "predict and provide" methodology, being adopted without appropriate counterbalancing demand-management tools, were directly leading to increased car ownership, higher levels of car dependency, and a modal shift away from more sustainable modes of transport such as public transport, cycling, and walking. Meanwhile, at a regional level, Malta was being urged to effectively tackle the externalities arising from traffic congestion—such as air pollution, climate change, and rising costs of delay to local businesses.

By 2014, the Maltese government had resolutely decided that the country needed a long-term transport strategy. The strategy needed to be grounded in clear, cross-cutting strategic goals, with overarching principles to guide the future development of the transport sector (see Figure 1). It should be usable as a reference point for other sectors' strategies, policies, and plans, and have documented long-term targets to shape future political manifestos and benchmark national performance.

Figure 1. Interrelationship between Strategic Goals and Guiding Principles

STRATEGIC GOALS	GUIDING PRINCIPLES							
	Efficient utilisation of the Existing Transport System: Traffic Management, Enforcement & Asset Management	Creating Modal Shift	Integrated Approach to Planning & Design	Encouraging Use of Greener Vehicles & Fuel	Developing & Improving the Effectiveness & Quality of the Strategic Transport Network	Education, Information & Human Resources	Room for Research & Innovation	Financing & Generating Revenue
Supports Economic Development	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Provides Accessibility & Mobility	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Promotes Environmental & Urban Sustainability		✓	✓	✓			✓	✓
Supports Social Development & Inclusion	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓
Works towards Improved Public Health		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Is Safe & Secure	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Source: Transport Malta, National Transport Strategy, 2050 (2016).

After three years of preparation, which included research, analysis, modeling, option testing, and consultation, Malta adopted an ambitious National Transport Strategy (NTS) with a 2050 horizon and an operational Transport Master Plan (TMP) to 2025.

The NTS and TMP include a diverse set of measures to rationalize the use of private cars; promote alternative mobility solutions by introducing incentivized systems; implement road infrastructural projects to encompass, where possible, infrastructure that facilitates the use of alternative means; and make more efficient use of multimodal and collective transport systems.

RIISING TO THE CHALLENGE

The development of a long-term national transport strategy was indeed a first for Malta, but in hindsight it proved to be an indispensable learning experience for everyone involved in the lengthy process of formulating, documenting, and disseminating Malta’s longer-term vision for transport. Unexpectedly, the development process fomented both an open and a constructive national debate on even the most contentious topics related to the future direction of transport policy, while increasing public awareness of the practical challenges facing the Transport Ministry as well as the issues facing the country.

Drawing up the first long-term national transport strategy for the European Union's smallest, most densely populated country—an island state located on the periphery of the continent—was not without its own specific challenges. A few months into the development process, the study team realized there was a serious deficit in breadth and quality of data needed for the analysis and scenario building required for long-term sustainable planning. A clear choice had to be made in the early stages as to whether to work with incomplete data sets and risk this being challenged in the future. Alternatively, the team could take the time to collect and collate more robust data, with the consequence of lengthy delays to committed timelines for completion of the strategy. Preferring to have a robust strategy that would stand up to scrutiny, a decision was taken for the latter option. This inevitably resulted in the overall project taking around a year longer than originally planned, with significant pressure on the team to hasten the process. In retrospect, the project team now considers this to have been the right decision, as Malta's long-term strategy was well received and, so far, has withstood public, scientific, and political scrutiny.

Development of a long-term strategy in a country with a population the size of a small European city is often hampered by lack of resources, in particular detailed expertise and research capacity. In many instances, specialized services need to be contracted from international consultants, with the inherent disadvantage that these experts would have little or no knowledge of the local context. One suggestion from the outset was that the plan's development process could be led by consultants, as has happened in other EU countries preparing their national transport plans. External consultants can often be used as a buffer between the transport ministries and the general public, should any discord over the plan arise. However, experience gained by the project team in previous studies had highlighted the key influence of local cultural and sociopolitical factors in the shaping of the final plans and the necessity for contracting authorities to take full ownership of their strategies and embed them in their operations once the consultants had completed their work and left the country. In this respect, the process was led from start to finish by the ministry's project team, with necessary ongoing training provided by the consultants to team members in the more complex and specialized areas of traffic modeling and macroeconomic forecasting. The knowledge gained and tools developed remained within the team and the country.

