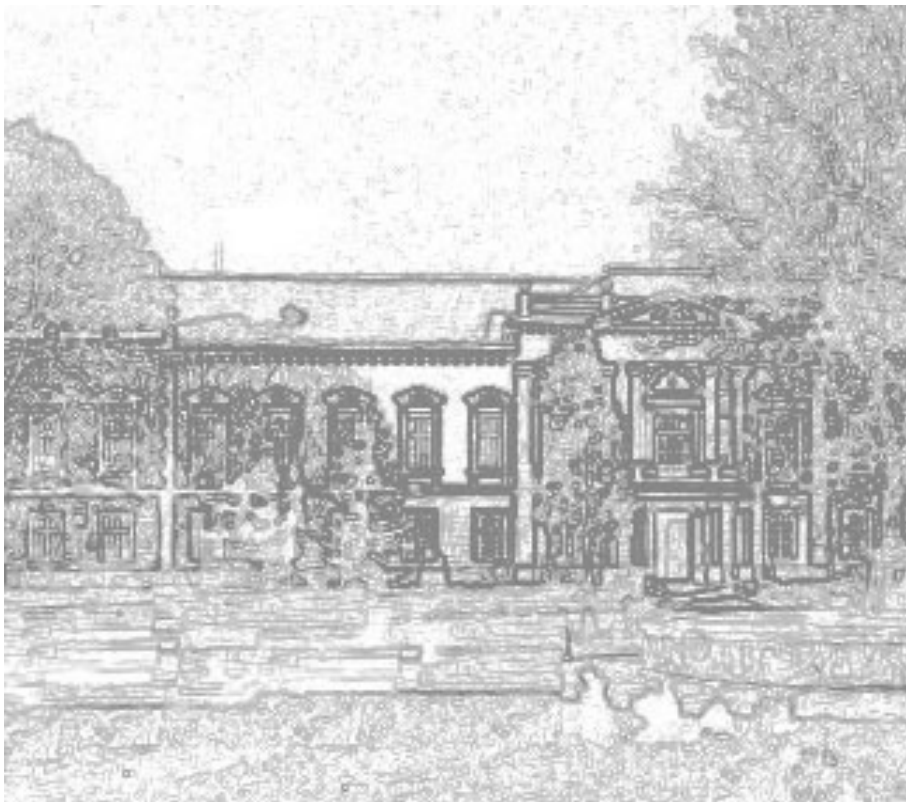


The Supplement 1/2006 of Ekológia (Bratislava)

Landscape Ecology – an International Integrating Tool in Environmental Issues

**Proceedings of
the 13th International Symposium on Problems of Landscape
Ecological Research
30 September – 3 October 2003 • Mojmírovce**



**Published under the financial support of the
Institute of Landscape Ecology of the Slovak Academy of Sciences,
Austrian Institute of East and Southeast European Studies
Vienna, Branch Office in Bratislava**

**Editors: RNDr. Zdena Krnáčová, PhD.
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THE ENVIRONMENTAL OBJECTIVE FOR SUSTAINABLE URBAN TRAVEL

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Abstract

Bezák P.: The environmental objective for sustainable urban travel. *Ekológia (Bratislava)*, Vol. 25, Supplement 1/2006, p. 3–15.

Organization of urban space including transport system belongs to the most important themes in contemporary changing society. Most of us travel every day, even if only locally. Daily urban travel demands cause number of negative elements with influence on everyday life of the city inhabitants. And we need an efficient transport system, but the way we travel is damaging our towns and cities. Increased traffic, and speed, have made our streets more threatening for pedestrians and cyclists. Children's freedom to play, or to walk or cycle to school unaccompanied has been severely curtailed. We walk less than we used to and cycling, other than for leisure, is mostly left to a few enthusiasts (Department for Transport, Government of UK, 1998).

Environmental aspect of the present urban travel is the topic presented in this paper. Important base for analysing urban travel must be reviewing whole range of impacts on the environment, including natural and built environment. Considering indicators of transport and environment reporting mechanism could be a proper assistance in their relations. Due to serious extent of environmental problems in urban surroundings implementing sustainable transport system was recognized. Various policies and strategies for sustainable urban travel are in the process of applying in the European context. Implementing some important European policies, together with examples of actions and activities have been taken in the urban travel, is also a subject of discussion.

Key words: environment, urban transport, transport policy, sustainability

Introduction

During the 1990's several attempts have been made to define what is meant by sustainable transport. Most of them have been based on the general definition of sustainable development introduced by the Brundtland Commission in the late 1980's namely "a development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability for future generations to meet their needs" (Commission Expert Group on Transport and Environment, 2000).

