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Extension of the validity period of interurban passenger transport concessions in Catalonia

On 20 May 2026, the Parliament of Catalonia ratified Decree Law 5/2026, of 28 April, on urgent measures in the field of interurban road passenger public transport, which allows the duration of passenger transport concessions to be extended beyond 2028.

Context

The Twenty-ninth Additional Provision of Law 2/2014, of 27 January, on fiscal, administrative, financial and public sector measures, establishes that administrative concessions for road passenger transport remain in force without exceeding 31 December 2028 in any case.

In this context, and in view of the crisis affecting the railway services network—which has led to a daily shift of users towards interurban bus transport services—as well as the need for concessionary companies to have more vehicles available, the Government of the Generalitat of Catalonia considers that it cannot wait until the current contracts expire in 2028 in order to provide a more sustainable and efficient transport system adapted to new needs.

In this regard, Decree Law 5/2026 establishes the need to adopt measures to accelerate the decarbonisation of rolling stock and improve the information tools made available to citizens, in exchange for an extension of the concession period beyond 2028.

According to the preamble, the current financial situation of the Generalitat does not allow for financial compensation to concessionaires or for the launch of new tendering procedures in addition to the existing ones. Therefore, the chosen approach is to extend the validity period of the current concessions. For this reason, Article 1 provides that the measures of the Decree Law are exceptional, temporary and subject to individual application.

Decarbonisation plans and adaptation of information systems

In order to implement the decarbonisation measures for the fleet of vehicles assigned to the service, and to adapt user information systems, companies holding administrative concessions for road passenger transport services must submit to the Generalitat, within three months from the entry into force of the Decree Law, a plan identifying, among other aspects:

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- The vehicles meeting the environmental requirements for decarbonisation processes that must be acquired.
- The number of electric charging points or other sustainable energy supply points that must be acquired and installed.
- A description of the necessary technological adaptations for the digital management and monitoring of operations, and for communications with service users.
- Commitments to implement, within 8 months, a user information system and a system enabling communication with the Directorate-General responsible for transport.

In addition, a detailed implementation schedule must be provided, along with a quantified economic assessment of the necessary investments, costs and obligations, supported by an economic and financial study specifying the financing mechanisms adopted and justifying the timeframes required to amortise the investments.

Extension of the concession period as a compensatory measure

If the plan is positively assessed, and following a hearing of the concessionaire, a decision will be issued setting out the new obligations assumed by the concessionaire, as well as the new duration of the concession. This decision will formalise the amendment of the relevant contract and must be published in the contracting authority's profile.

In this regard, the adjustment of the duration is conceived as a compensatory measure to address the corresponding amortisation periods. In any case, this extension may not exceed six years.

Failure to submit or approve the plan

If concessionaires fail to submit the decarbonisation and information system adaptation plans, or if such plans are not approved, the corresponding tendering processes will be carried out upon the expiry of the respective concession periods.

Likewise, in the event of non-compliance with the plans, the duration of the concession may be proportionally reduced or the concession may be terminated.