

The proposed Green Paper on Urban Transport – Statement by the BUSTRIP Project

Background

Urban areas are vital to the economic, environmental and social future of the EU. In order to attract investment and employment European cities have to offer economic opportunities and a high quality of life. Urban mobility plays a crucial role in this context since it contributes both to economic efficiency and social inclusion.

However, over the last decades and against the backdrop of the processes of globalisation, European integration and economic restructuring have substantially affected urban transport. The vicious circle of economic and transport growth leads to increasing negative effects. Transport in urban areas characterized by its frequent short journeys with cold engines substantially pressures health and environment. In towns and cities where 80% of Europeans live and work, these negative effects of transport are exceptionally palpable¹:

- Urban transport accounts for 40% of total CO₂ emissions and up to 70% of other pollutants from transport.
- Most of the congestion affects urban areas putting Europe at risk losing competitiveness.
- Increased traffic and urban congestion go also hand in hand with more air and noise pollution. The disturbing effects on the health of towns trigger considerable costs to community.
- In addition one out of two fatal accidents takes place in urban surroundings with the highest casualties among pedestrians and cyclists.
- Urban freight transport accounts for 10% of the traffic movements in urban areas and considerably contributes to the negative impacts of urban transport.

Thus, urban transportation constitutes both an extremely important and an exceptionally disturbing activity. Despite of its vital function for economy and society, transport has for a long time become a major problem, and essentially a threat to the sustainability of cities. How to increase mobility while at the same time reducing congestion, accidents and pollution is the common challenge to all cities.

BUSTRIP project

The EU strongly recommends local authorities to develop and implement a Sustainable Urban Transport Plan (SUTP) as a cornerstone to cope with the challenge of increasing negative transport impacts². The 12 partner cities within the BUSTRIP project (*Baltic Urban Sustainable Transport Implementation and Planning*)

¹ Keep Europe moving - Sustainable mobility for our continent. Mid-term review of the European Commission's 2001 Transport White Paper. COM(2006)314

² Thematic Strategy on the Urban Environment. COM(2005)718

www.bustrip-project.net) are among the first ones in Europe to start preparing and implementing SUTP's.

The process in the cities is based on a few main steps. At first the partner cities made a self-assessment on their existing transport plans and policies. In the second phase all partner cities were peer reviewed by transport experts from other partner cities. The cities use the findings of peer review to prepare their new SUTP's and to revise existing plans; from this they implement SUTP related pilot actions.

All findings, experiences, best practices and materials produced in the project will serve as the basis for the SUTP toolbox as the main outcome of the project. The toolbox will assist European cities to understand SUTP and the opportunities available to move towards sustainable urban transport.

Common challenges

The analysis of the findings of the Peer reviews, the SUTP and Pilot Action implementation shows that the cities despite of different size, society and stage of transport planning are facing rather common challenges on their way to develop sustainable urban. Based on the experiences we urge the Commission to address the following categories of measures in the Green Paper:

- Reducing the need for transport

Most cities do not understand how to implement the principle of reducing the need for transport and are reinforcing the growth of urban sprawl. Many cities are allowing new 'out of town' shopping centres and settlements that have the effect of increasing the need to travel. Most of these urban extensions and new settlements lack an adequate reservation of land for sustainable transport modes (bus lanes, tram lanes, etc.).

Travel and transport arises from where people live, work, do their shopping and have fun! Cities need to understand and use this principle in their spatial planning policies. They need to provide sufficient space for public transport, cycling and walking infrastructure and reserve space for sustainable transport modes in new developments.

- Stimulating the use of public transport, cycling and walking and promoting a less car dependent life-style

Public transport, cycling and walking are usually considered as an alternative to the car only for those that do not own a car. Most cities have; poor PT services (e.g. ticketing, integration, capacity etc), a lack of priority for PT and are reluctant to use restrictive measures (e.g. parking management).

Walking, cycling and public transport must be cheaper, more attractive and more easy to use. They need to be the sexy option that people choose. Cities need to make private personal transport users pay the full environmental cost and use the money to cross subsidise sustainable transport and improve the environment – no more free or subsidised parking and the more polluting vehicles must pay more!

- Promoting clean and energy efficient vehicles and alternative fuels

Few cities are leading by example by investing in their own environmentally friendly fleets and requiring their contractors to use similar vehicles. In many cities there

remain old PT vehicles with poor emission standards and limited use of alternative fuels.

Clean vehicle standards for all public vehicles and those providing services paid for by public money need to be adopted. Public transport vehicle fleet should use alternative fuels and by this start building a fuel infrastructure that is open for private cars and trucks as well. Cities should use existing instruments to give incentives for and promote clean vehicles and alternative fuels (e.g. parking management, 'environmental zones' for trucks, etc.)

- Address social exclusion and develop safe transport systems

Equality of access to public transport is not a high priority in some cities: the elderly, children, mobility impaired people and people who do not own a car, are faced with limited mobility (limited access to working, leisure, cultural activities, etc.)

Some cities have high numbers of accidents among pedestrians and cyclists as a result of poor maintenance, standards and design. Safety is also a key to success in achieving increased biking and walking in cities and a mean of creating attractive cities.

Cities need to make a clear commitment to reduce car dependence and to recognize public transport, walking and cycling as full transport modes for ALL users and as a necessary alternative to the car. Cities need to increase efforts to reduce the number of accidents and consider safety when designing streets.

- Improve urban freight transport

Urban freight transport is an exceptional challenge for city governments; however, freight transportation issues at city level are still not well understood or quantified. Many cities have the ambition to become a "logistics centre" without understanding the implications arising from increasing logistics activities such as congestion, noise and air quality impacts. Freight transport is not a high policy or action priority for many cities but is one of the biggest threats.

