Local Government Association (LGA)

LGA Response to EC A sustainable future for transport: Towards an integrated, technology-led and userfriendly system

September 2009

The Local Government Association (LGA) represents over 400 councils in England and Wales. The LGA exists to promote better local government. We work with and for our member authorities to realise a shared vision of local government that enables local people to shape a distinctive and better future for their locality and its communities. We aim to put local councils at the heart of the drive to improve public services and to work to ensure that the policy, legislative and financial context in which they operate, supports that objective.

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Future ofTransport

Executive Summary

1. LGA believes that the EU has an important role to play in shaping the future of transport policy between now and 2050.

2. The LGA is leading a campaign which emphasises that local authorities should be given new capacities to lead and innovate in the field of transport. Greater powers over urban transport planning should be devolved to groups of local authorities in major urban areas. The EU can help with this approach by promoting the right of local self-government, in line with the Council of Europe's Charter on Local Self-Government.

3. This response has been produced based on consultation with a wide range of stakeholders from the English local government sector, including local authorities themselves. It was approved by the LGA's democratically-elected representatives in September 2009.

4. The LGA agrees with the six challenges presented in the Communication, but believes their relative importance and the urgency needed to address them differ.

5. The LGA welcomes the policy objectives stated in the Communication, and would support their inclusion as objectives for a future European Transport Policy: quality transport that is safe and secure; well maintained and integrated networks; more environmentally sustainable transport; EU at the forefront of transport technologies; protecting and developing human capital; smart prices as traffic signals; improving accessibility.

6. The LGA broadly agrees with the policy instruments outlined in the Communication, although we feel that these mostly in fact expand on the "policy objectives" outlined in the previous section, rather than propose concrete policies or actions. We feel however that more detailed proposals for policy are necessary, and that these should be put forward for consultation. Endorsement of EU objectives does not necessarily equate to endorsement of specific policy proposals.

7. We believe that the EU has an important role to play in helping to address the wide range of transport challenges faced by public bodies and society as a whole. In the majority of cases, a non-legislative approach from the EU level, respecting subsidiarity, will be the most appropriate. Citizens and stakeholders have higher expectations of local transport policies than ever before, and initiatives at EU level make an important contribution to stimulating debate and promoting a forward-looking transport 'culture' in the Member States.

Introductory Remarks:

8. This response has been produced based on consultation with a wide range of stakeholders from the English local government sector, including local authorities themselves. It was approved by the LGA's democratically-elected representatives in September 2009.
9. An efficient transport system is an indispensable component of a functioning society. The complex nature of transport systems, their links to environmental issues, to economic growth, and to individual well-being, call for long-term vision and planning from all levels of government: local, regional, national, EU.

10. Considering that the current strategy for European Transport Policy (ETP) ends in 2010, this is indeed an opportune time to discuss a fundamental revision of the EU's transport policies for the coming decades.

11. The LGA therefore welcomes the Commission's attempt to establish a long-term European Transport Policy which will seek to achieve a long-term framework for the sustainable mobility of people and goods. We particularly look forward to proposals for practical policy instruments which will arise from this consultation, and trust that these too will be subject to full consultation.

12. Local Authorities play a wide role across the whole spectrum of planning for transport and land use, whether as highways authorities, directly as public transport operators, or as responsible authorities for other functions such as off street parking. Local authorities also have interests in some regional airports and involvement with port authorities etc.

13. The importance of Local Authorities in listening to the public and informing public and business opinion on key issues such as environmental concerns, optimum standards, strategic options and transport choices, interregional co-operation, should be a helpful element in creating more effective European Transport solutions.

14. The wide range of local experiences across Europe represents a tremendous learning opportunity for all concerned.

15. The structure of this response follows the three main sections and subsections outlined in the Communication: challenges; policy objectives to be addressed; and policy instruments.

