

Opinion of the Committee of the Regions on 'Transport and CO₂ — Developing a Community approach'

(1999/C 198/02)

THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS,

having regard to the Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on Transport and CO₂ — Developing a Community approach (COM (1998) 204 final);

having regard to the decision taken by the Commission on 3 April 1998, under the first paragraph of Article 198c of the Treaty establishing the European Community, to consult the Committee of the Regions on the matter;

having regard to the decision taken by its Bureau on 15 July 1998, to direct Commission 3 for Trans-European networks, Transport and Information Society to prepare the work;

having regard to the draft opinion (CdR 230/98 rev. 1) adopted by Commission 3 on 27 November 1998 (rapporteurs: Mr Panettoni and Ms Warhurst);

considering the Opinion of the Committee of the Regions of 18 September 1997 on Climate change and energy (CdR 104/97 fin)⁽¹⁾;

considering the resolution of the Committee of the Regions of 14 May 1998 on a European Charter of regional and local authorities for a progressive and sustainable transport policy (CdR 347/97 fin)⁽²⁾;

considering the White Paper on A strategy for revitalising the Community's railways (COM(96) 421 final) and the relevant Opinion of the Committee of the Regions (CdR 143/97 fin)⁽³⁾;

considering the Opinion of the Committee of the Regions on A sustainable transport strategy for local and regional authorities and the European Union (CdR 255/97 fin)⁽⁴⁾;

considering the Commission communication on Trans-European rail freight freeways (COM(97) 242 final) and the Opinion (CdR 346/97 fin)⁽⁵⁾ delivered by the Committee of the Regions following a referral from the Commission;

considering the European Commission Green Paper on the citizens' network: Fulfilling the potential of public passenger transport in Europe (COM(95) 601 final);

considering the Communication on The development of short sea shipping in Europe: Prospects and challenges (COM(95) 317 final);

considering the Green Paper on Sea ports and maritime infrastructure (COM(97) 678 final);

considering the Communication entitled Towards fair and efficient pricing in transport: policy options for internalising the external costs of transport in the European Union (COM(95) 691 final);

considering the fifth Community programme of policy and action in relation to the environment and sustainable development⁽⁶⁾ which affirms the need to pursue a strategy aimed at reducing the overall impact of transport on the environment;

⁽¹⁾ OJ C 379, 15.12.1997, p. 11.

⁽²⁾ OJ C 251, 10.8.1998, p. 7.

⁽³⁾ OJ C 379, 15.12.1997, p. 4.

⁽⁴⁾ OJ C 180, 11.6.1998, p. 1.

⁽⁵⁾ OJ C 180, 11.6.1998, p. 17.

⁽⁶⁾ OJ C 138, 17.5.1993, p. 1.

considering the Community proposal for a Protocol to the UN Framework Convention on climate change (UNFCCC) which has the ultimate aim of 'stabilisation of greenhouse-gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system';

whereas the protocol adopted in Kyoto on 10 December 1997 by the third conference of the parties to the Convention on climate change commits the industrialised countries to reduce greenhouse-gas emissions by an overall 5,3 % from 1990 levels by 2008-2012;

whereas the Kyoto protocol stipulated that emissions of the six main greenhouse gases not covered by the Montreal protocol on substances that deplete the ozone layer, and identified as carbon dioxide (CO₂), methane (CH₄), nitrous oxide (N₂O), hydrofluorocarbons (HFC), perfluorocarbons (PFC) and sulphur hexafluoride (SF₆), should be reduced,

adopted the following opinion at its 28th plenary session on 10 and 11 March 1999 (meeting of 11 March).

1. Introduction

1.1. The Kyoto protocol, signed by the countries attending the third conference of the parties in December 1997, set targets for reducing man-made greenhouse-gas emissions and introduced instruments for achieving this reduction. These instruments, and in particular the acquisition and sale of emission permits between countries which are party to the convention, will be the subject of the fourth conference of the parties, to be held in Buenos Aires in November 1998.