Generally speaking a sustainable transport system must contribute to economic and social welfare without depleting natural resources, destroying the environment or harming human health. Meanwhile, sustainable transportation can be described as:

- moving people and goods in cleaner, greener, healthier, safer, more equitable ways, and
- where appropriate, NOT moving people and goods.

Negative impacts of the urban travel on the environment

Current urban transportation puts a big pressure on the urban surroundings, as on the natural environment as on the humans and socio-economical development in the cities. Negative factors arising from this pressure can be divided into several categories:

- Environment - climate change, air pollution, noise, land take, surface sealing
- Health - disorders from air pollution/noise and the higher incidence of these disorders in the poorest groups, accidents, lack of physical exercise
- Economy - congestion, poor quality environments, pressures from growth
- Society - poor accessibility to services (particularly for non-car owners), fragmented/isolated communities, perceptions of danger restricting mobility (particularly of children), demand for personal freedom and choice.

Negative impacts on the environment can be considered as the most important elements in measuring of the quality of the city environment and transport system, having direct influence on the nature and the humans. Main pressures, derived from the impact on the environment, are introduced as follows:

Air Pollution

Emissions from transportation sources result from various kinds of combustion processes and include:

- oxides of nitrogen (NO_x)
- fine particulate measures such as PM₁₀
- volatile organic compounds (VOCs)
- carbon monoxide (CO)
- benzene and
- trace metals







(Department for Transport, Government of UK, 2000).


Fossil fuel combustion, particularly by motor vehicles, has been identified as the largest single contributor to atmospheric pollution, particularly in urban areas (Table 1).

Greenhouse gases

The costs of greenhouse gas emissions are even more difficult to quantify than other emissions, because the effects are global and may be long-term. CO₂ is considered to be the

Table 1. Comparison of various transport modes from the ecological viewpoint with a private car for an identical journey with the same number of people/km
(Source: Dekoster, Schollaert, 1999)

						
Space consumption	100	100	10	8	1	6
Primary energy consumption	100	100	30	0	405	34
CO ₂	100	100	29	0	420	30
Nitrogen oxides	100	15	9	0	290	4
Hydrocarbons	100	15	8	0	140	2
CO	100	15	2	0	93	1
Total atmospheric pollution	100	15	9	0	250	3
Risk of accidents	100	100	9	2	12	3

 = Car plus catalytic converter
Base = 100 (private car without catalytic converter)

most important greenhouse gas and, therefore, has been used as the key indicator for the purposes of assessing the impacts of transport options on climate change.

Traffic noise: exposure and annoyance

People are often exposed to and annoyed by traffic noise levels which endanger health and quality of life. Noise annoyance is defined by the World Health Organisation as “a feeling of displeasure evoked by noise”. Investment appraisal and compensation procedures exist because many of the impacts of environmental noise from transport on people, including disturbance (such as distraction, speech interference and sleep disturbance) and annoyance can be quantified (Department for Transport, Government of UK, 2000).

Impact on the landscape

Impact on the landscape can be shown by land take, fragmentation, barriers, accessibility to parkland and natural areas. Increasing travel demands for motor transport put a big pressure on the surroundings, which became negatively affected by heavy transportation. Space of green areas, parks, relaxing or sport zones, cultural heritage sites, as well as their accessibility is pushed off by dominance of individual motorised transport (<http://www.bicyba.sk>).

Transport and Environment Report Mechanism (TERM)

The concept of an indicator-based transport and environment reporting mechanism (TERM) for the EU was initiated in early 1998. TERM is steered jointly by the European Commission and the European Environment Agency (EEA). The main output of TERM is a regular indicator-based report through which the effectiveness of transport and environment integration strategies is monitored. TERM indicators are needed to put existing international statistical databases to good use, to identify the main gaps and shortcomings, and to gradually help to improve and streamline EU data collection systems. The TERM indicators were selected and grouped to address seven key questions:

1. Is the environmental performance of the transport sector improving?
2. Are we getting better at managing transport demand and at improving the modal split?
3. Are spatial and transport planning becoming better coordinated so as to match transport demand to the need for access?
4. Are we optimising the use of existing transport infrastructure capacity and moving towards a better-balanced inter-modal transport system?
5. Are we moving towards a fairer and more efficient pricing system, which ensures that external costs are internalised?
6. How rapidly are cleaner technologies being implemented and how efficiently are vehicles being used?
7. How effectively are environmental management and monitoring tools being used to support policy-and decision-making?

