

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

(2010/C 232/05)

THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS ISSUES THE FOLLOWING RECOMMENDATIONS

- on the question of EU funding, the CoR urges the Commission to give due consideration to urban mobility, through the Structural Funds and cohesion policy, the EIB and the EBRD
- believes that there needs to be more coherence across European policies and initiatives and, particularly, an integrated approach to urban policies
- re-states its support for development of sustainable urban mobility plans for, at least, the larger cities; it advocates the introduction of incentive measures at an EU level whereby European funding of urban transport projects would be contingent upon the existence of such plans and the adoption of public-private partnership mobility agreements
- the Commission should encourage Member States to make such plans mandatory for all large urban areas and create suitable incentives in order to encourage local authorities to draw them up
- urges the Commission to introduce an annual European prize to reward outstanding and transferable transport initiatives, as part of an EU-wide 'Green Flag Scheme' awarded for instance to urban areas that achieve low levels of environmental pollution and urban congestion
- urges the Commission to quickly commence the study proposed on the urban aspects of the internalisation of external costs of transport modes, to help rebalance the costs of different transport modes

<b>Rapporteur:</b>	Councillor Sir Albert Bore, Member of Birmingham City Council (UK/PES)
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	COM(2009) 490 final

## I. GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

### Background

1. In 2008, the Committee of the Regions <sup>(1)</sup> responded to the European Commission Green Paper: Towards a new culture for Urban Mobility <sup>(2)</sup>. This was followed by an Action Plan on Urban Mobility <sup>(3)</sup> in April 2009 in response to a European Parliament own initiative report <sup>(4)</sup> in which the Committee of the Regions welcomed the numerous urban mobility initiatives which have emerged at EU level.

2. The Committee of the Regions has advocated a model whereby Urban Mobility Plans are implemented via sustainable long-term public-public/public-private agreements or Mobility Agreements and asked that the Commission to establish a financing instrument within the framework of Cohesion Policy, made available to regions and urban areas directly, that would encourage urban areas to set up mobility plans. The design and implementation of Urban Mobility Plans would be the responsibility of the cities themselves.

3. The European Commission was also asked to add value to the process by funding incentives, award schemes and exchange of best practice with the equivalent of an EU-wide 'Blue Flag Scheme' for quality coastal areas to be awarded on the basis of specific indicators to urban areas with low levels of pollution and congestion.

4. believes that there is a need for European-level harmonisation, particularly regarding the technical requirements for vehicles (e.g. retrofitting existing vehicles with diesel particulate filters), infrastructure and transport services, and also in respect of labels (plates and badges) allowing vehicles that meet European exhaust gas and noise standards to enter green zones;

5. Moreover, the Committee of the Regions <sup>(5)</sup> has expressed the view that the social dimension of urban mobility should be given further focus, as it is the tool to promote both social cohesion and territorial cohesion within urban and peri-urban areas.

6. The Commission has now adopted an Action Plan on Urban Mobility <sup>(6)</sup> which proposes twenty measures to encourage and help local, regional and national authorities in achieving their goals for sustainable urban mobility. For the first time, a possible comprehensive support package in the field of sustainable urban mobility is presented.

7. The actions proposed by the Commission are to be launched over the four years following the adoption of the Action Plan, but the European Commission will conduct a review of the implementation of the Action Plan in the year 2012 and will then assess the need for further action.

### Comments on the European Commission's Action Plan on Urban Mobility

8. The Committee of the Regions congratulates the European Commission for having finally published an Action Plan on Urban Mobility which reflects the main issues at stake for better mobility in our cities.

#### *The Economic and Environmental Arguments for an Action Plan*

9. The European Commission has identified that 72 % <sup>(7)</sup> of the European population live in urban areas. This figure will rise to 84 % by 2050. Urban areas face the challenge of making transport sustainable, both in competitiveness terms (congestion, transport costs) and environmental terms (air quality, noise).

(1) Opinion on the Green Paper on Urban Transport (Rapporteur: Albert Bore) - CdR 236/2007 fin.

