

## Sustainable urban mobility can improve Europe's health and environment

Written by Henna Virkkunen on 2 July 2015 in Opinion  
Opinion

Henna Virkkunen says new technologies and environmental solutions are crucial to creating sustainable EU transport systems.



Increasing urbanisation is a worldwide trend and as such urban mobility is becoming a bigger and bigger issue. The need for sustainable ways of living raises the importance of developing sustainable urban mobility.

The focus should be on solutions that ensure environmentally friendly transport services. There has to be a shift towards low emission transport across all modes of transport. This is important in itself, but will also help in reaching our CO<sub>2</sub> emission reduction targets and in improving Europe's air quality.

Planning for land use is the most important phase in the creation of smooth and safe service networks and for ensuring that environmental issues are taken into account. Solutions that are reached during the planning phase are long-lasting and have an impact on traffic volumes, traffic distribution, traffic

safety and the status of different transport modes.

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Enhancing the possibilities for walking and cycling should form the basis of any urban planning. If walking and cycling are taken into account at the earliest possible stage, they will be more likely to become genuinely viable means of mobility. Oulu in Finland and Copenhagen in Denmark are good examples of where this has been done successfully.

Another important aspect is the use of intelligent transport solutions and innovative and smart technologies. Through the use of these intelligent solutions, transport services become smoother, safer and more environmentally friendly.

These innovative methods can provide passengers with information on traffic conditions in real-time and allow for infrastructure to be used more efficiently. Mobility problems will not be solved simply by building new infrastructures, but by using those that exist in a more intelligent way and by developing the interoperability of different services.

Reaching these goals will demand close cooperation between different stakeholders and the utilisation of both familiar and unfamiliar solutions. For example, the robotic automatisation of systems can bring many interesting possibilities into transportation and mobility. Europe, as a strong car industry area, should take a leading role in developing this kind of robotisation.

Digitalisation can also provide many opportunities for transport. The needs and expectations of passengers will become more demanding and fragmented while the available resources for developing transport systems are decreasing.

For example, private cars spend over 90 per cent of their time unused. This gives room to new innovative forms of mobility and new business models such as car-sharing and car-pooling that hold possibilities for utilising existing resources more efficiently.

New technologies enable users to take a more proactive role as developers and data producers in the transport system. Transport data, data infrastructure and physical transport infrastructure will together compose the essential platform for mobility services.

Sustainable urban mobility is a real win-win situation where everybody gains. Well planned urban mobility improves the environment, and has also an impact on life quality and health.

## About the author

Henna Virkkunen (Finland) is European People's Party group shadow rapporteur on sustainable urban mobility

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