



**74th Plenary session
9-10 April 2008**

**OPINION
of the
Committee of the Regions
on
GREEN PAPER ON URBAN TRANSPORT**

THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

- calls for coordinated action to effectively tackle the problems of congestion and pollution affecting all European towns and cities. Such action should be underpinned by an integrated approach to the issues involved, with the EU playing a significant role, while at the same time leaving local and regional authorities with control over the practical solutions to be adopted;
- asks the EU to encourage local and regional authorities to develop long-term mobility plans based on a partnership between towns and cities and their respective conurbations, in order to find solutions adapted to local circumstances (parking at the entrances to cities, development of cleaner transport modes, optimised public transport etc.) These mobility plans could include Clear Zones (i.e. areas with low levels of congestion and pollution), thus also giving priority to investment to support them;
- recognising the quantum of investment funding needed, proposes that these mobility plans be underpinned by broad-based partnerships, also involving the private sector, and urges the EU, working in collaboration with the EIB, to develop innovative financial instruments to fund the requisite infrastructure and cleaner technology;
- calls for an EU-level reporting mechanism to be established in order to report back on progress. This process should be started with an EU-funded benchmark study looking at cities across the EU and their approaches to meeting these challenges.

Rapporteur

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Reference document

Green Paper: Towards a New Culture for Urban Mobility
COM(2007) 551 final

I. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

Key Messages

1. welcomes the EU's commitment to continuing its efforts to raise the competitiveness of the European economy as well as to tackling sustainability and climate change. These key issues as formalised in the Lisbon Agenda, the Gothenburg Agreement and the Climate Change Action Plan are vital for the future of the Union. The CoR's political priorities recognise the vital importance of competitiveness for economic growth, particularly in urban centres and, as stated in the Lisbon objectives, together with its contribution to territorial cohesion;
2. notes that the division of powers between local, regional and national authorities varies across Member States. It is important that the measures laid down by the Commission in the forthcoming action plan do not presuppose certain organisational solutions;
3. underlines that these issues of growth and environment are being faced by cities on a daily basis. However, increasing environmental problems will hinder this growth. Cities and urban areas offer the potential for raising competitiveness and tackling climate change. In order to do this, cities and major urban areas must take measure to improve accessibility and solve the environmental issues. The opportunity of significantly decoupling growth from negative climate change impacts can first of all be realised in city regions, as it is above all in dense urban areas that alternative modes of travel become quickly viable;
4. calls for coordinated action in order to effectively tackle the significant problems of transportation derived congestion and environmental issues affecting cities to achieve decarbonisation of road transport by 2050. There have been individual cities where action has been successful. A more comprehensive strategy is needed respecting the subsidiarity and proportionality principles;
5. recognises the fundamental role that local and regional authorities play in the planning and implementation of urban transport policy and concurs with the Commission that rethinking urban mobility involves organising "co-modality" between all public and private modes of transport with a view to a shift towards environmentally friendly modes of transport;
6. The EU should pursue an integrated policy targeted at the environment, spatial planning and mobility, to which the following EU-level actions are key:
 1. To improve air quality and reduce noise pollution the EU must pursue a more stringent policy for tackling at source the problems associated with traffic. Technological improvements and cleaner fuels will lead to cleaner, quieter and more economical vehicles.

