EUROPEAN CONFERENCE OF MINISTERS OF TRANSPORT

IMPLEMENTING SUSTAINABLE URBAN TRAVEL POLICIES

Key Messages for Governments

OECD

Key Messages for Governments

Foreword

This booklet sets out recommendations to Governments on Implementing Sustainable Urban Travel Policies. These recommendations were defined in the ECMT project of the same name conducted jointly with the OECD from 1998-2001. ECMT Ministers of Transport approved the recommendations at their Council in Lisbon, Portugal in May 2001.

The three-year study[1] was designed to identify why sustainable urban travel policy strategies have proven so difficult for countries to implement, and, more generally, how countries and cities can bridge the gap between policy recommendations and their implementation.

The findings and conclusions of the project, described in the Final Report of the work published separately[2], has shown that countries are making progress in developing policy schemes to confront congestion, urban sprawl and in tackling the environmental problems associated with unsustainable urban travel patterns. However the trends revealed in the project show that serious difficulties persist in putting these policy plans to work and in seeing the impact of policy actions reflected in urban travel data.

Comprised of three principal parts – a series of workshops, a survey of urban travel patterns and trends in over 160 cities, and a series of national urban travel policy reviews – the project demonstrated that all levels of Government have important roles to play in assuring that effective, sectorally integrated policy options for sustainable urban travel are identified and implemented. It showed that National Governments in particular can act as catalysts for improving sustainable travel practices in urban areas.

1. The basis for this project was the ECMT-OECD report Urban Travel and Sustainable Development (UTSD), presented to Ministers at their 1994 Council in Annecy and published in 1995, which set out a three-part integrated policy strategy to bring about sustainable urban travel. The Strategy promoted combined implementation of measures based on best practice, innovation, and pricing.

Ministers in Annecy asked ECMT to review country policies in several years' time in light of the findings of the report. Based on this mandate the current work was undertaken.

2. Implementing Sustainable Urban Travel Policies: Final Report, ECMT, 2002.

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I Context[1]

Goals for sustainability in cities

Most countries and cities have common objectives for quality of life in urban areas.

With about three-quarters of the population of ECMT and OECD countries now living in urban areas, most transport-related environmental and health problems occur in cities and their surroundings. The structure and growth of urban regions are therefore crucial considerations in strategies for sustainable development. Although definitions of and criteria for sustainability differ among countries and cities, most have common objectives for quality of life in urban areas that include, clean air, quiet neighbourhoods, and economic prosperity without detrimental health and environmental impacts and depletion of finite natural resources[2].

How people and goods[3] move from one place to another in cities is a major factor in whether objectives for urban sustainability are met. Indeed, assuring that the growing numbers of urban and suburban dwellers in all socio-economic strata have access to the services and activities integral to their daily lives, while minimising the negative environmental, equity, economic and health impacts of travel, is the principal goal and challenge facing transport and land-use policy-makers at this time.

1. This report for Ministers highlights the key findings on implementation of sustainable urban travel policies from the three-year ECMT-OECD project on this topic that is now coming to a close. The report does not attempt to summarise all the findings of the project, but only the principal issues of importance to National governments.

2. These goals are consistent with those set out in the 1995 ECMT-OECD report "Urban Travel and Sustainable Development", and in the OECD Environmentally Sustainable Transport project (EST). They also reflect the objectives articulated on a broader scale in the Declaration and Programme of Joint Action of the UN-ECE Regional Conference on Transport and the Environment, held in Vienna in November 1997, and the WHO Charter on Transport, Environment and Health signed in London in June 1999.

3. For a detailed examination of urban freight transport, see ECMT Round Table 109: "Freight Transport and the City" (1999).

Trends in urban travel and land use and their impacts

Trends in travel and land use continue to put at risk the urban environment and the health of city and suburb inhabitants.