(2) COM(2007) 551.

(3) Opinion on the Action Plan on Urban Mobility (Rapporteur: Albert Bore) - CdR 417/2008 fin.

(4) Report on an Action Plan on Urban Mobility (Rapporteur: Gilles Savary) - 2008/2217(INI).

(5) Opinion on the Green Paper on Territorial Cohesion (Rapporteur: Jean-Yves Le Drian) - CdR 274/2008 fin.

(6) COM(2009) 490.

(7) United Nations, World Urbanisation Prospects: The 2007 Revision.

10. The Committee of the Regions acknowledges the crucial importance of urban mobility and urban transport for the future of Europe, as it touches upon the three main pillars of sustainable development:

- **the economic pillar**, because transport congestion is an obstacle to economic competitiveness (trade delays, higher cost of transportation of goods, etc). Urban areas are the economic motors of Europe, as more than 70 % of economic wealth in the EU is created there. However, 7 % of this wealth is wasted on the external costs of accidents, congestion, health and environmental damage;
- **the environmental pillar**, because the pollution generated by car/lorry traffic and congestion within metropolitan areas and cities and in inter-urban travel is one of the main obstacles to the EU's success in reaching the 20-20-20 objective. Motorised transport in cities represents 40 % of greenhouse gas emissions produced by road transport overall and up to 70 % of other pollutants. It is obvious that introducing a modal shift of urban transport (public transport being the main solution) will contribute to the sustainability of European development;
- **the social pillar**, because better systems of public transport and reductions in congestion will have a positive impact on the quality of life of citizens and public health; they will also give deprived neighbourhoods and communities better access to city centres, thereby allowing better access to job opportunities, services (health, education) and culture.

#### *Roles and Responsibilities*

11. The Committee of the Regions welcomes the complete understanding of the subsidiarity principle shown by the Commission since, in the Action Plan, the European Commission acknowledges that urban mobility policies are the primary responsibility of local, regional and national authorities even though decisions adopted at a local level often relate to a framework set by national and EU policy.

12. The European Commission adopts the view that much is to be gained by a partnership approach which fully respects the subsidiarity principle and the different competencies and responsibilities of all levels of governance.

13. The 20 measures proposed in this Action Plan mainly concern tools to help cities and regions develop sustainable mobility policy and reflect most the CoR's past recommendations. These tools are:

- exchange of information and best practice;

- publication of information and guidance documents on establishing urban mobility plans;
- dialogue with public transport operators in order to define voluntary commitments on passenger rights;
- internet guide on clean vehicles and discussions with the Member States regarding arrangements for introducing 'energy saving' driving techniques in driving tests;
- an observatory on urban mobility;
- several studies in the field of urban mobility, including how the different type of 'green zones' work in the EU.

14. The Commission's Action Plan on Urban Mobility provides an opportunity to set out an EU framework to assist local, regional and national authorities to take action in urban areas where sustainable transport networks need to be developed and new technological solutions introduced, respecting competencies and responsibilities, to introduce measures that offer EU citizens clean modes of transport in urban areas and to change urban mobility behaviour in order to meet environmental and economic competitiveness objectives and social cohesion goals of the EU.

15. The European Commission's Action Plan sets out 6 themes arising from the consultation on the Green Paper, each of which is worth commenting upon further.

#### *Promoting Integrated Policies*

16. Perhaps the most important of the three actions proposed within this theme is the support to be given to local authorities in developing sustainable urban mobility plans covering freight and passenger transport in urban and peri-urban areas. This action was a key recommendation of the Committee of the Regions <sup>(8)</sup>.

17. However, an interesting addition, worthwhile of support, is the proposal to introduce an urban mobility dimension in the Sustainable Energy Plans to be prepared by cities participating in the Covenant of Mayors <sup>(9)</sup> in order to promote an integrated approach, linking energy and climate change with sustainable transport and mobility issues.

<sup>(8)</sup> See footnote 3.

