

Opinion of the Committee of the Regions on ‘The White Paper “Roadmap to a Single European Transport Area”’

(2011/C 259/02)

THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

- believes that the objectives of the White Paper (WP) should be broken down into more short-term goals in order to give politicians a clear orientation framework on the measures to be taken during their term of office;
- advocates the full internalisation of external costs across all modes of transport by means of harmonised taxation, the revenue from which is allocated to establishing an integrated and efficient transport system;
- stresses that the Commission’s goals with regard to a modal shift from road to rail, inland waterway and maritime transport do not go far enough, and calls on the Commission to propose a more ambitious programme;
- is in favour of the idea of a ‘Blue Belt’ as a first step towards the creation of a solid system in maritime services that should be complemented by reviving the Motorways of the Sea, and regrets that the 2011 White Paper is less ambitious than the 2001 edition in terms of maritime transport policy;
- advocates incentives for preparing sustainable urban mobility plans and urges that better account be taken of the link between transport policy and spatial planning;
- supports the proposal of using Eurobonds as instruments to finance the transport infrastructures required to establish the TEN-T;
- notes that the internalisation of external costs, the elimination of tax distortions and unjustified subsidies and free and undistorted competition should be part of the future European transport model, based on aligning market choices with sustainability needs.

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Reference document	White Paper: Roadmap to a Single European Transport Area — Towards a competitive and resource efficient transport system COM(2011) 144 final

I. GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

General remarks

1. considers that the 2011 White Paper entitled *Roadmap to a Single European Transport Area – Towards a competitive and resource efficient transport system* addresses the main issues that are key to the future of European transport policy and the continent's transport systems. With this in mind, the Committee believes that the proposed transport policy should include the more general goals established within the European Union under the EU 2020 strategy and the environmental sustainability goals designed primarily to fight climate change, and strengthen social and territorial cohesion across the European Union;

2. notes that local and regional authorities have important policy duties in relation to transport; they not only share responsibility for matters such as maintenance of the road network, parking policy, accessibility and public transport, but also oversee environmental standards on such things as air quality, and must therefore be involved on the basis of multilevel governance;

3. where the White Paper talks about cities, suggests that urban areas and/or conurbations should be mentioned in addition; in a number of Member States it is not so much municipalities that are the basis for mobility policy but conurbations;

4. believes that the 2011 White Paper is a highly ambitious document, even more so because, not surprisingly, none of the 2001 White Paper's main objectives has been fully attained. Some of its ambitious long-term objectives should be broken down into more short-term interim goals in order to give a clear orientation framework to national and regional politicians on the measures to be taken during their term of office;

5. notes that the development of visions of the future is necessary and justified, because decisions taken today will have a decisive bearing on transport for decades to come. However, it should not be forgotten that visions of the future in several decades time can only be very fuzzy ones;

6. believes that the balance between transport modes is inextricably linked to the issue of the internalisation of external costs and directly influenced by charging policies for the use of transport infrastructure; clearly supports the vision of the

White Paper for a transparent and generally applicable model for the calculation of infrastructure charges that apply across all modes of transport, advocates the full internalisation of external costs and calls for all revenue generated from implementing the EU legislation aimed at better integrating external costs (such as the Eurovignette Directive) to be allocated to the establishment of an integrated and efficient transport system, ensuring that account is taken of the specific characteristics of the outermost regions and islands;

7. in this context, and in particular where air and maritime transport modes are concerned, believes that a balance must be sought between rigorous environmental protection and the enormous additional cost that this entails for islands and the outermost regions, which are entirely dependent on these modes of transport while, at the same time, being highly committed to cutting emissions;

8. welcomes the fact that the Commission is, in effect, encouraging a modal shift from road to rail, inland waterway and maritime transport, while also insisting on the full internalisation of the external costs of all modes of transport, such as air pollution, congestion and noise;

