

UK consultation on Commission Document COM (2007) 551 Green Paper: Towards A New Culture for Urban Mobility Submission from Sustrans

Introduction

Sustrans is the UK's leading sustainable transport NGO. We work on a range of practical projects in the UK facilitating healthy, active, sustainable urban transport. We also collaborate with partners across Europe and the rest of the world, and provide evidence and best practice to assist in such development.

We welcome this opportunity to contribute to the UK consultation on the EU Green Paper: Towards a New Culture for Urban Mobility. We feel that the Green Paper offers an invaluable opportunity for the EU to put sustainability, climate protection and public health at the centre of urban transport policy, and so to set the standard across Europe and globally.

We believe that a broad approach is needed to address the challenges facing European cities: climate change emissions, air and noise pollution, the quality of life of the urban citizens of Europe, congestion, and road safety. Technological progress alone does not offer adequate solutions to these problems.

We recommend an approach that significantly reduces the levels of all private motorised transport in urban areas, via a range of practical and feasible measures, and that increases the proportion of journeys made by foot, by bicycle and by public transport. We welcome the Commission's recognition that many trips within urban areas are less than 5km, with walking and cycling offering a genuine alternative to motorised transport. This is backed up by the World Health Organisation, which says that more than 30% of car trips in Europe are under 3km and 50% under 5km; journeys that could easily be made by walking, cycling or public transport.

Our own work shows huge potential for change to non-motorised travel in urban areas. Walking and cycling must, therefore, be at the heart of urban transport policy.

This focus on a shift to non-motorised transport will not only address policy objectives related to transport but also in areas such as climate change; public health and obesity; social inclusion and community cohesion; and energy security. The breadth of this range of objectives illustrates very well why urban transport is a legitimate and important field for EU policy-making and programmes. It also illustrates that urban transport policy should be well integrated with policy for longer-distance transport.

The role of the Green Paper should be to show that there are many simple yet effective measures that can be used *now* to address all of these challenges.

This paper presents an overview of the key policy areas that should be central in the EU Green Paper. It also describes some of the measures that should be used in urban transport programmes, to achieve a modal shift from private car use to walking and cycling.

Policy areas related to urban transport

Urban transport is a major factor in the environment within which most European citizens live. Policies and practices impact on people's lives, their social interaction, how active or inactive they can be, and their ability to live sustainably. In the past, urban transport policy has been dominated by the desire to facilitate mobility (the ability to travel) rather than accessibility (the access to the goods and services which are the motives which encourage people to travel). This has resulted in longer and longer journey distances, ever-increasing motor traffic levels, and a very wide range of negative side-effects.

The EU Green Paper: Towards a New Culture for Urban Mobility should have clear policy objectives in the areas of climate change; public health; communities and social inclusion; and energy security and peak oil.

Climate change

Transport is the second largest single source of greenhouse gas emissions in Europe and is rising rapidly. Urban mobility accounts for 40% of all CO₂ emissions of road transport and up to 70% of other pollutants from transport⁽¹⁾.

Transforming urban transport will be critical to achieving the EU's commitment to a 20% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2020. Technological improvements alone will not be enough to deliver the scale of emissions reductions we need to see from the transport sector, especially in the face of a continuing growth trend in motor travel. Even if real reductions through technology can be achieved, they will be no more than a welcome addition to the more immediate reductions that can be accomplished by restraining motorised transport and encouraging a shift towards more sustainable modes.

There is potential within European cities to reduce emissions by shifting journeys from motorised to non-motorised modes. Sustrans' own work for the UK Department for Transport has shown that in representative UK cities 47% of car trips could be replaced by walking, cycling or public transport, without major intervention⁽²⁾. Even greater potential exists where significant investment is made in infrastructure to support these modes.

The UK Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution recommended in 2007 that new urban transport infrastructure should contribute to environmental sustainability. It says "long-term financial mechanisms need to be put in place to achieve this, and national guidance on planning and infrastructure needs to be clear about the objectives that are to be achieved. Long-term institutional responsibilities for new infrastructure also need to be clarified..... We recommend that the government develops and strengthens requirements for Local Transport Plans, such that by the end of 2008 they can include statutory targets for reduction in urban traffic"⁽³⁾. We cite this report at length because we believe it encapsulates the way EU policy should develop, and at the same time demonstrates the importance of an over-

arching policy level. Urban transport is too important to be left to the lowest level of government.