As a result of previous misguided policy efforts in the 1990s that had equated car ownership levels with economic growth, Malta

has one of the highest per capita car ownership levels in Europe, a situation nowadays considered to be contrary to good practice. A main reason for this trend is the strong and influential car lobby that has developed over the years, a group often supported by mainstream media that advocated in favor of private car ownership. This has significantly influenced Malta's past transport policies, rendering them short-term in nature, based around political life cycles and heavily biased toward making travel easier for car users. Sadly, local media have often stifled or orchestrated discussion on demand-side policies in a manner that mobilizes public opinion against conventional car-restraint measures such as parking charges and low-emission zones. Bringing these important issues to the forefront of informed policy debate would prove to be a great challenge.

SETTING UP THE INSTITUTIONS

During the 1990s and early 2000s, the institutional setup in Malta was not particularly conducive to long-term planning. During this time, transport had fallen under the political direction of three, sometimes four, different government ministers at the same time while being regulated by a myriad of government entities, parastatal organizations, and quasi-autonomous nongovernmental organizations (or quangos). Inevitably, Maltese transport policy lacked clear, coherent, and comprehensive long-term vision. The need for long-term strategic direction and holistic planning had, however, been recognized at a political level by 2008, when it was decided to consolidate responsibility for air, sea, and land transport modes within the portfolio of one minister. This political decision was most likely influenced by the institutional model being adopted at the time by the European Commission, which had encompassed all transport modes under the same directorate general.

In 2010, the Authority for Transport in Malta Act (Cap 499) had established a new authority within the Ministry for Transport that subsumed all legacy entities, becoming responsible for planning and regulation of the transport sector as a whole. The setting up of this authority promulgated the political vision, giving rise to a single organization, Transport Malta, with a clear hierarchical structure and distinct function, designed to nurture and exploit the synergies among the transport modes. Embedded within the new organization's structure was a single strategic team, tasked with policy integration and bringing a cross-sectoral approach to long-term planning.

DEVELOPING THE VISION

The creation of the long-term vision for the National Transport Strategy was an iterative process that involved brainstorming, research, extensive stakeholder consultation, drafting, redrafting, data analysis, future forecasting, scenario testing, and several stages of political outreach and approval.

Brainstorming

The three-year plan development process kicked off with the setting up of a number of focus groups comprising academics, scientists and specialists in transport planning and economics, transport users, lobby groups, opinion writers, and members of civil society (see Figure 2). The composition of the focus groups aimed to be multidisciplinary, including individuals well known in transport and planning circles as well as people specifically sought out for having divergent opinions on transport.

The focus groups examined and debated transport issues from different perspectives leading to a comprehensive and detailed Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis of the current situation, an objective critique of the effectiveness of past policies, and recommendations for the long-term vision for transport.

Research

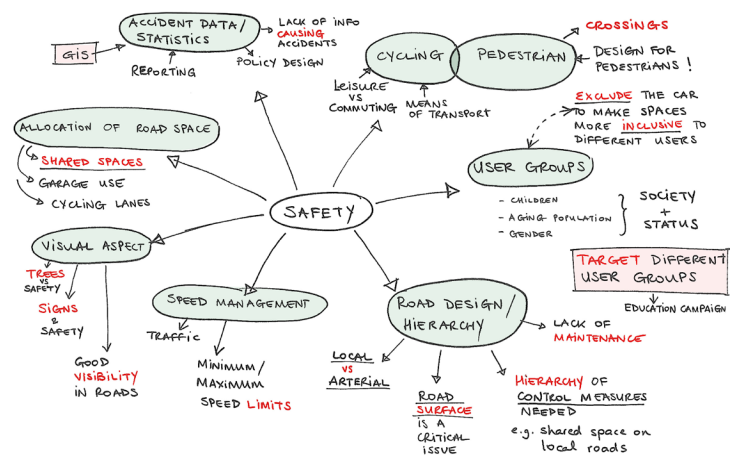
The research stage, which took a number of months to complete, initially involved an extensive stock-take and analysis of all of the relevant national policy documents. National policies and strategies on a variety of topic areas, ranging from plans for tourism expansion to health policies designed to combat obesity, were carefully scrutinized to identify how future transport policy could contribute toward the achievement of sectoral goals and targets.

Research also extended to the national strategies of other countries, in Europe and beyond, to identify best practices that could be applied in the Maltese context. This had provided the project team with useful background on the different approaches, methodologies, and consultation processes used and also provided guidance on document format and content—for example, on overall length, use of illustrations, and extent of coverage of technically complex issues. This research also influenced the final decision to split the work into two distinct documents, a long-term vision structured with a 35-year National Transport Strategy and a 10-year Transport Master Plan, thus bridging the longer-term with the shorter-term implementing policies, actions, and measures (see Figure 3).