1.2. The Committee of the Regions recognises that the EU has played an important part in the establishment of the Kyoto protocol and has helped advance policies for stabilising the global climate, with a view to sustainable growth.

1.3. Attention must now focus on how to implement the Kyoto targets and to assess and monitor the impact of the policies and measures adopted. The Committee intends to play a significant part in framing strategies while regional and local authorities will see to their practical implementation, backed by moves to ensure a level playing field, consistent action at all levels of authority and active partnership between all the parties involved in fostering sustainable growth.

2. General comments

2.1. Transport is a key sector in action to contain the growth in CO₂ emissions, because of its special nature and the growing demand in all the signatory countries of the Kyoto protocol. The Committee broadly endorses the Commission communication on transport and CO₂ and feels that the proposed measures provide a sound basis for achieving the abatement targets.

2.2. In the EU, transport's share of total CO₂ emissions rose from 19 % in 1985 to 26 % in 1995. The rise in emissions has outstripped economic growth. For obvious reasons the road transport sector — a large-scale consumer of energy — has been favoured by both producers and consumers. But it must not be forgotten that private cars alone produce about 50 % of emissions, and that urban traffic causes about half the emissions produced by road transport. Air traffic accounts for only 12 % of transport-related CO₂ emissions, but this sector's emissions are increasing at a constant rate. The breakdown of abatement targets between economic sectors has not been decided, and the communication does not address this question. However, the Committee is concerned to note that unless new policies are adopted, emissions from transport are likely to rise by 40 %, while the package of measures being proposed would reduce emissions growth by 20-25 % over the next 15 years. Although this reduction means halving the current trend and entails major innovations in transport policy and in user behaviour, the potential reduction still falls far short of the EU's target of an overall 8 % reduction on 1990 levels.

2.3. The Committee therefore endorses the Commission's wish to see the proposed measures adopted swiftly and decisively. However, the Committee feels that further measures will have to be devised in the near future; such measures should focus on local and urban transport, as these are the sectors with the highest growth rate, contain the most obvious critical points in operational and environmental terms, and involve the largest number of persons and activities.

3. Specific comments

3.1. The Committee endorses the perspective outlined in the communication, and agrees that the Kyoto targets cannot be reached without radical changes in policies, in instruments and in the breakdown of responsibilities between the implementing parties. In particular, the Committee thinks that the expansion of the transport sector relative to GDP

(U*km/GDP) must be reversed or at least radically stemmed. GDP rose by 26 % over the period 1985-1995, while CO₂ emissions from transport rose by 37 %.

3.2. In these circumstances, the Committee considers it vitally important that traditional policies for managing the provision of infrastructure and services be backed by new and effective policies for managing the demand for mobility. The Committee believes that local and regional transport is primarily a matter for local, regional and national authorities, working in co-operation with transport operators and transport user groups. Local and regional government therefore has an important role to play in achieving changes to these policies. They can help to achieve improvements in the quality of life for people who live and work in their areas and regions. Working in co-operation and partnership, local and regional government can perform this by:

- Managing the demand for mobility
- Co-operating with other local authorities and regions to ensure that measures are practical, efficient and politically viable.
- Assuring the business sector that there is a market for green transport goods.

3.3. The most effective contribution that regional and local government can make to reduce CO₂ is to manage the demand for mobility and to help people reduce the demand to travel. The majority of the European Union's regional and local authorities are responsible for land-use planning and can therefore determine the location of residential areas and areas of economic activity in relation to transport infrastructure. By adopting a co-ordinated approach to integrated land-use planning, local and regional authorities can help people reduce the need to travel; this means locating amenities and services near people and locating the activities which attract the heaviest traffic near public transport stops and stations. Local and regional authorities should, however, be given increased decision-making powers regarding the extent to which their areas are opened up to traffic and guarantees as to mobility and accessibility for all their citizens.