The recent discussion document from the UK Department for Transport: 'Towards a Sustainable Transport System – Supporting Economic Growth in a Low Carbon World' recognises the significant contribution urban transport policies can make to achieving carbon reduction. Robust and integrated policies are needed at the local, regional, national and international level to ensure urban transport planning responds appropriately to the scale of the greenhouse gas reductions that are required.

Significantly, the risks associated with not taking action swiftly to reduce greenhouse gases are not just environmental - as clearly stated in the Stern Review on the economics of climate change⁽⁴⁾, "the benefits of strong and early action far outweigh the economic costs of not acting". The overall costs and risks of climate change were evaluated as being equivalent to losing at least 5% of global GDP each year, now and forever, and this could rise to 20% of GDP or more if a wider range of risks and impacts is taken into account. By comparison, the cost of reducing greenhouse gas emissions to avoid the worst impacts of climate change can be limited to around 1% of global GDP each year. The Stern Review concluded that a range of options already exists to cut emissions, but that "strong, deliberate policy action is required to motivate their take-up. Climate change demands an international response, based on a shared understanding of long-term goals and agreement on frameworks for action". Building on the Stern Review, the Eddington Transport Study⁽⁵⁾, concluded that the transport sector needs to play its role in economy-wide reductions in greenhouse gas emissions. For economic reasons as well as social or environmental, Eddington concluded that all transport users should meet all their external economic, social or environmental costs.

Public health

A central tenet of transport policy over the last five decades has been to accept the growth in private motorised transport as inevitable and to cater for it. One of the consequences of this has been a decline in levels of physical inactivity and a rise in obesity across Europe, which increases the risk of health problems such as diabetes, heart disease, stroke, cancers and osteoporosis.

Urban transport policy can have a considerable, positive impact on public health by encouraging a shift to active, healthy forms of travel. One of the easiest ways to increase physical activity is to include walking and cycling in the daily routine, such as during the journey to work or school. In its recent report, 'Promoting physical activity and active living in urban environments', the World Health Organisation stresses the importance of developing urban transport policies that ensure active and sustainable alternatives to the private car are an easy choice for people to make. The WHO says "in Europe, walking and cycling can replace many car trips. Traffic-calming measures, infrastructure such as cycle lanes, tracks and paths and policy changes at the local level can increase pedestrian and bicycle travel. More people will walk and cycle if the traffic speed is reduced and convenient and safe infrastructure is built such as cycle lanes, tracks and paths and policies are changed

at the local level⁽⁶⁾. The recent Foresight report: 'Tackling Obesities: Future Choices'⁽⁷⁾, released by the UK Government Office for Science in October 2007, recognised the role of the 'obesogenic environment' which encourages people to choose inactive modes of travel, at the cost of their health and well-being. Key conclusions of the report stated that we need to change the environment we live in, and also promote behaviour change – two central arguments Sustrans makes throughout this submission.

Communities and social inclusion

There is a growing body of evidence that demonstrates the impact transport policy can have on social interaction and social cohesion within urban communities, and the desirability of moving away from our current over-reliance on private motorised transport.

Studies from as far back as the 1970s show that lower motor traffic levels are associated with significantly higher levels of social interaction⁽⁸⁾, and that in neighbourhoods that are conducive to walking and cycling people are more likely to know their neighbours, participate politically, trust others and be socially engaged⁽⁹⁾.

By increasing levels of walking and cycling within urban areas, urban transport policy can make a vital contribution to social cohesion, neighbourhood revitalisation and community well-being.

Urban transport policy should also recognise the distinction between mobility and accessibility. This means that transport policy needs to be well integrated with land use, development and zoning policy, so that journey distances are not made longer than they need to be. Wherever possible, the goods and services which citizens need should be accessible by walking or cycling from their residential neighbourhoods.

We can reduce the need for motorised transport by encouraging the local production and consumption of goods, which encourages local patterns of travel for both freight and people. This can also contribute to a sense of community identity within neighbourhoods and support the local economy.