<sup>(9)</sup> [www.eumayors.eu](http://www.eumayors.eu).

18. The Commission also envisages providing information on the link between sustainable urban mobility measures and regional policy objectives, including the link between urban transport and the trans-European transport network.

#### *Focusing on Citizens*

19. There is acknowledgement that passenger rights and availability of information on reliability, safety, etc are necessary to attract the public to the bus, tram, metro and other public transport modes. The Commission intends to identify EU-wide best practices and to put in place a set of voluntary commitments for strengthening passenger rights in public transport – an initiative which the Committee of the Regions has previously supported <sup>(10)</sup>.

20. The European Commission intends to work with public transport operators and others in facilitating the provision of travel information, with the ultimate aim of providing users with a public transport travel portal at an EU level on the internet with a particular focus on the main nodes in the TEN-T network and their local and regional connections – as previously suggested by the Committee of the Regions <sup>(10)</sup>.

21. The Commission proposes to launch a study on the operational rules for Green Zones across the EU, which is intended to lead to the exchange of good practice. This proposal underpins the Committee of Regions' suggestion <sup>(10)</sup>, of an annual European prize to reward outstanding and transferable transport initiatives, as part of the equivalent of an EU-wide 'Blue Flag Scheme' awarded to areas with low levels of environmental pollution and congestion (a 'Green Flag Scheme'). The European Commission suggests that, for the European Mobility week, the existing award scheme would be optimised and a special award introduced to encourage the adoption of urban mobility plans.

22. As energy-efficient driving is a mandatory part of the training and testing of professional drivers, the Commission will discuss with Member States if and how energy efficient driving could be included in driving tests for private drivers.

#### *Greening Urban Transport*

23. The European Commission believes that action at an EU level can help strengthen markets for new, clean vehicle technologies and alternative fuels. It therefore proposes continued support

for research and demonstration projects funded through the Seventh Framework Programme, to facilitate the market introduction of lower and zero emission vehicles and alternative fuels - with specific reference to the European Green Cars Initiative <sup>(11)</sup> with its focus on electric vehicles and related infrastructure in urban areas.

24. An internet-based guide on clean and energy efficient vehicles will be developed, providing support for the joint procurement of vehicles for public services.

25. Once the EU framework for the internalisation of external costs is established, the Commission will launch a study on the urban aspects of internalisation that will consider the effectiveness and efficiency of pricing solutions that make the user pay for the external costs (environmental, congestion and other costs).

#### *Strengthening Funding*

26. A specific recommendation of the Committee of the Regions <sup>(10)</sup> was that support for European funding and co-financing of urban transport projects should be conditional upon the existence of integrated Urban Mobility Plans, further adding to the EU incentivisation of these plans. The Committee of the Regions advocated the introduction of European financial instruments enabling co-financing of Urban Mobility Plans, contingent upon the existence of public-public/public-private Urban Mobility Agreements that draw in funds from the private sector and from local, regional and national funding programmes.

27. The Commission's Action Plan suggests that EU funding, including EIB instruments, can provide significant incentives and help leverage private funds, so helping local authorities to develop innovative public-private partnership schemes. The Commission would wish to help authorities and stakeholders to explore existing funding opportunities and develop innovative public-private partnership schemes.

28. Furthermore, the Commission has acknowledged that it should continue to support the CIVITAS initiative beyond the third generation projects started in 2008 as previously advocated by the Committee of the Regions <sup>(10)</sup>.

<sup>(10)</sup> See footnote 3.

<sup>(11)</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/research/transport/info/green\\_cars\\_initiative\\_en.html](http://ec.europa.eu/research/transport/info/green_cars_initiative_en.html).

*Sharing Experience and Knowledge*

29. The European Commission intends to launch a study on how to improve data collection for urban transport and mobility, and to set up a virtual platform to share information, data and statistics, monitor developments and facilitate the exchange of best practices – building on existing initiatives <sup>(12)</sup>. This action was previously welcomed by the Committee of the Regions.

