



2021/2075(INI)

16.11.2021

OPINION

of the Committee on Transport and Tourism

for the Committee on Regional Development

on the challenges for urban areas in the post-COVID-19 era
(2021/2075(INI))

Rapporteur for opinion: Vlad Gheorghe

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SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on Transport and Tourism calls on the Committee on Regional Development, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions into its motion for a resolution:

1. Underlines that urban areas are home to nearly three quarters of the EU population, which has led to a greater demand for urban mobility; whereas while this has served to boost economic growth and job creation, it has also led to safety issues, severe congestion, a deterioration in air quality, and an increase in noise and CO₂ emissions;
2. Stresses that the COVID-19 pandemic lockdowns have had a considerable impact on mobility demand and the choice of transport mode, especially in urban areas; notes that the social distancing introduced as part of sanitary measures in the EU has led citizens to take up mobility options other than public transport in order to avoid gatherings of people, which has also led to an increase in the use of private cars;
3. Points out that the transport sector has been among the most severely hit by the COVID-19 pandemic; stresses, however, that it has played a vital role in maintaining essential connectivity and delivering critical goods and services; emphasises the key role played by workers in the transport sector during the most difficult moments of the pandemic and underlines how in spite of being more exposed to the risk of infection, they have helped to guarantee the entire urban supply chain, in particular essential supplies of medical supplies and products;
4. Believes that the COVID-19 crisis has demonstrated the need for new urban planning and mobility solutions in order to make urban areas more resilient to future crises, such as pandemics or natural disasters, and adaptable to mobility demand; considers that this crisis presents an opportunity to reduce transport congestion and greenhouse gas emissions; stresses the need, in this respect, for local authorities to adapt and reengineer public transport and infrastructure, taking due account of the specific features of each territory, including the outermost regions, in order to ensure smart, accessible, interoperable, competitive, affordable, safe, healthy and environmentally sustainable commuting options and to complement public transport with on-demand and shared transport services, smart parking and collaborative innovation platforms; underlines the need to adapt infrastructure and reconfigure how space is managed to include active mobility and sustainable freight;
5. Notes that demand for public transport fell drastically in Europe due to the social distancing requirements of the pandemic and that public transport systems have struggled to regain market shares of users since the restrictive measures were eased or removed; recognises the key role of urban mobility and public transport in particular as one of the main backbones for a sustainable, smart and environmentally friendly post-COVID-19 recovery and transport; urges public authorities to put in place strategies and campaigns to encourage citizens to regain trust in public transport, tackling any safety concerns passengers may still have; stresses, in this regard, the particular role of guided transport – a social mode of mass transport compatible with stringent health control standards; highlights that sufficiently frequent services would allow for social distancing;

6. Notes the huge impact on mobility demand of increased teleworking during the lockdown period and believes that teleworking will remain an attractive option for many workers, at least those working part-time, which will have an impact on future urban mobility planning; underlines, in this respect, that the pandemic has facilitated the rediscovery of nearby shops and activities, as these afford greater flexibility and can mainly be accessed on foot;
7. Underlines that the COVID-19 crisis has highlighted and laid bare considerable disparities between urban areas, on the one hand, and peripheral urban and rural areas, on the other, for example in terms of the quality of and access to basic services such as healthcare and transport; recalls that rural areas, which are home to 30.6 % of the EU population, and above all sparsely populated areas, are suffering from a shortage of quality transport infrastructure and infrequent collective transport services, which directly affect their connectivity, accessibility and ultimately their socioeconomic development; reiterates that improving and reinforcing rural-urban connectivity can play a decisive role in reversing depopulation trends and addressing post-COVID demographic changes and behaviours, such as the increasing use of teleworking or rural tourism;
8. Commends the fact that cities are creating mobility hubs as part of the mobility as a service initiative, which enable people to access a variety of shared services for electric cars, bikes and scooters and to utilise smart digitalised parking; welcomes, in this regard, the creation of intermodal facilities such as park-and-ride schemes to enable commuters from outside urban areas to reach cities by rail or other modes of public transport;
9. Calls on the Commission to ensure that the right tools are put at the forefront of the new Urban Mobility Framework to support the expansion of affordable, attractive, competitive, safe, accessible and sustainable transport; highlights, moreover, that the framework should reflect the changing nature of urban mobility, such as the repurposing of public spaces, and promote synergies between safety and sustainability measures in urban areas; stresses the need to properly coordinate the different EU initiatives and the different visions and strategies of smart cities within the Urban Agenda; urges the Commission, furthermore, to propose legislation requiring that the Member States collect and regularly submit the relevant data on urban mobility; recalls the role of the Committee of the Regions in increasing the coherence and visibility of the objectives of these strategies;
10. Believes that all future measures must be based on science, be technologically neutral, and follow comprehensive impact assessments that take into account economic, environmental and social considerations to ensure a sustainable transition in urban areas;
11. Notes that the World Health Organization's new global air quality guidelines published on 22 September 2021 provide evidence of the damage caused by air pollution to human health; highlights that emissions from the transport sector are partly responsible for the high levels of air pollution in urban areas; stresses the importance of making urban areas easier and better to live in and of including the health dimension in all transport, mobility and infrastructure policies; welcomes plans to support the creation of

