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Summary Report on the Symposium “Climate Protection and Urban Traffic – 40 Percent less CO₂: Towns and Cities on the Starting Line”

The second symposium on urban mobility – *Kommunal mobil* – took place in Dessau on 20 and 21 November 2008 as a joint event between the German Federal Environment Agency, the German Institute of Urban Affairs (Difu) and the German Association of Towns and Cities. Stefan Rodt, the new head of the noise and traffic department at the Federal Environment Agency, opened the symposium by providing participants gathered in the Agency's architecturally and ecologically striking building with a summary of the issue at the heart of the symposium: Reducing CO₂ emissions from urban traffic by 40 percent – no problem! Or, no problem?

In her welcoming speech, Parliamentary State Secretary Astrid Klug from the Federal Environment Ministry (BMU) explained that the federal government cannot achieve its climate protection targets without the help of municipalities. This is why the federal government supports local climate protection measures by providing municipalities with environmental commissioners and investment aid totalling 400 million euro from carbon trading revenues. She mentioned the *Kommunaler Klimaschutz* [service point for municipal climate protection] that was set up at Difu as part of the German Climate Protection Initiative, a nationwide umbrella campaign for emission-free travel on short journeys, or “zero emission mobility”, the *Mobilitätsmanagement* [Mobility Management] action programme for companies and municipalities, the major role public procurement has to play in ensuring market penetration of environmentally friendly products and the promotion of hybrid public buses.

Karl Gröger, a representative of the German Association of Towns and Cities, member of its building and transport committee and deputy mayor of the host town Dessau-Roßlau, maintained that the “avoid, reduce, shift” triad is still entirely relevant in municipal transport planning, and that towns and cities should be able to manage on less, more efficient modes of transport. He claimed that despite the efforts of the past decade, we have yet to succeed in fundamentally reversing trends in the transport sector. He called for new and additional approaches, adding that these would receive support from the Association of Towns and Cities.

In her presentation, Dr Hedwig Verron of the Federal Environment Agency focused on the “minus 40 percent” numbers game, and effectively demonstrated that the current need for global action has arisen only due to emissions over the past 150 years that have led to a drastic increase in CO₂ pollution of the atmosphere. She explained that in order to achieve the necessary 40-percent reduction in the transport sector, measures going beyond the federal government's Climate Protection Programme would be necessary to reduce annual CO₂ emissions by a further 20 million metric tons by transport sector. Dr Verron noted that, contrary to what some believe, the problem here is not purely long-distance traffic – local traffic is responsible for 30 percent of CO₂ emissions from road transport.

In the module “Ten percent more buses and trains: mobility management and local public transport”, Ruedi Ott, head of transport planning in Zurich, talked about the per-

sistent, determined efforts to promote local public transport in and around the city and to curb car traffic. He stressed that, "Pedestrian traffic is the key to a better quality of life in towns and cities." He mentioned the continued favourable assessments Zurich's public transport receives in surveys and how commuters are also increasingly using local public transport. Bicycles only represent around seven percent of the share of traffic in Zurich, but one third of citizens regularly use them. Ott explained that one focus of Zurich's policies is now consistently harmonizing residential and mobility development. To achieve *Wartezeit Null* [zero waiting time], public transport gets priority at traffic lights, and the city aims to provide attractive footpaths as the "first and last mile" of public transport. Twenty-five percent of journeys in Zurich made using private vehicles are, according to Ott, "still shiftable".

Klaus Geschwinder reported on the conflict between climate protection and budget shortfalls in local public transport in the Hanover region. Politicians tend to lose touch with reality when planning the use of budget funds allocated to local public transport. He went on to explain that a good service alone would ensure continued use of local public transport, because the number of people who are utterly dependent upon public transport is sharply decreasing as a result of demographic trends. A report by Professor Friedrich (Braunschweig) shows that the Hanover region could reduce its CO₂ emissions by 45 percent. The CO₂ problem in Hanover is also not confined to HGV traffic, despite the city being situated on the axes of the major A2 and A7 motorways; rather, it is chiefly the result of regional and local traffic.

Mr Geschwinder explained that, although transport policy that relied on "symbolic measures" used to enjoy some measure of success, the main aim now must be to adopt targeted measures. He pointed to intense conflict among agencies and divided responsibilities as the key problems in implementing such measures. Construction planning and the authorities for car parks and local public transport in the Hanover region are all, he pointed out, in different hands. Common strategies on road traffic are also lacking, as responsibilities here are also split between authorities at different levels.

Matthias Knobloch from Auto Club Europa (ACE) provided an additional report on the BMU's *Mobilitätsmanagement* action plan, which the ACE and the German Energy Agency (dena) jointly oversee. He explained that the plan focuses on commercial mobility management – and aims to make mobility management one of the building blocks of climate protection policies. In addition, following Austria's example, mobility advisers should provide free initial consultation in 15 regions in Germany.

One of the main points to come out of the discussion session on the first presentations was that, in addition to promoting cycling and local public transport, there is a real need to increase car occupancy levels. In a medium-sized town such as Offenburg, CO₂ emissions are, it was said, chiefly caused by commuters entering and leaving the town, and extending the local public transport network is financially unfeasible.

