



# Economic and Social Council

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## Economic Commission for Europe

### Inland Transport Committee

#### Seventy-seventh session

Geneva, 24–26 February 2015

Item 2 of the provisional agenda

#### **Rethinking Sustainable Urban Transport and Mobility to Meet the Challenges of a New Era**

### **Concept note and draft agenda of the policy segment**

### **“Rethinking Sustainable Urban Transport and Mobility to Meet the Challenges of a New Era”**

#### **Note by the secretariat**

#### *Summary*

This document outlines the main ideas behind the choice of the topic for the Policy Segment of the seventy-seventh session of the Inland Transport Committee, which will focus on sustainable urban transport and mobility for meeting the challenges of a new era, with emphasis on economic, social and environmental sustainability. The Committee may wish to note that the Bureau, at its June 2014 meeting, agreed that the morning session of the first day of the seventy-seventh session of the Committee should be devoted to discussion of this topic.

## **I. Policy background**

1. Transport and mobility for sustainable development was formally recognized in the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in Rio de Janeiro (Rio+20), in which a special chapter was devoted to transport. Sustainable urban transport has been included in the outcome document of the Open Working Group for Sustainable Development under the proposed SDG 11:



*11.2 By 2030, provide access to safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems for all, improving road safety, notably by expanding public transport, with special attention to the needs of those in vulnerable situations, women, children, persons with disabilities and older persons.*

2. The inclusion of the explicit reference to urban transport in the proposed SDG 11 in the outcome paper of the Open Working Group is further affirmation that transport is an essential component of sustainable development. It is crucial to eradicating poverty and economic growth (access to markets and jobs), improving education (access to schools), protecting child and maternal health (access to medical services), and enhancing environmental sustainability and traffic safety.
3. The Synthesis Report of the Secretary-General on the Post-2015 Agenda released on 4 December 2014 welcomes the proposed 17 SDGs and invites Member States of the United Nations to negotiate the final parameters of the Post-2015 Sustainable Development Agenda to include concrete goals with measurable and achievable targets.
4. The Inland Transport Committee (ITC), as the unique intergovernmental body specializing in inland transport, can contribute to the global debate and help to build consensus on the important role of the sector in sustainable development and the post-2015 Sustainable Development Framework. During its seventy-sixth session, the Committee encouraged Governments and municipalities to support further research on urban transport and mobility to be carried out by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE). The choice of sustainable urban transport and mobility as the theme of the policy-oriented segment (round table) of the seventy-seventh session of the ITC is a continuation of this line of policy considerations.

## **II. Current status and key trends**

5. Why cities? A review of the current trends in urban passenger transport and urban freight distribution underlines the similarity of the pressures to which passenger and goods movements both contribute, and are subject to, at the city level, such as congestion, pollution and safety, to mention but a few. Increasingly, passenger and freight movements are intertwined in a zero-sum game, having to utilize the same finite infrastructures and urban space to satisfy the ever-increasing demand for transport. This competitive relationship lies at the heart of the policy segment, the objective of which is to identify strategies and policies that are aimed towards mitigating this phenomenon or, under certain conditions, even transforming it into a win-win, symbiotic relationship.
6. As to the extent of the challenge, a look at the current dynamics is quite telling: According to the UNECE study “Sustainable urban mobility and public transport in UNECE capitals”, statistics show that 80 per cent of European Union (EU) citizens live in urban areas, and 40 per cent live in large urban areas of over 200,000 inhabitants. Similar trends can be observed in other UNECE countries. Globally, cities in developing countries are growing rapidly, a dynamic process that goes hand in hand with the global rise of the middle class. The ensuing fast-growing demand for freight and personal mobility leads to an increase in private vehicle ownership and use: in developing and transition economies the size of fleets is forecasted to double or even triple in the next twenty years. As a result of these dynamics, one in three road fatalities occur in cities. Not surprisingly, congestion problems, too, are mostly concentrated in and around cities.
7. On the logistics side of the equation, according to the Centre for Retail Research, E-commerce is the fastest growing retail market in Europe and the United States of America (USA), with online retail sales as a share of total retail shares expected to reach 13.5 per cent in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in 2014, 11.6 per cent in

the USA, and 9.7 per cent in Germany. Online sales in the USA alone could reach \$306 billion or €240 billion in 2014. These shifts are associated with the growth of home deliveries or deliveries within newly implemented networks of pick-up points that dramatically alter the distribution patterns of economic activity and pose new and, as of yet, not fully understood logistics challenges for urban environments. This is indeed a new era for urban mobility and transport.

8. This broad picture, with some variations, cuts across developed and developing economies: Without innovative transport policies, individual car use will continue to grow and so will the negative impacts associated with it such as congestion, pollution and safety risks. As a response, many countries introduce economic instruments such as congestion charges in order to discourage the use of private vehicles, or zero taxes and price subsidies for low/zero-emissions vehicles to encourage active demand for new technologies.

9. But innovations, be they of the policy or technological sort, may also challenge the boundaries of existing legal and policy frameworks. Whereas city logistics could always be deemed an extension of inland transport, innovations such as drone-based delivery systems no longer fit into traditional transport policies.