*Optimising Urban Mobility*

30. The European Commission is concerned to facilitate modal shift towards more environmentally friendly modes of transport and efficient freight logistics and, in order to respond to these concerns, intends to organise a conference on urban freight transport in 2010. This is an initiative that is welcomed by the Committee of the Regions.

31. The Commission also envisages offering assistance on the application of Intelligent Transport Systems – hopefully, with interoperable communication protocols and data transfer to improve urban mobility in relation, for example, to electronic ticketing and payment, traffic management, travel information, etc.

**II. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS**

## THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

32. welcomes the European Commission's Action Plan on Urban Mobility and supports the measures put forward as these do not undermine the subsidiarity principle and the primary responsibilities of local, regional and national authorities, believing that urban mobility challenges are equally as important as regional and long distance transport infrastructure, and in any case are complementary in one or another regional field of action;

*Funding a modal shift towards public transport*

33. believes that technology-driven actions alone (new engine technology, better fuels and other improvements) supported by the Seventh Framework Programme will not be sufficient to achieve the provision of high quality, secure and affordable public transport systems and, thereby, major modal shift and lower congestion in urban areas; modal shift to all forms of public transport, cycling and walking must be encouraged;

34. accordingly, urges the Commission give due consideration to urban mobility, with clear sustainability criteria in urban and peri-urban areas of the EU, through the Structural Funds and Cohesion Policy, the European Investment Bank (EIB) and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD);

<sup>(12)</sup> For example – [www.eltis.org](http://www.eltis.org).

35. moreover, in the forthcoming review of the Financial Perspectives for the EU, urges that urban transport needs are taken into account – particularly because of the major contribution that funded Urban Mobility Plans could deliver in relation to the economic, environmental and social pillars of sustainable development in metropolitan areas;

36. supports the suggestions by the European Parliament that, in the 2014-20 Financial Perspectives, the possibility of a European financial instrument should be examined that would enable the co-financing of:

- Urban Mobility Plans; and
- investment in urban and metropolitan mobility that meets the EU's environmental and socio-economic objectives;

37. believes that these measures are justified as the provision of high quality, secure, affordable and extensive public transport systems in European cities and peri-urban areas would make it possible to:

- strengthen economic growth and competitiveness through a reduction of congestion and transport costs, make more effective the management of passenger and goods traffic, the creation of jobs in support of public transport systems and the leverage effect of such investment <sup>(13)</sup>;
- improve the quality of the environment through the reduction of GHG emissions and other pollutants, reduction of road traffic and energy savings <sup>(14)</sup>, improvement of air quality and the reduction of respiratory and cardio-vascular health impacts;
- reinforce social and territorial cohesion <sup>(15)</sup> through increased mobility for residents, particularly excluded communities living in poor suburbs, and at the same time improve the environment of populated areas and tourist attractions in town centres;

<sup>(13)</sup> Public transport investments have a multiplier effect of 2 to 2.5 on local and regional economies – EC Fifth Framework Programme (2005): Transecon study.

<sup>(14)</sup> Energy savings of around 400 to 500kg of fuel per inhabitant annually is possible in cities with public transport having a high modal share -UITP.

<sup>(15)</sup> See footnote 5.

*Adopting an integrated approach to urban policies*

38. believes that there needs to be more coherence across European policies and initiatives and, particularly, an integrated approach to urban policies and spatial planning in order that initiatives to tackle congestion and environmental pollution through the development of integrated, sustainable Urban Mobility Plans in metropolitan areas are not negated by policies on, for example, urban planning and housing provision;

39. re-states its support for development of sustainable urban mobility plans for, at least, the larger cities, urban and peri-urban areas that would address the accessibility challenges for all inhabitants and freight transport needs of these areas, as well as congestion, environmental and health impacts;

40. advocates the introduction of incentive measures at an EU level such that, in appropriate urban and peri-urban areas, European funding and co-financing of urban and metropolitan transport projects should be contingent upon the existence of Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans and the adoption of Mobility Agreements that, through public-private partnership agreements, draw in funds from the private sector, local, regional and national funding programmes;