(<http://www.eea.eu.int>)

The TERM indicator list covers the most important aspects of the transport and environment system (driving forces, pressures, state of the environment, impacts and societal responses — the so-called DPSIR framework). It represents a long-term vision of the indicators that are ideally needed to answer the above questions.

First stages of the TERM developing considered only countries of EU. However, involvement of the accession countries (AC) into this process is performed in the recent period. Comparative analysis of the differences and similarities between the EU and the ACs should contribute to the continuing debate on how to achieve more sustainable transport within an enlarged EU.

EXAMPLE: Indicator – Urban air quality

(Is the environmental performance of the transport sector improving?)

In many places and for certain pollutant, urban air quality has improved significantly over the last two decades, both in the EU and in the accession countries (AC). In the EU, this is mainly the result of the introduction of catalytic converters and better fuel quality. In the ACs, the improvement is attributable mainly to economic decline in the beginning of the 1990s and efforts made in other sectors, such as the energy sector where coal and lignite-based pollution sources have been reduced. Current measures will further improve urban air quality, but in 2010 the European urban population will still be exposed regularly to high concentrations of air pollutants.

The pollutants of greatest concern with regard to their impact on human health at present are fine particles (PM₁₀) and ground-level ozone (O₃), to both of which the transport sector is an important contributor. In 1999, 44% and 97% of the urban population (covered by monitoring stations) was exposed to exceedances of the air quality objectives for ground-level ozone and particulates respectively. For nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) and sulphur dioxide (SO₂) the situation is much better: in 1999 only 14% of the urban population was exposed to concentrations of NO₂ above the objective and a mere 2% to exceedances of the SO₂ objective.

Insufficient data are available to meaningfully distinguish between the ACs and the EU with respect to air quality. Furthermore, no sufficient data are available for an evaluation of ambient air concentrations of lead and benzene.

(European Environment Agency, 2002)

Implementing sustainable transport policies

Process of implementing sustainable urban transport is realised through various urban travel policies, depending on the particularities of the countries or urban regions. However, some of these practises are significant and widely used all over the places.

Decentralisation and national-local government relations

Emerging from a number of the national policy reviews as an area of policy success is the decentralisation of power and responsibility for urban transport and environment management, by matching responsibilities with the scale of the problems to be addressed. The importance of specific national policies in guiding local transport policy was emphasised by several countries - particularly the national framework for taxes and charges relating to transport, and clean air laws that place specific responsibility on local authorities.

Integration of transport and land use planning

Spatial structures reducing distances between urban functions can be considered as an important precondition for decreasing traffic, especially traffic caused by motorised modes. The measures can be subordinated under the following statement: A revision of spatial organisation or the development of spatial organisations in areas with future development which fit into traffic-reducing concepts. Vice versa, land use planning must recognise existing transport structures.

Within the project TRANSLAND (Integration of Transport and Land Use Planning) collection and evaluation of innovating transport policies from 26 cities of EU was realised. Results from this project point out some tasks of spatial organisations, needed for sustainable future development (Erl, Ferber, 2000):

- assign functions (housing, working, leisure, education, supply + services) on the urban/regional scale
- development of mixed used structures
- de-central concentration
- creation of dense, compact structures
- protection of landscape and nature and reduction of land consumption by avoiding urban sprawl
- redevelopment in existing structures
- infill development on vacant land in existing structures
- concentration of urban development around public transport stops
- create concentrated development nodes which allow for public transport to be economically feasible
- give attention to developing high quality public spaces to attract the public and create liveable cities.

Land use planning should also consider existing transport structures. The following are examples for measures in the field of transportation planning that promote sustainability:

- promotion of public transport (allowing for quantitative and qualitative improvements in order to make public transport competitive with car use)
- improvement of accessibility of public transport
- promotion of non-motorised transport (by making quantitative and qualitative improvements)
- promotion of transportation intermodality
- influencing car usage (reducing traffic, traffic calming, parking management)
- networking regional economy and production.

Consultation

Improving procedures for public consultation is a policy priority for many countries. It is increasingly recognised that a policy of sustainable transport requires more than government action, and the need for behavioural change makes involvement of the actors themselves essential.