1. Six challenges facing us between now and 2050:

16. The LGA agrees with the six challenges presented in the Communication, but believes their relative importance and the urgency needed to address them differ.

Ageing Population:

17. The ageing population undoubtedly presents a significant challenge which member states are beginning to address, not only in terms of transport, but also from a wider societal perspective. The increased cost of caring for an ageing population is likely to impose even more pressure on other budgets such as transport. Despite this fact, elements within the transport system will need to be adapted to cater for this ageing population, and that there is therefore a strong argument that local transport budgets should in fact be increased.

18. The LGA believes that different regions and cities will experience the ageing issue in different ways, and that leeway should be given to local authorities in finding the solution most appropriate to the age composition of their local populations.

Migration:

19. While migration from outside the EU might negate some of the effects of the ageing population, population inflows from third countries will also lead to an increase in demand for transport both within the EU and from the EU to the third country of origin. Intra-EU migration has also led to an increase in demand for transport within the EU, placing an increasing financial burden on the localities welcoming those from other Member States.

20. As highlighted in the Communication, accessibility is an important strand of the ETP, which should take into consideration the need to improve links to areas where migrants, or other groups at risk for social exclusion such as the poorest or elderly, might live. Deprived areas often suffer from a lack of services, making good collective transport coverage all the more important, both in terms of integration of migrants, but also in terms of economic growth and regeneration.

21. The LGA therefore believes that a removal of barriers to migration, both internal and external to the EU, must be accompanied by an increase in the national, and EU means made available to local authorities to adapt transport systems to this new reality.

The Environment:

22. Tackling congestion, and the resulting pollution and climate change is a priority for our organisation, and the local government sector as a whole. The LGA recognises that a range of increasing environmental pressures will hinder economic growth in all areas, and that co-ordinated action is required from all levels of government.

23. Tackling environmental challenges is a key political priority for local authorities, and should be given great prominence in future ETP developments. Figures show that between 1990 and 2007, transport CO_2 emissions in the EU27 increased by 35,6%, while emissions from other sectors decreased by 8.9%. Similarly, the share of transport in total emissions rose from 21% in 1990 to 28% in 2007. A transport Carbon Study due to be released in October predicted that transport carbon will continue to rise enormously in the period to 2031.

24. Also the environmental challenge is intractable from other factors being addressed by the Communication such as the increased urbanisation, since urban areas are where environmental problems are most keenly felt due to population and traffic density.

25. Larger populations and greater economic affluence will also mean more demand for transport. The challenge will be to reconcile this greater demand with the environmental challenges ahead.

26. Therefore future EU measures which tackle environmental challenges are likely to be welcomed provided they respect subsidiarity and do not unduly restrict local freedoms, or add significant cost burdens.

Fossil Fuels:

27. The LGA agrees that scarcity of fossil fuels is a significant issue, and one which must be addressed through research and promotion of alternative fuel technologies. Modal shift and increased uptake of public transport will also have to play an essential part in our aspirations to reduce consumption of fossil fuels.

Urbanisation:

28. Local authorities see the continuing increase of urbanisation as a multi-faceted problem. 84% of the EU's population is expected to live in urban areas by 2050[1]. The health and quality of life costs of private transport are most keenly felt in cities, in terms of loss of time in congested journeys, noise, pollution, accidents and barriers to social interaction. The urban sprawl issue identified by the Commission poses challenges in that it encourages private transport use and also means that administrative city-

[1] EC Communication on the Future of Transport

region and transport authority boundaries do not always reflect where real or 'functional' urban areas now end.

29. Another challenge regarding urbanisation is the corresponding negative effect this may have on rural areas. The East of England Plan[2], for example, highlights the need to ensure good access to employment, schools and other services in order to sustain rural communities. Sustainable mobility is a key challenge as often the private car remains the only viable mode of transport. Innovative schemes to provide more flexible rural public transport, such as demand responsive routing, have a role to play in increasing the accessibility of rural areas to market towns and service centres for example, particularly for those without a car.