3.4. The Committee is pleased to note that the Commission recognises that land-use policies plus complementary measures could reduce emissions per capita per day 'to about one third' by 2010. The Committee thinks that greater attention — and hence more research resources — should be devoted to what the communication terms 'complementary' measures, such as town-planning policies specifically designed to reduce transport demand, encouraging a new mobility culture, education and information policies on the environmental impact of transport, the promotion of organised car sharing and non-motorised mobility (walking and cycling), organising practical training designed to encourage an environmentally-friendly and fuel-saving driving style (Eco-driving training programme),

and innovative ways of improving urban mobility (traffic calming, use of information technology to improve traffic flow, rationalisation of routes and speeds). Regulatory adjustments by national government and by the Commission itself would help to generalise such measures.

3.5. Although the abovementioned measures are left almost entirely to regional and local authorities, the Committee attaches great importance to explicit Community and national recognition of their role in meeting the Kyoto targets. It follows that it would be appropriate to launch and monitor large-scale pilot programmes, to implement existing networks for disseminating experience and assisting with planning and organisation, and to set aside adequate resources for the promotion and development of the most effective abatement measures and the Committee calls upon the Commission to assist. The Committee urges the Commission to encourage local and regional authorities to take account of managing the demand for mobility when developing their local and regional strategies. The Committee welcomes the broad thrust of measures proposed for local and regional and passenger transport outlined in the Commission's Communication on Developing the Citizens' Network.

3.6. In addition to the main long-term aim of managing the demand for mobility, other co-ordinated measures will need to be adopted to achieve the reduction in CO₂: firstly, the revamped pricing system proposed in the 1996 green paper, under which users cover more of the costs generated by transport, including social and environmental costs; and secondly, a radical overhaul of the present system of incentives, which have often had the perverse effect of stimulating a demand which is not needed for the development of economic activities and the well-being of the community.

Other additional technical measures for reducing CO₂ emissions are: to enhance vehicles' energy efficiency and the use of alternative fuels, to reduce congestion and, more generally, reduce the impact of negative externalities. Regional and local authorities are already actively pursuing transport policies that are geared to these objectives, and are ready to make a further contribution to meeting the Kyoto targets by pursuing specific policies for horizontal integration between different transport modes and areas. Such policies can best be devised and applied at the local and regional level.

3.7. The Committee agrees on the need to focus intervention on the transport modes which emit the largest amounts of CO₂. This principally means road transport but also air transport, which produces the most CO₂ per

passenger/km and per ton/km of freight. The Committee therefore calls on the Commission to encourage the price structures of transport to reflect the true costs of travel⁽¹⁾, by altering price structures so that sustainable transport becomes cheaper and more attractive at the point of use and vice-versa. Tolls should be a disincentive to transport by road where railways are an alternative. The Committee looks forward to receiving the Commission's report on Air Transport and the Environment, and to commenting on the White Paper on Fair payment for infrastructure use. The Committee advocates that more emphasis should be put on promoting environmentally friendly alternative forms of transport such as walking and cycling.

3.8. The Committee considers that new competition and market rules are vital for a more efficient transport system. The rationale for this innovation varies from country to country. The Committee asks the Commission to encourage the sharing of experience of competition to take place. In particular, the Committee asks the Commission to note that in the light of UK experience, deregulation and the advent of open market competition has not been universally advantageous. Open competition may lead to a cheap network but it will not necessarily lead to a transport system which fits consumer needs, provides customer services and is cognisant of the environmental impact. There must be caveats in the system and it cannot be assumed that the market will directly provide the best and most efficient system. Moreover, the experience of many EU countries which have not implemented deregulation programmes shows that state-owned transport companies do not necessarily pursue public goals. Consequently, the Committee considers that efforts must focus principally on regulatory issues by public institutions. It is essential that quality standards are provided within the service contract which include user benefits such as customer care. There must also be compliance with social requirements such as wage levels and working conditions. The Committee urges the Commission to consider competition within the context of environmental, customer, local and regional authorities' concerns as well as operators' concerns.

3.9. Provisions must be aligned internationally and must ensure high levels of safety and environmental compatibility. To this end, the Committee approves the proposed instruments such as fuel taxation (with exceptions for public transport), the realignment of taxes on kerosene for air transport and, above all, the development of efficient pricing that more faithfully reflects the costs borne by society, and particularly social and environmental costs. The Green Paper on fair and efficient pricing provides a useful starting point which should be taken further and translated into practical measures.