Energy security and peak oil

The European Union and individual member states are rightly concerned about our increasing reliance on imported oil, and the decline in commercially available reserves. Urban transport is very dependent on oil, and a rapid shift away from motorised traffic in urban areas can make an immediate contribution to reducing our exposure to this risk. Ensuring this transition happens in a managed way should be a central tenet of the EU Green Paper and any subsequent policies and action plans on urban transport.

Policies and measures to take urban transport forward

The central aim of the Green Paper should be to shift the balance of advantage away from private motorised transport, and towards walking, cycling and public transport in urban areas. This can be achieved by employing soft measures, such as travel behaviour change programmes, but it also requires physical changes in the urban environment, so as to “lock in” travel behaviour change as we achieve it.

The potential for change

Current patterns of mobility and public attitudes to transport demonstrate that significant potential exists for modal shift towards non-motorised forms of transport, particularly in urban areas.

For example, research in many parts of the EU and elsewhere in the developed world shows that a significant proportion of car trips are within range of walking and cycling. As a general rule around 10% of car trips in urban areas are less than 1km, 30% less than 3km and 50% less than 5km⁽¹⁰⁾.

Furthermore detailed research carried out by Sustrans and Socialdata, part-funded by the Department for Transport in the UK showed that the overwhelming majority of people view past and future motor traffic growth as a negative trend⁽¹¹⁾. The surveys also revealed that:

- around 90% of people favour measures to improve conditions for walking, cycling, and public transport, even where these disadvantage car users
- on average 47% of car trips within the surveyed towns could be replaced by walking, cycling and/or public transport without the need for significant changes to infrastructure; modifications to the environment should lead to even greater travel behaviour change.

A range of cost-effective tools are available to deliver behaviour change, focused on improving information, changing perceptions and attitudes, and raising awareness of the alternatives to car use. These measures include workplace travel plans, car sharing, teleworking and individualised travel marketing such as the TravelSmart technique piloted in the UK by Sustrans. Forthcoming research estimates that if implemented now, measures such as these could save the equivalent of up to 14.2 million tonnes of carbon emissions by 2015 in the UK alone⁽¹²⁾.

Restriction of private motorised transport

The volume and speed of motorised transport – including motorcycles - within cities should be restricted. Particularly important is the reallocation of road space to walking, cycling and public transport, and also to public space – we currently give over too much of our shared urban space to transport uses and too little to other public activity.

Reducing traffic speeds not only helps make city streets safer but makes it easier for people to choose active ways of travelling. UK research suggests that 30kph zones in residential areas may increase children's use of streets and encourage more adults to work or cycle⁽¹³⁾⁽¹⁴⁾.

Other measures that can be put in place to reduce the dominance of the car in urban areas include making access by sustainable modes simpler, more convenient and less time consuming than access by car, priority lanes for cyclists and public transport, intersection treatments to improve safety for cyclists, parking restrictions, pavement widening, raised crossings and re-phasing of light-controlled crossings in favour of pedestrians.

Road user charging

We support the principle of road user charging, believing it has an important role to play in a sustainable urban transport policy by helping to change how and how much we travel. Road user charging encourages drivers to think more about the individual journeys they make. Its principal role should be to reduce the volume of motorised traffic within our cities, thereby reducing emissions from transport and encouraging people to walk and cycle.

Several European cities, including London, Oslo and Stockholm have successfully used road charging coupled with improvements in public transport and other alternatives as a means of reducing car use. Since congestion charges were introduced in London in 2003, there has been a 21% overall reduction in traffic entering the inner zone. Cycle journeys have increased by 20% and road crashes have declined by 7%⁽¹⁵⁾.

However, road user charging should not be used as simply a mechanism to cut congestion. Road space liberated by the charging regime should be "locked in" by reallocating it away from private motorised transport. If this is not done, over time motor traffic will expand again to consume the liberated road capacity.

Public transport

Encouraging greater use of public transport should be a key element of a sustainable urban transport policy. Carbon emissions per passenger for train and coach travel are six to eight times lower than car travel at average occupancy⁽¹⁶⁾, offering a sustainable and energy efficient substitute for private motorised transport.

For public transport to become a viable alternative, a change in public attitudes is needed. Public transport is often perceived as being less competitive in terms of convenience, speed and cost than it really is. This misperception should be addressed through information provision and individualised travel marketing campaigns.