Visions of sustainability remain, however, elusive for many ECMT and OECD countries. Population and jobs in many cities continue to move outward from central areas to the urban periphery and low-density areas beyond; commercial development on the fringes of cities likewise continues to expand, with growing competition among urban and suburban areas for this development and more trips generated. Persistent and worsening traffic congestion – particularly in suburbs in some countries – is hindering movement of people and goods in many cities while shares of trips by public transport, walking and cycling continue to decline. Car ownership and use are increasing, in some countries at a very rapid pace due to the effects of economic expansion. These travel and land use trends continue to put at risk the urban environment and the health of city and suburb inhabitants. Although local air pollution has improved in many ECMT and OECD cities in recent years, largely due to progress in vehicle emissions and fuel quality, ground-level ozone and particulate emissions persist as environmental concerns. Carbon dioxide emissions from urban road transport continue to rise. And noise from transport, particularly from road vehicles, is a growing environmental preoccupation in urban areas.

Policy instruments available

Flexible, integrated policy packages are needed that send the right signals to urban land use and transport markets.

To counter these trends and promote sustainable travel in urban areas, flexible, integrated policy packages – comprised of a cross-sectoral mix of regulatory, pricing, and technological measures – are needed that send the right signals to urban land use and transport markets. Just as different countries have different goals for sustainability, policy packages to promote sustainable travel will vary. In general terms, however, these policy packages include measures aiming to integrate land use and transport planning, manage growth in private car use, promote public transport and encourage walking and cycling in urban areas. The ECMT-OECD report ***Urban Travel and Sustainable Development*** (UTSD), presented to Ministers at their 1994 Council in Annecy and published in 1995, set out a three-strand integrated policy strategy – the starting point for the current project on

implementation – promoting combined implementation of measures based on best practice, innovation, and pricing designed to bring about sustainable urban travel. Other work has encouraged use of integrated policy packages as well: the OECD Environmentally Sustainable Transport project (EST)[4] has particularly emphasised greater integration of environmental factors in transport policy.

Implementing integrated policy packages for sustainable urban travel has proven easier said than done.

Implementing integrated policy packages for sustainable urban travel has proven easier said than done, however, for a great number of cities and countries. Defining and effectively implementing sustainable policy strategies for urban travel involves bringing together the diverse and divergent interests of a great many actors in the urban transport system. These include national, regional and local levels of government, politicians, public sector transport and land use planning agencies, environmental authorities and advocacy groups, private sector transport operators and other service providers, as well as real estate developers and the individual traveller[5]. Co-ordination and co-operation among these stakeholders – while essential to long-term implementation of sustainable strategies – is often complex and resource-intensive.

While few countries/urban areas appear to have actually set out to implement the 1995 ECMT-OECD Strategy in its entirety, most countries have developed, or are in the process of defining policy approaches based on elements of the strategy, particularly best practice. Countries and cities more-experienced with sustainable urban travel policies are experimenting with innovative approaches, including integration of land-use and transport policy, tight parking restrictions, and use of telematics in public transport. A small number of countries are working to find ways to integrate congestion pricing and other types of pricing measures into their policy packages. Though many ECMT-OECD countries have high levels of fuel taxation, particularly in Europe, few have adopted annual real increases in fuel prices such as described in the Strategy.

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4. Synthesis Report of EST! Environmentally Sustainable Transport: futures, strategies, and best practices.

5. Involvement of all sectors of the community in developing and implementing sustainable urban travel policies is consistent with the Local Agenda 21 process to promote sustainable development in cities, which grew out of the UNCED Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992.

2 Implementing strategies for sustainable urban travel

The ECMT-OECD project on Implementing Strategies for Sustainable Urban Travel, which began in 1998 and is currently drawing to a close, has demonstrated that all levels of Government – National, Regional and Local – have important roles to play in assuring that effective policy options are identified and implemented. The project, comprised of a series of thematic workshops, a survey of over 160 cities and a series of national policy reviews, has sought to better understand why integrated urban travel strategies such as that proposed in UTSD are proving so difficult for countries to implement, and, more generally, how countries and cities can bridge the gap between widely supported policy recommendations and their implementation.

All levels of Government have important roles to play in assuring that effective policy options are identified and implemented.

Implementation problems are not the same, nor are they experienced in the same way in all countries. Particular economic, institutional and political structures, as well as region-specific social and cultural factors can engender particular implementation problems.