### III. Conceptual framework for the policy segment

10. A common challenge for all major cities in the ECE region and the world is how to reconcile demand for freight and passenger mobility, while at the same time reducing congestion, traffic accidents and pollution. Urban transport systems are integral parts of national and, therefore, international transport systems. Yet at the same time, the objective of sustainable urban transport policy is to allow urban populations to reach their destinations in safe, affordable and environmentally sound ways, by transport means that contribute to their well-being without putting their health at risk, and minimize travelling times. Turning a zero-sum game into a win-win relationship is at the heart of sustainable urban transport and mobility.

11. The policy segment is expected to address the following questions:

(a) **Interconnectivity between international-national-regional-suburban and urban mobility of freight and passengers** is crucial for successful modal shift in favour of sustainable mobility; however infrastructure connectivity is far from adequate, common tariff systems, through tickets, nationally harmonized subsidies and Public Service Obligation schemes, as well as integrated traffic management etc., are warranted.

(b) **Innovative mobility solutions in cities** are needed, as **cities** are economic powerhouses that drive national economic growth and determine a nation's competitiveness. However, does the level of development of their transport system reflect this? Furthermore, as economic centres, **cities consume a growing volume of dangerous goods**, the transportation of which requires special safeguards. Are the rules on the transport of dangerous goods enforced with the same vigour in cities as they are in inter-city transport? In addition, **cities** often act as **precursors for** change and development. Are UNECE cities spearheading innovative mobility solutions that are likely to be scaled up for national and international use?

(c) The **negative externalities of transport activities** are concentrated in cities, i.e. improvement in urban **road safety** and reduction in **urban air and noise pollution, as well as in the levels of Green House Gases generated by transport**, can have a knock-on effect on national performance. In light of the post-2015 process and the expected agreement on a Sustainable Development Framework, Governments will be required to embark on a sustainable development path. They will also have to report on their

achievements. The tendency to favour actions with the biggest impact will most probably lead to further appreciation of the role of cities in achieving national goals. Are the current transport management structures conducive to such national/federal-urban cooperation?

(d) **Geography determines transport options.** If one goes from one corner of the UNECE region to the other, the traveller will pass through the Northern Hemisphere and nearly all time-zones. Thus, UNECE cities face a variety of issues and offer several solutions. Over centuries, **port cities, river cities, cities in deserts or in high mountains, cities with daily cross-border commuters,** etc. have become accustomed to living together with their geographic and geo-political endowments as much as they have learnt to turn these challenges into benefits. In this way UNECE cities have become unique **examples for different mobility solutions.**

12. The ITC Policy Segment will line up several city examples which will address one or more of the aspects listed above. The policy debate will, therefore, be linked to the core activities and concerns of the ITC, as well as to the ongoing debate over the post-2015 sustainable development framework.

#### **IV. Planned format of the Policy Segment**

13. The expected length of presentations is 7–10 minutes, except for the keynote speaker whose address will be 15 minutes long. The ensuing discussion will be facilitated by the moderator of the policy segment, who will allocate time for discussion, questions and comments from the floor. After each panel, the floor will be opened for comments and questions so that the policy segment becomes a true platform for policy debate.

#### **V. Expected output and outcome**

14. At the end of the policy segment, the moderator will draw “Conclusions” reflecting a summary of the debate that took place, and the segment’s key messages will be included in the ITC report. As an outcome, policymakers will see the direct link between national and urban mobility issues and solutions in a way that supports the fiscal and managerial decentralization of transport, while transport policy considerations are kept at national level and international cooperation on and harmonization of legal and practical solutions receive the necessary attention and support. Finally, the policy segment will be further substantiated by the UNECE paper “Sustainable urban mobility and public transport in UNECE capitals”.

## VI. Draft Programme

### Rethinking Sustainable Urban Transport and Mobility to Meet the Challenges of a New Era

24 February 2015, 10.00-13.00  
Salle VII, Palais des Nations, Geneva

<i>Hour</i>	<i>Topic</i>
10.00-10.30	
	10.00-10.15 Opening and welcome
	10.15-10.30 Keynote speech
10.30-11.30	
	10.30-11.10
	Speaker 1: Tariff and Transport Associations: the case of Budapest (Centre for Budapest Transport)
	Speaker 2: Improved rail and motorway hinterland connections to ports can boost city renewal: the case of Rijeka (tbc)
	Speaker 3: Connecting two continents through a mega-city while coping with increased safety and pollution issues: the case of Istanbul (tbc)
	Speaker 4: Where traditional cycling and modern mobility solutions through electric cars received priority: the case of Rotterdam (tbc)
	11.10-11.30 Q and A
11.30-11.50	Break
11.50-12.50	
	11.50-12.30
	Speaker 1: The role of the Federal Ministry of Transport in dealing with the fast-paced challenges of growing Russian cities and the case of Moscow Urban Transport (tbc)
	Speaker 2: When decaying public transport was faced with rapid motorization: the case of Almaty (tbc)
	Speaker 3: Impatient passenger demand for modern, reliable and affordable public transport amidst economic crisis: the case of Athens (tbc)
	Speaker 4: Geneva Public Transport Company meeting the mobility needs both of the city and the French neighbourhood (tbc)
	12.30-13.00 Q and A
12.50-13.00	Conclusions