

Planning sustainable urban mobility in the EU

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(own-initiative opinion)

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The Future of Urban Mobility → Building Sustainable, Inclusive and Resilient Systems

Starting points:

- Cities face growing mobility **challenges**: environmental pressures, congestion, rising costs and economic inefficiencies.
- These challenges affect daily life, **access** to opportunities and the overall **quality** of urban environments.
- Building truly sustainable mobility systems requires **collective action** across governments, civil society, businesses and communities.
- Financial, political and social **resources** must be **mobilised** to create mobility systems that serve everyone fairly and effectively.

Why Mobility Matters?

- Mobility enables access to jobs, education, services and civic life
 - It is a backbone of economic competitiveness
 - It shapes regional development and land use
 - It affects public health, safety and environmental outcomes
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- Mobility is more than efficiency—it is a fundamental social right.
 - Workers, students and communities rely on it every day.

A System Under Pressure

- Environmental impacts
 - Congestion and inefficiency
 - Social inequality and transport poverty
 - Technological disruption
- Change is underway—bringing both risks and opportunities.

The Moment of Change

- Urban mobility is undergoing rapid transformation.

“Change is underway... posing threats and opportunities.”

- Drivers:
 - Electrification, digitalisation, platformisation
 - Climate adaptation and environmental protection
 - Road safety commitments
 - Social expectations for fairness and accessibility

The Choice Ahead

- We face a transition by design or a drift for the worse.

“The choice we face is between a transition by design or an uncertain drift for the worse.”



Sustainability and Smart Planning

- Mobility must be environmentally, socially and economically sustainable
 - SUMP's provide a strategic framework
 - SUMP's must include suburban and peri-urban areas
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- Sustainability means reducing emissions, improving accessibility and ensuring cost-effective solutions.
 - SUMP's help cities transition to greener, smarter mobility systems.

Mobility Beyond the City

- Urban mobility is regional mobility.

“The social and economic life of urban areas extends well into suburban, peri-urban and rural areas.”

- Challenges:
 - Forced car ownership is a growing problem
 - Urban–rural divide and fairness concerns
- Without good alternatives, people in outer areas face long commutes, high costs and limited options.
- Fairness requires regional coordination.

Start with the Basics

- Walking, accessibility and safety are foundational.

“Walking is the most basic component of the mobility system.”

“Ensuring accessibility is vital to make public space truly ‘public’.”

- Points:
 - Safe, accessible walking infrastructure
 - Universal design
 - Road safety as a precondition for sustainable mobility

Universal design means creating environments, products and services that are usable by all people, regardless of age, ability or background, without the need for adaptation.

Participation and Dialogue

- Sustainable mobility requires social legitimacy. Quotes:

“Participation and dialogue at grassroots level are key.”

“Dialogue across generations is necessary.”

- Points:
 - Engage all affected groups, not only supporters
 - Cross-party cooperation for long-term implementation
 - Youth involvement (EU Youth Test)

SUMPs as the Strategic Backbone

“The development of SUMPs... constitutes a unique and critical opportunity to get things right.”

- Required for all 431 TEN-T urban nodes by 2027.
- Must cover the entire Functional Urban Area (FUA).
- Need strong cooperation across municipalities and levels of government.



Public Transport: The Backbone

- Affordable, accessible, reliable public transport
 - Key to reducing transport poverty
 - Social Climate Fund and Plans must support vulnerable groups
 - Multimodal systems: PT + active + shared mobility
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- Public transport is the foundation of sustainable mobility.
 - It must reach all people, especially those most at risk of exclusion.

Behavioural Change

“Behavioural insights should inform policy as early as possible.”

- Infrastructure alone is not enough
 - Behavioural insights must guide policy
 - Encourage active mobility and shared solutions
 - Employers play a key role
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- Behaviour change is essential.
 - Employers can support sustainable commuting through subsidies, cycling facilities and carpooling incentives.

Shared Mobility and Logistics

- Shared bikes, e-bikes, cargo bikes, e-scooters
 - Demand-responsive transport
 - Sustainable Urban Logistics Plans (SULPs)
 - Efficient last-mile delivery supports businesses and reduces congestion
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- Shared mobility expands access, especially when integrated with public transport.
 - Sustainable logistics benefit both businesses and cities.

Technology: Benefits and Limits

- EVs reduce air pollution
 - But do not solve congestion, parking or road safety
 - Need smart planning + efficient use of technologies
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- Electric vehicles are part of the solution, not the whole solution.
 - Without planning, urban expansion locks communities into car dependency.

Spatial Planning + Mobility Planning

- Land use and mobility must be planned together
 - Mixed-use development reduces travel needs
 - New developments must include sustainable mobility from the start
- If mobility is not planned early, new neighbourhoods become car-dependent, worsening traffic and emissions.

Climate-Neutral Cities

- EU Mission: Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities
 - SUMP as a key tool
 - Requires collaboration, funding and capacity-building
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- The transition to climate-neutral cities is possible.
 - SUMP represents a major opportunity—if backed by political will and resources

Employment, Workers and Businesses

- Sustainable mobility strengthens labour markets and competitiveness.

“Employment generates mobility demand.”

“Sustainable mobility needs workers.”

- Points:
 - Support employers who subsidise PT and promote sustainable commuting
 - Improve working conditions in transport sector
 - Protect workers from violence and harassment
 - Develop Sustainable Urban Logistics Plans (SULPs)

Tackling Transport Poverty

- Fairness requires multimodal, affordable solutions.

“Lack of good alternatives leads to forced car ownership.”

“People need a multimodal transport menu.”

- Solutions:
 - Integrated fares (e.g., 75-minute multimodal ticket)
 - Metropolitan Transport Authorities
 - Combining PT with cycling, shared mobility, DRT

Demand-Responsive Transport (DRT) is a flexible, on-demand public transport service that adjusts routes and schedules based on real-time passenger requests instead of fixed timetables or fixed lines.

Funding and the Post-2027 MFF

- Post-2027 EU budget is critical
 - SUMP as investment pipelines
 - Attract private investment
 - Create sustainable mobility jobs
- The next EU budget cycle will determine whether cities can implement their mobility plans at scale.
- ✓ All stakeholders should be involved in consultation processes in early phase, including in designing new National and regional partnership plans (NRPP)

The Role of Civil Society

- CIVINETs strengthen local capacity
 - Knowledge sharing and peer learning
 - Support for cities, social partners, CSOs and institutes
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- Civil society networks are essential partners.
 - They help cities learn from each other and accelerate change.

Key Takeaways

- Mobility is about people, not vehicles
 - SUMP's provide a strategic path forward
 - Public transport and multimodality are essential
 - Behavioural change + planning + funding = success
 - Collaboration across all levels is vital
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- Mobility is about the future we build together.
 - With strategic planning, political commitment and public engagement, we can create systems that are efficient, inclusive and sustainable.

Thank you!

- You can find the Opinion at the following link:

<https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/our-work/opinions-information-reports/opinions/planning-sustainable-urban-mobility-eu>

➤ Stay in touch:

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