Many difficulties in implementing policy strategies are, however, shared throughout ECMT and OECD countries and cities. The ECMT-OECD work has identified a number of key implementation barriers that are common to many countries; they include: poor policy integration and co-ordination – particularly as concerns land-use and transport policy, inefficient or counterproductive institutional roles and procedures – including on a national level, inadequate or lack of co-ordination among Ministries; and incomplete or excessive decentralisation of responsibilities for urban travel; an unsupportive legal or regulatory framework; weaknesses in the pricing/fiscal framework, and poor data quality and quantity.

Most ECMT and OECD countries allocate the majority of responsibility for urban land-use and travel policies to regions and municipalities – the levels at which urban travel policies are most effectively made and implemented. There is growing

National Government can act as a catalyst for sustainable travel practices on a local level.

recognition in many countries, however, that National Government can improve chances for implementation of integrated policy packages by providing for a flexible, sectorally integrated policy framework that sends the right messages to regions and cities via policy incentives and project financing for sustainable development. In this way, National Government can act as a catalyst – an initiator, sponsor, supporter, driving force – for sustainable travel practices on a local level, while leaving flexibility to local areas to decide what specific policies and measures best fit their needs. This reflects the idea of subsidiarity among levels of Government, which provides for decentralisation and co-ordination of responsibilities for urban travel.

3 Recommendations for national governments on improving implementation of sustainable urban travel policies

Following are a number of proposals brought forth in the project for how National Governments can improve opportunities for successful implementation of sustainable urban transport policies.

▸▸▸ *Establish a supportive national policy framework*

- **Develop a national policy framework for sustainable urban travel** that supports and influences national, regional and local goals for land-use, passenger and freight transport, health and the environment. It is important that this national policy framework be "internally coherent" – that is to say, within the transport sector – with integration of transport investment, traffic management and demand management policies, and "externally coherent", with integration among transport policies and those in other sectors such as land use, environment, and finance.

  Moreover, there are important ***links*** between local policies for urban travel and land use, and national transport and planning policies. These links must be identified so that policies on all levels – local, regional and national – are mutually supportive. Urban and regional land-use planning, for example, needs guidance from national spatial planning parameters. Improvements in the quality and efficiency of urban public transport often require financing/investment from National Government. The participation of private sources in public transport schemes requires a framework for competition defined in national law. And economic incentives designed to restrain private vehicle use and manage congestion such as fuel taxation and congestion pricing need to be implemented in the context of an economy-wide framework to ensure their efficacy and to avoid distortions.

▸▸▸ *Improve institutional co-ordination and co-operation*

- **Co-ordinate national policy approaches on urban land-use, travel, health and the environment**

  Co-ordination ***vertically*** among all levels of Government, as well as ***horizontally*** among land-use, transport, environment and health sectors, is essential to realise the objectives for sustainability. Co-ordination among land-use, transport, and environmental actors ***horizontally*** on all levels of government is necessary to ensure integration of policy objectives and strategies. This is key for National Governments so that inconsistent messages on priorities for sustainability are not handed down on a sectoral basis. ***Vertical*** co-ordination among levels of government enables national-level objectives for sustainable development to be effectively communicated to regional and local governments. For example, National Governments can encourage cities to factor the objective of reducing regional air pollution into their local transportation decisions.

  Priorities and objectives defined on local and regional levels can also be communicated from the "bottom-up", to ensure that national policies adequately account for priorities on lower levels. Involvement of all stakeholders in the urban travel system – be they private sector entities, real-estate developers or environmental advocacy groups – is becoming an increasingly important factor in policy development and implementation for sustainable urban travel.

- **Decentralise responsibilities when possible; centralise when necessary**

  Responsibilities must be commensurate with resources for implementation to occur. When decision-making power for urban travel is transferred from National Government to regional and local levels of Government, corresponding control over the sources of financing must be as well so that local and regional governments are able to assume full responsibility for the problems.

  As part of decentralisation efforts, National Governments in a number of countries have successfully encouraged the creation of new inter-communal organisations with responsibility for urban transport planning in a given region.

