

Second High Level Stakeholder conference on the Future of Transport

TEN-T Green Paper: A policy review

20 November 2009

Future of Transport and TEN-T network: the views of the respondents to the public consultations

Matthias Ruete, Director General, DG Transport and Energy, European Commission

Introduction

- VP Tajani has already referred to the large participation of stakeholders in the two consultations on the “Future of Transport” and on the revision of the TEN-T policy.
- This shows the interest for topic and bodes well for the richness of today’s debates.
- I will not go in all the details of the contributions. We have distributed a summary here at the conference which you can also find on our website together with all individual replies. What I will try to do now is to sketch the main points and the main dividing lines of these contributions.

General remarks

- The contributions generally share the analysis of the future challenges in terms of societal changes made in the Communication: environmental challenges, oil scarcity, globalisation, ageing, urbanisation and increased demand for mobility. In the face of these challenges, there is consensus that we need a breakthrough in our transport policy.
- There is also widespread agreement that decarbonising of transport should be at the centre of transport policy in the coming decades. The need for mobility will continue to increase, but transport will only be able to meet this demand if it takes a sustainable path.
- Where contributions have sometimes very different ideas is on how to reach these general goals. What should be the instruments? What policies do we need to activate? I hope the various workshops today can help us in

clarifying the different positions and in finding the right balance between different views.

- We have decided to divide today's discussion in three broad areas: infrastructure, technology and people. Let me give you an initial taste of the issues that respondents have raised and that may well emerge in the panel discussions.

1. INFRASTRUCTURE

As a network industry, transport is shaped by infrastructure.

Availability and access to, maintenance, capacity and modernity of infrastructure are crucial issues in transport policy.

Development of infrastructure has traditionally been at the heart of TEN-T policy in particular. There is a general consensus that the TEN-T policy should be an integral part of the coming White paper and that funds should be increased. But is it sufficient just to increase the volume of money?

Before thinking about funding, it is important to have a clear vision of what we need for a performing and sustainable transport system. In the consultation on the TEN-T Green Paper we proposed three options, of which number three, maintaining the comprehensive network and identifying a core network for Europe, has been chosen by a vast majority of reactions: not only in the public consultation, but also by the Report of the European Parliament, the Conclusions of the Council and the Opinions of the Social and Economic Committee and the Committee of Regions.

Apart from a clear vote for the dual layer option, with a comprehensive and a core network, many of the 300 responses to the public consultation showed the dilemma between the needs of central and peripheral regions, but also stressed the importance of the nodes, both as urban agglomerations and as points of inter-modal connection.

The importance of ITS and of technological innovation was emphasized, to make traffic more efficient in economic and in environmental terms.

“European added value” was the main quoted criterion for assessment of projects.

In the Communication on the Future of Transport we referred to the need to better exploit the networks. Some contributors defend the objective of decarbonising through giving priority to new investments that support modal shift. This is very much a central tenet of our policy, but it must be

recognised that even if modal shift were to be extremely successful, road transport would remain the predominant mode. We should therefore seek to achieve energy efficiency and environmental improvements in all modes as well as to find optimal combinations in which each mode can exploit its specific strength: this is what we call “co-modality”.

I was happy to see a broad agreement on the idea that investment in infrastructure should be designed to support co-modality. This includes, for example, making sure that freight flows are able to cross the EU as eco-efficiently as possible through “green-corridors” in which rail, sea and inland waterway connections are provided, together with modern infrastructure that supports clean technologies.

The transition towards a low-carbon system will be expensive. There is agreement that more TEN-T funds and public funds in general are needed to support infrastructure. However, there is also widespread concern that the necessary public funds may become harder to obtain, in particular after the crisis.

In this context, internalising external costs of transport can provide a source of revenues. Smart pricing has a widespread if not general support. Business and industry are however worried by its effects on competitiveness and on possible negative consequences on peripheral countries. Some would prefer that internalisation is applied only to private cars.

There are also diverging views concerning the use of revenues; road organisations want that the revenues obtained from road transport are reinvested in the road sector. The railway sector would prefer that these revenues are reinvested to develop the less polluting modes.

- *Do you think that the concept of “core network” and “green corridors” as laboratories for best practices and innovative technologies are a good idea?*
- *How to bring together all actors involved and make sure that good ideas on paper turn into reality?*
- *And how to support financially the creation of such “excellence infrastructure”? Can we persuade governments and voters to favour the internalisation of external costs to all modes and means of transport?*

These are all issues on which I hope to hear your views.

2. TECHNOLOGY

The second theme is technology.

