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EU green transport vision must support local flexibility

By mainstreaming urban transport into its new ten-year strategy for transport, the European Commission has taken a step in the right direction towards a cleaner and more economically vibrant EU.

Commenting on the EU's revised transport white paper unveiled on 28 March, EURO CITIES secretary general, Paul Bevan, said:

"We are pleased that the commission is showing the strategic leadership necessary to tackle politically difficult issues and welcome the leverage it will give member states and local authorities to push for sustainability."

Yet, there is apprehension that the same strategy has the potential to undermine the ability of local authorities to develop and deliver transport solutions in the future. On this, EURO CITIES' mobility lead, Frits Lintmeijer, Deputy Mayor for transport in Utrecht, said:

"While we are delighted that the commission has taken up our recommendation to recognise the importance of urban transport in its new plans, we are concerned that proposals related to mandatory urban mobility plans, access restriction schemes and road pricing schemes, seem to disregard city realities."

Legal issues, specifically, are causing unease among cities across Europe:

1. **Mandatory urban mobility plans:** which may compromise the flexibility cities have to ensure transport solutions are tailored specifically to their needs; no mandatory 'one-size-fits-all' solution can be applied at the local level.
2. **Access restriction schemes and road user charging:** cities oppose the commission's wish to develop a legal framework for these. In fact, these fields are local competences that are best addressed flexibly by local authorities according to local circumstances.

In addition, the new strategy doesn't offer the best approach towards more environmentally-friendly forms of transport in urban areas. EURO CITIES president, Frank Jensen, the Mayor of Copenhagen, said:

"If we really want to make a difference in the future, we need to get people cycling, walking and using public transport. The commission must also consider a strategy that strives to limit car use in urban areas in general. Even if they are lighter and more specialised, cars are a huge contributor to congestion in cities and also require the use of polluting sources of energy."

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Note to Editors

- EURO CITIES is the network of major European cities. Visit: www.eurocities.eu
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