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Working Party on Transport Statistics

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Item 7 of the provisional agenda

Traffic censuses in the Economic Commission for Europe region:

2020 E-Road traffic censuses

Reminder on the 2020 E-Road Census and request for 2019 data

Note by the secretariat

I. Background

1. At its seventieth session the Working Party on Transport Statistics (WP.6) adopted ECE/TRANS/WP.6/2019/11 which was a minor update to the recommendations to Governments on the 2020 E-Road traffic census (itself based on ECE/TRANS/WP.6/2018/11, which was adopted as a resolution of the Inland Transport Committee at its session in February 2019). This document asked countries to provide the necessary data by 1 November 2021.

2. Following the seventieth session, the Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe sent out letters to all concerned member States in June 2019, informing them of Inland Transport Committee resolutions 266 and 267 (ECE/TRANS/288, Annex IV) which invited Governments to conduct both censuses, and encouraging them to participate.

II. Proposal for the 2020 Round

3. The E-Road traffic census allows an assessment of traffic volumes, measured in Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT), on specific corridors (namely roads that are covered by the European Agreement on Main International Traffic Arteries (AGR)). This exercise is a useful geospatial complement to transport statistics on a national level, which allow mapping of traffic volumes and thus take into account population centres, important commercial locations and international borders.

4. Data would typically only be requested for 2020 as compared to the 2015 figures. But given the exceptional events of 2020 relating to COVID-19 and subsequent lockdowns or reductions in travel activity, traffic levels in 2020 are likely to be exceptionally reduced in most if not all member States. This would make any comparison with traffic levels in 2015 much less relevant. The secretariat therefore proposes to ask for data for 2019 as well, if available, in order to have a better idea of how traffic levels have changed since 2015 in a more typical year. This would allow a better assessment of typical usage patterns on the infrastructure concerned, while the 2020 data will allow the impact of COVID-19 to be measured as well.

5. While the censuses collect these data on an annualised basis, knowing how these traffic volumes change on a monthly (or even daily) basis is obviously a very useful way to track the impacts on transport systems of economic, social and seasonal changes across a country or countries. The census already does this to a certain extent, asking for peak holiday traffic (typically during July and August weekends for many European countries). Traffic monitoring in the style of the census, but on a daily or weekly level, is a useful way to quantify the impacts to commerce and personal travel habits. In addition to the requested census data, governments are encouraged to share any links to data they may have on a more short-term basis.
