



European Economic and Social Committee

TEN/366
**Integrating Transport and
Land-use Policies for More
Sustainable City Transport**

Brussels, 16 July 2009

OPINION
of the
European Economic and Social Committee
on
Integrating Transport and Land-use Policies for More Sustainable City Transport
(exploratory opinion)

Rapporteur: **Mr Osborn**

By letter of 3 November 2008, the European Commission asked the European Economic and Social Committee, under Article 262 of the Treaty establishing the European Community, to draw up an exploratory opinion on

Integrating Transport and Land-use Policies for More Sustainable City Transport.

The Section for Transport, Energy, Infrastructure and the Information Society, which was responsible for preparing the Committee's work on the subject, adopted its opinion on 26 June 2009. The rapporteur was Mr Osborn.

At its 455th plenary session, held on 15 and 16 July 2009 (meeting of 16 July), the European Economic and Social Committee adopted the following opinion by 114 votes to 1 vote against.

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1. Summary

- 1.1 People need transport to obtain access to work, to shops, to schools, and to all the other destinations of modern life. The development and maintenance of transport systems of all kinds is a major task of public policy. But transport also has downsides. It causes pollution, congestion and accidents. Transport links (or their absence) can divide and isolate communities as well as supporting them. Transport is also a major contributor to emissions of CO₂ and the growing threat of climate change.
- 1.2 There is therefore a growing need for public authorities at all levels to establish more sustainable patterns of transport which will meet peoples' travel needs while minimising the adverse impacts. The problems are most severe in urban areas, and it is in these areas that more sustainable transport strategies are particularly needed.
- 1.3 The pattern of transport movements in urban areas is intimately related to patterns of land-use. To achieve more sustainable transport therefore requires the adoption of integrated land-use and transport strategies and policies.
- 1.4 The primary responsibilities for developing and implementing integrated strategies lie at local and national level. Some progress towards sustainability in this field has already been made in a number of individual towns and cities and countries in Europe. But progress so far has been patchy. There is scope and a need for a European level initiative to promote and accelerate the adoption and implementation of more sustainable integrated land-use and transport strategies in towns and cities throughout Europe.

1.5 The key elements of the initiative should be:

- Launch a new research initiative to identify more precisely the main points of best practice in this field
- Develop a reliable set of indicators of progress towards sustainable transport
- Review national and local experience and systems of legislative and financial support with regard to their transport and carbon impacts
- Develop a new European framework for Sustainable Urban Transport and Land Use
- Review the balance of other European policies and programmes so as to make the overall impact of European policy more supportive of sustainable transport
- Develop intelligent transport systems (ITS).

2. General reflections

2.1 Modern societies are heavily dependent on transport. As individuals we rely on transport to get us to work, to shops, to leisure activities and almost everywhere else we want to go. Businesses also need transport to create and deliver their goods and services throughout the world.

2.2 Over the last two centuries technological development in transport has enormously increased the distances that can be travelled conveniently at affordable prices and enlarged the range of goods and services and of lifestyles available to individuals. It has also transformed the way in which urban settlements evolve. They no longer need to be tightly clustered around small centres with facilities accessed mainly on foot. They can spread at lower densities over large areas connected by networks of roads and transportation systems.

2.3 These changes have brought many benefits. But they have also caused significant problems. Continuing growth of demand for transport leads to congestion and delays. Local communities lose their cohesion as local facilities are replaced by more distant ones, and people lose touch with their neighbours. Most powered forms of transportation cause noise and pollution. Most also produce CO₂ emissions, and the continuing growth of transport demand is one of the major causes of climate change.

2.4 For many years Governments saw the expansion of opportunities for travel as a public good. Public policy and investment in the transport field were directed to enlarging transport networks and making them more widely accessible to all.

2.5 Many other public policies and programmes have also had an impact in driving the demand for more and longer journeys and trips. Many new housing developments are built at lower densities unsuitable for supporting public transport and assume that the occupants will rely on private transport to get where they need. Reorganisations of schools, hospitals and other

public services have tended to create bigger but more distant establishments. Developers of shopping facilities have similarly favoured large new out-of-town sites.

2.6 Gradually perceptions are changing. People are beginning to recognise the downsides of transport as well as its advantages. Public policy is also adapting. Transport policy and programmes still have to provide for basic transport needs to be met satisfactorily. But at the same time it is increasingly seen that transport, land-use and other policies need to include measures designed to reduce or contain the overall demand for transport, and to encourage people to use more sustainable transport modes such as public transport, walking and cycling in preference to the private car.

