

Urban Mobility: working together towards greener cities

Brussels, 25th September 2007

"Towards a new culture for urban mobility" is the title of the Green Paper adopted today by the Commission to open a debate on the key issues of urban mobility: free-flowing and greener towns and cities, smarter urban mobility and an urban transport which is accessible, safe and secure for all European citizens. With this Green Paper the Commission wants to identify, in partnership with all parties, what obstacles to successful urban mobility exist and how to remove them.

"European cities are different but they share similar challenges: congestion, climate change, pollution, safety. The Green Paper will focus European attention on the urban dimension of transport policy and put the spotlights on innovative policies which pioneering cities throughout Europe are putting in place", said Vice-President Jacques Barrot, Commissioner in charge of Transport. "My purpose is to find out what Europe can do to support those policies."

The Green Paper presents a set of policy issues for urban mobility and includes twenty five open questions addressing these options. The questions address, for example, how the quality of collective transport can be improved, how the use of clean and energy efficient technologies can be increased, how walking and cycling can be promoted and how the rights of collective transport passengers can be protected. Other questions look at the idea of a "labelling" scheme for pioneering cities, the development of guidance for Green Zones with restrictive measures, and the promotion of the use of urban road user charging.

The Green Paper sets a European agenda for urban mobility, while respecting the responsibilities of local, regional and national authorities in this field. The Commission wants to launch a discussion on how it can best enable the development of a new culture for urban mobility in Europe.

To support the preparations of the Green Paper, the European Commission organised an intensive consultation of stakeholders between January and June 2007. This included two stakeholder conferences, four technical workshops and an Internet consultation. *"The useful input that we have collected helps us to better understand the reality of Europe's cities and the expectations of citizens and stakeholders. I believe that we now present a well-balanced document",* stated Commissioner Barrot

The Green Paper marks the start of a new consultation phase and will be discussed by the European institutions. Citizens and stakeholders are invited to share their views with the Commission until 15 March 2008. An Action Plan on urban mobility will follow in the early autumn of 2008. For each proposed action that it includes, the Action Plan will indicate a time line for implementation and identify the responsibilities of the various actors, in full respect of the principle of subsidiarity.

The publication of this Green Paper was announced in the mid-term review of the Transport White Paper. It is among the twenty one strategic priorities of the Commission for the year 2007.

Why a Green Paper on Urban Mobility?

Cities all over Europe face similar problems (congestion, road safety, security, pollution, climate change due to CO2 emissions etc.) and these problems are increasing constantly.

Inaction would result in Europe having to pay an even higher price both in economic and environmental terms, as well as for the health and quality of life of European citizens.

The objectives of the European transport policy cannot be achieved without a contribution from urban transport. It is time to put urban mobility on the European agenda and open a new chapter in European transport policy. This is the reason why the Commission wishes to open a debate with citizens and all relevant stakeholders at the local, regional, national and European levels. This should result in concrete proposals to achieve a sustainable urban mobility in Europe.

What are the key issues addressed by the Green Paper?

The Green Paper addresses the main challenges related to urban mobility by 5 themes:

1. Free-flowing towns and cities;
2. Greener towns and cities;
3. Smarter urban transport;
4. Accessible urban transport, and
5. Safe and secure urban transport.

In addition, the Green Paper looks at means in order to help the creation of a new culture for urban mobility, including knowledge development and data collection, and addresses the issue of financing.

Challenges

Towards free-flowing towns and cities

Throughout Europe, increasing traffic in urban areas leads to permanent congestion. This has negative economic, social and environmental impacts and degrades the built environment. The annual costs are estimated at almost 100 billion Euro or 1% of the EU's GDP.

Congestion in towns and cities is one of the main problems identified during previous consultations. A fluid, properly functioning transport system allows people and goods to arrive on time.

Experience shows that there is no single solution to reduce congestion. Alternatives to private car use, such as collective transport, walking, cycling, should be made attractive and safe. Citizens should be able to switch between modes easily. Possible solutions range from good connections between modes, good parking facilities outside city centres, urban charging schemes, better traffic management and information, carpooling and car- sharing, and efficient freight transport.

Towards greener towns and cities

The main environmental issues in towns and cities stem from the domination of oil as a transport fuel, which generates CO₂, and air pollutant emissions. Air and noise pollution are increasingly worrying. Urban mobility accounts for 40% of all CO₂ emissions of road transport and up to 70% of other pollutants from road transport. These have a negative impact on citizens' health.

Some options to face these challenges include the development of new and clean technologies (energy efficiency, alternative fuels) supported by green procurement, traffic restrictions and green zones (pedestrianisation, restricted access zones, speed limits, urban charging, etc).

Towards smarter urban transport

European cities must face a permanent increase of freight and passenger transport fluxes. Meanwhile, the necessary infrastructure developments to cope with this increase runs up against important limitations linked to the lack of space and to environmental constraints. In this context Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS) and urban traffic management and control applications present a potential added value for an efficient management of urban mobility, including freight distribution. Smart charging systems, better traveller information and the standardisation of interfaces and interoperability of ITS applications in towns and cities are part of the solution.

Towards accessible urban transport

Society is changing, and is expecting more intelligent and affordable mobility solutions. Citizens also expect seamless and accessible collective transport and safe infrastructure for walking, cycling and private vehicle use. They expect more flexible transport solutions for both freight and passenger mobility.

