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ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

INLAND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

Working Party on Transport Statistics  
(Fifty-first session, 24-26 October 2000,  
agenda item 5(b))

**METHODOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT AND HARMONIZATION  
OF TRANSPORT STATISTICS**

**Harmonization of urban and regional transport statistics**

**Note by the secretariat**

**NOTE:** The following paper was given by the secretariat at the first meeting of the Task Force on Sustainable Urban Transport Indicators, organized in cooperation with the Institute of Territorial Studies in Barcelona and held from 28-29 March 2000.

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***The Harmonization of Urban Transport Statistics at the International Level***

*Submitted by the UN/ECE secretariat for consideration by the*

*Task Force on Sustainable Urban Transport Indicators*

*(28-29 March 2000, Barcelona)*

**I. Background and mandate for the Task Force**

1. The Task Force on Sustainable Urban Transport Indicators was created under a mandate by the UN/ECE Working Party on Transport Statistics (WP.6), at its fiftieth session (17-19 November 1999). WP.6, whose parent body is the ECE's Inland Transport Committee (ITC), devoted its fiftieth anniversary session to the theme of "Indicators for Sustainable Transport."

2. The creation of the Task Force follows four years of work at the ECE, in cooperation with other organizations (International Union of Public Transport (UITP), EC/Eurostat, European Conference of Ministers of Transport (ECMT)) toward the international harmonization of urban and regional transport data.

3. Recognizing the importance of obtaining timely, reliable and high quality information on urban and regional transport, both from the perspective of transport planning and infrastructure development, and from an environmental perspective, these organizations have worked together since 1996 in an effort to fill the statistical gaps in this area. This work has included thus far (1) the development of a Pilot Questionnaire on Urban Passenger Transport; (2) a Workshop on Urban Passenger and Environmental Statistics, (May 1997, Washington D.C.); and now (3) the convening of the Task Force on Sustainable Urban Transport Indicators. All of these activities have been carried out, moreover, in the context of the follow-up activities to the **UN Regional Conference on Transport and the Environment**, held in Vienna in 1997 (see below).

## **II. Follow-up to the UN Regional Conference on Transport and Environment**

4. As noted above, activities of ECE in the area of urban transport statistics carried out under the Inland Transport Committee are part of the follow-up work to the UN Regional Conference on Transport and the Environment, held in November 1997 in Vienna. The Programme of Joint Action (POJA) from the Vienna Conference includes in Chapter I: "Towards Sustainable Transport", part (d), which calls on Governments and international organizations to:

Develop further, on the basis of already established monitoring and reviewing procedures, a common theoretical base and methodologies for collecting, analysing and reporting data on transportation activities and their environmental and health consequences. Develop a proposal for a Pan-European regular exchange and publication of data and analysis in this respect (ECE/RCTE/CONF.3/FINAL).

5. The ECE Working Party on Transport Statistics (WP.6) is considered a "Lead Actor" in the implementation of Chapter I(d), and reported on each of the three activities cited above at the first session of the Meeting of National Focal Points, Lead Actors and other Actors (7-8 February 2000), convened by the ECE Joint Meeting on Transport and the Environment.

6. Moreover, Chapter V of POJA deals with "**Promoting Sustainable Urban Transport**," and has given rise to various projects related to sustainable urban transport, some of which were described during the Meeting of National Focal Points, including that of Croatia, Denmark, Finland, Hungary, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the Netherlands, Poland, the Russian Federation and Switzerland (Informal document No. 1: Draft Projects List). The next session of the Joint Meeting on

Transport and Environment is scheduled for 6 June 2000 in Geneva where the results of the Task Force will be submitted.

### **III. Workshop on Urban Passenger Transport and Environmental Statistics (Washington, D.C., 1997)**

7. As a precursor to the preparations of the Vienna Conference, and in anticipation of follow-up work in the statistical area, the UN/ECE organized a Workshop on Urban Passenger Transport and Environmental Statistics. The Washington Workshop (12-15 May 1997) was organized under the auspices of the UN/ECE Workshop Programme for Countries in Transition, financed by the United States Department of Transport (Bureau of Transport Statistics), in cooperation with the UITP. Workshop participants included urban planning, transport and environmental policy experts with experience in transport and/or environmental statistics from ECE member countries, as well as international organizations. The Washington Workshop produced a set of **Recommendations to Governments**, some of which may be relevant for the Task Force. The Washington Recommendations are contained in the annex of the Report of the Workshop (TRANS/WP.6/1997/1).