2.7 The growing threats of climate change and insecurity of oil supplies adds a new urgency to these dilemmas, and to the need to take stronger action to reduce the demand for transport, and to constrain it into more sustainable modes. This may imply substantial changes in the patterns of urban land use and mobility.

2.8 **Four key new policy goals for sustainable transport and land-use can be identified:**

- Encourage people to choose residential locations closer to their places of work, education and recreation, and/or ensure that jobs and educational establishments are provided closer to residential areas, in order to reduce congestion, pollution and greenhouse gas emissions, and to restore viability to local communities.
- Encourage people who have the possibility, to use public transport or walk or cycle where possible and discourage car use.
- Encourage businesses to use more local sources of supply and of labour so as limit the transport movements they create.
- Reawaken interest in more local destinations for holidays so as to reduce or limit the ever-growing demand for air transport and the damage this causes to the environment.

2.9 There is an enormous social and economic momentum behind the ever-growing demand for transport, and it is no easy task to arrest or divert it. Experience shows that the task can only be successfully tackled if policy is developed in a well-integrated way, linking transport, land-use and other policies to reinforce one another, and developing them in an open, transparent and democratic way so as to secure sufficient political and popular support for them at all levels of government. Particular attention needs to be given to the needs of the elderly, people with disabilities and households with low incomes in the development of new strategies and policies.

3. **Elements of co-ordinated transport and land-use and sustainable transport policies**

3.1 Land use and related policies that can encourage more sustainable urban transport include:

- promoting greater densities of development;

- promoting compact forms of urban development with short routes to all major services;
- promoting the development or expansion of smaller and medium sized towns in preference to the further development of already over-stretched major cities;
- restricting further encroachment of cities on their surrounding green areas and establishing green areas within and around cities, etc.;
- encouraging the provision of smaller more local facilities (shops, schools, churches, hospitals, civic offices etc) with small catchment areas and discouraging larger and more distant ones with large more dispersed catchments;
- encouraging mixed use developments rather than segregating different functions in zones that can only be reached by car or public transport;
- encouraging people to live closer to their places of work or other regular destinations;
- encouraging home working by making full use of the internet;
- steering the location of major facilities (public or private) to places that are readily accessible by public transport and restricting the provision of parking space for cars at such facilities or mandating significant charges for it;
- encouraging businesses to locate their operations conveniently for local workers, suppliers and consumers and accessible to public transport;
- encouraging businesses to source supplies and labour locally and to serve local markets, to avoid distance selling and to reduce the impact of globalisation;
- introducing the technically sound internalisation of external costs.

3.2 Transport policies that can encourage more sustainable urban transport include:

- promoting good, clean, accessible and energy efficient public transport;
- reallocation of road investment to public transport investment;
- promoting dedicated routes or lanes for public transport;
- restricting space and time for private parking in inner-city areas;
- promoting pedestrianisation schemes, footpaths, walkways and cycle routes;
- promoting mobility management schemes;
- promoting awareness raising by travel information;
- promoting charging for use of road space;
- making vehicle and fuel taxation include all the externalities that such modes impose on society including carbon emissions and other pollution;
- encouraging public authorities to locate themselves in compact building complexes, and officials to travel to work by public transport and to use flexitime.

3.3 Experience shows however that policies of this kind cannot be introduced piecemeal. They are only effective and politically acceptable when they are introduced as part of a comprehensive strategy, integrating land-use and transport objectives, and involving several parts of the public sector and many private sector actors.

- 3.4 For example restrictions on the use of private transport in cities, such as restriction of parking spaces, road user charges or parking fees, are only acceptable and effective when the public transport alternatives are made sufficiently attractive – i.e. clean, safe, frequent, reliable and affordable. In addition the needs of elderly people, people with disabilities and households with low incomes need to be specially considered.
- 3.5 Similarly the encouragement of cycling requires a range of measures including the provision of dedicated cycling routes, the supply of adequate and secure parking spaces both in public and private spaces, and the incentivisation of cycling as against driving for those who are able, employer support for commuting costs, and the development of a pro-cycling culture.
- 3.6 Again the encouragement of local shops and other facilities requires appropriate zoning requirements, both to encourage small local facilities and to discourage large out of town facilities that can only be reached by car, sympathetic local taxation policies, programmes of urban regeneration that enhance the attractiveness of small local facilities and local neighbourhood centres that serve as catalysts.
- 3.7 It will not be easy to halt and reverse the trends that have dominated the evolution of cities and urban transport over the last 100 years. Most of the actions that have been taken so far have been taken at local level and have been piecemeal and tentative. Conflicts between different bodies and different levels of Government have hampered progress. Many public and private vested interests need to be overcome.
- 3.8 The growing threat of climate change and the fact that the contribution of transport to the Europe's overall greenhouse gas emissions keeps increasing gives a new urgency to these problems. We cannot afford to allow the present inertia to continue. A much faster transition towards more sustainable urban transport and land use patterns is needed.