30. It is also important to note the inter-dependence of urban and rural areas, in terms of the significant impact on surrounding rural areas of the proximity of major conurbations/capital cities in economic and employment terms, the related transport and environmental/waste implications, and the social value to urban areas of those rural areas.

31. It is a concern that issues of rural accessibility and rural integration within the wider transport network appear to have been largely ignored, by policy makers at all levels.

Globalisation:

32. With regards to globalisation, it is unclear how we can resolve the apparent conflict between economic and environmental goals. Increased globalisation will entail increased demand for transport, which will lead to more CO2 emissions unless there is significant modal shift beyond that foreseen, or technological breakthrough in the near future.

33. We also believe that the lack of sufficient powers and funding for sub-national public sector transport authorities in England is a key barrier to overcoming these challenges. We would welcome a proposal to enshrine both the principle, and the legal framework, whereby the local public sector is able to plan, specify and regulate the public transport network in support of wider city region environmental, economic and social inclusion objectives.

2. Policy areas to be addressed:

34. The LGA welcomes the policy objectives stated in the Communication, and would support their inclusion as objectives for a future European Transport Policy: quality transport that is safe and secure; well maintained and integrated networks; more environmentally sustainable transport; EU at the forefront of transport technologies; protecting and developing human capital; smart prices as traffic signals; improving accessibility.

Safety and quality of transport:

35. We believes that, where possible, safety standards should be decoupled from economic pressures. To help achieve this, independent transport regulatory bodies in all Member States need to have significant powers to enforce standards, and the EU should encourage their development at national level.

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[2] http://www.go-east.gov.uk/goeast/planning/regional_planning/?a=42496

36. Policies which support and incentivise public transport use and reduce private transport use would have a positive impact on public safety.
37. Certain local authorities have pointed out that the security of passenger and freight movements at modal interchange points is still not addressed sufficiently to enable trouble-free transfers.
38. The goal of transport security, and the associated actions to reduce the likelihood of terrorist activity should continue to be pursued at EU and international level.
39. Whilst safe transport is normally taken for granted by citizens, high quality transport is more problematic. As a local example, ferry links between Devon and Brittany operate in isolation from rail services provided in both France an Great Britain. There is no compatible timetabling, combined ticketing or service provision available on this route for rail passengers. This is in common with many maritime links.
40. It is important to recognise the different levels of infrastructure (strategic; regional (inter-urban); and local), and the different roles these fulfill. At the same time, we would remind the Commission that not only are the needs of passengers and freight different, but the needs of container and bulk freight traffic also differ.

Well-maintained and integrated networks:

41. Current networks in the EU are mostly well maintained by the Member States, but difficulties in funding the development of Trans-European road and rail corridors gives cause for concern for the longer term viability of regions whose economic activities, such as tourism, and attractive remote locations become challenging to reach due to congestion in the urban hubs it is necessary to pass through to reach them.
42. The need to secure environmentally sustainable objectives in transport is strongly endorsed with the need to provide adequate multimodal solutions to freight transfers at ports and rail nodes.

Environmentally sustainable transport:

43. Although the links between transport and health is noted in the Communication, it is important that this link is explicitly recognised and promoted to a greater extent than is currently the case. This is manifest in terms of direct health improvements through cycling or walking; a reduction in accidents through reduced travel and lower numbers of vehicles; and lower pollution levels resulting in improved air quality.
44. With regards to environmentally sustainable transport, it is worth noting the impacts of transport on air pollution in addition to climate change. Actions that promote behavioural change, such as a modal shift to public transport have benefits for both carbon dioxide and air pollutant emissions.
45. The European Commission will launch a study on 'green zones' (not outlined in the Communication) which will help cities to identify zoning solutions that suit their needs. LGA welcomes exchanges of best practice but believes that this must not lead to a harmonised approach to urban green zones at the EU level.
46. We welcome the recent proposal (not outlined in the Communication) for the Commission to open an internet site to help public authorities in their purchases of clean and energy efficient vehicles.

