



Encouraging good practice in the development of Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans



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ABSTRACT

The European Commission's 2009 Action Plan for Urban Transport identified, as its first Action, the provision of guidance on Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans. The 2011 White Paper subsequently envisaged that there might be a mandatory requirement for such Plans for cities over a certain size, and that the allocation of regional and cohesion funds might be made conditional on the submission and auditing of such Plans. Since then, substantial progress has been made in the development of guidance for the preparation of SUMPs, leading to the publication of guidance in 2013. The purpose of this paper is to review experience with the provision of such guidance, at a European and national level, assess the underpinning research and identify areas in which further research is needed.

The paper reviews the background to the preparation of guidance at a European level and also at a national level in Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Poland, Scandinavia, Spain and the UK. It identifies the weaknesses in the preparation of Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans highlighted by those preparing the guidance, and by the underpinning research. On this basis it lists the principal barriers to effective plan development and implementation. Subsequently it reviews the research which has been undertaken to overcome those barriers, the extent to which current guidance reflects the findings of that research and our understanding of the process of policy transfer. Finally, it highlights eight research needs which should contribute to overcoming the remaining barriers.

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1. Introduction

The European Commission's attitude to urban transport has changed dramatically in the last decade. Ten years ago, its approach was still influenced by the principle of "subsidiarity": avoiding becoming involved in policies which could reasonably be pursued at national, regional or local level. However, its analysis (EC, 2007) demonstrated that urban transport was responsible for 80% of congestion costs and 14% of all carbon emissions. Moreover, urban areas accounted for 60% of Europe's population, but over 85% of its economic output. On both these grounds, it was argued, urban transport was too important to be left solely to local government to manage.

These arguments had first been developed in working groups established by the Environment Directorate in 2003 and 2004, the latter resulting in a report which laid the foundations for future development of Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans (SUMPs)

(DGEnv, 2004). Those working groups in turn drew on the pioneering work of the Land Use and Transport Research cluster of the Commission's fifth research framework, which was subsequently encapsulated in a Decision-Makers' Guidebook on developing sustainable urban land use and transport strategies (May, 2005).

The Commission's Action Plan on Urban Mobility (EC, 2009) recommended encouraging the adoption of Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans. In June 2010, the Council of the European Union stated that it "supports the development of Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans for cities ... and encourages the development of incentives, such as expert assistance and information exchange, for the creation of such plans". The subsequent 2011 White Paper (EC, 2011) proposed that there might be a mandatory requirement for such Plans for cities with a population of over 100,000, and that the allocation of regional and cohesion funds might be made conditional on the submission and auditing of such Plans.

In support of this policy, the ELTISplus project provided guidance on such plans (ELTISplus, 2014). In doing so, it drew on the experience of local transport planning in member states, and on advice on the essential and desirable elements of the process (ELTISplus, 2012). The resulting guidelines are based on

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Table 1
Differences between traditional transport plans and SUMP (ELTISplus, 2012).

Traditional transport plans		Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans
Often short term perspective without a strategic vision	Strategic level/vision	Including a long term/strategic vision with a time horizon of 20–30 years
Usually focused on a particular city	Geographical scope	Functional city; cooperation with neighbouring authorities essential
Limited input from operators and other local partners; not a mandatory characteristic	Level of public involvement	High citizen and stakeholder involvement an essential characteristic
Not a mandatory consideration	Sustainability	Balancing social equity, environmental quality and economic development
Limited transport and infrastructure focus	Sector integration	Integration of practices and policies between policy sectors (environment, land use, social inclusion, etc.)
Usually not mandatory to cooperate between tiers of authority	Institutional cooperation	Integration between tiers of government (e.g. district, municipality, agglomeration, region)
Often missing or focusing on broad objectives	Monitoring and evaluation	Focus on the achievement of measurable outcomes and targets
Historic emphasis on road schemes, infrastructure development	Thematic focus	Decisive shift in favour of measures to encourage public transport, walking and cycling and beyond (public space, land use, etc.)
Not considered	Cost internalisation	Review of transport costs and benefits also across policy sectors

eleven elements and 32 specific activities under the broad headings of preparing well; rational and transparent goal setting; elaborating the plan; and implementing the plan (ELTISplus, 2014).

At the outset the guidelines emphasise the differences between the traditional approach to urban transport planning and that advocated for Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans. Table 1 summarises these differences. As can be seen, it is argued that Sustainable Urban Mobility Planning has a greater emphasis on developing a long term vision, involving citizens and stakeholders throughout the process, specifying objectives and setting targets related to all aspects of sustainability, and developing effective packages of measures, without undue emphasis on supply-side solutions.

The companion State of the Art Report (ELTISplus, 2012) demonstrates the extent of the challenge still to be faced in Europe. It groups member states into three categories:

- those with a well established transport planning framework (7, but only including Flanders in Belgium and England and Wales in the UK),
- those which are moving towards Sustainable Urban Mobility Planning (12, including Wallonia in Belgium and Scotland in the UK),
- those which have yet to adopt sustainable mobility planning (11, including Northern Ireland in the UK).

Even in the first category, most countries fail to meet all the requirements, as illustrated in Table 2. The principal barriers to such planning in these countries are identified as strong pro-car and infrastructure lobbies, lack of joint working between transport and land use, lack of relevant knowledge, lack of funds for the preparation of Plans, inadequate coordination between tiers of government, the demands of intensive public and stakeholder involvement, and political conservatism (ELTISplus, 2012).

Table 2
The status of SUMP in the most advanced European countries (ELTISplus, 2012).

Country	Legally defined	National guidance	Plans in place	Sustainability objective	Full public involvement	Linked with finance	Political support
Belgium (Flanders)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
France	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	?	Yes	?
Germany	No	Under discussion	Yes	No	?	Yes	No
Italy	Yes	Yes	Some	?	?	No	?
Netherlands	Yes	Yes	Yes	Most	Yes	Yes	Yes
Norway	Yes	Yes	Yes	?	No	Yes	Yes
UK ^a	Yes	Yes	Yes	?	Yes	Yes	?

^a England and Wales outside London.

In this paper we consider the role of research in overcoming these barriers, and the potential contribution of the research community to the process of policy learning which is needed. In the next section we review the guidance available and the extent to which it draws on available research. In the subsequent section we consider the remaining barriers to effective policy development, and identify eight areas in which research is still needed. Subsequently we consider the way in which guidance is provided, and the extent to which it is likely to stimulate policy learning. We conclude with suggestions on ways in which the research community might contribute to more effective policy learning. We focus on European experience, but the implications for policy, practice and research may well be relevant to urban areas elsewhere in the world.

2. The guidance available and its underpinning research

2.1. European guidance

As noted in Section 1, the draft guidelines for the preparation of Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans are now available (ELTISplus, 2014). Fig. 1 illustrates the proposed SUMP cycle, including its four phases, eleven elements and 32 specific activities.

The guidelines draw on three principal sources, each of which is duly acknowledged: good practice in individual cities, national guidance documents, and underpinning research on the barriers to effective planning and on ways of overcoming them. We outline the latter two sets of sources in what follows.

2.2. National guidance

Several European countries now encourage or require the production of Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans. The requirements in England and France are the most fully developed, and are outlined below. We also describe briefly provisions in other

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