2. In the interests of traffic safety, the EU must encourage advances in vehicle technology.
 3. The EU must promote the development of the technologies needed to underpin regional and local pricing policies.
 4. The EU must promote links between urban areas by high-speed train and tram lines and networks.
 5. The EU should push for uniform road signs for environmental zones, while leaving towns with as much freedom as possible to introduce environmental zoning.
 6. The EU should promote the construction of non-motorised traffic routes, thus making it safe to walk, cycle or use other environmentally friendly forms of transport.
7. asks the EU to encourage the regions and especially the cities to tackle the problems by developing comprehensive long-term mobility plans to deal with congestion and mitigate climate change by developing alternative methods of transport and providing choice to travellers, with a view to redressing the balance of modalities towards more sustainable modes. Within these plans, Clear Zones, i.e. newly designated areas with low levels of pollution and congestion (as distinct from the Green Zones which are areas with low levels of pollution only) should be encouraged through the award of Clear Zone status and investment to support these prioritised;
8. recognises that accessing the quantum of investment funding needed to support such Clear Zones may prove challenging for some Member States. There is a role for the EU, working in close collaboration with the European Investment Bank, to develop innovative financial instruments capable of funding the necessary sustainable mobility infrastructure and investment into low carbon vehicles. This could be taken forward as an extension of the CIVITAS programme, or following the conclusion of CIVITAS in 2009, be incorporated within a successor EU funded programme;
9. calls for an EU-level mechanism to be established in order to report-back on progress in the field of urban transport and also on tried and tested procedures which can serve as an example for others. This process should be started with an EU-funded benchmark study looking at cities across the EU and their approaches to congestion reduction, environmental enhancements and the provision of more sustainable modes of transportation. The annual progress report on the Lisbon goals given at the annual Spring Councils should provide a timetable for reporting back;
10. recommends that the Commission issues guidelines in the form of common standards with regard to methodologies for calculating the full costs and benefits of transport modes (including externalities such as congestion, environmental damage, social inclusion, and effects on employment and the social viability of city centres) as the basis for promoting co-modality; and also the establishment of consumer friendly eco-standards for vehicles which reflect whole-life environmental costs;
11. urges the Commission to support and award networks of best practice (with which the CoR should be associated) in order to widen their take-up in areas such as multi-element packages

which provide an alternative to car ownership and the active use thereof and through the expansion of initiatives such as Demonstration Cities showcasing innovative pricing mechanisms and the establishment of Clear Zones;

12. encourages the Commission to capitalise on the achievements of award schemes, where it is recognised that there is a need to fund the showcasing of the expertise gained, by using awards as a marketing tool for the city regions concerned and a target for other city regions to aspire to;
13. calls for the EU to use best-practice and model cities to illustrate, both within Europe and beyond, the efforts it is making to search for and implement innovative and complex solutions to our current problems and opportunities and calls for Mobility Plans to be developed by city regions over at least a 20-year horizon. The plans could cover funding needs, new technologies to be explored and piloted, infrastructure needs, innovative procurement to stimulate innovation etc. With the plan led approach to all EU cities through a significantly expanded Civitas or possibly through a new programme and with both the exemplar cities and demonstration cities, the EU could showcase within Europe and globally how it is seeking and implementing innovative and challenging solutions to our current problems and our current opportunities;
14. calls on the authorities at all levels of government and administration to encourage actions to facilitate joint procurement (public-public or public-private) to promote Clear Zones (where such joint procurement is not contrary to the wider public interest. Joint Procurement has the ability to create a market for manufacturers investing in new technologies and to stimulate innovation. The EU could support this action by promoting best practice networks for green procurement and for stimulating innovation in the transport technology field, drawn from regions and localities actively involved in producing, researching and supporting developments in transportation technologies. These two actions would stimulate both demand and supply of new technologies for the benefit of cities;
15. stresses that the role of the private sector in the future provision of alternative transport modes and the decoupling of improved accessibility from increase in vehicle kilometrage needs to be more fully understood and therefore as part of the above mentioned EU-wide benchmarking study, an element should look at the role of private finance and companies in current innovative solutions and what incentives can be given to maximise their effective role;
16. points out that the Green Paper is timely as additional resources at all levels will be necessary to tackle the problems. The EU already spends significant resources on mobility and transport issues through TEN -T and also importantly for urban areas through the Convergence Regions under the structural funds. Cities are an important and integral component of transport networks since they are hubs where different modes come together and where journeys usually start and end. For this reason transport in cities must be given the same attention as transport networks. We must look to the longer term and long-term plans must also be met. Rather than waiting for problems to become acute, towns and regions should adopt a

proactive approach. Therefore at all levels when resources are allocated, the aim should be not only to correct problems that have already arisen, but also to earmark extra resources for towns and regions that tackle potential problems at an early stage;