Technological innovations:

47. We would welcome a greater focus in EU programmes on steps to develop new technologies. This would alleviate some of the congestion, environmental problems, and practical difficulties associated with transport within the EU.

48. The technology itself needs to be accessible, but "accessibility" also needs to take into consideration not only people with reduced mobility but also social exclusion factors (affordability and availability of technology, access of deprived areas to infrastructure, etc.).

Pricing systems:

49. The LGA welcomes the 'polluter pays' principle and would support voluntary measures which facilitate the internalisation of external costs in the road sector. We recognise that private road transport use is currently subsidised by not having to cover its full environment, health, social and infrastructure costs.
50. We would also agree that long-term infrastructure investment decisions should take into account the full costs to society of the resulting transport use and compare this with alternatives.
51. There is a great opportunity for the EU to continue to promote a wide-ranging debate about the relative benefits and disadvantages of road pricing systems (such as the national lorry charge in Germany).
52. However, any harmonising legislation, such as the Eurovignette Directive must remain as framework legislation, not impose solutions on Member States, and exclude, as currently, urban areas from it's scope. This is essential to allow local urban congestion charging schemes to be developed under flexible conditions.

Sound planning:

53. We also welcome sound planning as a method to improve accessibility. Local authorities, with their local knowledge and understanding, are be best placed to devise and implement this planning.

3. Policy instruments:

54. The LGA broadly agrees with the policy instruments outlined in the Communication, although we feel that these mostly in fact expand on the "policy objectives" outlined in the previous section, rather than propose concrete policies or actions. We feel however that more detailed proposals for policy are necessary, and that these should be put forward for consultation. Endorsement of EU objectives does not necessarily equate to endorsement of specific policy proposals.
55. In fact, one of the few issues in the paper which hints at an actual new EU policy can be found in point 72 of the Communication where the Commission calls for "project appraisal methods progressively harmonised at EU level". LGA would take a cautious view of a standardised project appraisal methodology at EU level, especially if it were made mandatory. An EU methodology for TEN-T projects appraisal only would have greater legitimacy, due to their truly European nature. The EU should add value to national activities here by promoting technical co-operation and exchanges of best practice, instead of opting immediately to a legislative solution for harmonisation at EU level.

Infrastructure & Modal networks:

56. With regards to modal networks, we would emphasise that local transport planning remains a competence of Member States. The UK has developed a local transport planning process over many years, which is

tailored to the needs of local communities. Commission initiatives must therefore emphasise that the EU approach to transport planning can be adopted on a voluntary, rather than mandatory, basis.

57. We furthermore emphasise the importance of democratic accountability in local transport and infrastructure planning processes. Democratically elected local politicians are those closest to the people and are best placed to address the needs of the areas which they represent.

Technological innovations:

58. With regards to technological innovations designed to accelerate the transition towards low-carbon emissions, the LGA points out that the EU should place emphasis, in the first instance, on minimising the negative environmental impacts of transport, through, for example, playing a stronger role in the promotion of alternative fuels. Development and funding of the associated fuelling infrastructures should not be overlooked (as is currently the case). We emphasise that the approach at EU level to alternative fuels and technologies should remain technology neutral, allowing local and regional authorities to choose the solution which best meets the needs of their citizens.

59. Effective enforcement of the latest Euro standards & increasing the environmental standards applied to vehicle manufacturing should also remain a priority.

Education:

60. Concerning education as a means to effect cultural and behavioural change, we believe that there is now a significant opportunity for the EU to promote a wider public debate around urban demand management schemes - making the 'polluter pays' principle a reality by seeking to internalise external costs. The best road pricing schemes reduce soil, air, water and noise pollution, and bring a range of economic, social and public health benefits.