“To provide a sustainable transport system which is efficient, inclusive, safe, integrated and reliable for people and freight, and which supports attractive urban, rural and coastal environments and communities where people want to live and work: now and in the future.”

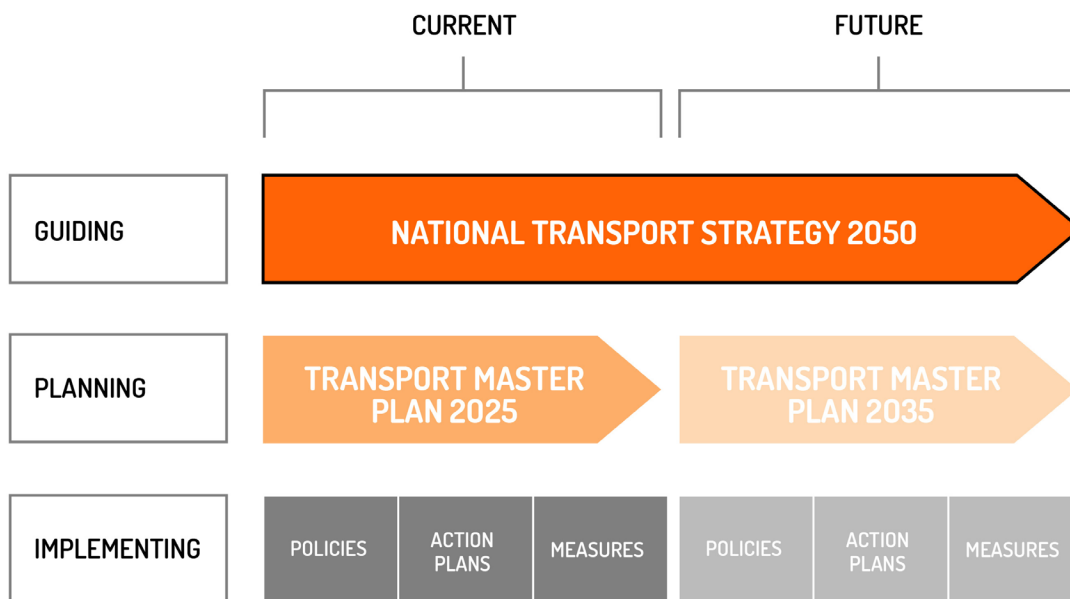
Vision guiding the Development of the National Transport Strategy, 2050

Figure 2. Brainstorming Among the Experts



Source: Transport Malta, National Transport Strategy, 2050 (2016). Photograph by Stephen Camilleri, graphic by Sarah Scheiber.

Figure 3. Relationship between the Long-Term Strategy and the 10-year Operational Plans



Source: Transport Malta, National Transport Strategy, 2050 (2016).

A COLLABORATIVE APPROACH

The development of Malta's Transport Strategy for 2050 was spearheaded by a small core team of transport and urban planners, economists, civil engineers, and environmental scientists from Transport Malta's Integrated Transport Strategy Directorate, each specialist experienced and conversant with the Maltese transport system. The core team was supported by transport consultants from Spain and Italy with specific expertise in demand forecasting and transport modeling, techniques that would be used to guide the decision-making process. Throughout the project, technical oversight was provided by Joint Assistance to Support Projects in European Regions (JASPERS), an agency partnership set up between the European Investment Bank and the European Commission. The strong dynamic relationship between the team members, putting forward different opinions and openly questioning ideas, ensured sound validation at each stage of the plan's development.

Focus group discussions organized at the project's outset provided insight for policy orientation, a useful basis to commence the drafting of the operational objectives for the long-term plan later used for interministerial discussion and stakeholder consultation. The early phases of the plan's development process had involved the organization of technical

meetings with each Transport Malta directorate, the scope being to better understand the operational issues and challenges facing each transport mode and to acquire relevant data for the analytical phase. During this preparation, periodic political "checkpoint" meetings were organized to validate the technical proposals being put forward by the team with the government policy direction.

Drafting and circulating early versions of the long-term vision was crucial for cultivating awareness and public acceptance. The importance of both formal and informal public consultation at the earliest stages of the plan's development cannot be emphasized enough. Formal public consultation was supported by informal intragovernmental consultation, workshops, and bilateral meetings organized upon request by specific stakeholders and sector representatives from business, operations, and lobby groups.