climate-neutral cities through the modal shift, as an example of urban mobility, in line with the EU's climate and environmental objectives;

12. Recalls that the EU has actively promoted the concept of sustainable urban mobility planning for a number of years and is committed to supporting national, regional and local authorities in developing and implementing sustainable urban mobility plans (SUMP), including through funding instruments and technical expertise;
13. Calls for a revision of the Commission guidelines on developing and implementing the SUMP to include, among others, the following new objectives: making mobility systems more resilient to rapid fluctuations in mobility demand, facilitating active mobility, guaranteeing the protection of active road users, fostering multimodality, developing urban logistic and land-use plans, and boosting cooperation and competitiveness;
14. Recalls that almost 40 % of all road fatalities in Europe occur in urban areas; reiterates that speeding is a key factor in around 30 % of fatal road crashes and an aggravating factor in most crashes; calls on the Commission to use its anticipated recommendation on speed to make 30km/h the maximum default speed in residential areas and areas with a high number of pedestrians and cyclists, with the possibility for higher limits on the main arterial roads and appropriate protection for vulnerable road users; welcomes the fact that the EU has reaffirmed its long-term strategic goal to get close to zero deaths and zero serious injuries on European roads by 2050 (Vision Zero) and its medium-term goal to reduce deaths and serious injuries by 50 % by 2030; calls on the Commission, therefore, to better integrate road safety into the SUMP guidelines and calls on local authorities to promote road safety through awareness-raising initiatives, appropriate actions and funding opportunities;
15. Notes that cycling has increased in response to the COVID-19 pandemic; believes that local authorities should consider maintaining through their regular urban planning processes the cycling and walking infrastructure erected in the Member States as a response to the pandemic, as well as further extensions; calls on the Member States and local authorities to make active mobility an integral part of urban mobility and infrastructure design and to earmark adequate investment for this purpose; calls on the Commission to publish a strategy on active mobility and to mobilise funding accordingly;
16. Recognises that urban logistics such as postal, delivery and refuse vehicles are an essential and increasingly in-demand public service, which require not only new and safe space for the ever more frequent stops by the operators of those vehicles, but also long-term solutions to meet socioeconomic, environmental and climate needs; calls on local authorities to develop dedicated sustainable urban logistics plans, including clear policies and specific loading and unloading areas, which integrate freight into the planning of more dynamic and flexible uses of curb space; calls for a reflection on the use of urban transport vehicles for other urban logistics uses, particularly at night; points to the key role of intermodal exchanges to facilitate freight transport and calls for multimodality to be encouraged in order to make freight transport sustainable; stresses, in this respect, the potential use of cargo bikes in urban areas, including in last-mile logistics, as they are energy efficient and can help to alleviate road congestion;