61. We note that the biggest barriers to the implementation of road pricing schemes are not technological difficulties, but general concern about the issues and public skepticism. EU facilitated education initiatives, as well as education actions at other level have an important role to play here to bring about cultural change as regards attitudes to transport.

Funding:

62. With regards to funding, whilst we recognise that the EU has reformed and better aligned some of its funding instruments in the 2007-2013 round to help them tackle environmental challenges, opportunities remain to develop greater synergies between transport policies, and other Community instruments.

63. We welcome measures which raise awareness of the full possibilities to target European Regional Development Funds (ERDF) at transport initiatives, especially in non-convergence regions, where it is less clear which projects which are not about infrastructure construction can be supported. Again, the EU has an opportunity here to exchange good practices on successful ERDF funded 'softer' transport projects in objective 2 ("competitiveness") regions.

64. Finally, we would have liked the Communication to have recognised more clearly the crucial role that local and regional government plays in all

aspects of transport planning, and the benefits of devolving resources to the local level. Many successes are realised when local and regional governments are given a greater range of flexibilities, decision-making powers and resources to address transport challenges.

65. We welcome the news that a future Civitas programme will be prepared but highlight that this does not remove the need for a discussion around a new dedicated EU fund for urban transport, or a greater use of the structural funds for transport actions.

66. The LGA is leading a campaign which emphasises that UK local & regional authorities should be given new capacities to lead and innovate. The need for greater devolution of powers and resources to the local level might not apply in every Member State, but the EU can help with this approach generally by promoting the right of local self-government, in line with the Council of Europe's Charter on Local Self-Government.

Conclusion:

67. We believe that the EU has an important role to play in helping to address the wide range of transport challenges faced by public bodies and society as a whole. In the majority of cases, a non-legislative approach from the EU level, respecting subsidiarity, will be the most appropriate. Citizens and stakeholders have higher expectations of local transport policies than ever before, and initiatives at EU level make an important contribution to stimulating debate and promoting a forward-looking transport 'culture' in the Member States.

68. The EU has a valuable role to play in coordinating technical cooperation, networking activities, and exchanges of best practice between the Member States. Currently the approach is very fragmentary in terms of different projects and websites which are not particularly useful for general practitioners. The eltis.org website is a welcome step towards consolidation in this direction. Best practice exchanges must continue to happen in a more structured and visible way than is currently the case.

69. Through its Brussels and UK offices, the LGA will continue to work on these issues with the European institutions, other local government associations, the Committee of the Regions, transport NGOs, and local authorities. We look forward to an ongoing dialogue with the Commission on these important topics, and look forward to seeing our ideas reflected in the Commission's future work.

Examples of good-practice from local authorities.

Devon County Council:

-*TravelSmart*
A project that allows households to choose free information about local transport such as buses trains, walking and cycling routes and more economical driving. The project has covered 25,000 homes in Exeter and Exminster and has been delivered in partnership with Exeter City Council, Sustrans, Socialdata and the Big Lottery Fund.

-*CarShareDevon.com*
Part of the national lift share scheme the scheme locally has approx 6,000 members signed up who can match their trips with other registered users and share their cars for commuting or any other type of trip. The idea is that car sharing reduces the problems associated with parking, reduces congestion on the roads and allows users to save money by sharing their transport costs.

-*Cycle Exeter*
Exeter is one of a handful of places nationally to be awarded Cycling Demonstration Town status. With intensive funding from Cycling England Devon County Council also contributes towards innovative ways of encouraging more people to cycle more safely, more often. The project has created new routes, extended training for both children and adults. The number of cycle trips in Exeter has risen by X% since the project was started in XXXX.

-*Eco Driving Courses*
Recognising that in a rural area most people undertake their trips by car, Devon County Council has developed a training program which educates drivers about how to drive more economically, saving fuel and money. The techniques involved also have the benefit of improving road safety. The training material is published on the web, though a DVD which can be requested and is also provided at the Devon Drivers Centre which is run by Devon County Councils Road Safety Team.

