

Midland Metro

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European Planning policy

The European Commission (EC) sets out common policy objectives at a European scale for all Member States. The main document of relevance to transport issues is the most recent White Paper on Transport, produced in September 2001 ⁽¹⁹⁾. This contains a number of common policies on transport, which aim to optimise the transport system in the European Union, increasing both the quality and sustainability of transport services within the context of a growing economy, population and the process of enlargement.

The measures in the White Paper are the first stages towards a longer term strategy on transport which aims to break the link between economic growth and transport growth.

The White Paper identifies a number of key transport problems that include, amongst other things:

- congestion and bottlenecks in the transport network;
- unequal growth in different modes of transport;
- a need to ensure that the costs associated with the harmful effects of transport (eg impacts on air quality and ambient noise levels) are included in the environmental costs of the transport sector; and
- a lack of linkages between modes of transport and to outlying regions from the central regions.

Solutions proposed in the White Paper to improve the network include:

- tackling the rising levels of congestion and encouraging the use of environment-friendly modes of transport to reduce pollution;
- shifting the balance between modes of transport;
- a new approach to urban transport by local public authorities which reconciles the modernisation of public services with rationalisation of private car use; and
- better land-use planning policy and in particular, improved urban transport policy at local level, especially in large cities.

The White Paper stresses the need to develop network intermodality between Member States and high quality urban transport, including better use of public transport and existing infrastructure. Journey continuity is also an important aim and the White Paper states that light rail, train and bus stations, as well as car parks should be geared towards exchanges between the car and public transport. The White Paper notes that urban transport should be rationalised to reduce car use so that the problems of pollution and urban congestion can be reduced. This should be achieved through traffic management, cleaner vehicles and the development of good-quality public transport infrastructure, including rapid passenger transit networks.