9. notes that the Commission has previously stated that the external costs of accidents are already effectively internalised through insurance premiums. The Committee questions that view and therefore calls on the Commission to produce calculation models that can be used for the internalisation of accident costs in which all the costs of accidents are taken into account;

10. welcomes the fact that the White Paper also includes measures to promote more sustainable travel behaviour, foster the willingness to adopt new travel modes and new technologies and secure acceptance for the full internalisation of externalities in the total cost of mobility. The EU has the important task of creating understanding and acceptance of the measures that local and regional authorities have to take to solve traffic problems in conurbations;

11. regrets that the accessibility and mobility of people and the fundamental concept of territorial cohesion in transport have not been adequately addressed by the White Paper, particularly with regard to outlying, outermost and island regions. A single European transport area will not be achieved unless businesses and individuals can be guaranteed fair access conditions across Europe's regions;

12. notes that the political work of the CoR during the last decade takes a clear position on the principles and policies that should guide today's European transport policy; therefore, it is of the opinion that proper consideration to this wealth of knowledge should be given when formulating the European transport policy for the years to come;

13. notes, as a matter of principle, that an efficient sustainable system of mobility with low emissions is an individual's right and, at the same time, is an essential underpinning for the economy, prosperity and quality of life. In order to develop infrastructure more effectively, simplified planning laws should be encouraged;

II. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

A vision for a competitive and sustainable transport system

14. welcomes the analysis presented in the White Paper on the trends and related challenges affecting the transport sector in the decades to come. A solid diagnosis of the trends affecting the transport sector is a necessary pre-condition for devising the right transport policies. In this matter, the White Paper reflects most of the conceptual fault lines that need to feed into the debate on the future of Europe's transport system;

15. while transport is indeed of key importance to the EU's competitiveness, would seek, however, to nuance the Commission's assertion that 'curbing mobility is not an option'. Clearly, transport must meet the demands of individuals and businesses as regards mobility and trade. However, companies in particular should be made even more aware of the need to group journeys together more and take advantage of methods and technologies that help to optimise transport use (e.g. telecommuting, video conferencing, location optimisation);

16. supports the ten goals for a competitive and resource-efficient transport system identified by the White Paper and their use as benchmarks for achieving the 60 % GHG emissions reduction target; thus the Committee recommends that this general target should also be included as part of the list of goals identified in the White Paper. Furthermore, it suggests that the proposed goals should be complemented by additional goals focusing on the reduction of the dependency on oil, the diminishing of noise and the mitigation of atmospheric pollution;

17. supports the goal to halve the use of 'conventionally-fuelled' cars in urban transport by 2030, phase them out in cities by 2050 and achieve almost CO₂-free city logistics in major urban centres by 2030, in part through tax measures, although it does consider this measure very ambitious. Therefore considers that intermediate goals should be set that would enable a roadmap for implementing the measures to be established, implementation to be monitored, and the results to be evaluated;

18. welcomes the Commission's goal of moving towards full application of the 'user pays' and 'polluter pays' principles and thus eliminating distortions prejudicial to fair competition between modes of transport based on the internalisation of all external costs; supports the full internalisation of social and environmental costs (including accidents, air pollution, noise and congestion) by means of harmonised taxation across all modes of transport, and the revenue from which is allocated to establishing an integrated and efficient transport system;

19. is pleased that several of the proposals made by the CoR in its most recent opinions on urban mobility have been included in the White Paper. In this regard the Committee supports the Commission's objective of creating incentives to optimise and minimise journeys by conventional cars and trucks within cities and agrees that large fleets of urban buses, taxis and delivery vans are the perfect test bed for the introduction of clean vehicles. The Commission rightly points out that the development and early deployment of clean vehicles can have immediate benefits in terms of reducing oil dependence, as well as health benefits in terms of improved air quality in cities;