17. stresses the importance of encouraging urban mobility actions under the new Operational programmes for Convergence regions. Where this occurs the cities and regions in question will need to show that their EU funded actions are seeking to tackle the key issues;

Towards Free-Flowing Towns and Cities

Concerning Question 1 – on whether a "labelling" scheme should be envisaged to recognise the efforts of pioneering cities to combat congestion and improve living conditions:

18. The EU could combine labelling along the lines of the EU-wide "Blue Flag scheme", awarded on the basis of specific indicators, with the introduction of a 'Clear Zone Scheme' – an area with low levels of pollution and congestion. Projects could be funded in "Demonstration Cities" covering a range of population sizes and historical legacies, possibly to link with the aspiration to extend CIVITAS to larger scale actions (See Question 21).
19. An annual report on the implementation of best practices could accompany the annual progress report on the urban goals submitted each year to the Spring Council.

Concerning Question 2 – on measures which could be taken to promote walking and cycling as real alternatives to the car:

20. The only way to promote walking and cycling as genuine alternatives to driving is to systematically create or expand comprehensive, high-quality and unobstructed networks of footpaths and cycle paths, which local authorities would be responsible for to help ensure that much wider use is made of the bicycle as a transport mode within the EU than is currently the case. The best way for this to happen is to put the "compact city" concept into practice. A functional approach to the planning of new settlements can help deep down the distances to be covered by pedestrians and cyclists. The development of urban Clear Zones encompassing stringent measures to tackle congestion and air pollution would significantly improve the environment for walking and cycling. There are many already existing examples of good practice with regard to promotional campaigns in schools and communities, and there is a role for the EU in supporting professional networks, showcasing exemplars and celebrating success. Europe should build on the success of the TAPESTRY¹ programme.

¹ TAPESTRY - Travel Awareness, Publicity and Education Supporting a Sustainable Transport Strategy in Europe. TAPESTRY was a three year research and demonstration project funded by the European Commission (DG Energy and Transport) under the 5th RTD Framework Programme.

Concerning Question 3 - on what could be done to promote a modal shift towards sustainable transport modes in cities:

21. Achieving modal shift requires an integrated approach to improving journey experience for sustainable modes, making them more attractive whilst making unsustainable modes less attractive. Planning measures in the context of action plans to reduce air and noise pollution and transport (development) plans also requires an integrated approach. The forthcoming revision of the relevant EU directives should insert subsidiarity and take an integrated approach to planning into account, thus ensuring legal certainty for local authorities where it is practised. Particularly in the field of state aid and public contracts, failure to differentiate in applying Community law often has undesirable and unpredictable effects. Whether transport services are directly provided by a local authority or contracted out must in future still be decided at local and regional level.

Concerning Question 4 – on how the use of clean and energy efficient technologies in urban transport could be further increased:

22. The suggestions put forward in the Green Paper to continue to set increasingly more demanding targets through progressively more restrictive emissions standards, encouraging the widespread establishment of Urban Green Zones with common standards, are supported. There may also be potential for European targets, perhaps linked to contribution rebates, tied to proportions of public sector procurement meeting an agreed "eco-rating". There is also the potential to encourage commitment to "eco-standard" procurement by large private sector entities using the EU's various business networks.

Concerning Question 6 – on whether criteria or guidance should be set out for the definition of Green Zones and their restriction measures, how best to ensure compatibility with free circulation and on whether there is an issue of cross border enforcement of local rules governing green zones:

23. EU guidelines but not guidance on the definition of Green Zones would be a helpful contribution to clarity and consistency, especially to establish generally recognised categories of vehicles based upon energy consumption and emissions ratings. There may be a need for a Europe-wide website which brings data for cities within the EU together in a standard format and sign posts specific information for the urban area concerned. Standard marking of cars entering green zones to indicate pollution levels would be beneficial both to drivers and to those implementing green zones in urban areas, provided that the same identification features are used for all cars throughout Europe.
24. European-wide guidelines are needed on highway code matters concerning the environment and the more vulnerable road users. Member States should be encouraged to incorporate these guidelines in to their national highway codes, thus ensuring greater clarity and uniformity across the Union.