The feedback received during the three-month consultation on the first draft of the strategic plan was documented, each point raised (both positive and negative) was carefully considered and subsequently analyzed (see Figure 4).

In several instances, suggestions and ideas arising from the consultation process were incorporated into the next draft of the strategic plan. A report outlining where and how this feedback was taken into account was made available on Transport Malta's

Figure 4. Consultation Process



N.	Document Reference	Consultee	Date	Summary of Comments Received	Response
37	Chapter 1 Section 1.2	University of Malta - Institute of Climate Change and Sustainable Development (ICCS)	16/08/2016	The issues raised about housing and activity densities are correct. However questions regarding (i) correct and updated density information; (ii) carrying capacity; and (iii) thresholds that guide the provision of private versus Public Transport.	Data used was based on NSO Census 2011, extrapolated to 2014 - the latest official data available at the time (Base year 2014). Comment is noted, and will also be referred to the relevant competent authority Planning Authority (PA).
38	Chapter 1 Section 1.2	University of Malta - Institute of Climate Change and Sustainable Development (ICCS)	16/08/2016	The concerns over Comino should be integrated with the Management Plan currently under development at the Environment and Resources Authority	Noted. It will be referred to the relevant authority - Environment and Resources Authority (ERA).
39	Chapter 1 Section 1.2	University of Malta - Institute of Climate Change and Sustainable Development (ICCS)	16/08/2016	The Existing Conditions and Data Diagnostic Report which is referred to in the Master Plan is not available.	Noted. This supporting document will be published in due course.
	Chapter 1 Section 1.2	OPM (Energy and Projects) - Sustainable Energy and	16/08/2016	"the demand for travel by bus is currently being provided through a fleet of 374 modern, lower floor, low emission (euro 6 engine) and fully accessible buses" Was the energy output from this measure calculated? If not, could the	Fuel utilisation is assessed routinely by the relevant competent authority - Malta Resources Authority (MRA).

Source: Extract from the presentation "From Predict and Provide to Avoid, Shift and Improve: Time to Change Policy Direction" by David Sutton at the Malta Chamber of Commerce Enterprise and Industry Conference (2016).

public website: <http://www.transport.gov.mt/transport-strategies/development-of-national-transport-strategy>.

To maximize outreach, all of the documents were placed on Transport Malta’s website, with short videos on social media linking back to the consultation web page (see Figure 5). The consultation process was also widely embraced by the political class, which in turn catalyzed debate across the political spectrum and increased media interest and coverage.

