

I

(Resolutions, recommendations and opinions)

OPINIONS

COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

79TH PLENARY SESSION HELD ON 21 AND 22 APRIL 2009

Opinion of the Committee of the Regions on an Action Plan on Urban Mobility

(2009/C 200/01)

THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

- regrets the failure of the Commission to issue the expected Action Plan on Urban Mobility as this potentially limits the potential of urban mobility policy;
- welcomes the numerous initiatives which have emerged at EU level on urban policy and the EU funding which has already supported a range of urban initiatives, and, therefore, believes it necessary to move beyond the Green Paper and further broaden the political scope of urban mobility policy;
- underlines the importance of ensuring that adequate funding mechanisms are in place, along with mechanisms to ensure effective partnership working. The CoR therefore advocates a model whereby Urban Mobility Plans are implemented via sustainable long-term public-public/public-private agreements or Mobility Agreements;
- asks that the Commission establish a financing instrument that would encourage urban and metropolitan areas to set up Mobility Plans. This financial instrument should be made available to regions and urban areas directly, without depending upon Member State approval. Urban Mobility Plans should be the responsibility of the cities themselves;
- asks that the European Commission also add value to the process by funding incentives, award schemes and exchange of best practice. The CoR's opinion on the Green Paper suggested the equivalent of an EU-wide 'Blue Flag Scheme' to be awarded on the basis of specific indicators to urban areas with low levels of pollution and congestion.

Rapporteur general: Councillor Sir Albert Bore, Member of Birmingham City Council (UK/PES)

Reference document

Referral from the European Parliament of 10 March 2009

I. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

Key Messages

1. regrets the failure of the Commission to issue the expected Action Plan on Urban Mobility as this potentially limits the potential of urban mobility policy;

2. welcomes the initiative of the European Parliament to issue an own initiative report and its decision to consult with the Committee of the Regions;

3. welcomes the numerous initiatives which have emerged at EU level on urban policy and the EU funding which has already supported a range of urban initiatives, and, therefore, believes it necessary to move beyond the Green Paper and further broaden the political scope of urban mobility policy. Given the potential benefits which enhanced and sustainable urban and metropolitan mobility can contribute to the quality of life of EU citizens in urban areas, to decarbonisation and reduced reliance on fossil fuels, and to economic competitiveness, it is appropriate that the EU should renew its endeavours in this policy area. The agenda needs to be coherent and — within the context of the subsidiarity principle — the EU should assume a role supportive of actions at the local and regional levels by promoting best-practices, exchanging experiences and fostering research and technological development;

4. recognises that the EU already provides important support for research related to urban mobility; in public transport regulation and on environmental issues. CoR's response to the Commission's Green Paper on Urban Mobility highlighted the potential long-term added value of promoting Urban Mobility Plans, of the kind already developed for example by French and German cities, for wider adoption by cities throughout the European Union, as a means of addressing urban congestion and environmental pollution; however, supports stronger involvement for cities in EU-funded research related to urban mobility, in public transport regulation and on environmental issues. This can be achieved by adapting research programmes accordingly;

5. underlines the importance of ensuring that adequate funding mechanisms are in place, along with mechanisms to ensure effective partnership working. CoR therefore advocates a model whereby Urban Mobility Plans are implemented via

sustainable long-term public-public/public-private agreements or Mobility Agreements. Such Mobility Agreements should be able to draw in funds from the private sector, local, regional and national programmes;

6. considers that there is a role for the EU, working in close collaboration with the EIB, to develop innovative financial instruments capable of funding the necessary sustainable mobility infrastructure and investment into low carbon vehicles. Whilst initiatives to date in these areas are welcomed, a step change is needed to move from isolated exemplar projects to widespread roll-out across the Union. Mobility Agreements would facilitate the establishment of strong stakeholder alliances capable of bearing the risks associated with the substantial levels of commercial borrowing needed to bring forward sustainable transport infrastructure on a large scale;

7. supports the suggestions in the European Parliament draft report that, in the 2014-20 financial perspective, possibility of a European financial instrument should be examined that would enable the co-financing of:

- Urban and Metropolitan Travel Plans (Urban Mobility Plans) and
- Investment in urban and metropolitan mobility that meets the EU's environmental and socio-economic objectives;

8. asks that the Commission establish a financing instrument that would encourage urban and metropolitan areas to set up Mobility Plans. This financial instrument should be made available to regions and urban areas directly, without depending upon Member State approval. Urban Mobility Plans should be the responsibility of the cities themselves. Frequently, at the local and regional level, projects depend on securing the correct mix of public and private sector investment, and there is a role for the EU in facilitating this;

9. asks that the European Commission also add value to the process by funding incentives, award schemes and exchange of best practice. The CoR's opinion on the Green Paper suggested the equivalent of an EU-wide 'Blue Flag Scheme' to be awarded on the basis of specific indicators to urban areas with low levels of pollution and congestion;