20. also supports the idea of shifting the balance towards the most environmentally friendly modes of transport while maintaining that the overall efficiency and interoperability of all transport modes should be improved. Nevertheless, active policies that discriminate in favour of a particular mode should be carefully assessed and considered against the background of a fair and transparent model for the allocation of transport funds; otherwise there is a risk of promoting low-efficiency transport solutions. Moreover, using alternative modes of transport presupposes the existence of appropriate infrastructure and services, so that current demand can be met;

21. despite the above comments, believes that the ten goals for a competitive and resource-efficient transport system identified by the White Paper are clearly very ambitious; therefore believes that intermediate milestones and targets should also be defined, with input from local and regional authorities, taking into account complementary strategic goals already defined by the European Commission. These intermediate goals should be part of a monitoring process to guarantee the success of the vision set out in the White Paper;

22. points out, above all, that EU transport policy should be underpinned by the concept of the general interest (equal access to transport for all, upholding social rights, integration of external costs, etc.);

23. notes that point 137 of the working document (SEC(2011) 391) accompanying the White Paper (but published in only one language) announces, in relation to the follow-up to Regulation 1370/2007 on public service obligations in the area of transport, that '*the Commission will propose an initiative for the introduction of competitive tendering for public service contracts, aimed at ensuring the efficient provision of high quality services*'. This initiative must respect local

and regional authorities' scope to deliver, subject to certain conditions, 'in-house'-type services without competitive tendering;

24. encourages the European Union to carry through a thorough and genuine integration of the transport policies of the 27 Member States (assimilating national structures, ensuring respect for competition in accordance with the principles of the general interest, harmonising taxation and establishing a new regulatory framework applicable to the different levels of subsidiarity) in compliance with multi-level governance;

A Single European Transport Area

25. would emphasise the need to reduce the fragmentation of the European rail market in order to create an efficient rail network which offers a quality service in terms of journey times, reliability and capacity. In this regard, a sustainable and cost-effective solution should be devised with a view to the creation of a competitive European rail freight network, which caters to the specific needs of this type of traffic. Furthermore, crucial technical barriers, related for example to the railway gauge, should be overcome. In addition, it is clear that rail freight and short sea shipping, and in particular the complementary use of both modes, have the potential to contribute to the integration of regional economies situated in outlying regions. To this end, and in order to ensure the smooth functioning of these sustainable modes of transport, links to logistical hubs must also be developed, providing optimum intermodal exchange and overall system efficiency, while avoiding a proliferation of logistical installations lacking the features that can steer the transport system towards intermodality and co-modality;

26. supports the idea of reinforcing a European transport policy that is underpinned by a clear, coherent, comprehensive and stable set of rules for users and operators, the deployment of advanced transport technologies and solutions, and the building or upgrading of adequate infrastructure. This would require the completion of the internal market for transport services and the removal of regulatory, administrative and technical barriers in all modes of transport, as well as consistent enforcement of competition rules, improved service standards and reinforced users' rights;

27. believes it is important not just to consider long-distance transport routes, but also to include basic regional networks, while also paying particular attention to border regions that face specific problems such as differences in payment systems, technical links, schedules and legislative frameworks;

28. on the other hand, points out that the opening-up of the market for rail services has not yet progressed sufficiently. It is therefore felt that the technical and legal rules governing the rail transport market should be improved and standardised. At the same time, possibilities for co-financing should be introduced;

29. reiterates that, when they take place, the liberalisation of the market and the arrival of new entrants must be accompanied by provisions allowing for an increased market share for rail (relating in particular to the role of European agencies in standardising equipment, traffic conditions and safety norms on the networks), this being the only way to foster creativity and develop more diversified services for the benefit of consumers and a real modal shift;

30. stresses that, with regard to the modal shift from road to rail, inland waterway and maritime transport, the White Paper's targets for reducing the share of freight transported over 300km by road (i.e. a 30 % reduction by 2030 and a 50 % reduction by 2050) are not ambitious enough; urges, therefore, that the European Commission propose an ambitious programme to create rolling road links across the whole of Europe. Only this type of infrastructure will be capable of eliminating long-distance road freight transport, while at the same time strengthening territorial cohesion, particularly with outlying countries;

