Sustainable Transport Planning in Practice

Ensuring sustainable transport in the European Union is the central objective of the EU Common Transport Policy and a major challenge of the EU Sustainable Development Strategy.

Although growing transport activity enhances the economic growth in the EU, it also undoubtedly increases the adverse pressures on the environment and human health. Therefore, sustainable transport policies require intricate reconciliation between apparently conflicting objectives: strong economic growth and detrimental environmental and health impacts.

In this regard, there is an urgent need to simultaneously address social, economic, and environmental issues of transport planning by integrating transport policy with land-use planning and environmental policy. A successful implementation of such an integrated transport planning has been recognized as an essential pre-condition of sustainable mobility across Europe.

However, research concerning the integration of land use planning, transport and environment policies is relatively scarce and so is the evidence about policy integration in practice.

In order to fill this gap, British scientists have recently explored the translation from theory to practice of integrated transport planning in United Kingdom. This research was carried out in 2002-2003 using qualitative methods of inquiry including interviews, documentary, and case study analysis.

In general, the research demonstrated that, in practice, different factors constitute important barriers to implementation of integrated transport planning in UK:

- idealised notion of integration concept,
- lack of clearly defined integration and sustainability targets,
- confusion about the measures to be taken,
- lack of clear and resourced responsibilities enhanced by divided institutional responsibilities and organisational changes,
- failures in communication enhanced by departmental and policy fragmentation, and
- lack of research on synergistic effects of land use and transport policies.

In response, the authors highlight the need for new planning authority structures at city-region level that could accommodate new policy demands and horizontal (between local authority departments and service providers) and vertical (from central down to local government) synergies.

Furthermore, in order to provide a means for measuring the extent of integrated transport practices and their outcomes in UK, and elsewhere, the researches have developed a “ladder of integration” - an analytical tool that identifies different stages of progress toward integrated transport system. The ladder defines 8 levels of progress by which integration could be achieved either at local, regional or national level. It was developed on the basis of an example from Sweden (the city of Malmö) where integrated transport policy was successfully implemented over the last ten years.

According to the authors, this tool could allow UK policy-makers (and others) to assess current level of integration process and to be clear about the likely impact of policy measures they propose in order to achieve sustainable transport system.


Contact: Angela.Hull@uwe.ac.

Theme(s): Sustainable mobility, Sustainable development and policy assessment