3.10. The Committee particularly appreciates the emphasis placed on logistics as an instrument for reducing both transport costs and the distances travelled by individual vehicles, the aim being to reduce empty running and overall traffic. If properly enshrined in public policies, development of third-party logistics offers good potential for demand-side management of freight transport, as it reduces the impact of external-cost internalisation on prices.

3.11. The communication devotes insufficient attention to urban freight transport. The Committee feels that this is a highly promising intervention area in which regional and local authorities could offer innovative solutions. The potential for rationalising the use of road space could do much to help achieve the Kyoto targets.

3.12. Technological innovation policies, backed by tax instruments and voluntary agreements with vehicle manufacturers, can play a key role in reducing emissions, especially from cars. However, experience has shown that replacing the vehicle fleet is a slow process if special measures are not taken to encourage scrapping. This means that technological innovations only produce significant results over the medium to long term. Moreover, technological advances relating to environmental factors can be neutralised by the increasing power and performance of new vehicles. Consequently, all measures implemented by the Member States or the Commission in this field should be accompanied by policies on fleet development and use. Regional and local authorities have made a major effort to speed up the introduction of innovations, offering manufacturers a prime market in the form of public vehicle fleets, including the official cars used by the authorities. Regional and local authorities can further assist by communicating with the business sector to assure them of the demand for green transport goods.

3.13. Regional and local policies have given effective support for wider use of electric vehicles, vehicles with a very low fuel consumption and vehicles that use 'green' fuels. Such support should continue, not least because it provides a direct demonstration of the practical value of these innovative forms of vehicle.

3.14. Rail transport is undergoing major innovations, with the introduction of competition rules and the opening-up to new operators. The picture is changing rapidly, as local railways are being entrusted to regional operators, national networks radically changed, and transnational networks developing with the introduction of rail-freight freeways. Regional and local authorities will be called on to play a much

⁽¹⁾ As previously discussed in the Committee's opinions, such as Opinion CdR 406/95 fin (OJ C 337, 11.11.1996, p. 13) on the Common Transport Policy Action Programme 1995-2000.

more effective role than hitherto, and to assume responsibility for managing demand and for planning and controlling supply at local level. Here the Committee considers that integration between the various functions of the network and the various regions is vital.

3.15. In the context of urban mobility, the Committee endorses the importance accorded to the development of public transport networks as an instrument for reducing CO₂ emissions. The challenge for the future is for local and regional authorities to assist in the shift away from dependence on private cars and make transport systems more sustainable to achieve a new mobility culture. The communication's suggestions regarding key parameters such as the energy efficiency of vehicle occupancy rates pave the way for more sophisticated public transport policies. Collective forms of transport such as car and van pooling, collective taxis and car sharing are interesting ideas and should also be taken into account in the public transport system. These important innovations could form the subject of a pilot-studies programme at European level. Co-operation between regional/local authorities and businesses and other transport users will contribute greatly to the success of efforts to encourage wider use of public transport and a socially more efficient use of private cars.

3.16. The Committee agrees that the development of short-distance sea shipping within the EU can help to improve intermodal balance and reduce road traffic, while improving energy consumption and reducing CO₂ emissions. The Committee wishes the Commission to note the importance of inland waterways in this aim also. However, the Committee stresses that such action will only be possible if it is part of a total transport system reorganised according to new logistical criteria and policies which encourage intermodality.

3.17. Integrated, coherent organisation of the various constituents of the transport system is essential for meeting the targets set in the communication. This applies to intermodality and the development of combined transport, the development of short sea shipping and inland waterways, the creation of a network of international rail-freight corridors (freeways), rational organisation of road transport along terminal sections and over short to medium distances at least, and an effective interface with regional and urban transport.

3.18. The key role of planning instruments, and of instruments for assessing the economic (and other) effects of action taken, has not yet been fully addressed. The Committee advocates the introduction of an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) as part of the transport plan. The subnational nature of regional and local authorities, and their detailed knowledge of local conditions, make them potentially an ideal forum for integrated planning that embraces the transport

system and the regional economy, including *ex post* monitoring of emission reductions.