4. Action at local and national levels

- 4.1 The key role at local level has to be played by the local planning authorities working together with the local transport and highways authorities and other public bodies. The planning authorities need to establish land-use plans that will guide the pattern of development and the transport linkages between them in a way that will enable transport patterns to become more sustainable over time (through the development of ITS systems). The transport authorities need to complement these planning measures with measures to ensure that public transport systems are sufficiently frequent, reliable and affordable to represent an acceptable alternative to private transport. Together they need to create Integrated Strategies for Sustainable Transport and Land Use. Other public bodies and major developers need to be involved and required to take transport impacts fully into account in their own future strategies.
- 4.2 It will of course take time to evolve towards a more sustainable pattern of urban transport and land use. The purpose of the integrated strategies must be to ensure that every time that

transport networks are modified or that physical development and redevelopment take place, each successive step represents a move in the right direction. Some European cities have already made progress in this direction and have introduced significant innovatory policies to promote more sustainable transport. But in general most cities are still held back by lack of powers and financial resources, by lack of political will and by a lack of sufficient understanding and support from citizens. They also feel under pressure to compete to attract new development of an unsustainable kind. A new pattern of co-operation to work towards a more polycentric form of compact and sustainable towns of the future is needed. The transition town movement needs support and encouragement.

- 4.3 National (and regional) government has a key role to play in encouraging and enabling the right kind of action at local level. National governments may sometimes need to restructure local bodies and institutions or redraw their boundaries so as to facilitate the creation of truly integrated strategies. Or they may require or encourage the different local bodies and government departments involved to work together as partners for the development of integrated strategies. They may also need to provide incentives, consolidate knowledge and experience and ensure policy coordination at all levels.
- 4.4 National government are usually responsible for the basic statutory framework for the creation of land-use plans, and for the regulation of new developments, and provide the means whereby local authorities can regulate such developments in ways that will support an integrated strategy.
- 4.5 National governments are usually responsible for establishing the basic financial framework for the operation of public transport undertakings, and frequently may need to provide sources of funding for some of the larger investments that will be needed. They also control the fiscal frameworks and the patterns of taxation, charging and subsidy that have a crucial impact on individual and collective decisions about land-use, development and transport.
- 4.6 Above all national governments have a key role to play in awakening the public to the dangers ahead from the threat of climate change and resource depletion, and the need for much more urgent and vigorous action to change patterns of transport and travel. We see a need for all governments in Europe to develop comprehensive strategies or frameworks for integrating land-use and transport in their towns and cities.

5. Action at European Level

- 5.1 Up to now European policy and action in the transport field has concentrated on the creation and expansion of major transport networks linking the different parts of Europe. Regional and cohesion funds have played a major part in the development of these networks, particularly the expansion of major road networks. In so doing European influence has tended to encourage the further expansion and dispersion of many major European cities, and to make evolution towards a more sustainable pattern of urban transport and land-use more difficult.

- 5.2 More recently the Commission has taken up the challenge of promoting more sustainable patterns of urban transport. It identified many of the key issues in the Green paper on Urban Transport and in the supporting technical report on sustainable urban transport plans. The EU has provided investment funds through the Structural and Cohesion Funds and through the European Investment Bank. The EU has encouraged the exchange of best practice, and offered small grant support for research, development and demonstration projects, for example under the CIVITAS programme. These have been useful activities, and could usefully be continued and expanded. But they are in no way transformative.
- 5.3 The new challenges of climate change and the urgent need to take action in all fields to limit CO₂ emissions now point to a growing need for a new collective European effort. Only a major European initiative can give the necessary acceleration of the process of transformation to better coordinated sustainable transport and land use patterns for the future.
- 5.4 The EU has of course limited competence in this field, and application of the principle of subsidiarity means that most of the primary responsibilities for local transport and land use planning will remain at local and national levels. Nevertheless the Committee believes that there is room for a significant strengthening of European activity to catalyse and encourage action at local and national level, and particularly bearing in mind the leading European role in combating climate change and promoting the reduction of carbon emissions.
- 5.5 **The Committee supports the recent recommendations from the European parliament and from the Committee of the Regions for developing the European role in this area. The Committee recommends that the Commission should now adopt a five-pronged approach in a new Action Plan:**
- 5.6 **A. Undertake a major new research effort in urban land-use transport interactions**