25. Many towns and regions are now introducing their own environmental zoning, using their own road signs. To avoid confusing international hauliers and tourists, the EU should develop uniform traffic signs. Local and regional authorities should have as much freedom as possible to introduce environmental zoning.
26. Cross border enforcement of local rules is already possible (Council Framework Decision 2005/214/JHA of 24 February 2005 on the application of the principle of mutual recognition to financial penalties).
27. The CoR is concerned that the European Commission - without awaiting the outcome of the consultation - in December submitted a completely revised proposal on the promotion of clean and energy efficient road transport vehicles, (COM(2007) 817 final).

Concerning question 5 – on how joint green procurement could be promoted:

28. Further benefits could be obtained from the STEER² programme linking this to new European eco-standards based on the principles of life-time social costs outlined in the Green Paper. At the EU level, we could promote partnership working with suppliers, disseminating the concepts of life-time costings through supplier networks, and promoting common standards and acceptances, and the translation of pertinent academic research into innovative, commercially-viable products.

Concerning Question 7 – on how eco-driving could be further promoted:

29. The social and financial value of eco-driving could be promoted and included in driving lessons. What is at issue here is a change in driving behaviour and habits. These skills could be and incorporated into national driving tests by establishing standards of good practice and care. There could be a role for the EU in sharing best practice in campaign messages and use of the marketing mix, along the lines of the EU's successful TAPESTRY initiative. Another way of encouraging eco-driving is to promote in-car equipment to measure fuel consumption.

Towards Smarter Urban Transport

Concerning Question 8 – on whether better information services for travellers should be developed and promoted:

30. Better information services for travellers both prior to and during journeys can make significant contributions to sustainability. European cities already have many examples of good practice. There is a role at the EU level in encouraging the expansion and inter-compatibility of existing systems through the establishment of common systems and common

²

STEER is the vertical action of the European Intelligent Energy Programme which focuses on alternative vehicles and fuels, policy measures for the efficient use of energy in transport and strengthening the knowledge of local energy agencies in the transport field.

symbols. There is a role in promoting exemplar systems. The Galileo satellite navigation system is of crucial importance in this respect.

31. Information services for collective transport users need to be developed and improved. Real-time information and information on disruptions posted on the internet or sent to mobile telephones and tailored to the individual traveller's needs will do much to make collective transport more attractive and more competitive vis-à-vis less sustainable transport modes. Galileo will play a key role in the development of new information services. It is important therefore that the EU take responsibility for ensuring that Galileo is expanded as quickly as possible.
32. Support should be given in the first instance to projects for setting up information services which reinforce the network effect of public transport - i.e. information systems that give comprehensive information on connections and the situation in the entire network of the integrated transport system of a conurbation and beyond (region, canton, state).

Concerning Question 9 – on whether further actions are needed to ensure standardisation of interfaces and interoperability of ITS applications in towns and cities, and on which applications should take priority when actions are taken:

33. Actions to date to ensure interoperability have been helpful in establishing technical standards, and there is an ongoing role for the EU in this area. More could be done in encouraging common approaches by groups of cities and between Member States, for example with systems for online monitoring and information to prevent serious traffic congestion.
34. As well as for systems informing transport users, common systems should be developed as far as possible at European level to provide, for example, BACT³ monitoring systems to provide statistics for transport and planning purposes.

Towards Accessible Urban Transport

Concerning Question 11 – on how the quality of collective transport in European towns and cities can be increased:

35. The EU should encourage the development of equipment and infrastructure to common standards, underpinning by research and development aimed at continuous improvement of service quality. Demand responsiveness could be encouraged by linking public funding to increased levels of customer satisfaction.

³

BACT stands for Best Available Control Technology.

36. Measures to reflect direct and indirect costs will also help in this regard by balancing the factors in the mode choice decision.