4. Conclusions

4.1. The Committee of the Regions welcomes the communication on transport and CO₂. It endorses the analysis and the proposed sectoral abatement measures. However, thought must be given to further measures for curbing the increase in emissions, as although the increase is to be halved it will still be inconsistent with the Kyoto targets.

4.2. The Committee attaches particular importance to the development of integrated regional transport planning, specifically designed to reduce transport demand. The Committee encourages the Commission to further develop ways in which this can be implemented as part of a co-ordinated approach to achieving a new mobility culture.

4.3. The Committee particularly supports the chosen sectoral categories of action. It agrees that CO₂ abatement measures will also benefit the economy and the environment, and that swift action is needed in six areas:

- economising passenger-car fuel by, for example, continuing the development and production of vehicles with low fuel consumption ;
- securing the adoption of fairer and more efficient pricing;
- encouraging public transport, especially in urban centres, and completion of the single market in rail transport;
- improving the environmental performance of air transport;
- promoting short sea shipping;
- encouraging modal integration and the development of intermodality.

4.4. The Committee endorses the measures proposed for the various segments of the transport system, but notes the priority given to long-distance and to national and international transport and the underestimation of the role which urban and local transport policy can play in reducing emissions and improving quality of life. However, measures taken in this policy sector make for lasting improvements in public health and the quality of life. The role of local government in encouraging environmentally and climate friendly transport management and reductions in greenhouse gas emissions must be recognised.

4.5. The Committee agrees that action plans at the various levels of government (national, regional, local) should

consistently involve public and private players and should be backed by effective systems for monitoring trends in CO₂

emissions and compliance with commitments at national and local level.

Brussels, 11 March 1999.

*The President
of the Committee of the Regions*
Manfred DAMMEYER

Opinion of the Committee of the Regions on the 'Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the Committee of the Regions and the Economic and Social Committee "Developing the Citizens' Network — Why good local and regional passenger transport is important, and how the European Commission is helping to bring it about"'

(1999/C 198/03)

THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS,

having regard to the Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the Committee of the Regions and the Economic and Social Committee 'Developing the Citizens' Network — Why good local and regional passenger transport is important, and how the European Commission is helping to bring it about' (COM(1998) 431 final);

having regard to the decision of the Commission of 13 July 1998, in accordance with the first paragraph of Article 198c of the Treaty establishing the European Community, to consult the Committee on the subject;

having regard to the bureau decision of 15 July 1998 to instruct Commission 3 for Trans-European Networks, Transport and Information Society to draw up the relevant opinion;

having regard to the draft opinion (CdR 436/98 rev. 1) adopted by Commission 3 on 22 January 1999 (rapporteur: Mr Panettoni),

adopted the following opinion at its 28th plenary session of 10 and 11 March 1999 (meeting of 11 March).

1. Introduction

1.1. The influence of local and regional passenger transport

1.1.1. The Committee of the Regions recognises that transport unquestionably plays a key role in the sustainable development which the Amsterdam Treaty singles out as one of the objectives of the European Union.

1.1.2. The Committee believes that a local and regional transport network meeting the highest standards of quality and sustainability must be created if territorial economic development plans are to be successfully implemented. A good local and regional transport network is crucial for a properly functioning national and European transport system. A system of this kind has multiple effects, all of considerable economic,

environmental and social value. An efficient transport system is a key structural component in economic development plans, and hence in job-creation programmes. At the same time, it is a vital element for sustainable development processes since it helps to relieve traffic congestion, restore the environment, cut energy consumption and reduce pollution, particularly CO₂. Efficient local and regional transport is also an effective instrument for containing and reducing the social exclusion of the economically disadvantaged, the unemployed, the disabled and the populations of peripheral and rural areas. In addition, it reinforces the territorial cohesion of vulnerable areas.

1.1.3. The Committee would highlight the basic fact that although demand for mobility has been on the rise for several