There has been a long and distinguished tradition of research projects on urban transport and land-use interaction in the EU's 4th and 5th RTD Framework Programmes (as documented e.g. in Marshall and Banister, eds.: Land Use and Transport: European Research: Towards Integrated Policies. London/Amsterdam: Elseviers, 2007). This research tradition has been discontinued in the 6th and 7th RTD Framework Programmes. Climate change and possible future energy scarcity present new challenges for urban planning and require policy-oriented research to provide decision makers with reliable information on the likely impacts of possible integrated strategies to cope with rising energy costs and to achieve the greenhouse gas emission targets of the EU. It is therefore necessary to review and update the results of the earlier studies in the light of these possibly fundamentally different conditions. In particular the following policy questions require urgent investigation:

- *Adaptation to climate change*: Which combinations of transport and land use policies are necessary and feasible to reduce the foreseeable risks of climate change, such as floods, land slides, storm surges, heat waves, etc?
- *Mitigation of climate change*: Which combinations of transport and land use policies are most likely to achieve the transport sector's contribution to the greenhouse gas emission targets of the EU and Member States for 2020 and 2050 with the least negative impacts in terms of costs to the economy, social equity and quality of life?
- *Access to basic services and social life*: Which combinations of transport and land use policies are best to achieve minimum standards of access by public transport to basic services (health, retail, education) and social life (including in particular the needs of elderly people, people with disabilities and households with low incomes) in the light of ageing/declining populations and high energy prices?

5.7 **B. Develop an agreed set of indicators demonstrating how far an urban area has progressed in the direction of sustainable transport**

Such indicators might for example include the proportion of all trips undertaken by sustainable modes (walking, cycling and public transport) as against private transport. They might also include data on the size of the catchment areas of all facilities (schools, hospitals, public offices, shopping centres), and how over time these could be reduced by encouraging smaller more local facilities, whilst maintaining decentralised public service units, that reduce the length of journeys to them.

5.8 **C. Initiate a Europe-wide review of current practice on urban transport and land-use**

The main object should be to identify the institutional, legislative and financial systems that are most helpful to the transition to sustainable transport and land-use. The review might in particular cover some of the newer and more controversial ideas such as:

- systems for road pricing and for charging for parking space or restricting it in urban centres;
- systems for financing the development of satisfactory public transport systems and supporting its operations;
- systems for requiring the developers of major public access facilities to provide adequate linkages to public transport systems and to restrict their provision of parking space for private vehicles;
- systems for requiring public and private developers to take account of transport impacts in preparing their own forward plans, and perhaps for charging or taxing developers and operators of large facilities for the additional travel and carbon impacts their decisions impose on their communities.

5.9 **D. Develop a European Framework for Sustainable Urban Transport and Land Use**

Such a framework might include:

- Guidelines for Member States' national strategies for the promotion of sustainable urban transport and land use. Each national strategy should itself mandate local planning, transport and highway authorities (and other relevant public bodies) to work together to produce local land-use and sustainable transport plans for each city and major urban settlement.
- Guidelines for good practice and benchmarking in the development of local strategies, including arrangements for systematic and extensive consultation with the public and all stakeholder interests involved so as to build strong public awareness of the changes needed and as much consensus as possible about the way forward.
- Indicators for measuring progress towards sustainability, and for evaluating the contribution being made by different cities and regions towards reducing carbon emissions by the more sustainable plans.
- Provisions for providing financial support either on a European or a national level for the investments needed to implement the strategies over time. The CIVITAS programme has supported some excellent initiatives and in the Committee's view needs to be expanded.

5.10 **E. Review other European legislation and spending programmes that affect transport and land use**

Most European expenditure in the transport field has been directed towards the expansion of road, rail and air infrastructure in the interests of economic growth with limited assessment of their impact on carbon emissions and sustainability. It would now be appropriate to reassess the balance of these programmes, to introduce a systematic assessment of the carbon impact of such investments, and to reorient programmes so that they give more support for public transport, rail networks and sustainable urban transport and less to the promotion of further expansion of long-distance heavy carbon-emitting traffic.

Brussels, 16 July 2009.

The President
of the
European Economic and Social Committee

Mario Sepi