This could be achieved through innovative solutions for high quality collective transport, intermodal terminals for collective transport, and good links between suburban and urban transport networks. An appropriate EU legal framework for public transport is essential. A European Charter on the rights and obligations for passengers using collective transport is an option for the future.

Towards safe and secure urban transport

About two-thirds of road accidents and one-third of road fatalities takes place in urban areas with the most vulnerable road users being pedestrians and cyclists. In order to improve this situation, possible solutions must cover behavioural, vehicle and infrastructure aspects as well as a strict enforcement of traffic rules.

In addition, the sometimes perceived low personal security of passengers prevents some people from travelling, or from using the collective transport services. This may lead to extra car use.

Creating a new culture for urban mobility

There is a need to create a new urban mobility culture in Europe. Citizens and decision makers have to think in terms of behavioural change. Only through a shift in mentality we can maintain our cities as attractive places to be and to go, and can ensure that they can continue to function as successful engines of the European economy.

Education, training and awareness raising activities have an important role to play, as well as development of new knowledge, collection of data and monitoring of trends. Stakeholders should work together in developing this new culture for urban mobility in Europe.

Financing urban transport

Stakeholders emphasised that the financing needs are huge. They include investments in infrastructure, intermodal terminals, maintenance and network function, renewal and overhaul of rolling stock, etc. But it should not be forgotten that the use and maintenance of the urban transport networks, i.e. the operation costs, also require sufficient funding.

All stakeholders at local, regional, national and EU level, including users, must contribute. Successful financing of urban transport projects requires a mixture of budgetary, regulatory and financial instruments, including specific local taxes and private financing. Pricing schemes could include urban road user charging or parking charges. These schemes can contribute to urban transport financing through the earmarking of the revenues raised for the financing of urban transport measures.

At the EU level, existing sources of financing such the structural and cohesion funds could be better used. In the longer term, targeted EU support for financing clean urban transport activities could be envisaged.

What is the Commission's role in this area?

The challenges that European towns and cities face cannot be solved easily at the local level alone. The task is difficult and stakeholders, cities and towns in Europe should not be left alone. Joint solutions have to be developed by mobilising Europe's resources.

The European Commission is not presenting solutions or actions but it offers options. It wants to launch a debate on the issues and challenges that face transport policy maker at the local level. The basis for this debate is the rich input received from stakeholders during the six-month consultation period.

Usually, local authorities themselves rather than the EU are in the lead in defining and implementing urban mobility policies. But the EU can support them and enable and encourage the development of a new culture for urban mobility in Europe, without imposing solutions from the centre that are not adapted to local circumstances. This approach was supported by stakeholders during the preparation phase.

For example, added value of action at European level can be to promote the sharing of good practices across borders. But it can also involve better co-ordination and co-operation, promoting interoperability, financial support, simplification of existing legislation, or, in certain cases, removal or introduction of legislation.

Where do the suggestions for the Green Paper come from?

Background

On October 24, 2006, the European Commission adopted its Legislative Work Programme for the year 2007. As one of its twenty-one strategic initiatives, the Commission announced the adoption of a Green Paper on Urban Transport in September 2007. The preparation of the Green Paper has been subject to an intensive consultation process that started on 31 January 2007 and ended on 4 June 2007.

During this consultation process, relevant stakeholders at European, national, regional and local level, city representatives, NGO's, representatives of European Institutions and European citizens shared their views on urban mobility policy.

The consultations during the preparation of the Green Paper

Between January and June 2007, the Commission organised conferences, workshops and meetings to collect views, information and get an overview of the expectations of the Green Paper among stakeholders. This allowed the Commission to meet and exchange views with a wide variety of stakeholders and to obtain information about the best practices of cities and of public and private sector organisations.

The consultation process included two conferences, four technical workshops and an internet consultation. The results from this consultation phase together with lessons from long-running Community programmes on integrated urban transport approaches are presented in a Commission Staff Working Document.

What are the next steps?

The Green Paper does not propose concrete policy measures but rather launches a further debate on possible options for action. This new consultation should identify those actions that will be included in an Action Plan on Urban Mobility. The consultation period will end on 15 March 2008.

The Action Plan, together with its Impact Assessment, will be published in the early autumn of 2008. It will propose actions at the EU, national, regional, and local level and at the level of the industry and citizens. It will present a clear vision on responsibilities and tasks and a timetable for action.

How can stakeholders take part in the consultation?

Responses should be sent to the Commission by 15 March 2008 at the following e-mail address: tren-urbantransport@ec.europa.eu

or the following mailing address:

**European Commission
Directorate General for Energy and Transport
Clean transport and urban transport unit
(DM28 02/64)
200, rue de la Loi
B – 1049 Brussels**

For further information please visit:

http://ec.europa.eu/transport/clean/index_en.htm

More information on the Green Paper and the consultation process can be found at:

http://ec.europa.eu/transport/clean/green_paper_urban_transport/index_en.htm

GREEN PAPER - Towards a new culture for urban mobility

http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/site/en/com/2007/com2007_0551en01.pdf

The Aalborg Charter

http://www.aalborgplus10.dk/media/charter_english.pdf

Local Action 21

<http://www.iclei-europe.org/index.php?id=localaction21>

Global Alliance for EcoMobility

<http://www.ecomobility.org/>