-*Fare Cars*
In deep rural areas bus routes are often unviable and it can often be unviable even for Devon County Council to provide a financially supported bus service. The Frae Car principle was established to provide public transport to deep rural areas by using a scheduled taxi service which charges bus fares. The service is financially supported by the County Council and is often the most cost effective way of provided access to important services for people in parts of Devon where a bus could not otherwise be justified.

Birmingham:

Birmingham was selected as a lead city to demonstrate electric cars in the UK. Birmingham is part of the CABLED (Coventry and Birmingham Low Emission Demonstrators) also involving Coventry City Council, the Regional Development Agency and private energy and automotive companies. The CABLED consortium has secured £15m from the government's Technology Strategy Board.

The project will see charging points and 110 electric cars on the streets of Birmingham and Coventry by the end of 2010. These will be available for a period of up to 18 months to selected users so that car manufacturers can secure user information on how electric cars perform in real life situations. The information gained from this project will inform future plans of manufacturers and their partners to develop low carbon vehicles for the mass market.

Further info available here:

http://www.birminghampost.net/news/gogreen/2009/07/21/shaping-electric-car-future-65233-24205284/

http://www.birminghampost.net/birmingham-business/birmingham-business-news/2009/06/24/birmingham-and-coventry-manufacturers-in-25m-electric-car-project-65233-23960245/

East of England Case Study:

Transport and the Economy in the East of England, the Transport Economic Evidence Study (TEES):

The TEES report is an independent study commissioned by the East of England Development Agency (EEDA) to quantify how much transport congestion is costing the economy and advise where transport investment should be targeted to maximise transport's contribution to Regional Economic Strategy objectives. The study produced many interesting results, however the key headlines are:

- Transport congestion in the East of England is costing the UK economy over £1bn per annum. By 2021 this will have increased to £2bn per annum.
- For businesses this equates to up to £900 per employee productivity losses per year (GVA) by 2021.
- 85% of productivity losses are being experienced in the region's "engines of growth", major urban areas and on connections between them.

Consultation:
Cambridgeshire County Council launched a public consultation on proposals to tackle congestion and pollution in the County, which included proposals to introduce a road user charge, to improve safety and to improve public transport. Alongside a three-month consultation the local authority also held 23 roadshow events for local residents to express their views. Residents also received information on the proposed scheme, the consultation process and the roadshows through leaflets dropped through letterboxes.

Car-sharing:
The cost of car-sharing is either zero or negative if partners take turns to drive. Congestion is reduced, emissions are reduced and fuel consumption is reduced. In addition, less parking is required and staff morale can benefit. A small business in the East of England, Liftshare.com, is using the internet to promote this opportunity and has sold systems to hundreds of businesses and local authorities in the UK and is now exporting to continental Europe.

However, there are barriers to uptake and there is a need to work with local authorities and employers to tackle these. The University of East Anglia is leading a programme to investigate the barriers to uptake of lift sharing in Norwich and Norfolk working with Liftshare.com, Norfolk County Council, Norwich Union insurance group and the Open University.

Promoting cycling in schools:
Schools within Luton, Southend, Bedford and St Albans are involved with the BIKE-IT campaign which is facilitated by Sustrans, a leading sustainable transport charity in the UK. A dedicated BIKE-IT officer works with school children to promote cycling, cycle training, cycle maintenance, cycle storage and the impact on environment, health, geography etc.

Promoting walking in schools:
Southend Borough Council is implementing the Walking Bus project to try to encourage children to walk to school. The aim is to increase physical activity within school children, reduce environmental pollution and make the areas around schools safer. The "buses" walk along set, safe routes accompanied by a minimum of two adults. Participation is encouraged through a reward scheme of prizes for children and a donation to the school of £1500 to use on green issues if the scheme is active for a year.