General remarks

10. Efficient, effective and sustainable urban transport systems contribute much to the economic competitiveness of cities, regions and the European Union as a whole. Whilst the application of the subsidiarity principle leads to the conclusion that the development of such systems are the responsibility of the local and regional authorities concerned, there is a role for the European Union in promoting best practice, facilitating shared learning, accelerating technology transfer and ensuring compatibility of technologies deployed to the extent needed to facilitate free movement of vehicles between the Member States;

11. As the global recession deepens and European firms struggle to retain market share in increasingly competitive global markets, the EU must lead by example, playing its part to ensure that the quality of urban infrastructure for the movement of people and goods gives European firms advantage over global competitors, rather than undermining their ability to compete. It is therefore imperative that momentum is maintained behind the Urban Mobility initiative which resulted in the publication of the Green Paper in September 2007, and that the EU commits to tangible actions to take this agenda forward;

Recommendations on the Draft Report of the European Parliament:*Accelerating European research and innovation in the field of urban mobility*

12. supports the immediate reviewing, evaluating and harmonising of existing urban statistics and databases, in order to assess the need for upgrading them;

13. supports the immediate launch of a European internet portal and forum on urban mobility, to facilitate the exchange and dissemination of information, good practice and innovations, particularly in the field of sustainable transport promotion;

14. supports the proposal for the introduction of an annual European prize to reward outstanding and transferable transport initiatives and projects, but suggests that this should be as part of the introduction of the equivalent of an EU-wide 'Blue Flag Scheme' awarded on the basis of specific indicators to urban areas with low levels of environmental pollution and congestion;

15. supports the development of a new CIVITAS initiative, but recommends that mechanisms to promote the widespread uptake of learning and innovation generated within CIVITAS projects are reviewed and improved wherever possible;

16. supports in principle funding for the ITS research and development programme be stepped up, but recognises that the realisation of aspirations for integration and interoperability of systems represent substantive challenges;

Encouraging optimisation of various modes of transport: incentivising sustainable mobility for urban areas with EU added value

17. strongly supports the promotion of integrated sustainable urban travel plans (Urban Mobility Plans) but, mindful of potential subsidiarity issues, that whilst there is a role for the EU in incentivising the preparation of such plans in the spirit of promoting good practice, the decision to produce such plans lies with the cities and regions concerned, so as to include the wider travel-to-work areas;

18. strongly supports the proposal that European funding and co-financing of urban transport projects become conditional upon the existence of integrated Mobility Plans, further adding to the EU incentivisation of these plans;

19. strongly supports the introduction of guidelines on EU incentive funding within the framework of existing regional policy instruments for coordinated national and regional investments, work programmes and projects relating to urban transport and the wider travel to work areas, provided that these investments meet the environmental and socio-economic goals of the EU, including achieving interoperability between all modes of transport. Also supports the introduction of a European financial instrument within the 2014-2020 financial perspective, enabling co-financing of Urban Mobility Plans, financing not projects but outcomes that meet the EU's environmental and socio-economic objectives, and request that the possibility be investigated of earlier funding being made available for small-scale pilot initiatives. It is further recommended that more ambitious instruments are sought to provide funding on a larger scale to support the delivery of Urban Mobility Plans, contingent upon the existence of public-public/public-private Urban Mobility Agreements that draw in funds from the private sector, local, regional and national programmes;

20. welcomes the launch of a study of experiences on tariff integration (including smart cards) and would encourage a further study on the provision of inter-modal information in EU conurbations and asks that the interoperability of smart cards also be investigated so that in future they could contain passes which are valid in various metropolitan areas in the European Union;

21. supports the call for the Commission to draw up a report on urban charging and the case for guidelines on such charging and on road tolls for accessing large towns and city centres. Whilst the complexities associated with such an undertaking are considerable, there are substantial benefits to be gained, notably in terms of contribution to coherent Urban Mobility Plans and as a step to 'one-stop' inter-modal payment systems;

Urban transport: an industry and European technologies which should find expression in the Lisbon Strategy and the European economic recovery plan

22. strongly supports a European initiative being introduced for the standardisation and certification of equipment as regards safety, comfort (noise, vibrations etc.), network interoperability, accessibility for people with reduced mobility, sustainable transport and clean-engine technologies on the basis of a carbon audit;

23. strongly support a significant proportion of the appropriations released by the European economic recovery plan being allocated to the financing of on-going urban transport investments and projects that can be financed immediately, where such investments are consistent with addressing the EU's environmental and socio-economic objectives;

Better coherence with other EU policies

24. invites the European Commission to promote more coherence at the local level in/with other EU policies, such as those relating to the environment, sustainable urban development, transport of passengers and goods in non-urban areas, climate change and regional policy;

25. repeats its call for an EU-level mechanism to be established to report-back on progress on the delivery of the Urban Mobility Plans, to provide examples for other cities. This process should be started with an EU-funded benchmark study looking at cities across the EU and their approaches to congestion reduction, environmental enhancements and the provision of more sustainable modes of transportation, including non-motorised modes.

Brussels, 21 April 2009

*The President
of the Committee of the Regions*
Luc VAN DEN BRANDE