17. Welcomes the Commission's intention to engage with cities and the Member States to ensure that all large cities and urban nodes in the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T) draw up SUMP by 2030; calls on the Commission and the Member States, in this regard, to work closely with regions and cities, particularly across borders, to enhance and complete the missing last-mile infrastructure and multimodal and cross-border connections throughout the TEN-T; points out that many European ports are located near urban centres and are important transport nodes in the TEN-T;
18. Calls for the SUMP guidelines to include provisions on reinforced cooperation, information exchange and the sharing of best practices between municipalities to improve public and private transport management and boost the satisfaction of transport users in urban areas; calls for an acceleration of the transition to achieve the objectives of the European Green Deal regarding mobility and transport;
19. Underlines that the road transport sector has an important role to play in reducing emissions, as highlighted by the Commission's handbook on the external costs of transport; highlights that the transition to zero-emission vehicles will be crucial and will require specific infrastructure, such as charging points, which should be included in the SUMP; urges the Commission, the Member States, the regions and local authorities to start making plans to deploy charging points for electric vehicles throughout their infrastructure in order to boost the roll-out of charging points and safe and smart parking; stresses that the EU should strongly support the development of financing schemes for the purchase and procurement of the yet more expensive zero-emission vehicles, particularly for public transport fleets;
20. Calls on the Commission to come up with proposals in its upcoming revision of the Urban Mobility Package to accelerate the digitalisation of urban mobility in order to deploy mobility as a service and introduce a single and multimodal ticketing system enabling digital ticketing payments, integrated tickets and the digitalisation of operations, such as touchless buttons, the sharing of real-time mobility flows and smart digital parking; calls, in this respect, for the swift completion of the Common European Data Space for Mobility and urges the Member States to mobilise digital innovation hubs, which have a key role to play in supporting urban authorities in rolling out effective smart city strategies; considers that AI, in particular, should address the specific needs of public authorities in designing new mobility and transport models;
21. Calls on the Member States and local authorities to reassess their investments in urban mobility and to give priority to develop digital mobility solutions and infrastructure that will improve the general experience of all passengers, including people with reduced mobility, and will be adapted to the post-COVID-19 needs of transport workers;
22. Notes that the deployment of powered transporters, electric rideable vehicles, personal light electric vehicles and personal mobility devices are posing new challenges in particularly dense urban areas, especially in terms of road safety and accessibility; believes that authorities should promote innovative policies to integrate these with pedestrians and other types of vehicles, as well as education campaigns on the safe use of micro-mobility devices;
23. Stresses the need to make public transport accessible to all, including people with

disabilities and reduced mobility, who are vulnerable users and at risk of social exclusion; points out that architectural barriers continue to pose obstacles to the accessibility of public transport services, which are often not sufficiently adapted to people's needs and the demands on their time; urges public authorities to actively involve people with disabilities and reduced mobility in identifying needs and devising solutions and to ensure that they can participate in the SUMP process;

24. Recognises the importance for urban mobility of the gender dimension and the conditions for people accompanying children; underlines that a further modal shift towards sustainable public transport and active mobility would require ensuring accessibility for everyone, including taking into account the particular needs of women and people accompanying children in terms of scheduling, destination and mobility patterns, accessibility, proximity to services, security and safety; calls on the Commission and the Member States to put forward recommendations to encourage the participation of people accompanying children and of women in the planning of urban mobility solutions and in decision-making processes;
25. Notes that the COVID-19 pandemic has led to the expansion of the home delivery sector and the use of vans and powered two-wheeled vehicles such as mopeds and bicycles, leading to the emergence of new types of platform work and business models; calls on the Commission, in conjunction with the Member States, to come up with a recommendation on the safety of delivery personnel, including requirements for employers and companies to ensure the provision and use of safety equipment and safe vehicles, as well as training in the digital tools they might have to use, such as applications and interactive platforms;
26. Recalls that the EU disbursed some EUR 16.5 billion for urban mobility between 2014 and 2020, mainly for clean transport (metro and tram infrastructure), but also cycle paths and intelligent transport systems; considers that this funding should be increased so that more urban areas can benefit from it; stresses that such EU-funded projects should always be based on comprehensive multiannual urban mobility strategies and differentiate between cities and regions; points out that according to the Court of Auditors' (ECA) special report No 6/2020 on sustainable urban mobility in the EU, EU funding for sustainable mobility has not been used effectively to achieve its objectives; stresses that congestion has significant socioeconomic costs, particularly in terms of lost productivity, and recalls that the ECA report estimates that congestion is costing the EU around EUR 270 billion a year; requests, therefore, that the Commission closely monitor the money allocated to ensure it is actually spent;
27. Believes that the Commission should ensure that access to EU funding programmes for urban mobility, such as the European Regional Development Fund, the Cohesion Fund and the Connecting Europe Facility, is conditional on existing or prospective SUMP; emphasises that cohesion policy can help to grasp the potential of both AI and the smart city model, such as by improving administrative capacity and digital skills, and should encourage a shift from experimentation to scaling up smart city initiatives with funding and related support; calls on the Commission to consider ways to support cities in preparing their SUMP to the highest standards; stresses that the Commission, the Member States and the regions should assist local authorities wherever possible in achieving this goal; welcomes, moreover, the European Investment Bank's intention to

work together with public authorities to support ambitious investment programmes that promote sustainable mobility at local and regional levels, including through SUMP and public transport projects;

