

# LEADING WITH COURAGE

INTERVIEW WITH  
EUGENIO PATANÈ

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*Group photo of participants during the  
2025 Leadership Summit in Rome*

*Lavinia Blasi*

This year's POLIS Leadership Summit gathered leading voices in urban mobility in Rome, creating a powerful platform for honest dialogue, strategic reflection, and collective action on leading with courage even in the face of resistance.

POLIS spoke with Rome's Deputy Mayor for Mobility, Eugenio Patanè, to explore how the host city is navigating public pushback while advancing bold, equitable, and innovative transport solutions.

At the recent POLIS Leadership Summit, held in Rome on 14 May 2025, city leaders from across Europe came together to discuss how to deliver bold and equitable mobility transformations in the face of increasing complexity and public resistance.

The event, hosted by POLIS and the City of Rome, focused on how political leadership can drive forward sustainable urban mobility despite pushback, uncertainty, and competing priorities.

In this aspect, the Summit's host city has been leading by example. With ambitious goals to reduce car dependency, expand active and shared mobility, and improve road safety, Rome is pursuing a wide range of measures, supported by a strong political vision and consistent public engagement. At the centre of these efforts is Eugenio Patanè, Deputy Mayor for Mobility, who has played a key role in shaping and implementing Rome's Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan (SUMP, in Italian 'PUMS').

Most critically, Patanè speaks to the core theme of the Summit: the importance of political courage in pushing forward progressive policies, even when they are met with resistance. For Rome, success lies in staying the course, being transparent, and maintaining an open dialogue with communities.

As cities across Europe look to scale up their sustainable mobility ambitions, Rome's experience offers valuable lessons in leadership, accountability, and long-term planning.

**POLIS: What did it mean for the City of Rome to host the POLIS Leadership Summit and assume a leadership role in urban mobility? As a city rich in history yet facing modern mobility challenges, what unique perspective did Rome bring to Europe's evolving mobility dialogue?**

**Eugenio Patanè:** Hosting the POLIS Leadership Summit was a significant opportunity for Rome. Our municipal administration is at the forefront of the urban mobility transformation. We are facing complex challenges, and learning from other cities confronting similar issues proved truly valuable. Beyond its institutional importance, the POLIS Leadership Summit served as a practical platform for exchanging ideas and experiences. It is precisely through this ongoing dialogue that ideas and projects for mutual progress on sustainability are conceived.

**POLIS: Within the framework of its Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan (SUMP), what technological innovations is Rome implementing to boost sustainability and safety in its transport systems?**

**Patanè:** When it comes to technological innovation, Rome is taking bold and impactful steps. A prime example is our MaaS (Mobility as a Service) pilot, which ran from July to November 2023—it involved 389 Mobility Managers and around 428,000 employees, marking a significant shift in how people move around the city by integrating various transport services into a single digital platform.

Another major innovation is our Tap&Go system, which allows passengers to pay for bus and metro tickets using their credit cards. Currently, 50% of occasional users (non-subscribers) opt for digital payment methods, with Tap&Go being the most popular. This shift has enabled ATAC to halve printed ticket volumes, making public transport not only more efficient but also more sustainable and user-friendly.

Rome's Mobility Centre, managed by Roma Servizi per la Mobilità, plays a critical role in enhancing sustainability and safety through technology. It coordinates a wide range of functions, including real-time traffic updates via variable message signs and electronic bollards; news dissemination through a dedicated app and website; data monitoring from local public transport operators; and management of automated enforcement systems for limited traffic zones, bus lanes, and speed cameras.

Rome is also embracing flexible, on-demand transport solutions. Since 4 September 2025, the city has rolled out a Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) service in the Massimina area. Originally launched as a pilot, it is now a permanent feature of ATAC's service contract. Passengers can book a ride by entering their departure point, destination, and preferred time—making public transport more adaptable to individual needs.



**Eugenio Patanè**

Deputy Mayor for Mobility  
*City of Rome*





*From top to bottom: First section of the GRAB, Tap&Go system, Rome's brand new Archeotram service*  
Roma Capitale

**POLIS:** Rome has launched initiatives like the GRAB (Ring Cycling Pathway) and the pedestrianisation of Piazza Pia. How are these efforts helping with prioritising cyclists, pedestrians, and public transport users, and what broader impact do they have on reclaiming public space? Are there more initiatives in store?