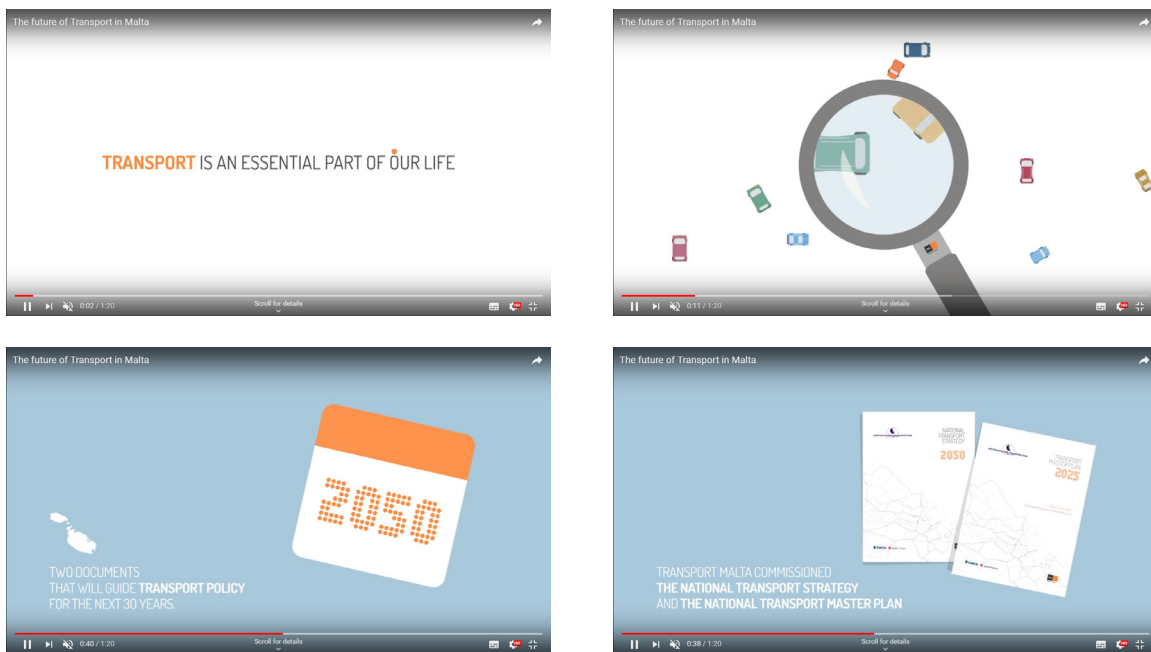
SETTING ACHIEVABLE LONG-TERM TARGETS FOR THE TRANSPORT SECTOR

The quantified targets set out in the 2050 National Transport Strategy were carefully selected to benchmark transport performance against the long-term strategic vision, where transport can most effectively contribute to improving national goals for economic development, environmental sustainability, accessibility, safety, security, and public health. Several of the cross-sectoral targets had been previously been committed to by Malta at an EU or international level (e.g., that of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change) and therefore needed to be disaggregated to establish the appropriate share from transport.

The use of the analyzed data and modeling tools enabled simple visual representation of various “what-if” scenarios (see Figure 6). This enabled unbiased, evidence-based selection of an optimal mix of measures designed to achieve the targets set in the short-term operational plan that would contribute to the longer-term strategic vision. Apart from the technical outputs used to predict, quantify, and compare the future impacts of selected groups of measures against a business-as-usual scenario, the model’s visuals also facilitated simple communication of complex concepts. The modeling process also helped filter out unachievable or speculative proposals that the team was asked to consider.

National climate change commitments had previously assumed that a significant contribution to greenhouse gas mitigation efforts could be made from the transport sector alone. However, technical outputs of the process had enabled clearer understanding of what could realistically be achieved through the transport measures in the plan. This opened up an opportunity for informed discussion on the types of actions that Malta would need to take at a national level, including the contribution by the transport sectors.

Figure 5. Use of Social Media to Reach Out to Different Sections of Society



Source: Transport Malta Facebook page (2016), accessed November 9, 2018, at <http://bit.ly/28Tx1JY>

FROM PLAN TO ACTION

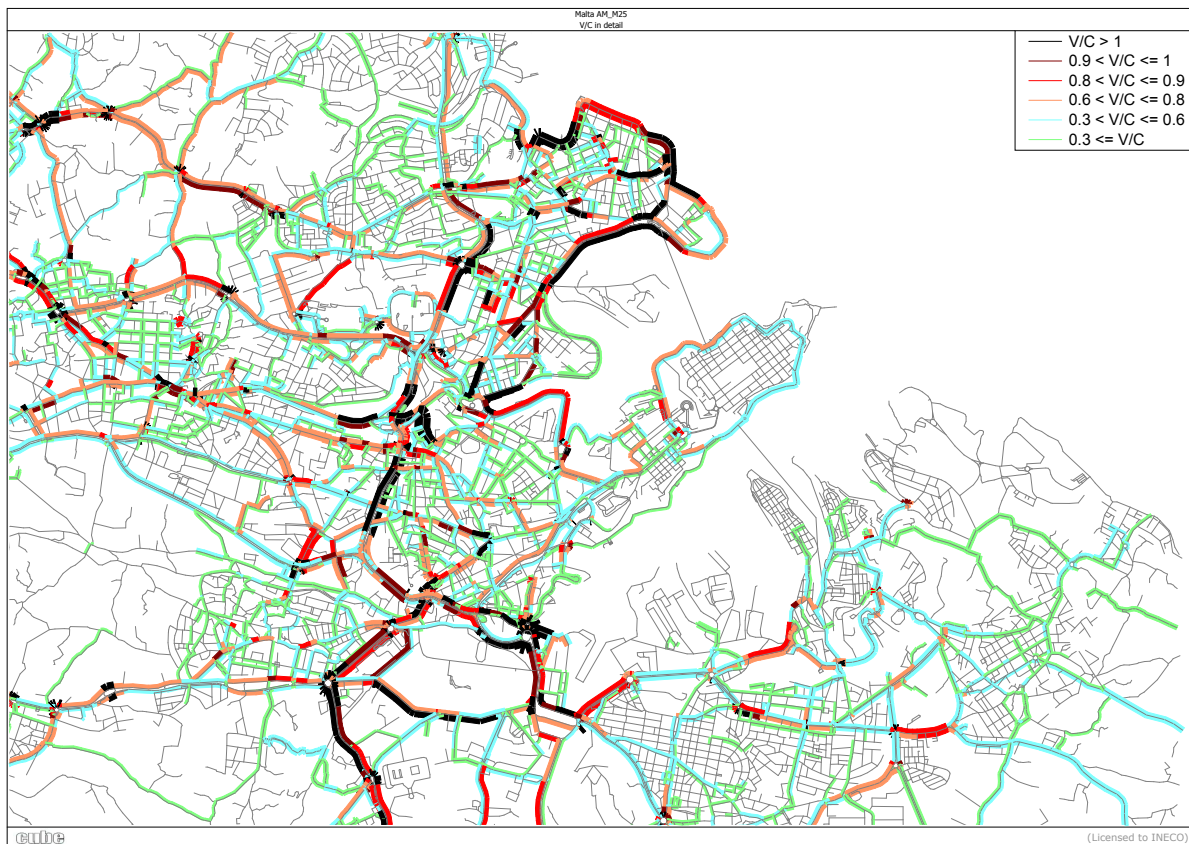
The implementation of Malta's National Transport Strategy and Transport Master Plan is still at a very early stage. Nonetheless, several legacy projects and measures that reached maturity during the formulation stage of the plan have since been deployed, and others are advancing well in their project pipelines. At this early stage, it would be premature to give a fair assessment of the impact of the completed measures on the achievement of the longer-term goals. Built into the strategic process, however, is a midterm review for the operational plan to be carried out in 2020, which will evaluate progress at that time. The end-of-term review to be carried out in 2025, in addition to benchmarking the performance of the short-to-medium-term plan, will also facilitate an objective appraisal of how far Malta is from expected trajectories toward the longer-term goals. It is already evident that the Transport Strategy and Plan are significantly influencing both the way transport authorities approach highway design and the amount of finance being allocated by the government to promote sustainable transport modes, such as electric vehicles and bicycles. For the first time,

