Towards a new culture for urban mobility

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PURPOSE: to launch a debate on a European urban mobility strategy (Green Paper).

BACKGROUND: in the European Union, over 60% of the population lives in urban areas. Just under 85% of the EU's gross domestic product is created in urban areas. Towns and cities are the drivers of the European economy. They attract investment and jobs. They are essential to the smooth functioning of the economy. Although European towns and cities are all different they face similar challenges (increased traffic in town and city centres; air and noise pollution; road traffic accidents) and are trying to find common solutions.

Local authorities cannot face all these issues on their own; there is a need for cooperation and coordination at European level. Therefore, the Commission has decided to present a Green Paper on urban mobility in order to explore if and how it can add value to action already taken at local level.

The consultations exercise organised by the Commission in view of the preparation of the

Green Paper provided information resulting in a set of policy options and 25 open questions about these options. With this Green Paper, the Commission launches a second consultation process until 15 March 2008, with a view to presenting, in early autumn 2008, an Action Plan which will identify a series of concrete actions and initiatives towards better and sustainable urban mobility. For each proposed action, the Action Plan will indicate a time line for implementation and the allocation of responsibilities between the various actors.

CONTENT: urban mobility should make possible the economic development of towns and cities, the quality of life of their inhabitants and the protection of their environment. To this end, European towns and cities face five challenges which need to be met as part of an integrated approach.

(1) Towards free-flowing towns and cities: in order to reduce congestion in towns and cities, alternatives to private car use, such as walking, cycling, collective transport or the use of the motorbike and scooter, should be made attractive and safe. Citizens should be able to optimise their travel through efficient links between the different modes of transport. Authorities should promote co-modality and reallocate space that becomes available after congestion mitigation measures. An adequate parking policy is also necessary to reduce the use of cars in the centre of the cities. Finally, intelligent and adaptive traffic management systems have also proven their efficiency in reducing congestion.

Issues: (1) Should a "labelling'" scheme be envisaged to recognise the efforts of pioneering cities to combat congestion and improve living conditions? (2) What measures could be taken to promote walking and cycling as real alternatives to the car? (3) What could be done to promote a modal shift towards sustainable transport modes in cities?

(2) Towards greener towns and cities: CO2 emissions from new passenger cars sold in the EU decreased by 12.4% between 1995 and 2004, following a voluntary agreement between the European Commission and the industry. To enable the EU to reach its 120g objective by 2012, the Commission, in a Communication of February 2007, outlined a comprehensive new strategy. However, despite these improvements, environmental conditions are still not satisfactory: local authorities are facing serious problems to meet the requirements on air quality, such as the limits of particulates and nitrogen oxides in ambient air. In addition, noise reduction at source could be reduced by tightening EU standards for noise emissions from road and rail vehicles and from tyres. Extension, rehabilitation and upgrading of clean

urban public transport, as well as other sustainable urban transport projects, should also continue to be promoted and supported by the EU.

Issues: (1) How could the use of clean and energy efficient technologies in urban transport be further increased? (2) How could joint green procurement be promoted? (3) Should criteria or guidance be set out for the definition of Green Zones and their restriction measures? (4) How could eco-driving be further promoted?

3) Towards smarter urban transport: European towns and cities are confronted with a constant increase in freight and passenger flows. However, there are substantial limits to the development of the infrastructure needed to cope with this increase, as a result of a lack of space and environmental constraints. Against this background, stakeholders have highlighted that Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS) applications are currently underexploited for the efficient management of urban mobility, or are developed without due attention to interoperability.

Issues: (1) Should better information services for travellers be developed and promoted? (2) Are further actions needed to ensure standardisation of interfaces and interoperability of ITS applications in towns and cities? Which applications should take priority when action is taken? (3) Regarding ITS, how could the exchange of information and best practices between all involved parties be improved?

4) Towards accessible urban transport: accessibility primarily concerns people with reduced mobility, disabled people, elderly people, families with young children, and young children themselves: they should have easy access to urban transport infrastructure. Accessibility also refers to the quality of access that people and businesses have to the urban mobility system, made up of infrastructure and services.

According to stakeholders, there is insufficient attention to co-modality and a lack of integrated collective transport solutions, such as suburban railway systems, tram-train systems, and well-located Park&Ride facilities at collective transport terminals in the outskirts of towns and cities.

Issues: (1) How can the quality of collective transport in European towns and cities be increased? (2) Should the development of dedicated lanes for collective transport be encouraged? (3) Is there a need to introduce a European Charter on rights and obligations for passengers using collective transport? (4) What measures could be undertaken to better integrate passenger and freight transport in research and in urban mobility planning? (5) How can better coordination between urban and interurban transport and land use planning be achieved?

5) Towards safe and secure urban transport: in 2005, 41 600 people were killed on the roads in the EU. This is far from the joint target of no more than 25 000 fatalities a year by 2010. The European road safety policy covers behavioural, vehicle and infrastructure issues (the safety and security of vehicles and infrastructures must be improved).

Issues: (1) What further actions should be undertaken to help cities and towns meet their road safety and personal security challenges in urban transport? (2) How can operators and citizens be better informed on the potential of advanced infrastructure management and vehicle technologies for safety? (3) Should automatic radar devices adapted to the urban environment be developed and should their use be promoted? (4) Is video surveillance a good tool for safety and security in urban transport?

Finally, regarding **financial resources**, the Paper poses the following questions, amongst others: how could existing financial instruments such as structural and cohesion funds be better used in a coherent way to support integrated and sustainable urban transport? How could economic instruments, in particular market-based instruments, support clean and energy efficient urban transport? Should towns and cities be encouraged to use urban charging? In the longer term, what added value could targeted European support for financing clean and energy efficient urban transport bring?