31. supports the full implementation of the Single European Sky initiative and the completion of the internal market for rail services. It is also in favour of the idea of a 'Blue Belt' as a first step towards the creation of a solid system in maritime services that should be complemented by the concept of Motorways of the Sea, including a new vision of the importance of ships as real mobile infrastructures;

32. considers that connecting the EU's outermost regions to the European mainland and neighbouring third countries should be given special consideration covered by specific rules; the lack of accessibility traditionally suffered by these regions penalises them and prevents them both from playing a full part in the single European market and from developing their economies within their regional setting;

33. regrets that the 2011 White Paper constitutes a step backwards in terms of pro-maritime transport policy, in relation to the 2001 edition (which gave rise to the Motorways of the Sea), and in particular that the list of initiatives appended to the White Paper gives no information either on the future of the Motorways of the Sea or on the Marco Polo programme;

34. considers that regions which, due to their geography, are far more seriously affected by traffic emissions (such as mountain regions) need to have their own rules and regulations in order to reduce the volume of traffic and the related side-effects to such an extent that harm to human health and the environment can be excluded;

35. considers that additional efforts should be made to promote better and more efficient transport solutions that improve connections between the European mainland and its island and outermost regions, and with regions situated beyond the EU's external borders;

36. would also stress that, in addition to strengthening links between eastern and western Europe, it is essential to promote, for reasons of both cohesion and competitiveness, efficient connections between central Europe and Europe's external borders and regions situated further away that link Europe with the Mediterranean and Atlantic areas. In this matter, the CoR would like to emphasise the crucial importance of ports and airports, together with their inland connections, in the integration of the EU in the global market, namely with African, American and Asian regions, as well as the strategic potential of the Atlantic islands as logistic transport platforms;

37. notes that special efforts are also being made to develop in a focused way the five major transport axes identified by the European Commission in the context of the guidelines for transport in Europe and the neighbouring regions. In this respect, the central axis will require greater efforts from the EU and the states situated on it. Welcomes the objective of making the central network being developed in the context of TEN-T more flexible. This will require transparent assessment methods that guarantee both the security of the investments made and ongoing updating and extension of TEN-T;

38. welcomes the proposal for revising the slot regulation to favour more efficient use of airport capacity. However, it is vital to give careful consideration before taking any final decisions on new operating schedules, especially for airports located within urban areas where environmental impacts are more critical;

39. stresses the importance of aligning competitiveness and the social agenda, building on social dialogue, in order to prevent the social conflicts that have been a proven cause of significant economic losses in a number of sectors;

40. welcomes the initiatives proposed to improve security through a comprehensive approach combining policy, legislation and monitoring of air and maritime transport security. In particular, promoting improved screening methods that makes it possible to check a higher number of passengers with minimum fuss, while also fully respecting passenger's fundamental rights, is of utmost relevance;

41. shares the Commission's 'zero-deaths' goal on road safety while recognising the many challenges it poses and the level of ambition it involves; a differentiated approach should be adopted here, for instance by considering the relationship between congestion and the number of traffic accidents. There are wide disparities between cities and regions with respect to the number of road fatalities and measures taken. A universal standard would create a disproportionate burden for cities and regions that have already taken effective measures to reduce the number of road accidents. Achieving road safety is not solely dependent on technology but also on human behaviour. In this matter, the CoR recommends that periodic vehicle inspections should be harmonised and that road safety education should be included as part of the driving schools programmes in Europe. Such harmonised inspections could also be applied in other areas, e.g. to greenhouse gas emissions; equally, a change in human behaviour patterns may lead to a reduction in traffic and thus make a significant contribution to greater traffic safety;

42. considers that traffic safety measures should be based on good practice and that latitude should be granted for integrating and adapting measures to suit local circumstances; also points here to its earlier opinion on the policy orientations on road safety 2011-2020;

