

TRANSPORT SITUATION IN NORWAY IN 2004

1. Traffic trends

Road traffic

Road traffic measured in vehicle-km has increased in 2004 compared to 2003 (2,2 % compared to 1,6 %). The increase is highest for road freight traffic.

Air traffic

After a period of decrease in air traffic, the number of passenger started to increase in 2002-2003. This increase continued in 2004 and continues to be largest for international flights (5 % for domestic and 12,9 % for international flights).

Rail traffic

Unfortunately, we do not have similar updated information on rail traffic. However rail transport has shown a declining share over the latest years.

2. Obstacles to the developments of transport

Given the Norwegian geography, climate and population distribution, both transport and infrastructure development/maintenance is expensive in Norway. No special problems occurred concerning the developments of transport in 2004. The rail network is limited; the road network is of varying quality, this is an obstacle for development of transport by heavy vehicles. Some airports are located in sparsely populated areas, but are of significant importance. Road congestion is a problem in some main cities, and on some major routes. Otherwise congestion is a temporary problem due to weather condition or holidays.

3. Best practices in transport and infrastructure regulation

Road safety

A penalty point system was introduced in Norway in 2004. The system is designated to cover violations of road traffic rules which constitute serious hazards to road safety and which are close to the limit where driving licenses are automatically suspended.

The following violations will lead to penalty points:

- Speeding
- Dangerous overtaking
- Violating priority rules
- Driving against a red light

Each violation will be registered by two points, except minor speeding violations which will be registered by one point. A number of eight penalty points within a period of three years will result in suspension of the driving license for a period of six months.

A preliminary experience is that the public in general comprehend and appreciate both the motivations for the measure and its content. The penalty point system is systematically evaluated by an independent research body with respect to both the effects on the driver behaviour and road safety consequences. This evaluation will continue until 2007.

New Organisation Models

Based on an invitation from the Ministry of Transport and Communications to go through a four years test period, four major cities in Norway (Bergen, Trondheim, Stavanger and Kristiansand) implemented a new organisational structure aiming at improving the transport policy system of these cities. The decision making processes thereby put the local authorities to a larger degree in charge of the transport sector in these cities. The former organisational structure divides the responsibility for land use and transport policy between local, regional and national authorities. By giving local authorities necessary resources and power, the quality of services offered to the travellers will hopefully improve. By the end of 2004 there is an observable tendency to increase local efforts to improve local public transport services.

Incentive-based funding

In 2004 the Government introduced an incentive-based state funding scheme for public transport in larger urban areas. The system rewards local authorities in larger cities who implement measures that encourage increased use of public transportation and less traffic by private cars (compared to the development in previous five years). Restrictions on private car use are required to receive funding from the scheme. The intention is to reward proven results according to the objectives of the scheme. For 2004 the response so far indicates that the scheme has helped local authorities increasing their efforts in improving local public transport services.