Climate change policies

The general lack of focus on CO₂ emissions at the urban level probably reflects a view that climate change is a national – or international - rather than local issue. The fact that measures taken to address urban issues, including many air pollution, congestion and traffic management measures and especially measures that influence driving style and vehicle maintenance, also have an important impact on CO₂ emissions does not yet appear to have been assimilated. There is clearly a role for national climate change programmes to make inroads in shaping urban transport policies — or perhaps conversely for national programmes to take fuller account of the actions taken at the local level in urban areas.

Policy targets

The Survey of cities revealed trends in the objectives for sustainable development set by local authorities. The principal preoccupation in all regions was preventing pollution and environmental degradation. A large number of cities reported measures taken in this area during the 1990s. Next came promoting public transport and reducing car traffic, which were cited throughout Europe as priority – just as often as preventing pollution – but figured low in the statistics for North America and Japan. Traffic management, better planning, management of sprawl, mobility management and development of road infrastructure followed in frequency as issues of priority throughout the cities surveyed, but a step behind the first three issues. Promotion of cycling and walking figured quite weakly in the statistics, and parking management hardly at all. One priority that stands out for Russia and other Eastern European Countries is the creation of urban green space and greenbelts (Council of the Ministers, 2001).

Considering current situation in EU, trends of transport policy are defined by several documents, issued by European Commission. As for example we can mention:

- The White Paper “European transport policy for 2010: time to decide“ was adopted by the European Commission on 12 September 2001 and paints a realistic picture of the present situation with regard to transport and proposes some 60 specific measures to be taken at Community level under the transport policy. It includes an action programme extending until 2010, with milestones along the way, notably the monitoring exercises and the mid-term review in 2005 to check whether the precise targets (for example, on modal split or road safety) are being attained or whether adjustments need making. One of the proposals concerns “Developing high-quality urban transport”. In response to the general deterioration in the quality of life of European citizens suffering from growing congestion in towns and cities, in line with the subsidiarity principle the Commission proposes to place the emphasis on exchanges of good practice aiming at making better use of public transport and existing infrastructure. A better approach is needed from local public authorities to reconcile modernisation of the public service and rational use of the car. These measures, which are essential to achieving sustainable development, will certainly be among the most difficult to put into practice. This is the price that will have to be paid to meet the international commitments made at Kyoto to reduce CO₂ emissions (Commission of the European Communities, COM (2001) 370 final).
- Amended proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on action by Member States concerning public service requirements and the award of public service contracts in passenger transport by rail, road and inland waterway. The objectives of the Commission’s original proposal are:
 - a) to stimulate more efficient and attractive public transport, through the use of controlled competition and other measures
 - b) to promote legal certainty for authorities and operators (Commission of the European Communities, COM (2002) 107 final).

Programmes and activities towards sustainable urban travel within EU

As the awareness of urban travel negative impacts on the environment increases, more actions and activities towards sustainable transport are occurred. The recent time many programmes and activities in harmony with EU transport policy have been started or realised, most of them supported by European Commission.

ELTIS – European Local Transport Information Service

ELTIS is funded jointly by DG Energy and Transport of the European Commission, and by the International Union of Public Transport (UITP). It is a guide to current transport measures, policies and practices implemented in cities and regions across Europe.

The aim of ELTIS is to provide information and support a practical transfer of knowledge and exchange of experience in the field of urban and regional transport in Europe. It should give the user the opportunity to explore best practices from European cities and regions, to search for specific transport solutions and to be informed about the state of the art in a given transport application. In turn this should help create a more sustainable living environment, one which provides greater accessibility and mobility to its inhabitants.

ELTIS has been designed for everyone involved in improving mobility, transport efficiency and safety as well as reducing the environmental impacts of transport, in particular transport policy-makers and managers, transport operators and user groups. ELTIS offers a regular round-up of latest EU local transport news and events as well as incorporating a great number of transport case studies, concepts and documentation and bibliographical references (Commission of the European Communities, COM (2000) 284 final; <http://www.eltis.org>).

Citizens' network benchmarking Initiative

The main political objective that underpin the Citizens' Network Benchmarking approach are set out in the Green Paper "The Citizens' Network" (COM (1995) 601) and the communication "Developing the Citizens' Network" (COM (1998) 431), in which the European Commission argued for an integration of transport systems in order to promote the use of public transport, cycling and walking and lessen dependence on private cars. The White Paper 'European transport policy for 2010: time to decide' (COM (2001) 370) which was published by the European Commission in September 2001 reinforces the need and the commitment to promote the identification and dissemination of best practice in urban transport.