43. as regards rail transport, believes that the ERTMS (European Rail Traffic Management System) must be employed systematically on all railway tracks; particular attention must be paid here to cross-border sections, where different safety systems still produce bottlenecks;

44. in this regard, restates its support for the idea of harmonising the various definitions of a major injury, so that the effectiveness of road safety policy can be better monitored and assessed. Furthermore, it proposes the provision of access to, and the interoperability of, road traffic offence registers in order to make it possible to apply sanctions with due account taken of infringements committed in other Member States;

Innovating for the future – technology and behaviour

45. strongly supports the vision presented by the White Paper for a European Transport Research and Innovation Policy which provides for joint combined research efforts; also agrees as to the areas that need to be addressed, namely, vehicle efficiency through new engines, materials and design; cleaner energy use through new energy sources and propulsion systems; and better use of the network and safer and more secure operations through information and communication systems;

46. welcomes the proposal presented in the White Paper to define appropriate standards for CO₂ emissions of vehicles in all modes, establish rules on the interoperability of charging infrastructure for clean vehicles and draw up guidelines and standards for refuelling infrastructures; all this should be done with the involvement of local and regional authorities;

47. emphasises the importance of EU policy addressing vehicle problems at source, by means of standards on greenhouse gas emissions and on atmospheric and noise pollution, together with standards to strengthen active and passive vehicle safety. It is essential here that the introduction of significant technical advances in vehicle technology is linked with the observance of emission limits for noise and air pollution control;

48. considers that travel and driving behaviour are key issues for the full accomplishment of the goals set by the White Paper; therefore, welcomes all initiatives included in the White Paper to promote awareness of the availability of alternatives to individual conventional transport, and measures designed to improve driving behaviour; nonetheless considers that more needs to be done in the field of travel behaviour, in

particular in preparing the European public of the future to adopt new attitudes towards mobility but also in adapting proper transport infrastructure;

Urban mobility

49. welcomes the proposals on Urban Mobility Plans included in the White Paper. The development of sustainable urban mobility plans for, at least, the larger cities was a key demand of the CoR in its opinion in the Green Paper;

50. draws attention to the Commission's view that a large part of the transport system's external effects occur mainly in heavily built-up areas. The local and regional authorities know best how to solve these problems and so it is important that they have the necessary tools. The subsidiarity principle must be respected, but the EU can support the work of local and regional authorities by encouraging collaboration and exchange of experience and by promoting a change in attitudes;

51. advocates incentives for preparing sustainable Urban Mobility Plans and Urban Mobility Audits, but with decisions remaining with the local and regional authorities concerned in full respect of the subsidiarity principle; and reiterates its previous opinion for the introduction of a new financial instrument within the 2014-2020 financial perspectives enabling co-financing of Urban Mobility Plans. Submitting an application for Urban Mobility Audits could for example contribute to the process for the establishment of a European prize to reward outstanding and transferable transport initiatives. This prize could, in turn, form part of the equivalent of an EU-wide 'Blue Flag Scheme' awarded to areas with low levels of environmental pollution and congestion as proposed in the past by the CoR;

52. believes that well planned-cities that adopt more efficient production processes and eliminate superfluous transportation solutions promote higher accessibility to goods, people and services; therefore, recommends that urban planning and mobility planning should be addressed in a more integrated way;

53. eagerly awaits local initiatives to introduce urban road user charging and access restriction schemes and supports the introduction of common technical standards to ensure interoperability, with a view to preventing these local initiatives from creating new technical barriers to free movement within the European Union;

54. emphasises the key role of technical and organisational solutions such as information technologies in supporting new mobility patterns based on the combined use of all modes of transport for travel and freight (e.g. intermodal electronic ticketing systems, intermodal freight documentation, electronic routing, cargo tracking, real time delivery information) in order

to make optimum use of existing light transport (through co-ownership of vehicles, greater use of electric vehicles for short distances, car-sharing, car-pooling, the design of travel and transport interchange plans and giving priority to buses and trams), governance of local and regional transport systems being a major issue, which is overlooked in the White Paper;