**POLIS:** How does Rome actively engage its citizens in shaping mobility planning? How is the city ensuring that community voices—particularly those of youth, the elderly, people with disabilities, and other vulnerable or excluded communities—are meaningfully involved?

**Patanè:** At the heart of everything our department does is a single guiding philosophy: to reduce reliance on private vehicles as much as possible, shifting the focus towards public transport, shared mobility, and soft mobility modes such as walking and cycling. All our initiatives—from the creation of environmental islands to tackling accident black spots, developing cycling infrastructure, launching school streets, and delivering major mobility projects like metro and tram lines—are driven by this goal.

**Patanè:** Rome has adopted an innovative and participatory approach to mobility planning, with a strong commitment to ensuring that all citizens are actively involved in shaping the city's transport policies.

Our aim is to redistribute urban space in a way that prioritises pedestrians and sustainable modes of transport, while gradually reducing the dominance of cars in the cityscape. This is not just about infrastructure—it is about reimagining the city to make it safer, greener, and more liveable for all our citizens.





This approach has been a cornerstone of Rome's SUMP, which was developed through a continuous and open dialogue between the administration, technical experts, and the public. The process was designed to be both transparent and inclusive, placing citizens at the heart of decision-making. By using a range of communication tools and engagement channels, the city made a concerted effort to reach young people, older residents, people with disabilities, and others who are too often left out of traditional planning processes.

Rome's major mobility projects reflect this. A good example is the Termini-Vatican-Aurelio (TVA) tram line, which was shaped by input gathered during community consultations. The project includes the creation of pedestrian islands and a circulation plan that carefully considers the needs of local residents and businesses, responding directly to concerns and suggestions raised by citizens.

In addition, the city has launched several initiatives aimed at fostering greater accessibility and social inclusion. These include the piloting of Mobility as a Service (MaaS) platforms to simplify multimodal travel, the installation of touch-sensitive shelters to improve access to public transport, and the broader redevelopment of urban spaces to make them safer and more welcoming for everyone.

Rome has also worked to ensure that vulnerable communities play an active role in improving road safety and public space usage. The Consulta Cittadina, a civic advisory council, has been instrumental in promoting this engagement, alongside educational programmes targeted at both younger and older residents to raise awareness and encourage participation. Ultimately, Rome's goal is to build a transport system that is not only efficient and sustainable but also inclusive and co-designed with the very people who use it every day.

## POLIS: What concrete safety measures is Rome introducing to protect pedestrians and cyclists, particularly in high-risk areas?

**Patanè:** Road safety is a top priority for Rome, especially when it comes to protecting pedestrians and cyclists in high-risk areas. We commissioned Roma Servizi per la Mobilità to identify and address around 70 dangerous intersections—so called 'black points'—with the list continually updated. Measures vary by location and include improved signage, speed control, redesigned junctions with traffic islands and kerbs, better parking layouts, and the use of technology to monitor speed and red-light violations.

We are also targeting 'pedestrian black points', where vulnerable road users are most at risk. Their safety is central to our mobility strategy, particularly in a city like Rome, where these users are more exposed than in many other European capitals.

More importantly, road safety is embedded in our wider urban mobility policies. Initiatives such as environmental islands, cycle paths, school streets, tramways, and subways all aim to reduce car dominance and make public space safer for everyone.



**School street in Via Monte Ruggero**  
*Roma Capitale*



**POLIS:** A key theme of the Summit is navigating leadership dilemmas when progressive mobility policies face public resistance. How does Rome manage backlash and pushback while staying committed to long-term goals that ‘serve the greater good’? What can other cities learn from Rome’s approach to balancing political courage with constructive public dialogue?

**Patanè:** When Mayor Roberto Gualtieri and his coalition won the elections, it was on the basis of a clear programme—one that prioritised reducing the number of private vehicles and rethinking urban mobility. That public mandate gives us the responsibility to follow through, even when our choices face resistance.

One of Rome’s greatest strengths, I believe, is our ability to balance political courage with open, ongoing dialogue. We are committed to making bold decisions in the public interest, even if they are not always popular in the short term. At the same time, we place great value on staying connected with citizens through transparent communication and, crucially, through direct engagement in public meetings across all neighbourhoods and districts.

This approach helps build trust and ensures that, while we remain firm on long-term goals, people feel heard and included in the journey. It is a model of leadership rooted not just in conviction, but in conversation—and that is something other cities can take inspiration from.

*View of Rome and pedestrians in Piazza del Campidoglio*

*Roma Capitale*