- **Provide a consistent, integrated framework for National Government financing and investment** in regional and local transport and land-use actions while ensuring adequate flexibility for local innovation. (See Legal, regulatory and fiscal framework).

- **Consider all modes of travel, in particular environmentally sustainable modes, as well as land-use priorities when allocating National Government funds** to the local level.

▸▸▸ *Encourage effective public participation, partnerships and communication*

- **Involve the public (e.g. press, advocacy groups, and individual clients of the transport system)** early in the strategy design process and provide for their active involvement throughout implementation and monitoring.

- **Seek partnerships with different stakeholders in the transport system (businesses, employers, residential and commercial land developers and associations).** Successful implementation of sustainable urban travel policies requires more than government action. Necessary changes in travel patterns and behaviour make early and consistent involvement of these important actors in the transport system essential.

- **Inform and communicate with transport system clients. They must understand and buy into the policy objectives before any behavioural change can occur.** Effective communication is particularly important in winning public support for demand management policies.

▸▸▸ *Provide a supportive legal and regulatory framework*

A legal and regulatory framework that provides guidelines for Government action on all levels and parameters for involvement of the private sector in public transport provision is essential for effective implementation of sustainable urban travel policies.

- **Ensure that rules and regulations for public transport** clearly specify the relative roles of public and private sectors in service and infrastructure provision and financing.

Financing of public transport should be reviewed to ensure that efficiency in operations is maximised. **Public service obligations** should include oversight of service and network quality, reduced fares and other concessions as a part of social policy – the latter properly designed so as to avoid distortions in competition and adverse consequences to public transport organisations, and passenger security. Parameters for **private sector involvement** should be clearly specified including rules for competition and procurement, as well as service and quality obligations.

- **Ensure that measures to promote walking and cycling** in urban areas as well as **transport demand management tools**, such as employer mobility plans, car sharing schemes and telecommuting are supported in the legal and regulatory framework.

- **Fully integrate air quality, greenhouse gas, noise and other environmental targets** into transport and land-use policy and **adopt technical standards for vehicles and fuels and rigorously monitor** their implementation in the public and private fleets.

▸▸▸ *Ensure a comprehensive pricing and fiscal structure*

- **The pricing and fiscal structure** should send the right messages promoting sustainable urban transport across sectors. Inconsistencies in fiscal policy among sectors can pose problems for implementation, particularly for transport and land-use planning integration. Competitive pressure among neighbouring towns and cities for fiscal revenue and employment opportunities can hinder efforts to discourage location of large businesses in fringe areas. In addition, policy "interferences" can result in the wrong signals being sent to decision-makers – individuals in particular – about how they travel in and around cities. National policies for housing and real estate, for instance, can induce decisions about where to live that conflict with strategies to reduce congestion and sprawl.

▸▸▸ *Rationalise financing and investment streams*

Revenue flows from pricing measures, investment and other types of funding should be directed so that opportunities for policy implementation are enhanced. Poorly channelled financial streams, such as described below, can frustrate application of policies designed to improve sustainability in urban travel.

- **Channel revenues from pricing initiatives (e.g. road or congestion pricing, parking fines, etc.)** so that benefits can be felt by those bearing the costs. While earmarking of revenues from pricing schemes is seen in many countries as compromising economic efficiency, in some cases, directing revenues from pricing measures to local and regional levels can enhance political support for and facilitate implementation of "unpopular" pricing initiatives. Channelling revenues away from the immediate jurisdiction can sometimes compromise incentives for reducing private car travel, confuse public perception of the rationale behind the measures and impede acceptance of what might otherwise be very effective schemes.

- **Allocate funding (investments or other) in a balanced way** among different travel modes to maximise efficiency in the performance of the urban transport system and avoid development of one mode to the detriment of another. Funding decisions should be based on assessment of the relative environmental, economic and equity impacts of particular modes. Further, infrastructure investment decisions should fully take into consideration objectives for travel demand management.

- **Weigh national investment and financing in capital cities** against funding needs in secondary and tertiary cities. Excessive concentration of National Government resources in capital cities risks inefficient use of funds, and perhaps more importantly, missed opportunities for promoting real improvements to transport systems in other key urban areas.