key stakeholders, such as cycling organizations, are being directly involved in the highway design process to ensure that safe and segregated infrastructure is provided, where feasible, to promote the plan's primary strategic objective of achieving sustainable mobility.

The three potential stumbling blocks for effective continued implementation of the long-term strategy had been objectively identified from the outset: (1) guaranteeing the allocation of necessary financial resources needed for long-term planning, (2) securing the necessary administrative capacity and human resources, and (3) ensuring the ability of the Transport Strategy and Plan to remain relevant in changing political climates. These challenges were mitigated as the Transport Strategy and Plan entered into force through the preparation and approval of a capacity-building and training plan, as well as a medium-term finance plan that sets out the annual budget requirements for the implementation of the Master Plan over its 10-year lifespan.

To date, the national strategic framework has withstood the test of time and is being routinely used an important reference

Figure 6. Visual Representation of Traffic Congestion Levels Using a Transport Model



Source: Transport Malta, National Transport Master Plan, 2025 (2016).

document, not only by the government but also by political parties, lobby groups, and the European Commission. Indeed, the forecasting and analytical modeling work that quantified the impact of transport measures in the Transport Strategy is currently being used to develop other national medium and long-term plans, including the National Energy and Climate Plan with a 2030 time horizon and the National Policy Framework for Alternative Fuels Infrastructure.

Malta's National Transport Strategy for 2050 and Transport Master Plan for 2025 may be accessed through the following web link: <http://www.transport.gov.mt/transport-strategies/strategies-policies-actions/national-transport-strategy-and-master-plan>.

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ABOUT THE LONG-TERM STRATEGIES PROJECT

World Resources Institute and the United Nations Development Programme, working closely with UN Climate Change, are developing a set of resources to help policymakers integrate long-term climate strategies into national policy making.



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This project contributes to the 2050 Pathways Platform and is undertaken in collaboration with the NDC Partnership.

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David is also a guest lecturer in transport planning and traffic engineering at the University of Malta.



This vision and direction of the project is guided by the project's advisory committee: Monica Araya, Richard Baron, Ron Benioff, Pankaj Bhatia (co-chair), Yamil Bonduki, Rob Bradley, Carter Brandon, Hakima El Haite, Claudio Forner, Stephen Gold (co-chair), Emmanuel Guerin, Ingrid-Gabriela Hoven, Dr. Martin Kipping, Carlos Nobre, Siddharth Pathak, Samantha Smith, Marta Torres Gunfaus, Laurence Tubiana, and Pablo Vieira.

For more information about the project, and to view the expanding set of resources, visit www.longtermstrategies.org.