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SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION: LOCAL TRANSPORT AND LAND USE
Note by the secretariat

Introduction

1. At its fifty-ninth session in September 1998, the Committee on Human Settlements considered the work done on the case studies on improving environmental performance and the results of the Workshop on sustainable consumption patterns held in Vienna in February 1998. The Workshop was a joint activity of the ECE Committee on Human Settlements and the ECE Committee on Environmental Policy. It recognized that cities were crucial in promoting sustainable consumption patterns in land use, transport, mobility and lifestyles. Influencing consumer behaviour in cities is an important part of a broader long-term strategy to achieve urban consumption patterns that are environmentally, economically and socially sustainable.

2. The Committee on Human Settlements also considered the proposal for further work. It suggested focusing future activities on environmentally sound urban and regional transport coordinated with sustainable land use and planning, where joint actions of the central, regional and local authorities could substantially reduce the overall impact (from a life-cycle perspective) on human health, natural resources and the environment, while maintaining or even improving the quality of life and economic performance. The Committee invited its Bureau and the secretariat to prepare a concrete proposal for such activities with a timetable for its next session in September 1999. This note was prepared in response to this request.

I. BACKGROUND

3. The countries in transition face unprecedented growth in the use of cars and profound changes in their mobility patterns. Historically their cities relied on extensive public transport facilities. In western countries, policy makers and planners recognize that the existing land use and transport patterns are unsustainable. There is a growing awareness of the need to consider land use and transport together with their environmental implications. If such an approach could be introduced in countries in transition, where there are significant opportunities for real gains from integrated land use and transport policies, unsustainable patterns of urban developments could be modified and reversed.

4. There is strong evidence that the transport patterns shape lifestyles and land use. For example, new transport infrastructure creates further demand for travel and land. The creation of new transport networks around cities encourages the decentralization of services and retail trade and has a considerable impact on suburban land use and transport needs.

5. It is also recognized that existing land use influences travel modes and demand. Higher densities can reduce the separation of a city's functions and activities and boost demand for public transport; certain threshold densities are required for public transport systems to be viable. However, other factors, such as income, car ownership and the degree of public transport development, determine travel behaviour too.

6. Integrating land use and local transport policies not only means that they should complement each other. It also means integrating thought and action across all policy areas and levels of decision-making. Therefore, land use and local transport policies should be linked to policies on health, education, the economy, the environment and social welfare, as well as national and regional policies. This also means that public and private sectors interests have to be taken into account together. Local authorities have a key role to play. The public, planners, local businesses and transport operators are the key players, if sustainable local transport and land use are to be achieved.

II. OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE

7. The project would promote environmentally sound management of local transport integrated with sustainable land use and planning, with a particular focus on countries in transition. More specifically, the project would:

(a) Facilitate the exchange of information and experience on planning, regulatory, economic, financial, organizational and other measures to achieve environmentally sound urban transport and sustainable land use;

(b) Promote networking among environmental and municipal policy makers and decision makers, urban and regional planners, researchers, and

representatives of the private sector and citizens groups dealing with transport management and land use;

(c) Draw up policy recommendations and practical guidance to public authorities, in particular at the local level.

8. The project would make it possible to evaluate:

(a) Prevailing traffic patterns and trends in urban and adjacent areas, and transport-related impacts on the environment and human health;

(b) Driving forces behind these patterns and trends, including the role of urban design and structure, land use, transport infrastructure, income growth and lifestyles;

(c) Initiatives launched by central and local governments to mitigate excessive demand for urban transport, to widen travellers' choices and to shift demand towards environmentally sound transport modes.

9. Particular attention would be given to the development of a strategic approach to integrating urban transport management with land use and planning. This may cover:

(a) Setting specific targets for achieving local transport systems which are economically, socially and environmentally sustainable. These could include targets for emission reductions and energy consumption by transport mode or targets for the development of public transport;

(b) Planning instruments which aim, inter alia, at:

(i) Creating a "foot-fit" urban structure - mixed land use for housing, work, shopping, and recreation both for new and for existing city quarters;

(ii) Locating facilities that generate traffic of persons, i.e. offices, public service and retail centres, close to traffic terminals;

(iii) Improving the attractiveness and quality of residential areas to reduce transport needs;

(iv) Creating a network of green corridors connecting residential areas with natural landscapes, forests and parks to reduce the need for car travel for sports and recreation;

(v) Linking urban, suburban and inter-city transport to reduce need for private car connections;

(vi) Upgrading and extending the public transport infrastructure;

(vii) Building safe cycle tracks to make cycling a real alternative to driving, especially in city centres;

- (viii) Creating pedestrian zones and safe footpaths;
- (c) Regulations such as:
 - (i) Environmental impact assessment of transport-infrastructure projects to mitigate any increase in travel demand or to reduce it;
 - (ii) Traffic restrictions for vehicles (in inner-city areas, in environmentally sensitive areas, for freight transit, etc.);
 - (iii) Parking and public transport requirements in planning for airports, railway stations and social facilities;
 - (iv) Parking limitations in areas where there are public transport alternatives;
- (d) Economic and financial instruments such as:
 - (i) Road and fuel taxation to internalize the costs of accidents, congestion, pollution, noise and use of public space in the total transport costs, and to finance environmentally sound transport programmes;
 - (ii) Parking pricing systems to limit car traffic in city centres;
 - (iii) Financial management strategies to support municipal public transport;
- (e) Other measures such as:
 - (i) Public information and participation;
 - (ii) Institutional arrangements to coordinate transport policies at local, regional and national levels.

III. ORGANIZATION AND METHODS OF WORK

10. The ECE Committees on Human Settlements and on Environmental Policy would jointly implement the project. A joint steering group could be set up for the project. It would be composed of some 10 to 15 experts from central and local governments, the private sector, the academic community and NGOs. The steering group would work in cooperation with the secretariat to:

(a) Examine practical experience, at national, regional and local levels, with the promotion of environmentally sound local transport integrated with sustainable land use and planning; the results would be discussed at a workshop in spring 2001;

(b) Develop, on the basis of the workshop's results, guidelines for governments for subsequent submission to a joint ad hoc meeting convened by the two ECE Committees in early 2002. The guidelines would then be

transmitted to the fifth Ministerial Conference "Environment for Europe" (Kiev, September 2002).

11. When the Committee's Bureau considered the proposal on local transport and related land-use in April 1999, it felt that real value added could be achieved only if both Committees would agree to join their efforts (subject to a decision by the Committee on Environmental Policy at its next session on 20-24 September 1999). It should be mentioned also that the Eighth Conference on Urban and Regional Research identified a number of other topics which the Committee on Human Settlements may wish to consider within its activities on urban environmental performance, for example:

(a) Urban structures affected by lifestyles and environmentally friendly behaviour;

(b) Impact of social polarization and urban labour markets on urban environment;

(c) Energy use in urban areas and recycling of construction and demolition waste;

(d) Human resources, skills and standards, organization of public participation needed for urban sustainability;

(e) Environmental impacts of interactions between urban/rural development patterns.