The Green Paper should clearly adopt the road user hierarchy now widely accepted in Europe, which places walking trips and pedestrians at the top of transport policy, cycling and cyclists second, public transport third and private motorised transport last. We consider that it is not possible simply to 'optimise the use of all the various modes of transport and organise "co-modality" between the different modes of collective transport and the different modes of individual transport', as this Green Paper currently sets out to do. Clear direction needs to be set for the relative priorities of different transport choices, based on the policy challenges outlined above.

Residential neighbourhoods

By combining urban design, community involvement and sustainable transport planning, home zones significantly reduce vehicle speeds and transform streets into spaces for people and not just vehicles. Less capital intensive means of transforming streets, such as Sustrans' DIY Streets pilot programme, also exist.

Home zones and similar schemes embody the design principles of safety through uncertainty, whereby an absence of priority along with short driver sight-lines, social activity and a lack of clarity regarding vehicle routes, significantly reduce vehicle speeds. The application of these principles need not be limited to residential areas: in northern Europe they have been successfully applied to shopping areas and public squares and spaces.

Restoring the balance between traffic and communities helps to promote sustainable travel behaviour and makes streets safer, more sociable and better places to live in.

Conclusions

The Green Paper: Towards a New Culture for Urban Mobility should have as its central objectives:

- to make urban transport environmentally sustainable
- to reduce greenhouse gas emissions
- to promote active, healthy forms of transport – walking and cycling
- to cut toxic emissions from motorised transport
- to promote accessibility over mobility
- to reduce reliance on imported oil
- to improve the quality of life for European citizens.

It should do this by:

- reducing the volume of motorised transport within European cities
- putting walking and cycling at the heart of future urban transport policy
- recognising common objectives in areas such as physical activity promotion, obesity, social inclusion and crime reduction, as well as environmental and sustainability policy
- ensuring urban transport policy is fully integrated with policies on land use, development, zoning etc.

Based on our improved awareness of these shared policy objectives, the Green Paper is clearly an opportunity to move to healthy, sustainable transport in Europe's cities. We must not let the opportunity slip away.

Sustrans overview

Sustrans provides practical solutions to and advises on challenges in transport, environment and health. Our main activities in the UK include:

- the UK National Cycle Network, which carried over 338 million zero-emission journeys in 2006; 80% of these trips were on urban traffic-free routes. The Network continues to expand, and usage has grown faster than route length for each of the last five years; we expect further significant growth in coming years
- the Active Travel programme, which has been at the forefront of work promoting cycling and walking as effective ways of reducing physical inactivity and obesity, which costs the UK an estimated £10.7 billion (€15 billion) a year
- the Safe Routes to Schools programme, which enables 100,000s of children to walk or cycle to school, reduces carbon emissions and prevents ill-health, for the present and the future
- Bike It, a ground-breaking schools project which has already quadrupled the number of children cycling to its target schools, and is transforming attitudes and behaviour in schools through innovative approaches which aim to overcome the obstacles to cycling to school, with practical solutions
- TravelSmart, a programme of individualised travel marketing that works with households by offering tailor-made information and support, enabling people to walk, cycle and use public transport more often - this programme has achieved reductions in car travel of between 9 and 14% in every UK project
- the Liveable Neighbourhoods programme, regenerating residential zones dominated by the car, using techniques proven in central and northern Europe, to permit more local access and non-motorised travel
- the Research and Monitoring Unit, which provides the statistical results of each project and, through analysis, advises on future actions.

In the UK we work in partnership with a number of UK-level ministries - the Department for Transport, Department of Health, Department for Education and Skills, Department of Communities and Local Government and others – national, regional and local government and agencies, community groups, schools and businesses. Internationally, we work with a wide range of individual experts throughout the world in the field of sustainable transport, as well as actively participating in European associations such as European Network for Health Enhancing Physical Activity, European Cyclists' Federation and the European Greenways Association. Our programmes help to deliver on government policies and strategies in areas including climate change, public health, community regeneration and quality of life.

We would be pleased to provide further information as required. Please contact Tricia Allen, Policy Coordinator, at tricia.allen@sustrans.org.uk.

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