Cities need to address the challenge of urban freight transport. City planning traditionally focuses on passenger transport since freight transport is essentially a private industry. Authorities need to increase their logistics competence and recognize the misperception that they don't have anything to do with the operation of private firms.

Barriers to sustainable urban transport

Authorities, politicians, citizens, businesses, companies and all other stakeholders need to understand the effect of their behaviour on urban transport and its negative impacts on society, economy and environment. They need to be persuaded that only an approach of transport planning that involves all stakeholders and integrates policy sectors, policy levels and across authority borders will lead to more sustainable urban transport. It has to cover both passenger and freight transport and aim at avoiding unnecessary transports, reducing the necessity of cars for private mobility, support clean vehicles, increase the security and mobility for all groups of society.

SUTP's provide the framework for such a planning approach. The experiences from the cities in the BUSTRIP project which are currently implementing their SUTP's show that there are several barriers in the implementation process.

- Implementation and funding

There is significant confusion over the legal responsibilities of cities and national/provincial agencies for SUTP. There is not a common agreement between all cities that the responsibility for SUTP rests with cities – the diversity of national legislation means that in actual fact responsibility rests with a consortium of agencies and cities.

Most cities lack all the necessary staff with the full range of competencies to prepare and implement a SUTP. There is a general lack of resources for monitoring and evaluation. In some cities there are not consultants with the necessary competence. All cities need to be more creative in finding finance for sustainable transport infrastructure, services and maintenance.

*There is a need for support on how to implement Sustainable Urban Transport Plans. The EU should use the experiences made in EU funded projects like PILOT and BUSTRIP to prepare **guidance material** addressing responsibilities, financing, etc.*

- Leadership and commitment

There is a tendency for sustainability to be only a "catchphrase" with few policies and little implementation. Economic concerns are given higher priorities (e.g. external shopping centres, economic settlements in the periphery). Many cities are undermining their sustainable transport efforts by agreeing to new business and housing development without the necessary public transport, cycle ways and pedestrian facilities. Competition between cities for new business means that some politicians are sacrificing green fields to get development – almost at any cost. Furthermore processes of securing political support can be interrupted by elections in case key political supporters are being replaced.

There is generally a very poor understanding among decision makers of the implications of transport arising from developments in cities, neighbouring towns and in the region. They need better understanding of the likely consequences of the different initiatives they are thinking about before deciding what actions to take.

*Significant support is required to build understanding and capacity among all stakeholders to convert sustainability from a "catch phrase" to a guiding principle. **Training and awareness raising programmes** provided by the EU for politicians, staff and stakeholders can add substantial value for this. This would also help to overcome lack of continuity in decision makers and staff with a high turnover.*

- Monitoring and evaluation

Cities need much better information about existing mobility and freight trends and patterns. There is a general lack of an agreed indicator set measuring sustainable urban transport trends. Existing monitoring and evaluation are generally "stand-alone" procedures in most cities and are incomplete to monitor all relevant implications of transport arising from all developments in the region. Monitoring and evaluation are a prerequisite of identifying the underlying factors behind success or failure of pilot projects and are the basis for best-practice exchange.

*The EU should define a **key indicator set for sustainable urban transport**. All cities would benefit from a core set of indicators to monitor the achievement of strategic and operational SUTP objectives. The indicator set should provide detailed descriptions of each indicator to avoid misinterpretation and ensure validity and comparability. Practical application of a common indicator set is crucial. The EU*

should provide methods and tools on how to organize and conduct the monitoring process of these indicators.

*The EU should not confine itself to spreading and exchange of best-practice. The EU should also promote the **exchange of 'bad practice'** to prevent cities of doing the mistakes that have been done before in other cities. Exchanging these failure factors at EU level provides significant added value.*

- Logistics competence

City governments need to increase their logistics competence and to address the challenge of urban freight transport. Cooperation and better understanding between freight industry and local authorities are required to develop new logistics concepts and constructive solutions which reconcile the need for access for goods and services with local sustainability concerns.

*The EU should **intensify research in urban freight** aiming at developing successful operational models that integrate local authorities and freight industry. Freight transport needs to receive a higher priority in city policies. There is a need of higher logistics competence in transport planning which requires an adaptation of the **academic system**. Traditionally, universities strictly separate the education in the subjects transport and logistics. The EU should support universities that successively have broadened their scope and promote education that integrates transport, logistics and sustainability issues.*

Conclusions

The BUSTRIP project welcomes the Commission's intention to publish a Green Paper on Urban Transport and we are happy to share with you our unique experiences made in the project.

We wish to emphasize that **technology will not solve urban transport problems on its own!** Solving the transport related problems in urban areas requires an integrated planning approach that includes all stakeholders and addresses land-use planning, modal shift, clean vehicles and fuels, safety and social inclusion. We strongly recommend the implementation of Sustainable Urban Transport Plans.

The EU can add value by removing obstacles that hinder local authorities in successfully implementing SUTP's. Priority areas for action should be training and awareness raising programmes, the development of a key indicator set for sustainable urban transport, the promotion of 'bad practice', supporting urban freight research and education.

Above all, the EU should support the implementation of SUTP's as an essential tool for decision makers on local level. To support local actors the EU should prepare guidance material that utilises the unique experiences made in BUSTRIP. SUTP's should be disseminated and backed by the EU as an integrated approach of effectively tackling urban transport problems and climate change.

On behalf of the BUSTRIP project

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