55. advocates defining a strategy for moving towards 'zero-emission urban logistics', bringing together aspects of land planning, rail, sea and river access, charging and vehicle technology standards through the promotion of joint public procurement for low-emission vehicles in commercial fleets (delivery vans, taxis, buses, etc);

56. urges that better account be taken of the link between the urban dimension of transport policy and the broader concept of spatial planning not only to improve urban transport and infrastructure but also to combat urban sprawl and rethink the relationship between cities and their direct (urban/rural) environment; particular attention should be paid to strengthening short-distance public transport;

Modern infrastructure, smart pricing and funding

57. as part of the ongoing TEN-T policy review, supports the establishment of a core network of strategic European infrastructure integrating all the regions of the European Union, together with the main reference points for transport and logistics, and shaping a Single European Transport Area where provision should be made for the removal of bottlenecks and for appropriate connections with the global market;

58. notes that the objectives stated in the White Paper cannot be fully realised if the appropriate funds are not in place, bearing in mind the regional specificity of cohesion of the different Member States and the commitments under the Stability and Growth Pact. It should be noted that the White Paper avoids the subject of the budgetary and non budgetary resources to be attributed to EU transport policy and to infrastructure. In this connection, the CoR supports the proposal of using a European loan or Eurobonds as major instruments to finance the transport infrastructures required. The CoR notes that this large-scale investment will have to be backed by genuine political will at the highest level, or the objectives of the European transport policy, so vital to regional competitiveness, will be so many empty promises;

59. notes that cohesion policy has its own goals as part of a regional development integrated approach and that it is not desirable that its budget should be used to finance European policy on the transport network. On the other hand, it will be necessary to foster consistency between the infrastructure projects financed by cohesion policy and the objectives of European transport policy;

60. insists on the need to review the resources earmarked for transport infrastructure proposed in the future EU budget and to further encourage private-sector commitment in a more transparent way. In addition, the Committee is also in favour of promoting new financing instruments for the transport sector, particularly through the EU project bond initiative;

61. notes that the internalisation of externalities, the elimination of tax distortions and unjustified subsidies and free and undistorted competition should be part of the future model that is based on aligning market choices with sustainability needs; therefore, the Committee supports a smart pricing and taxation approach that seeks the full and mandatory internalisation of the external costs of road and rail transport, local pollution and noise in ports and airports, and in relation to air pollution at sea, and advocates examining mandatory application of internalisation charges on all inland waterways on EU territory. The lack of alternatives in transport to and from the island and outermost regions must be taken into account when setting the charges on the internalisation of transport externalities;

62. nevertheless stresses that account must be taken of the specific constraints of outlying regions in future measures to internalise external costs (the Eurovignette road toll and follow-up). Any arrangement that did not take account of the distance

handicap would in practice penalise economic agents and players in remote areas;

63. underlines that, despite the importance of this measure, the goals set for 2016 and 2020 seem to be very ambitious and, based on previous and current experience (e.g. the Eurovignette legislation), very difficult to implement;

The external dimension

64. fully supports the external dimension strand of the White Paper; in this regard, highlights the importance of extending internal market rules through work in international organisations, promoting European safety, security, privacy and environmental standards worldwide through bilateral and multi-lateral cooperation, and reinforcing transport dialogue with main partners;

65. urges the European Commission to further develop the concept of the international dimension of Europe's transport system, and to integrate fully the Mediterranean and Atlantic dimension of the transport network, which undoubtedly has an impact on the development of transport in the European Union as well as being a key means of strengthening vital cooperation between the two shores of the Mediterranean and competitive and sustainable integration into the world market.

Brussels, 30 June 2011.

The President
of the Committee of the Regions
Mercedes BRESSO