Concerning Question 12 – on whether the development of dedicated lanes for collective transport should be encouraged:

37. We believe that dedicated lanes for collective transport in conjunction with ITS should be encouraged. There is a role for the EU in supporting projects to create dedicated bus and trolleybus lanes as well as tram lines, either uniquely for them or in a separate corridor shared with pedestrian and cycle paths and developing common signing and designations. Dedicated lanes may be a good way of securing a more unimpeded traffic flow for collective transport. Where this involves cutting the number of lanes open to cars, it can also lead to a reduction in car numbers and increased congestion for those cars that do remain on the road. It may sometimes be difficult to secure understanding for such measures and to implement them in practice. The EU and the national level can support local decision-makers in that regard through information and awareness-raising. Other options include the development of internet-based car-pooling services and of systems whereby car-pools of at least three people would be allowed to use the collective transport lanes at certain times of the day.

Concerning Question 13 – on whether there is a need to introduce a European charter on the rights and obligations for passengers using collective transport:

38. We would support an extension to the EU Charter on fundamental rights concerning the rights and obligations of passengers using collective transport to improve accessibility, particularly for the mobility impaired.

Concerning Question 14 – on what measures could be undertaken to better integrate passenger and freight transport in research and urban mobility planning:

39. Integration could be incentivised through funding criteria for research and demonstration projects, particularly relating to the adoption of energy efficient, environmentally friendly vehicles suited to the urban environment. The setting up of specific urban emission reduction criteria, linked to the labelling designations referred to in paragraph 18 (Question 1), could be considered.

Concerning Question 15 – on how better co-ordination between urban and interurban transport and land use planning can be achieved, and what type of organisational structure could be appropriate:

40. We support the use of voluntarily drawn up mobility plans integrating wider metropolitan conurbations. It is important that appropriate diversion measures are put in place to remove heavy goods traffic from town and city centres. There is no single optimal solution, but conurbations should develop local solutions geared to delivering outcomes prescribed and

incentivised by the EU. These plans could form the basis of contractual Mobility Agreements between major stakeholder partners.

41. The CoR believes that, in order to relieve congestion on access routes to large cities, and working in cooperation with municipalities in surrounding areas and, where appropriate, metropolitan transport authorities, major interchanges should be constructed at the entrances to cities, with sufficient available parking (park and ride facilities) to allow those driving into the city to leave their cars and use public transport, without any significant time loss. We think it makes sense to support the creation of integrated transport systems, together with consortia of local authorities or similar bodies to manage them, that respect the natural boundaries of conurbations and movement of people.
42. Land use at all levels – municipal and higher levels of government - and mobility planning should go hand in hand so as to make initiatives in both areas as effective as possible from an environmental, energy and operational perspective as the two areas are closely interlinked.

Towards Safe and Secure Urban Transport

Concerning Question 16 – on what further actions should be undertaken to help cities and towns meet their road safety and personal security challenges in urban transport:

43. Pedestrians and cyclists are particularly vulnerable in urban areas, and ongoing improvements to road safety are imperative if these modes are to be encouraged. Further actions might include encouraging demonstration projects featuring innovative ways of affording pedestrians and cyclists priority over motorised transport, and encourage early adoption of safety enhancing technology. Local authorities should be encouraged to enter into voluntary joint ventures with private industry in order to solve these problems. Numerous examples of best practice solutions already exist.

Concerning Question 17 – on how operators and citizens can be better informed on the potential of advanced infrastructure management and vehicle technologies for safety:

44. We consider that well-promoted demonstration projects are the best mechanism for conveying the potential of these developments. We commend the work of the European Road Safety Observatory in publicising new developments in this area and draw attention to the existing examples of best practice in European regions.

Concerning Question 18 – on whether automatic radar devices adapted to the urban environment should be developed, and whether their use should be promoted:

45. The EU should promote development of new technology. A valid role for the EU may be to promote further trials across Europe to inform a greater understanding of the costs and benefits involved.

