



Executive Vice-President of the European Commission
Mr. Frans Timmermans

EU Commissioner for Transport
Ms. Adina Vălean

Brussels, 1 December 2020

Dear Executive Vice-President Mr. Timmermans,
Dear Commissioner Ms. Vălean,

Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy – Make walking, cycling and public transport the primary modes in Functional Urban Areas by 2030

As you are about to launch the Strategy for Sustainable and Smart Mobility, it is worth looking back to the past 2011 Transport White Paper. Its main synthesis – “Curbing mobility is not an option” – was translated into a series of strategic goals, including “phasing out conventionally-fuelled cars in cities by 2050”. What seemed then ambitious appears now to be the very minimum. The world and our understanding of the climate crisis has moved on dramatically, which makes writing a new vision for a future European mobility system, also in view of the COVID-19 pandemic and economic crisis, all the more urgent. **The climate, COVID-19 and economic challenges should be addressed by prioritizing walking, cycling, public transport as well as shared mobility services in all relevant policies as well as funding decisions in order to make them the primary modes in Functional Urban Areas by 2030.**

This paradigm shift in Europe’s transport system is very much needed as fundamental developments are still heading in the wrong direction. With GHG emissions in transport still on an upward trend¹, air pollution levels contributing to 379,000 premature deaths², an unsatisfactory reduction in road fatalities³, a systemic lack of physical activity among a large part of the EU population⁴ and

¹ [Transport: increasing oil consumption and greenhouse gas emissions hamper EU progress towards environment and climate objectives — European Environment Agency \(europa.eu\)](#)

² [Marked improvement in Europe's air quality \(europa.eu\); European Environment Agency 2020 report-Air Pollution](#)

³ [Road deaths in the European Union – latest data | ETSC](#)

⁴ [Health-enhancing physical activity statistics - Statistics Explained \(europa.eu\)](#)

overburdening congestion, things need to change. The promise of relying primarily on technological vehicle solutions as well as making the transport system ‘smarter’ through digitalization and automation has not delivered in the past and equally will not deliver in the future if not expanded and complemented by a different set of policies.

Signatories wish to see **5 key recommendations** integrated in the Strategy:

1. **Unequivocally prioritize safe walking, cycling, public transport and shared mobility services** over individual motorized transport, in particular in Functional Urban Areas; therefore commit to modal shift and set targets for increasing the share of these modes;
2. **Make improved road safety for active mobility users a priority** for the next decade, in particular through continuously addressing the inherent safety risks of motorized vehicles through speed-management, eliminating drink-driving as well as addressing driver distraction;
3. **Strengthen the urban mobility policy context**, by enhancing not only EU funding for Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans, including from the Recovery and Resilience Facility, but also on information collection to better measure the impact of policies and investments;
4. **Integrate walking and cycling infrastructure in EU-funded infrastructure projects, including TEN-T**, as part of making all EU investments in the transport sector climate- and air quality-proof; and
5. **Reduce the externalized costs of motorized transport and systematically apply the polluter-pays principle and the users-pay principle.**

According to the Commission’s own data, the negative externalities of motorized transport amount to 800 billion euros per year. This is an expense which begs to be addressed by prioritizing investments in active modes as well as public transport. As the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on the daily mobility of millions of EU citizens has illustrated more clearly than ever before: having fewer cars driving on urban streets is perhaps the single most important measure for reducing GHG and health harmful pollutant transport emissions, improving air quality and the quality of life by giving scarce and valuable public space back to Europe’s people.

Technology has to be part of the solution, but it is not an end in itself. Signatories acknowledge the value of replacing internal combustion engine cars with electric cars, in rural areas as well as in urban centers, but stress that the overall number of cars, in particular in cities, needs to decrease. We fully embrace new technologies such as smart and connected e-bikes, e-cargo bikes and e-buses and welcome investments in modern (digital and physical) infrastructure integrating all modes of active and shared mobility. Electric bicycles, already seeing an unprecedented boom over the past years, are projected to grow fivefold in sales by 2030, hereby creating tens of thousands of jobs in manufacturing, retail and services. There is a clear message to be emphasized, that each Euro spent on infrastructure for active mobility creates more jobs than similar expenditures on cars and road highways.

Cities have been and will be crucial players in this shift. They are the first front in the innovation process that is occurring in the mobility sector with the emerging changes of the “new normal”. As new behaviors and mobility patterns develop, road safety takes on a new dimension in accidents and injuries. It is of crucial importance that this aspect does not fall by the wayside when championing for a sustainable and smart mobility. Making active mobility safe is also essential.

The choice for Europe’s transport system is not about curbing or not curbing mobility. The real question is whether all citizens have access to clean, safe and affordable mobility with climate and health benefits. The litmus test is whether primary school children can roam their town, village or city as past generations used to do; whether 12-year old kids can cycle independently and safely to school; whether employees can choose a zero-emissions bus, tram or metro in order to commute to workplaces and citizens don’t have to rely on cars.

Mobility is about choice. The EU has to set the right framework for people and businesses to make truly sustainable choices, we are here to help the Commission in its quest for a Sustainable and Smart Mobility.

Sincerely yours,

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