

The Honorable Government of [...]  
a/c Permanent Representation to the European Union

## **Urban Mobility in the National Recovery and Resilience Plan**

Dear Sir, Madam,

POLIS is the leading network of European cities and regions committed to Transport Innovation – specifically, to innovations that can make urban mobility become more sustainable, safe, and equitable.

During the health crisis, our many members – along with most other local and regional authorities, all across Europe – stepped forward into the front lines, supporting essential workers, deliveries, and several public and private services. In spite of daunting financial losses, we kept cities moving throughout the most difficult moments of the crisis.

We responded to short-term emergencies, and now we certainly want to relaunch economic activity. **But we must learn and improve. We want progress.** We don't want to "bounce back" to an ineffective urban mobility "business as usual" that has been fueling the climate crisis and causing millions of untimely deaths and chronic health problems from road danger, air pollution and lack of physical activity.

The European Green Deal, and its policy implications for funding instruments, has opened a **unique – and critical – window of opportunity for change.** We fully subscribe to the words of the President of the Commission, Ms. von der Leyen, that *"by using the Green Deal as our compass, we can turn the crisis of this pandemic into an opportunity to rebuild our economies differently and make them more resilient"*.

**We strongly encourage all National Recovery and Resilience Plans to follow-through on this vision, and make Sustainable and Safe Urban Mobility a core component.**

Subsidiarity is not an obstacle. As EU Transport Commissioner, Ms. Adina Vălean, stated, Member States should *"ensure that sustainable urban mobility needs, including for public transport, are adequately addressed in the preparation of their Recovery plan"*.

The European Union, with the full support of its Member States, has committed to drastic **reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and traffic deaths**. This is the time to convert political support into public action. The commitment of the Recovery and Resilience Funds to the advancement of Sustainable Urban Mobility will be a direct and true measure of action.

We know this is a challenge – but we also know, from practical experience in many of our member cities and regions that **success is possible**. Proactive leadership and cooperation among all levels of government make a big difference.

Furthermore,

As a network of cities and regions committed to Transport Innovation, our members are in direct contact with their citizens, and have practical experience, from the field. Building on their input, we take this opportunity to share some recommendations on the types of investments that can produce **the most important benefits** to Sustainable Urban Mobility.

We are fully aware of the need for swift action regarding commitment of the funds, and for the importance of enhancing the positive impact of these investments. We know, from experience, that the measures mentioned below enable **fast action, strategic benefits with multiplier effects, and highly visible changes in the right direction, which will directly benefit everyday lives of millions of citizens and thousands of businesses**.

These measures have the additional advantages of (1) being labour-intensive, i.e., will involve more jobs, and green jobs, (2) facilitating digital innovation in urban mobility, through a multimodal ecosystem that encourages the emergence of shared mobility services and MaaS platforms, and (3) easier to amplify through co-funding of local and regional authorities.

**But, above all, these measures directly address the needs of hundreds of cities, thousands of businesses, and millions of Europeans.**

With the likely approach of an economic recession, and unemployment rising, the disposable income of urban families will be reduced, and previous mobility habits, based on the individual use of private cars, will no longer be possible for many. It is essential to **grow the capacity of the most affordable transport options** – which are, at the same time, the most sustainable, i.e., public transport, cycling and walking.

We underline, as **key measures for advancing Sustainable Urban Mobility**:

- a) Growing the quality and capacity for **Public Transport**, which requires investments (1) in the rolling stock (e.g. growing bus fleets and making them zero-emission), (2) in the

infrastructure (e.g. creating continuous bus lanes and making bus stops accessible, to improve commercial speed), and also (3) in the design and management of the network (e.g. launching new commuting lines, shaping combined offers through partnerships with shared mobility operators, etc.). It is also critical, at this point, to (4) ensure that the financial losses sustained by this sector throughout the health crisis are adequately covered, and do not generate chronic financial problems that lead to cuts in service or delay capital investments;

- b) Growing the capacity for **Cycling**, which requires implementing (1) high-capacity bike commuting routes (to feed suburban transport hubs and city centres), (2) traffic calming schemes in non-arterial roads (to unlock the potential of vast street networks as cyclable), (3) secure, ample and well-distributed parking for bikes, and increasing the available stock of bicycles, especially electric bikes, through (4) public and or private bike sharing schemes and (5) purchase incentives;
- c) Increasing the safety and convenience for **Walking**, which must be delivered in tandem with pedestrian accessibility improvements, priority being given to the connections inside and around key pedestrian traffic generators, like (1) school zones, (2) public transport hubs, (3) commercial streets and (4) high density areas well served by public transport. These gains can be obtained through public space improvement projects like school streets, low speed zones, pedestrian zones and shared spaces;
- d) **Rationalizing access to urban centres**, by designing and implementing (1) areas of paid parking (especially in central areas with high demand), and (2) areas of controlled access (for example, in residential areas, or in high-density areas well-served by public transport), which in both cases involved adjustments in the infrastructure, advanced equipment and enforcement capability;
- e) In the field of **Urban Freight Logistics** there are also several opportunities for improvements that combine sustainability and efficiency, namely through (1) new consolidation centres, (2) low emission vehicles (including cargo bikes), (3) smart-charging infrastructure.

We must add that substantive, fast, coherent, and sustained advances in Sustainable Urban Mobility are best achieved with an integrated and strategic approach. This is better obtained through **Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans** (SUMP), for which the Commission has issued specific guidance, based on good practices. It is very important to make funding available for local and regional authorities to develop these plans.

We hope your Government finds this message useful, and joins a growing number of Member States in accelerating the European shift towards Sustainable Urban Mobility.

As the leading network of cities and regions committed to Transport Innovation, we encourage your Government to engage in this critical moment for our future. **We stand ready to support your efforts**, by networking with your local and regional authorities, and connecting to good practice from our 84 members, from 17 member states.

The climate crisis remains our biggest and most threatening challenge – there will be no vaccine for it, and the window of opportunity to deal with it hasn't become any wider. The next decade is critical.

This is not a moment for “business as usual” – we stand before a fundamental choice. Urban mobility has been a major source of greenhouse gas emissions, and traffic fatalities. **We cannot waste this unique opportunity to build back better**. Now, more than ever, we need true and consistent leadership with a sound vision and a steady hand, and full commitment from all levels of government – European, national, regional and local.

Brussels, 29<sup>th</sup> September 2020

Yours sincerely,



Karen Vancluysen  
Secretary General, The POLIS Network

Copy:

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