



Dear President Barroso,



We are concerned about the direction the Commission is apparently taking in its midterm review of the 2001 Common Transport Policy white paper.

Our concerns stem from a draft internal Commission paper dated 23 March 2006 that we have seen; and from comments made publicly in recent months and weeks by the Commissioner for Transport and other Commission officials.



Contradiction with agreed EU policy

Firstly, we are deeply concerned by the uncoordinated, standalone character of the draft document.



The basic premise of the new policy direction appears to be that mobility should be encouraged in order to create the conditions for growth and jobs. However, such a premise is in direct conflict with several overarching and related policy areas, such as the Sustainable Development Strategy, and EU policy in the fields of energy, climate change, public health, the use and management of natural resources (particularly in the case of extractive industries) and protection of biodiversity. These policy areas are at risk of being severely undermined if transport policy does not take their goals into account.



Moreover, this change of direction is in conflict with the objectives of the original 2001 White Paper which itself took into account the 2001 Gothenburg European Council conclusions that stated, "Action is needed to bring about a significant decoupling of transport growth and GDP growth, in particular by a shift from road to rail, water and public passenger transport".



Justification for this change of policy is completely lacking.

Friends of the Earth Europe

Conflict with Lisbon Strategy

Secondly, we strongly disagree with the assumption that encouraging increased transport is in line with the Lisbon Strategy for growth and jobs.



There is a consensus in the scientific community that transport growth is not linked to increased employment - the European Conference of Ministers of Transport recognised this five years ago.



Recent experience from Germany, Sweden and the UK shows that smart transport pricing schemes reduce travel times, congestion, healthcare costs, energy use and pollution, and have a neutral or positive impact on growth and jobs. The central challenge for the future is how transport and its impacts can be properly managed, not how it should be encouraged.



Unjustifiable subsidies

Thirdly, we are concerned that the Commission intends to recommend the use of cohesion and structural funds to prioritise road infrastructure in particular. This has been justified on the basis that it would best serve economic development and cohesion objectives.



In our view this strategy is flawed. Sustainable economic development and cohesion in the new Member States will not be helped by European support for selected large infrastructure projects that often harm the environment and represent poor value for public money. There is a desperate need instead for a

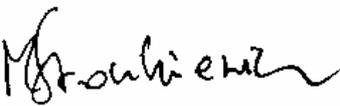
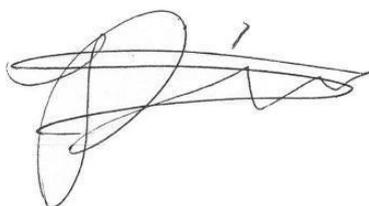
strategy that helps States to maintain, renew and upgrade their existing infrastructure. Extensive rail networks in many of the new Member States are a strategic asset that are at risk from being lost due to insufficient funding.

The best way to prepare for the challenges of our future mobility is to make Europe less transport-dependent and to ensure that mobility is environmentally, socially and economically sustainable. Implementing the 'polluter pays' principle as enshrined in the Treaty and re-focusing EU investment in transport are two important ways of achieving these objectives.

In short, we are concerned that the Commission is about to embark on an unsustainable new transport policy which has little or no economic justification and undermines several other key European policies.

We would like your assurance that these concerns will be addressed in the coming weeks before the final review is published. Furthermore, we would welcome the opportunity to address these concerns with you in person.

Yours sincerely,



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cc.
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