In 1998, the European Commission launched a pilot project on urban passenger transport benchmarking, involving 15 cities and regions. Indicators were developed to measure performance of participants and multinational working groups were set around specific key topics to better understand particular problems within different issues. Following this successful project, the European Commission launched in 2001 another one-year duration

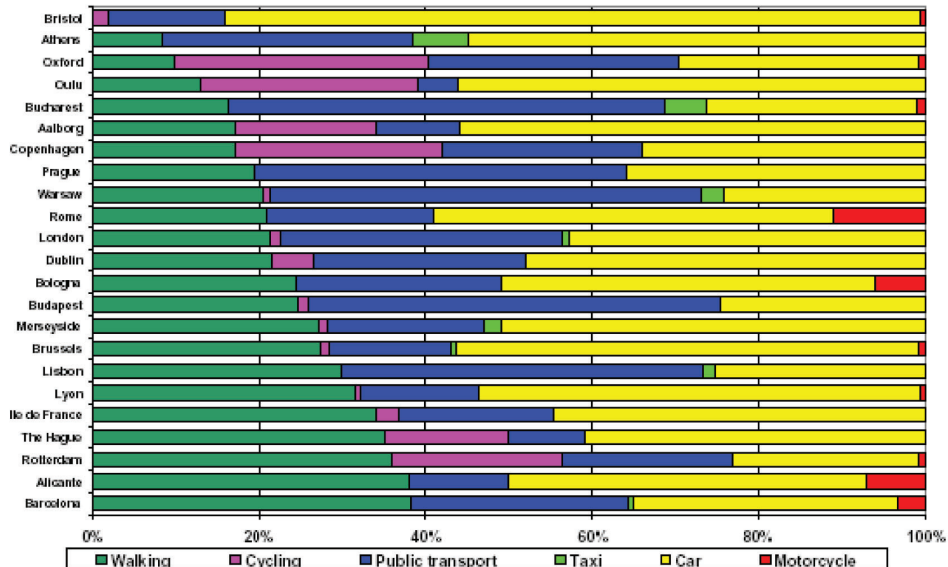


Fig. 1. Modal split of daily motorised and non-motorised trips in urban administrative areas (mostly around the year of 2000).

(Source: <http://www.transportbenchmarks.org/pdf/Reports/FinalReport.pdf>)

benchmarking initiative on urban transport systems involving 45 cities and regions from the EU and the Accession Countries, from rural towns to large metropolitan regions. The objective of the initiative was to enable local authorities and transport operators to exchange best practices between them, to assess the performance of their local transport systems, to compare them with those of the others, learn from each other and decide what can be improved and how.

The Urban Transport Benchmarking Initiative aims to continue and build on the work of the Citizens Network benchmarking project. Objectives are focused on involvement of local and regional urban transport stakeholders from 35–40 cities, which can set up common performance indicators covering urban transport, undertake a comparative analysis (Fig.1), organise site visits, identify and study best practices and disseminate the results.

There have been many other transport benchmarking projects, as for example:

- Benchmarking European Sustainable Transport (BEST)
- Benchmarking Public Transport Emissions and Energy Use (BESTRANS)
- Commission for Integrated Transport (CFIT) – EU Best Practice in Integrated Transport Delivery
- Citizen's Network Benchmarking Initiative
- CoMET & NOVA – Benchmarking of global Metro Systems
- Danish Ministry for Environment: US Study Tour

- ECMT Urban Travel Survey
- EMTA Barometer
- EQUIP – Extending the Quality of Public Transport
- International Air Transport Association (IATA)
- International Railway Benchmarking
- Metis-Conseil Benchmarking
- Millennium Cities Database
- NATCYP – Benchmarking National Cycling Policies
- NPF National Policy Frameworks for Urban Transport
- Scandinavian BEST
- TERM – Transport and Environment Reporting Mechanism (<http://www.transportbenchmarks.org>).

EPOMM – European Platform on Mobility Management

EPOMM is an international partnership co-ordinated by the EC aiming to promote and develop Mobility Management in Europe and to fine tune its implementation with the EU Member States and the other European countries. It serves as link for people and organisations interested in Mobility Management, such as representatives of the EU member governments, local and regional authorities, researchers, major employers, transport operators and other user groups.

Mobility Management is a new concept to promote sustainable transport. The core of Mobility Management are “soft” measures (e.g. information or coordination of existing user services), which enhance the effectiveness of “hard” measures of traffic planning (e.g. new tram lines, new roads and new bike tracks). Mobility Management tools (in comparison to “hard” measures) do not necessarily require large investments measured against their high potential to change mobility behaviour. The objective of Mobility Management is to reduce single car use (<http://www.epommweb.org>).

