

SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE IN POLAND OVERVIEW AND NEEDS

Dr. Andrzej Brzezinski,
(Warsaw University of Technology)

Summary of presentation at the FIST Workshop, Vienna 25-26 January 2001

Transformation in Central and Eastern Europe has caused a great change in transport demand. Volumes of freight transport was first reduced than stabilised. The role of railways was reduced. Personal mobility has been growing and with a rapid growth of motorization (which is growing much faster than GDP) there is a shift from public to private transport. There is a great pressure to develop road infrastructure. Generally, these changes cannot be considered as positive from the point of view of sustainability. To assure sustainable development it would be necessary to decouple economic growth and transport demand growth.

In any case the improvement and development of transport systems is necessary. National budgets, even supported by the EU assistance and with increased involvement of international finance institutions, are still too limited to meet all competing objectives in the transport sectors and the whole economy, where development objectives are often conflicting with social transfer and environmental objectives.

Among strategic questions the following are most important: (1) proportion between investing in upgrading/development of international transport corridors, and in improving national/regional/local networks and facilities; (2) dividing resources between transport means; (3) proportion between investing in new infrastructure and in maintenance, renovation and upgrading of existing infrastructure. In addition, there is a competition between objective of the reduction of regional differentiation and objectives of maximisation of overall economic growth (on the national scale).

Taking into account the experience of the ending decade, in countries such as Poland, the following policy directions seems to be most appropriate: (1) solving transport problem with upgrading of the existing systems which cannot be limited to investing in **hardware** but should include streamlining management and operation, development of human resources etc.; this does not means resigning from, for example, implementing motorway development programmes; however these programmes should be reviewed and probably curtailed; (2) because of economic situation in CEE countries it is still not feasible to achieve full harmonisation of standards with the EU in a short time; consequently, a greater effort has to be made to select **appropriate standards** at various stages of development; (3) assuring **complementarity** of different level networks (local, regional, national, international).

These principles were used in drafting a new proposal of the medium- and long-term national transport policy for Poland prepared by the Ministry of Transport and Maritime Economy. Of three policy options: (a) BAU – continuation of present trends; (b) modified policy and (c) sustainable development of the transport system; the third one is recommended. The objective has been formulated as follows: “creation the transport system which would be sustainable in terms of technology, economy, spatial, social and environmental aspects. This should be achieved in the country of developing market economy and taking into account international competition”. To reach this objective it is necessary: (1) to decouple GDP and transport intensity through physical planning, fiscal policy and management; (2) relate the development of transport infrastructure to the overall national public finance policy; (3) to

assess infrastructure and the whole transport development programmes from the point of view of the use of non-renewable resources and impact on the environment. Proposed phasing of implementation is strictly linked to the process of accession to the European Union.

According to the long-term strategy (till 2015): (1) railways and road system will have to become self-financing with the support from the public budget limited to objectives such as: defence, international agreements concerning TEN and transport in selected areas such as large metropolis; for the road sector “revenues from excise fuel and vehicle taxes, and the use of public road land and motorway tolls should balance the expenditures of the whole transport sector” (2) objectives for the road system include: elimination of backlogs in maintenance, creation of efficient connection with EU countries, first of all TEN and improvement of traffic safety; (3) for railways, priority is given to E-W and N-S lines of international importance, including improvement of border crossings; (4) in case of cities and metropolitan areas, the state contribution will depend on meeting conditions such as efficient management and co-operation of local authorities and adoption of sustainable transport policy at the local and regional level.

Proposed means of implementation include: restructuring (commercialisation) of public transport enterprises (first of all, railways), wide use of criteria of efficiency in investment and management of operation, internalisation of external costs, introducing public-private partnership (PPP), mechanism of state-local co-operation, communication with general public and interest groups. International co-operation with concentration on EU and IFI's will lie on: (a) taking into account international context in programming projects to get synergy effect; (b) rationalisation of public expenditures through review of projects/programmes by external partners; (c) attracting experienced investors in order to increase efficiency through competition.

The evolution of motorway development programme is the best illustration of changes in transport policy. Original programme envisaged construction of 2600 kilometres of motorways in the BOT scheme with the participation of the public financing not exceeding 15 %. This appeared to be too ambitious because of higher construction costs, limited willingness of the Polish user to pay, difficulties in getting acceptance for some sections, and, the strong opposition of pro-ecological organisations against the whole programme. Generally, the offer of the private sector appeared to be much more limited than expected at the beginning of the decade. Taking into account all lessons mentioned above, the new policy provides widening of the scope of public-private partnership and more flexible phasing of the implementation of the motorway construction programme, including postponing the construction of sections for which traffic forecasts envisaged lower volumes. On these sections the existing roads are to be upgraded first.

Adoption of this policy which is presently a subject of a wide discussion and consultations would be consistent with principles of sustainable development. However, this would require diverting the development process from the present trends which inevitably lead to severe problems such as congestion, economic inefficiencies and environmental pollution.