28. Insists that regional and local authorities have a key role to play in all stages: planning, preparation and implementation; calls for more direct EU funding to be made available to local and regional authorities in order to improve efficiency, ensure consistency and reduce administrative burdens; calls on the Commission, moreover, to provide Member States with all the necessary guidance and to facilitate access to funding, differentiating between cities and regions depending on their level of digitalisation;
29. Notes that the tourism sector has also been severely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic; recalls that in terms of volume, cities are the main locations for European tourism; stresses the need, therefore, to plan mobility offerings with specific services for tourism-related travel and other services for everyday mobility; reiterates that sustainable and resilient development and the management of urban tourism need to be fully integrated into the wider urban agenda and calls on the Commission to take tourism into account when devising the new Urban Mobility Package; calls on the Member States, moreover, to invest in funding to support the shift towards more sustainable, innovative, resilient and high-quality tourism products and services and further contribute to sustainability;
30. Recalls that urban tourism has played an essential part in devising urban policies; points out that most EU cities have suffered from downturns in tourism following the pandemic and have had to search for new and more sustainable *modi operandi* to restore tourism, leading to an intense use of new digital technologies, which have enabled urban spaces and the movement of urban tourists to be managed better to prevent the build-up of large groups and risky situations in the context of the pandemic;
31. Recalls the importance of a modern and seamless TEN-T and of strengthening urban nodes and cross-border transport services across Europe to unleash the potential of international collective sustainable transport and make tourism more sustainable all year round.

INFORMATION ON ADOPTION IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

Date adopted	15.11.2021
Result of final vote	+: 42 -: 0 0: 1
Members present for the final vote	Andris Ameriks, Izaskun Bilbao Barandica, Karolin Braunsberger-Reinhold, Jakop G. Dalunde, Johan Danielsson, Karima Delli, Gheorghe Falcă, Isabel García Muñoz, Jens Gieseke, Elena Kountoura, Bogusław Liberadzki, Peter Lundgren, Benoît Lutgen, Tilly Metz, Cláudia Monteiro de Aguiar, Caroline Nagtegaal, Jan-Christoph Oetjen, João Pimenta Lopes, Rovana Plumb, Dominique Riquet, Dorien Rookmaker, Massimiliano Salini, Vera Tax, Barbara Thaler, Lucia Vuolo, Kosma Złotowski
Substitutes present for the final vote	Pablo Arias Echeverría, Leila Chaibi, Markus Ferber, Vlad Gheorghe, Ondřej Kovařík, Colm Markey, Nora Mebarek, Jutta Paulus, Robert Roos, Kathleen Van Brempt, Marianne Vind
Substitutes under Rule 209(7) present for the final vote	Matteo Adinolfi, Markus Buchheit, Zbigniew Kuźmiuk, Jutta Paulus, Tsvetelina Penkova, Jessica Polfjärd, Ramona Strugariu

FINAL VOTE BY ROLL CALL IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

42	+
ECR	Zbigniew Kuźmiuk, Peter Lundgren, Kosma Złotowski
ID	Matteo Adinolfi, Markus Buchheit
NI	Dorien Rookmaker
PPE	Pablo Arias Echeverría, Karolin Braunsberger-Reinhold, Gheorghe Falcă, Markus Ferber, Jens Gieseke, Benoît Lutgen, Colm Markey, Cláudia Monteiro de Aguiar, Jessica Polfjård, Massimiliano Salini, Barbara Thaler, Lucia Vuolo
RENEW	Izaskun Bilbao Barandica, Vlad Gheorghe, Ondřej Kovařík, Caroline Nagtegaal, Jan-Christoph Oetjen, Dominique Riquet, Ramona Strugariu
S&D	Andris Ameriks, Johan Danielsson, Isabel García Muñoz, Bogusław Liberadzki, Nora Mebarek, Tsvetelina Penkova, Rovana Plumb, Vera Tax, Kathleen Van Brempt, Marianne Vind
THE LEFT	Leila Chaibi, Elena Kountoura, João Pimenta Lopes
VERTS/ALE	Jakop G. Dalunde, Karima Delli, Tilly Metz, Jutta Paulus

0	-

1	0
ECR	Robert Roos

Key to symbols:

+ : in favour

- : against

0 : abstention