41. accepts that many cities have already drawn up mobility plans but believes that, if this approach was adopted across all major urban areas with active stakeholder involvement, cities would continue to have the freedom to adapt mobility plans to their own circumstances whilst the Commission would be able to demonstrate the added value of action at the EU level;

42. notes that, as on previous occasions, the European Commission has called upon local authorities to develop and implement sustainable urban transport plans<sup>(16)</sup>, the Commission should encourage Member States to make this mandatory for all large urban or peri-urban areas and create suitable incentives for cities and regions in order to encourage local authorities to draw up such plans;

43. urges that funding for the CIVITAS initiative should be increased but only to allow CIVITAS to move beyond demonstration projects and the exchange of best practice, to assist in the promotion and implementation of Urban Mobility Plans;

44. urges the Commission to further incentivise the development and implementation of Urban Mobility Plans by the introduction of an annual European prize to reward outstanding and transferable transport initiatives, as part of an EU-wide 'Green Flag Scheme' awarded for instance to urban areas that adopt Urban Mobility Plans and achieve low levels of environmental pollution and urban congestion or have been particularly successful in adjusting the modal split;

<sup>(16)</sup> Thematic strategy on the Urban Environment – COM(2005) 718.

45. recommends the Commission adopt a set of indicators which would trigger the award of an urban 'Green Flag', but recognises that achievement of low levels of pollution (air and noise) and low levels of congestion (speed and reliability of journeys) will be a variable challenge for cities given the high degree of variation of city characteristics and urban transport characteristics;

46. recommends that, when the selecting cities for the award of a green flag, account also be taken of the promotion of a green and/or environment-friendly way of thinking in urban areas, such as the promotion of the use of alternative forms of transport (by the development of foot and cycle paths or the encouragement of other alternative means of transport, etc);

*Encouraging a modal shift in transport*

47. accepts that the citizens of the EU, given their more acute awareness of climate change issues, may now be more receptive to adopting measures that will make the user pay for the external costs of transport systems (environmental, congestion and other costs) where public authorities do not invest in public transport – the 'polluter pays' principle;

48. urges the Commission to quickly commence the study proposed on the urban aspects of the internalisation of external costs of transport modes, so that measures can be adopted that will help rebalance the costs of different transport modes<sup>(17)</sup>,<sup>(18)</sup> and achieve more sustainable transport system in urban areas;

49. believes that guidance from the European Commission on the various options for reflecting the external costs of mobility in transport prices will encourage public support for clean modes of transport, assist in modal shift and help to make it clear to the public that individual transport only 'appears' more economical because the external costs do not appear on the economic accounts for transport;

50. welcomes the support offered by the Commission for research into clean, energy efficient vehicles and alternative fuels but notes that, whilst technological advance will assist with the environmental agenda, measure to achieve modal shift are also required to deal with both the environmental and congestion problems within urban areas;

<sup>(17)</sup> Passenger fares in rail and bus services are increasing faster than the cost of private car use – European Environmental Agency, Report 3/2004.

<sup>(18)</sup> A Sustainable Future for Transport: Towards an Integrated, Technology-led and User Friendly System (Rapporteur: Väino Hallikmägi) – CdR 146/2009 fin.

*Enhancing the rights of passengers*

51. welcomes the European Commission's proposals on passenger rights and availability of information on safety and reliability but, since these will extend only to voluntary commitments based on EU-wide best practice, urges the Commission to strengthen the likely impact of these proposals by supporting communication

and awareness campaigns in all Member States, in co-operation with national, regional and local authorities;

52. calls for such awareness campaigns to include information on the impact of urban mobility measures and the mobility choices of Europe's citizens on the environment and economic competitiveness of Europe and its regions.

Brussels, 15 April 2010.

*The First Vice-President  
of the Committee of the Regions*  
Ramón Luis VALCÁRCEL SISO

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