



**Position of the association of European Metropolitan Transport Authorities
(EMTA) on the White Paper of the European Commission on the future of
the European transport policy**

December 2001

Introduction

The association of European Metropolitan Transport Authorities (EMTA) brings together 26 public authorities in charge of the public transport networks of the European largest cities. These authorities plan, co-ordinate, fund and improve constantly the quality of public transport systems serving more than 70 million European citizens.

The Members of EMTA have greeted the release last September by the European Commission of the White Paper on the European transport policy by 2010, since **they all agree that there is an urgent need to change the current patterns of mobility in Europe**. However, they would like to stress that **this White Paper is lacking ambition concerning mobility in the urban areas**, where lives more than three quarters of the European population, on the one hand, and that the European institutions should move fast to implement the measures necessary to foster a sustainable mobility, on the other hand. The probability that the objectives won't be reached is strong enough to justify a strong commitment of the European authorities (Commission, but also Parliament and Council of Ministers) to deliver quickly the measures proposed.

Main comments

EMTA authorities share the analysis of the current situation by the White Paper : too many deaths on the roads (41,000 each year in the EU), too much congestion stifling the urban areas, too long travelling times affecting mostly the poorest people, too many nuisances to the quality of life (noise, degradation of urban spaces, stress), too much damage to nature, too low quality of public transport systems. And, **if nothing is done quickly to reverse these trends, worst is to come**, since the current evolution clearly still consists in an increase in the use of the private car, especially in urban areas.

Given this trend, **the objective set by the White Paper to bring the market shares of each transport mode in 2010 back at the same levels as in 1998 seems ambitious enough**, and will mean that measures will have to be adopted soon so as to alter behaviours.

EMTA transport authorities think that each level of public authorities has a role to play to achieve a sustainable mobility, and the European Union in the first place. Public transport authorities expect indeed from the European Union:

- ***First a clear statement of the objectives, which should be ambitious.***
Europe has to show the world that there is a way of combining economic dynamism, social justice, quality of life and a protected environment.

- *A greater involvement of the European Union for the implementation of a sustainable urban mobility.*

The public transport authorities of the European metropolitan areas regret **that urban transport is not given due consideration in the White Paper**, which is illustrated by the fact that it only received 4 pages in the 123-page White Paper. Even though the Commission is right to advocate the principle of subsidiarity and to say that the “responsibility for urban transport lies mainly with the national and local authorities”, **the fact that 75% of the European Population now lives in urban areas should place urban mobility at the core of all European transport policies**. Europe should let the local authorities the freedom to organize their transport systems as they wish, provided that this organization respects the general principles set at the European level.

In general terms, EMTA authorities are angry that **urban transportation issues often don't get as much attention and money as the improvement of long distance travel** (high speed trains, new airport facilities). To take an example, everyone in Europe has heard about the success of the French TGV, but who knows that high speed services make up less than 10% of SNCF's (French national railways) patronage, while the regional rail services of the Paris metropolitan area account for some 60% of SNCF passengers. Is it normal that these passengers don't receive the same attention and quality of service for their daily trips as when they go on holiday on the Cote d'Azur once a year ?

All the policies developed by the European Union so as to implement a sustainable mobility will fail if mobility patterns don't improve in the urban areas in the first place. The commitments of Europe concerning the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions will fail, the will to cut the number of people killed in accidents will fail, the promise to reduce congestion and its economic burden will fail as well if the use of private car is not cut noticeably in the cities and metropolitan areas.

Even though the European Commission cannot replace the local authorities, it can set general targets. **The White Paper would have been right to display some objectives of reduction of the use of private car in the European cities**. The EU can also inform better the local authorities of the necessity to reverse the current trends. It is still too often regarded as bold and politically dangerous for local authorities to try and reduce car traffic in their territories. Politicians who want to act in this direction feel too often isolated and criticized by the different lobbies opposed to the reduction of car traffic, while it should be the opposite. It should be the local politicians who don't act fast to improve the local mobility who should be widely criticized and feel ashamed. Europe should do much more to this end.

- *A steady and important contribution to research and development of new transport systems*

The European Union already invests quite a lot of money in its research programmes devoted to transport. This effort should go on and its results widely circulated.

The European Union should also devote more money to the funding of new transport systems in the European cities, so as to accelerate some projects which often stumble on financial issues. European subsidies currently concern nearly exclusively cross-border transport projects, which are useful for the improvement of communications between European countries, but very far from the every day problems of the European citizens. **Nothing prevents the European Union from devoting more money to urban transport projects**, as already do most European States through subsidies paid to the local authorities. Some people might say that the European budget is not big enough for such a policy. But is it tolerable that the European Union still devotes half of its expenses to the agriculture, and so little to urban citizens ?

- *A fast move towards harmonization of:*

- . the **taxation of fuels**, with clear incentives for the use of alternative ones,
- . the **technical standards** of public transport systems, so as to set minimum levels of quality of service (for example in terms of accessibility to people with reduced mobility) and of security and so as to reduce their costs of production (for example concerning tramway systems)
- . the **rules concerning the use of private car** (alcohol and speed limits, which could still be lowered by the countries and cities wishing to do so, frequency and objectives of controls, minimum amounts of fines and penalties).

- *The definition and implementation at the European level of guidelines for a fairer infrastructure charging system between the different transport modes.*

The European regulations could state that the money collected should be devoted to the funding of public transport systems

- *The definition of strict rules concerning the necessary co-ordination between land use and transport policies.*

The European concept of urbanity is based on cities of a certain density very well served by public transport systems. **The attempts to control and influence the patterns of urban mobility will achieve nothing if it is still possible to develop new urban areas without efficient public transport.** The preservation of rural areas from uncontrolled urbanization should go together with better connections between town and transport planning in the built areas.

Conclusion

As a conclusion of this position statement, the transport authorities of the European Metropolitan areas would like to stress **that the White Paper doesn't tackle in a proper way the problems of urban transport** and can only be regarded as **a first step**, a sort of general background presentation of the transportation issues. EMTA authorities think therefore that the European Commission should go further and prepare a new White – or Green – Paper specific for urban transport issues, which would be **both more ambitious in its objectives and more compelling in its expectations**. The subsidiarity principle means that an authority only acts if the lower levels of authorities cannot, or not as well. This is why it could be said that the European Union will be guilty of not respecting the principle of subsidiarity if it doesn't act quickly to improve urban mobility, that is to say the every day mobility of the European citizens.

Paris, 18 December 2001

List of public transport authorities belonging to the association of European Metropolitan Transport Authorities (EMTA)

AMSTERDAM (ROA)
ATHENS (OASA)
BARCELONA (ATM)
BILBAO (CTB)
BRUSSELS (Ministère de la Région de Bruxelles)
DUBLIN (DTO)
FRANKFURT (RMV)
GENEVA (Office des Transports et de la Circulation)
HELSINKI (YTV)
LISBON (Camara Municipal)
LONDON (TfL)
MADRID (CTM)
MANCHESTER (GMPTE)
MILAN (Comune di Milano)
OSLO (AS Sporveier)
PARIS (STIF)
PRAGUE (ROPID)
ROME (Comune di Roma)
SEVILLE (Junta de Andalucia)
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VALENCIA (ETM)
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