▸▸▸ *Improve data collection, monitoring and research*

Sound and reliable data are the empirical basis for good policy-making and serve as the inputs to the analytical process. More importantly, they provide insight into urban travel trends and the forces behind them – necessary to evaluate what combinations of policies are best for the problems observed. Urban data are in many cases not easily accessible to National Governments. As a result, potentially helpful benchmarking exercises are difficult to carry out.

- **Improve data collection.** As revealed in the 1992 survey of cities and confirmed in the 1999 exercise, urban data, particularly as concerns urban travel and land use and their interactions, remain sparse, inconsistent and often of overall poor quality. Data are not

collected in a consistent way among cities and collection methods are often subject to modification within a given city. National Governments can take initiatives or support on-going activities to improve consistency of data collection. It would be valuable to develop a consistent methodology at international level that can be used in all such inquiries.

- **Carry out consistent monitoring** of implementation of urban travel and land use activities and their links to health and environmental objectives. Communicate results of this monitoring to elected officials and the public to promote transparency in decisions and accountability.

- **Organise and finance research, development, and testing** of potential solutions to promote sustainable urban travel and land use. Encourage exchange of best practice among actors at local, national and international levels. Promote further development of alternative energy sources for vehicles.

Ministers:

- **AGREED** with these Recommendations;
- **DECIDED** to follow up the work by monitoring the implementation of these Recommendations, in particular by:
  - Examining the implications of the Recommendations in specific groups of countries (e.g. Central and Eastern Europe).
  - Exploring ways to improve consistency in urban data collection and monitoring.
  - Developing a Guide to Good Practice proposing guidelines for National Governments on how to establish a supportive policy and institutional framework and establish positive incentives for sustainable travel in urban areas.

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- *IMPLEMENTING SUSTAINABLE URBAN TRAVEL POLICIES*
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EUROPEAN CONFERENCE OF MINISTERS OF TRANSPORT (ECMT)

The European Conference of Ministers of Transport (ECMT) is an inter-governmental organisation established by a Protocol signed in Brussels on 17 October 1953. It is a forum in which Ministers responsible for transport, and more specifically the inland transport sector, can co-operate on policy. Within this forum, Ministers can openly discuss current problems and agree upon joint approaches aimed at improving the utilisation and at ensuring the rational development of European transport systems of international importance.

The role of ECMT is to:

- help create an integrated transport system throughout Europe that is economically and technically efficient, meets the highest possible safety and environmental standards and takes full account of the social dimension;
- help build a bridge between the European Union and the rest of the continent at a political level.

The Council of the Conference comprises the Ministers of Transport of 41 full Member countries: Albania, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Belgium, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Finland, France, FYR Macedonia, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Moldova, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, the Russian Federation, the Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine and the United Kingdom. There are six Associate member countries (Australia, Canada, Japan, New Zealand, Republic of Korea and the United States) and two Observer countries (Armenia and Morocco).

A Committee of Deputies, composed of senior civil servants representing Ministers, prepares proposals for consideration by the Council of Ministers. The Committee is assisted by working groups, each of which has a specific mandate.

The issues currently being studied – on which policy decisions by Ministers will be required – include the development and implementation of a pan-European transport policy; the integration of Central and Eastern European Countries into the European transport market; specific issues relating to transport by rail, road and waterway; combined transport; transport and the environment; the social costs of transport; trends in international transport and infrastructure needs; transport for people with mobility handicaps; road safety; traffic management, road traffic information and new communications technologies.

Statistical analyses of trends in traffic and investment are published regularly by the ECMT and provide a clear indication of the situation, on a trimestrial or annual basis, in the transport sector in different European countries.

As part of its research activities, the ECMT holds regular Symposia, Seminars and Round Tables on transport economics issues. Their conclusions serve as a basis for formulating proposals for policy decisions to be submitted to Ministers.

The ECMT's Documentation Service has extensive information available concerning the transport sector. This information is accessible on the ECMT Internet site.

For administrative purposes the ECMT's Secretariat is attached to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

Further information about the ECMT is available on Internet at the following address: ***http://www.oecd.org/cem/***

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