### **IV. Pilot Questionnaire on Urban Passenger Transport**

8. The Pilot Questionnaire on Urban Passenger Transport was initiated in response to a request in 1996 by the UITP to WP.6 to examine ways of obtaining better statistics on urban and regional passenger transport (TRANS/WP.6/R.93). Based on input from ECE member Governments (TRANS/WP.6/1998/5) and the apparent desire to harmonize transport statistics at the sub-national level (both regional and urban), the Pilot Questionnaire was first circulated in 1997. Recognizing the difficulty in providing data in certain categories, the Working Party asked the ECE secretariat to further streamline the questionnaire and to ask for information on definitions and methodologies used to collect the data.

9. The Pilot Questionnaire was recirculated in both 1998 and 1999, asking member Governments for information on transport performance on metros, trams and light rail, the names of towns and cities in each country with metros, trams and light rail, as well as the number of taxis in operation. Information (of varying quality) was obtained from a total of 34 European and Central Asian countries. The consolidated results of the 1999 Pilot Questionnaire, which are contained in the UN document TRANS/WP.6/1999/2, were considered by WP.6 at its fiftieth session. The Working Party asked the secretariat to circulate the Pilot Questionnaire, as an Appendix to the Common Questionnaire, for the first time in September 2000. The Pilot Questionnaire would ask for meta-data and definitions of terms and the Working Party would discuss this again at its fifty-first session to determine the future direction of work in this area (TRANS/WP.6/137, paras. 23-25).

## V. Project on Urban Transport Patterns and Land-Use Planning

10. In addition to the above-mentioned activities carried out under the ECE's Inland Transport Committee, the **ECE's Committees on Environmental Policy and on Human Settlements**, in 1999, decided to develop jointly a project to promote the environmentally sound management of local transport integrated with sustainable land-use planning (HBP/1999/6). This follows Agenda 21, as well as the Fourth Ministerial Conference of "Environment for Europe" (Arhus, 1998) which recognized the importance of sustainable consumption and production patterns. The project on Urban Transport Patterns and Land-Use Planning aims to:

- Facilitate the exchange of information on planning and other measures to achieve sound urban transport and sustainable land use;
- Promote networking among environmental and municipal policy and decision makers, urban and regional planners, researchers, and representatives of the private sector and citizens groups dealing with transport management and land use; and
- Generate policy recommendations and practical guidelines to public authorities at various levels.

11. The Project intends to develop guidelines for Governments for subsequent submission to the fifth Ministerial Conference "Environment for Europe" (September 2002, Kiev).

## VI. Obstacles to Collection of Harmonized Data on Urban Transport

12. Since 1993, general Transport Statistics for ECE member countries (Eastern and Western Europe, Central Asia and North America), have been collected by means of the Common Questionnaire for Transport Statistics, developed jointly by the Intersecretariat Working Group on Transport Statistics (IWG) which is made up of representatives of the ECE, Eurostat and the ECMT. The IWG developed the **Common Questionnaire for Transport Statistics**, and the accompanying **Glossary for Transport Statistics**, in an effort to increase the comparability of transport statistics at the international level, as well as to reduce the response burden of the member countries of the three organizations.

13. The collection of transport statistics at the urban level has traditionally presented two problems to the international organizations who collect transport statistics on an annual basis from their respective member countries by means of the Common Questionnaire for Transport Statistics (CQ): (1) urban transport data does not fit the modal framework of the CQ; and (2) urban transport data does not conform to the national framework of the CQ, as explained below.

14. The Common Questionnaire is divided into chapters by mode (i.e., road, rail, inland waterways and pipeline transport), whereas urban transport is multimodal (road-rail-intercity rail). Moreover, the Common Questionnaire is sent to an established network of contacts, primarily the Central Statistical Offices of the member countries of ECE, Eurostat and the ECMT, and sometimes the statistical divisions of Ministries of Transport. Since urban data is not normally collected at the national level, a reliable collection depends upon the national authorities obtaining data from the city authorities.

15. These two obstacles: the traditional “modal approach” and the well-established “national approach” to collecting transport statistics should be explored by the Task Force in an effort to encourage dependable channels for collecting data at the urban level according to a methodology (and according to accepted definitions) that will allow this data to be comparable at the international level. The experience gained by ECMT and the UITP in their recent **surveys of urban transport** could be useful in this regard. In the case of ECMT, the Questionnaire was sent to a list of contacts at the local level (city and regional authorities) assigned by the Ministry of Transport of each participating country. The results achieved by UITP would also be interesting to examine in this regard.

## **VII. Development of Core Indicators on Sustainable Urban Transport**

16. The key challenge at hand for the Task Force is the development of a set of basic (core) indicators that can be used to monitor, measure and report on the sustainability of urban transport. The relevant indicators must be linked to certain accepted policy goals in sustainable development in general and in urban liveability in particular. The Report of the Task Force, including Policy Recommendations and Proposed Indicators will be made available during the fifty-first session of WP.6 (TRANS/WP.6/2000/4).

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