Many speakers spoke out against general speed limits on motorways and in towns and cities, exceeding 30 kph for latter. Introducing speed limits of 30 kph, as stipulated by many clean-air plans, could be made significantly easier if the proponents of 50-kph

limits had to provide evidence of the neutrality of emissions at 50 kph and not, as is presently the case, vice versa. Asked how Switzerland had managed to develop a good local public transport service, Ott responded by saying that, while the Swiss political wheels probably turned much slower than in Germany, they always turned in the same direction. As a result, policy-making based on consensus, as practised in Switzerland, is probably more effective than the opposition-based politics of Germany, which persistently forces changes of tack. He added, however, that another reason may be that local authorities have their own tax revenues at their disposal, and citizens themselves can use referendums to secure the funds for local public transport.

In the module “Ten percent more muscle power: Walk and cycle”, Thorben Prenzel, from the Zero Emission Mobility coordination centre at the Federal Environment Ministry, reported on the planned umbrella campaign and the current marketing and town competition. The campaign aims to encourage citizens to walk or cycle short distances, instead of using their cars.

According to Dr-Ing Reinhold Baier, whose presentation was entitled “Child-friendly streets – room for manoeuvre in the design guidelines for urban roads”, children are out and about in public spaces everywhere, so all roads must conform to their needs. In addition, however, the streets must also be suited to the requirements of all age groups, because it is impossible to redesign infrastructures for the needs of every generation, and senior citizens in particular have very similar requirements to young children with regard to urban roadways. He explained that, overall, it is a question of assessing roads in urban planning terms, rather than traffic terms. The German Road and Transportation Research Association (FGSV) plans to achieve this with its design guidelines for urban roads and make all streets fit for every user group.

He highlighted school closures as a major problem brought about by demographic change. While plans for school routes to existing schools were optimized over the years, sudden decisions to close schools have meant that routes now lead over main roads that no one ever thought pupils would have to cross. Transport planners should, therefore, be involved in school planning.

The discussion brought up the matter of potential conflict between the general goal of “less land consumption” and “more space for pedestrians”. Baier called for an altogether new approach to land appropriation that curbs the prevailing practice of widening roads. He explained it was a matter of allotting more space along the sides of existing roads and less to the main carriageway. He also pointed out that a synergy exists between campaigns and infrastructure. Particularly for new modes of transport, such as Segways, it is important to preserve available space on the sides of roadways and to redesign road areas to increase roadside space.

As part of the module “Ten percent less traffic: Back to the cities”, Stefan Reiss-Schmitt, director of the City of Munich Urban Development Planning, talked about the urban development potential of inner-city derelict land. Following the call for a “compact, urban, green city”, Munich has been developing derelict land in the inner-city for some years now. Reiss-Schmitt went on to explain that growth pressure in Munich is so great that high land prices and scarcity of available land mean that it is not possible to

accommodate all newcomers within the city. The number of commuters from the surrounding region is also on the increase and the commuter belt is growing. In addition, many local communities around Munich are concerned about the growing (political) influence of non-locals who are moving to their towns from Munich.

Dr Jens-Martin Gutsche researched the costs of residential areas and transport in a series of regions and discovered that households are basically playing a zero sum game when living and mobility costs are accounted for. According to the research, therefore, it does not “pay” at all for the households to move far out of the city. On the other hand, low travel costs can compensate for the high cost of inner-city living. Gutsche, however, did note that there were still certain differences between regions with very high property prices and those with lower prices.

In the module “Ten percent cheaper: Cost efficiency and financial feasibility”, Tilman Bracher's presentation “Investment deficits and investment needs in municipalities” discussed Difu's current study on the need for local investment. According to the study, the financial problems municipalities face as a result of the need to renew existing infrastructure will dramatically increase in the coming years, and will significantly limit the scope necessary to redirect transport policies. Municipalities must, he noted, redesign road areas, promote cycling and develop inner-city land for new uses.

Dr Friedemann Kunst, head of the traffic department at the Senate Department for Urban Development, gave a presentation on “Berlin as an example of mobility in a frugal city”. He explained that in recent, comparatively less frugal years, Berlin has chalked up great success in reducing car use, as car traffic has not increased for years and car ownership also remains comparatively low and stable. Conversely, increasing numbers of citizens are travelling by bicycle and the city has successfully consolidated the local transport network.

In the closing module, Konrad Otto-Zimmermann, formerly of the Federal Environment Agency and now Secretary General of the ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability, gave some food for thought from an international perspective. He called on municipalities to remain conscious of international networking and global solutions, because the national level alone cannot adequately solve problems of demographic change and CO₂ emissions: “Local action can move the world”.

Prof Dr-Ing Klaus J. Beckmann from the German Institute of Urban Affairs closed by stressing that, “The financial crisis and discussions on climate protection have cleared the way for rethinking and redirecting local transport policy. We now find ourselves in the fortunate position of being able to think creatively about such issues.”