The CIVITAS Initiative – Radical strategies for Clean Urban Transport

The CIVITAS Initiative, launched by the European Commission in the year 2000, supports ambitious cities in introducing and testing bold and innovative measures to radically improve urban transport. The aim is to achieve a significant change in the modal split towards sustainable transport modes, and to increase the use of clean vehicles and alternative fuels. In order to achieve their objectives, the CIVITAS cities combine a coherent set of measures that are specifically selected to match local circumstances. The measures address both the demand side and the supply side of transport. The cities follow an integrated approach towards energy and transport policies.

Each city (19 CIVITAS cities) will implement a policy-mix based upon the categories of measures that are the backbone of the CIVITAS initiative. Many of the CIVITAS cities are implementing large-scale schemes and can be seen as ‘leading cities’. Other cities are implementing more restricted schemes and can be seen as ‘follower cities’. The policy-mix

chosen by each city differs. Although aiming for the same result, each takes into account specific local circumstances. Each of the CIVITAS cities will therefore develop an original approach to the implementation of the CIVITAS measures. However, the evaluation of the impacts by the cities will be done in a comparable way (<http://www.civitas-initiative.org>).

The CUTE project

The CUTE (Clean Urban Transport for Europe) means demonstration project to support 9 European cities in introducing hydrogen into their public transport system. These cities want to demonstrate that hydrogen is an efficient and environmentally friendly power source for the future of their cities. Twenty seven fuel-cell powered buses, running on locally produced and refilled hydrogen, should prove that zero emission public transport is possible today when ambitious political will and innovative technology are combined. The 9 European cities are convinced that the combination of a hydrogen and fuel-cell bus in a quality public transport system will lead towards the most sustainable urban transport system and address all these important problems simultaneously.

This hydrogen/fuel cell bus project will be the first project world-wide which addresses at the same time the production of hydrogen, the hydrogen refilling in city centres and the operational use in commercial public transport systems. These buses will be operated like conventional buses, on the same lines and under the same tight time schedule for best comparative assessment of performance and costs.

(<http://www.miljobilar.stockholm.se/upload/3222/cutebrochure1.pdf>)

Conclusion

Although definitions of and criteria for sustainability differ among countries and cities, most of them have common objectives for quality of life in urban areas that include, clean air, quiet neighbourhoods, and economic prosperity without detrimental health and environmental impacts and depletion of finite natural resources. One of the possible ways to maintain urban environment could be fulfilled by implementation of sustainable transport policy.

Certain concept of the environment and transport connectivity is agreed in the Europe, where indicators are showing the state of the environment. Joining more countries into this concept, using comparative analysis of similarities and differences, should bring better results. This is the main idea of whole variety of current actions and activities, which are derived from European transport policy, to reach more complex results, involve wide spectrum of people and influence national and local policies. Several practical examples of such activities point out the ways, which should be followed to promote sustainable urban transport.

Translated by the author

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Received 18. 11. 2003

Bezák P.: Environmentálna úloha trvalo udržateľnej mestskej dopravy.

Aj keď detailnejšie kritériá a definície trvalej udržateľnosti sa sčasti môžu líšiť v rámci jednotlivých krajín a miest, existujú základné pravidlá pre kvalitu života v mestskom prostredí, zahrňujúc čisté ovzdušie, tiché prostredie, ekonomickú prosperitu bez škodlivých vplyvov na zdravie obyvateľov i životné prostredie a vyčerpanie obmedzených zásob prírodných zdrojov. Priblíženie sa k tomuto stavu môže byť naplnené implementáciou politík trvalo udržateľnej dopravy.

Prepojenosť dopravy s kvalitou životného prostredia je už v Európe pomerne zaužívaná, najmä prostredníctvom indikátorov, určujúcich súčasný stav životného prostredia. Využitie porovnávacích analýz na stanovenie

podobných a rozdielnych črt v jednotlivých mestách môže priniesť ešte výraznejšie výsledky pripojením viacerých krajín k tomuto výskumu. Množstvo realizovaných či prebiehajúcich aktivít, programov a pod., ktoré sú odvodené zo súčasnej európskej dopravnej politiky, viaže sa práve na dosiahnutie komplexnejších a hlbších výsledkov, zahrnutie širokého spektra ľudí do procesu a vplyv na národné a lokálne politiky, rozhodovacie procesy. Práve takéto aktivity načrtávajú možné cesty vedúce k trvalo udržateľnej mestskej doprave.