The decisive role of technology in the way to decarbonisation is acknowledged. However, views are diverging on the concrete measures to be put in place.

Electric cars are widely supported. However, the introduction of electric vehicles will need the introduction of a number of standards, backed by EU support, and the necessary infrastructure which is still lacking.

As to aviation, contributors agree that technological progress towards the decarbonisation relies to a large extent on biofuels.

But technology is not only vehicles: information technologies will transform our travel and transport experience by considerably improving the energy performance of all modes, as well as safety.

An underlying and difficult issue open to debate is that of technology neutrality, as some contributions emphasise the need not to distort technical development through EU measures.

A way to go is to impose emission standards without specifying the technology required, as indeed the EU has already done for cars and which respondents considered to be a positive evolution.

Some contributors would also like to see the ETS system extended to all modes of transport and others would like that quantitative targets for the reduction of CO₂ are applied to the transport system. Some contributions see a role for the EU in the creation of a legal framework harmonizing rules for the creation of environmental zones in urban areas.

These are complex issues, where the objective is right, but the suggested alternatives need to be carefully considered. An important part of the work on the preparation of the White Paper will consist precisely on this: assessing the impact of different options and measures that can be envisaged to solve a particular problem.

Our two panels on technology will also have some challenging questions to debate:

- *Will technology be enough to solve our problems, notably those of climate change?*

- *How to solve the chicken and egg question of the introduction of new technologies? Should we maintain our technology neutrality or concentrate our efforts?*
- *Will we be able to rapidly agree on setting the standards that our industry needs to develop solutions that can compete worldwide?*

3. THE PEOPLE

Our third theme is the people: the users and workers of the transport sector. All of us, in fact.

I kept it last in my presentation to make it clearer, from the examples already given, that the great transformation that we need to bring into the transport sector will never succeed if we do not have the full backing of the people.

Can we convince travellers to make greater use of collective transport means, which are generally safer and more energy efficient? I believe this can be done if a better service is offered; that is one of the reasons why safety, security and passengers' rights are so high on our agenda.

To judge from the answers received, further legislative development in the area of passenger rights encounters some resistance from the part of the industry and local authorities.

I am not sure that settling for a lower level of protection is the right choice for an industry that needs to attract demand. And we know that for passengers, as well as for freight, price is not the only and possibly not even the main element of choice: quality of service is also important, particularly for an aging population.

Talking about transport users is talking about citizens, and more than 70% of EU citizens live in cities. Many cities and local authorities have responded to our consultation. Can we help cities in offering sustainable mobility options to their citizens?

Local problems must have local solutions. This is a case in which the word "subsidiarity" has particular meaning. But local problems of transport, if not solved, end up in global impacts. We cannot leave cities alone in dealing with one of the most complex issues in our society.

I have not yet spoken about workers. They will have to carry the burden of adaptation to a new world of transport.

We know this creates tensions: for example in connection to market opening processes. From the replies to the consultation we see considerable support for continuing the opening of transport markets. However, more uniform enforcement is necessary, notably in respect of social conditions.

The modernisation of transport and the introduction of greater competition need not be enemy of workers. Healthier companies can offer better quality jobs and more efficient transport helps the entire EU economy.

Some transport sectors, I am thinking about maritime or logistics, face a shortage of skills. There is much scope for training and for raising the qualifications of transport professionals, to the benefits of companies and workers alike.

I can therefore see a number of important questions also for our two panels on users and workers.

- *How can we bring more competition in certain transport sectors without lowering workers conditions and safety standards?*
- *How can we offer better transport alternatives to users? How can we obtain the support of citizens for ‘unpopular’ measures such as congestion pricing?*
- *How can the EU better coordinate its action to reduce CO₂ emissions with that of cities and local authorities in respect of urban transport?*

4. THE EXTERNAL DIMENSION

Few contributions refer to what we believe to be very important, namely the role of the EU in the world, but there is an acknowledgement that the role of the EU could be strengthened and EU coordination increased.

Environmental organisations see a much greater role for the EU: following the example of the introduction of ETS in aviation which has been led by the EU.

Some contributions mention that bold actions could be promoted by the Union at international level for example on noise for aircraft.

5. CONCLUSIONS

I hope that my presentation has given a fair picture of some of the points in the contributions. I am fully aware that I couldn't do full justice to each and every one of the many valuable contributions we have received.

So I expect that many of you would like to take the floor and have the opportunity to explain in greater detail the points of view which I have not touched upon.

You will have this opportunity in the six workshops which will start right after my presentation and that gather a wealth of knowledge and expertise in the world of transport.

So thanks for listening, thanks for being here today and enjoy the discussions in the workshops.