Creating a New Urban Mobility Culture

Concerning Question 20 – on whether all stakeholders should work together in developing a new mobility culture in Europe; and whether a European Observatory on Urban Mobility based on the model of the European Road Safety Observatory could be a useful initiative to support this co-operation:

46. We believe that this would be a useful model to follow, given Europe's success in reducing accident rates. The establishment of a European Observatory on Urban Mobility can only be supported if it offers true added value. We also believe that the model of cascading targets linked to funding has made a significant contribution to the progress made in accident reduction. A European Observatory on Urban Mobility could assist with the promotion of good practice, the award of Clear Zone status and an annual EU reporting mechanism linked to the Spring Councils.

Financial Resources

Concerning Question 21 – on how existing financial instruments such as the structural and cohesion funds could be better used in a coherent way to support integrated and sustainable transport:

47. There are already significant resources spent on mobility actions through various programmes, most notably through the TEN-T programme, in the Structural Funds under the Convergence Regions programmes and through Civitas. It is clear that in Convergence regions, where EU resources are being delivered in an urban context, they should be expected to fit in with the aims of this Green Paper. The actions financed under the Convergence programmes should seek to establish a balanced modality approach based on their respective pollution and climate impacts. These Convergence resources and those under the other programmes are not sufficient to stimulate the necessary radical change that is needed across Europe. In addition, these funds are not generally focused on the areas of real need, those large urban areas under pressure from growth where competitiveness is being hampered by environmental issues. The Green Paper illustrates the need for action. There is an EU role – in a significantly extended "Civitas Plus Plus" approach or in a totally new programme, either of which should be focussed on stimulating the delivery of this radical change. These funds should support the development and financing of Clear Zones and the switch to a more balanced modality approach as stated in this opinion. It would also help draw in funds from the private sector and funds from national programmes.

Concerning Question 23 – on how targeted research activities could help more in integrating urban constraints and urban traffic development:

48. The key issues are systems to manage traffic and control activity, in conjunction with development of housing densities along strategic public transport corridors. In particular, urban development must dovetail with the development of the communication infrastructure

network and other infrastructure networks to avoid the need to integrate them later on. The main benefit will be achievement of the critical demand threshold for setting up and running public transport services.

Concerning Question 24 – on whether towns and cities should be encouraged to use urban charging; whether there is a need for a general framework and/or guidance for urban charging; whether revenues should be earmarked to improve collective urban transport and whether external costs should be internalised:

49. Urban charging could be a tool open to urban authorities. It would be helpful for the EU to encourage the development of best practice models, and learning from those schemes already established. A general framework and/or guidance could be of benefit. Standardisation would be desirable but difficult to achieve. Local and regional authorities must have effective instruments available to them if they are to solve congestion and environmental problems. Congestion charges can be a highly effective tool here. This is why local and regional authorities must be able to decide for themselves on the introduction of such charges and on how the revenue raised is used. In many Member States, however, they are unable to do so, since such matters are decided at national level. It would be helpful for the EU to encourage the development of best practice models, and learning from those schemes already established. In the CoR's view, the Commission can by explaining and raising awareness do a lot to facilitate the introduction of congestion charges by local and regional decision-makers.

Concerning Question 25 – on what added value, in the longer term, targeted European support for financing lean and energy efficient urban transport could bring:

50. Targeted support could result in improved performance against carbon reduction targets, new technology applications being rolled out faster and wider dissemination and uptake of best practice. In turn, this could reduce the economic cost of congestion to the EU and provide leadership in the global market for sustainable development technologies and methodologies, and in reconciling economic growth with sustainable urban transport.

51. Further added value could be generated by the EU by using Mobility Agreements to facilitate the establishment of strong stakeholder alliances capable of bearing the risk associated with the substantive levels of commercial borrowing needed to bring forward sustainable transport infrastructure on a large scale. Close working with the EIB will be needed to deliver this outcome.

Brussels, 9 April 2008

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II. PROCEDURE

Title	Green Paper: Towards a New Culture for Urban Mobility
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Previous Committee opinions	